

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2024



IN THEIR OWN WORDS
FS ORAL HISTORIES

THE NEW LEARNING POLICY
EXPLAINED

POMELO DIPLOMACY

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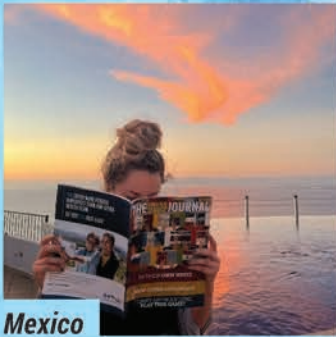
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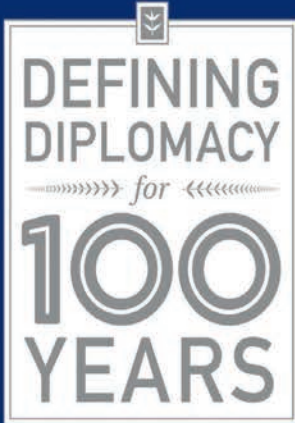
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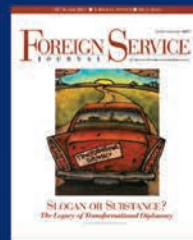
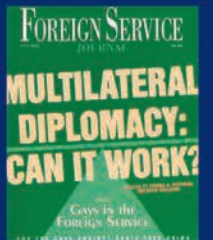
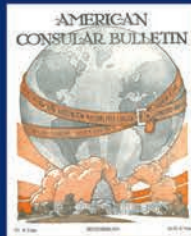
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THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

March 2024 Volume 101, No. 2

Focus on Oral Histories



Straight from the Source

47

A Look at the New Learning Policy

How, When, and Where Do State Department Employees Learn?

By Sarah Wardwell

Feature

52

Pomelo Diplomacy

By Marc Gilkey



20

A Century of Service: Firsthand Accounts from U.S. Diplomats

By Tom Selinger, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training

43

Diplomatic Security Service: Early Days

By Angela French, Diplomatic Security Public Affairs Office

THE FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

Perspectives

7

President's Views

Promoting All Aspects of Diversity

By Tom Yazdgerdi

9

Letter from the Editor

Let's Talk About the Mail

By Shawn Dorman

17

Speaking Out

Needed: A New Approach
to Protecting America's
Diplomatic Treasures

By Glyn Davies

88

Reflections

Serving at the Panda Post

By Doug Kelly

90

Local Lens

Lake Tekapo, New Zealand

By Carole Fenton



Departments

- 10 Letters
- 11 Letters-Plus
- 13 Talking Points
- 71 In Memory
- 79 Books

Marketplace

- 82 Real Estate
- 86 Classifieds
- 87 Index to Advertisers

AFSA NEWS

THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF THE AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

- 57 AFSA Webinar: Constructive Dissent Today
- 58 State VP Voice—Spotlight on EERs and the New Scoring Rubric
- 59 USAID VP Voice—Promotion Evaluation Reforms
- 60 FCS VP Voice—Signs of a Spring Thaw?
- 60 Federal Benefits Series—2024 Insurance Update
- 60 AFSA Governing Board Meetings, December 2023 and January 2024
- 61 Retiree VP Voice—Esprit de Corps
- 61 AFSA Welcomes New USAID Class
- 61 College Scholarships Available
- 62 AFSA on the Hill—Third Year of Robust Authorization Acts
- 63 On the Agenda: Road Safety
- 63 AFSA Meets with Employee Organizations
- 64 AFSA Releases Cost of Living Survey Results
- 66 Employee Spotlight: Ásgeir Sigfússon
- 66 AFSA Editorial Board Welcomes New Member
- 67 AFSA Welcomes New Comms Director
- 67 Next Stage: So You Want to Be an REA?
- 68 Diplomats@Work: Evacuating Ukraine
- 69 Keeping It Clean
- 69 AFSA Welcomes LM Intern
- 70 AFSA's Good Works: The AFSA Memorial Plaques

On the Cover—Composition by Driven by Design. Photo details provided in Focus section.

Promoting All Aspects of Diversity

BY TOM YAZDGERDI

Having a diverse workforce is a good thing in and of itself and leads to better decision-making and outcomes based on a variety of viewpoints.

When discussing DEIA (diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility), people generally think of racial, ethnic, and gender balance and opportunity. Inclusive of those efforts is the need to ensure that the DNA of our diverse workforce is made up of a broad representation of socioeconomic status, educational background, and work and life experience, among other factors.

All the foreign affairs agencies are grappling with how best to promote DEIA and ensure all employees are engaged in this. At State, we have gone through the first EER cycle (2023-2024) that includes DEIA as one of the five stand-alone core precepts essential to promotion and a successful Foreign Service career.

AFSA is working with State to assess how this effort has gone and what lessons can be learned. USAID will include a similar DEIA precept in their 2024-2025 assessment process. At a January meeting with AFSA, USAID Administrator Samantha Power and her staff expressed interest in learning from State's experience.

Other department initiatives that have a DEIA angle include rejiggering the Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT). While the FSOT is still an important factor in whether an applicant moves forward in the

intake process, since June 2022 the score (no longer pass/fail) is considered along with other application elements.

To me, this change makes sense. It reflects the general move in our country away from standardized tests as the primary measure of an individual's potential success at college or in other endeavors. Aren't academic record, achievements in the workplace, and motivation more important indicators?

The department is also aiming to make the Foreign Service Officer Assessment (FSOA)—the last step in the selection process—virtual. To many, this sounds sacrilegious. How can you possibly size up someone's ability to succeed in the Foreign Service by way of a Zoom call?

The department appears confident that it can and recently gave AFSA a preliminary demonstration of how a virtual FSOA would be conducted. It was impressive and convincing, and I am hopeful the initiative will work out and be fruitful. It could help level the playing field, allowing those to participate who could not otherwise take time off from work, find childcare or eldercare, or afford travel to and hotel costs in Washington, D.C.—currently the only place the FSOA is offered.

Last December my family hosted a recent alum of my graduate school, who had to fly from overseas to Washington, on their own dime, to take the FSOA—and struggled to meet the cost. That just does not seem right to me.

Coupled with the recent change to make all State Department internships paid, making the FSOA virtual will open

up the possibility of a Foreign Service career for many from disadvantaged backgrounds.

AFSA is doing its part to attract talent to the Foreign Service from schools that are not the traditional "feeder" schools. As I write this column in late January, I am preparing to travel to Florida to meet with our great retiree association in Sarasota but will also travel to Miami, Boca Raton, and Jupiter to speak to students and faculty at Miami Dade College (MDC) and Florida Atlantic University (FAU).

MDC, with the largest undergraduate enrollment of any college or university in the country, can be a rich source of talent for the Foreign Service and help the department and other foreign affairs agencies better reflect the face of America abroad and at home.

AFSA is also collaborating with FirstGens@state, a new employee organization at State that supports, develops, and advocates for first-generation professionals, first-generation college graduates, and individuals otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, inequity, or inequality. This new group can help retain talent from those backgrounds.

None of the above initiatives in any way means lowering standards for entry to the FS. Especially in this centennial year, AFSA will continue to support a rigorous intake process that reflects the Service's excellence and esprit de corps. Please let me know what you think at yazdgerdi@afsa.org or member@afsa.org. ■



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

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Let's Talk About the Mail

BY SHAWN DORMAN

This month as part of our centennial commemorations, we spotlight your Foreign Service stories through the decades with a Focus on oral histories from the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and the Diplomatic Security Service. We also feature a Straight from the Source look at State's new learning policy, and more. Instead of previewing all the excellent articles this month, I want to direct your attention here to an important *FSJ* logistical development.

Some 30 years ago, I started reading *The Foreign Service Journal* at my first post, Kyrgyzstan, a small new country in post-Soviet Central Asia. Its tiny new American embassy was not easy to reach. No commercial flights flew in or out of the country.

We received mail maybe once a month when someone would drive over the mountains, if snow didn't close the pass, to Kazakhstan's then-capital Almaty to pick up the Bishkek pouch. The *Journal* was a lifeline—a connection to home, to the Foreign Service and the State Department, and to AFSA, headed by Tex Harris at the time.

Back in those days, people sent change-of-address cards when they moved. The whimsical postcard

announcement my brother, Josh, drew for me has been taped to my filing cabinet all these years. It brings a smile today, as I



Shawn Dorman is the editor of The Foreign Service Journal.

write on the *FSJ*'s new pouch mail arrangement.

As of January 1, by agreement with the State Department after extensive negotiations, AFSA has shifted its use of the pouch. Instead of bulk mailing *FSJ*s to members with pouch addresses, we are now sending five to 10 copies of each new edition to each community liaison office coordinator (CLO) for embassy communities.

Because mail options, even to smaller posts like Bishkek, have greatly expanded, most posts have alternative mailing addresses (DPO, APO, FPO, etc.), and a majority of FS members no longer rely on the pouch for their mail. Any AFSA member using a non-pouch address will continue to receive the magazine that way, and we encourage those using pouch addresses who want to receive the print magazine to send us an alternate, non-pouch address.

If you are at a pouch-only post and cannot get a copy from the CLO, please reach out to us, and we'll take care of you. But we urge you to try the CLO first. This change is already reducing waste from copies going to out-of-date addresses (for those who move and do not inform AFSA), lessening our environmental footprint, and lightening the load on pouch facility colleagues and those who manage mailrooms at posts worldwide.

If you enjoy reading the hard copy, by all means, we want to send it to you! But you absolutely must update your mailing address and keep it up to date. AFSA does



On the road to Bishkek, circa 1994.

not get any address changes automatically—they have to come from you.

Please take a moment and go into your AFSA account online (<https://ams.afsa.org/eweb/>) and update your mailing address. Always use a non-pouch address if you have one.

We know reading habits have changed. If you currently prefer to read online, want to help save resources, or do not plan to update your mailing address regularly, please let us know and opt out of the print copy. You can always opt back in later. Send a quick note to journal@afsa.org with "opt out of print" in the subject line. Include your name, agency, and current mailing address.

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Also find *FSJ* content through the *FSJ* LinkedIn page, on all the AFSA social media channels, and in our searchable archive online that houses every edition back to 1924 (and the *Consular Bulletin* before that).

Thank you for helping us keep up with you. And please do keep reading—and writing for—the *Journal*. ■

Framing the Immigration Issue

I read the letter “The Biden Administration and Immigration,” by Ambassador (ret.) Michael A. McCarthy and Senior FSO (ret.) Nicholas M. Hill, in the November 2023 *FSJ*. I appreciate their dedication to discussing this critical issue and recognize the value their experience brings.

While I share concerns about the impact of current immigration policies on locally employed (LE) staff, I find the language overly harsh and divisive. Labeling immigrants uninvited “scofflaws” dehumanizes individuals driven from their homes by desperation and fierce hope for a better life.

And statements like “we effectively have no border” contribute to a narrative fueled by fear and anxiety rather than fostering a productive dialogue. Further, the authors’ assertion that we are betraying our LE colleagues is unwarranted.

Hill and McCarthy present a false dichotomy between supporting displaced individuals and protecting the interests of LE staff. This oversimplification ignores the complexities of the issue. Throughout history, immigrants have played a crucial role in shaping America. Many of our ancestors, for instance, were uninvited immigrants who risked everything for the American dream.

America’s continued success hinges on embracing the resilience of those who migrate in pursuit of opportunity. While acknowledging the challenges in the current system, we must recognize the significant contributions of immigrants. Many successful entrepreneurs, past and present, hail from immigrant backgrounds, highlighting the enduring impact of migration on our nation’s fabric.



In fact, according to the American Immigration Council report “New American Fortune 500 in 2022,” immigrants or their children founded 43.8 percent of the Fortune 500 list. These companies employ more than 14.8 million people and generate more than \$7 trillion in revenue annually, greater than the GDP of every country except the United States and China. Also, immigration offsets our low fertility rate, giving us an economic edge over other developed countries facing population decline.

As argued by Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee, Nobel laureates in economics, in their book *Good Economics for Hard Times*, “the politics of the response to immigration is not just one of misunderstood economics, but also one of identity politics.” Framing the debate with divisive rhetoric obscures the value of diverse migration to our nation.

America’s true strength lies in upholding the principles of freedom and opportunity—principles that motivate individuals from across the globe to seek a brighter future not just for themselves but for us all.

Therefore, I urge the authors to revisit their language and approach and refrain from using fear-based rhetoric.

In a positive development, President Biden signed the GRATEFUL Act into law in December 2023. This legislation grants up to 3,500 additional visas to U.S. government employees abroad in 2024 and 3,000 annually thereafter. The GRATEFUL Act aims to alleviate the backlog in the Special Immigrant Visa process, reflecting a commitment to those who have dedicated their careers to supporting U.S. diplomatic efforts.

Jesse Gutierrez
USAID / Somalia
Nairobi, Kenya

Inviting Indochina Service Alums

There will be a MACV/CORDS (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam / Civil Operations and Rural Development Support) reunion April 24-27, 2024, at Fort Moore (formerly Fort Benning), in Columbus, Ga., hosted by Counterparts.

All military and civilian personnel who served in advisory positions in Indochina and their counterparts are invited. The program will include sessions with active-duty personnel in the Security Force Assistance Brigade and faculty of the Military Advisors Training Course.

Counterparts is a veterans association comprising former Allied military and civilian advisers and their counterparts who served in various theaters of operation during the Second Indochina War. CSPAN recorded presentations at the 2019 reunion, including of FSO Robert “Bob” Traister (<https://bit.ly/CSPAN-Traister>).

For more information on the 2024 reunion, contact the organizer, Len Ganz, at len.ganz@gmail.com or (781) 444-7808, or me at (301) 717-4127.

Gordon Bare

U.S. Army and State Dept., retired
Bethesda, Maryland ■

Correction

In the November 2023 *FSJ* Focus, “In Their Own Write,” the author note for FSO Michelle L. Stefanick (*Tell the Truth*) states that she retired in 2013. In fact, she *resigned* at that time.

Share your thoughts
about this month’s issue.

Submit letters to the editor:
journal@afsa.org

RESPONSE TO DECEMBER 2023 EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT ARTICLE,
 “A PARENT’S GUIDE TO PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS”

Navigating the Education of Special Needs Children

BY KAREN SLITER

Thank you for the very informative and helpful article regarding psychoeducational evaluations for children in the December 2023 *FSJ*. My husband and I have done a number of these evaluations for our daughter, who has a “one of a kind” genetic deletion. Psychoeducational evaluations were central to figuring out her unique learning profile.

She is 19 now, so we have perspective on her entire primary and secondary school education. I am sharing our experiences in the hope that they will be helpful to other Foreign Service families as they navigate what can at times seem like a very long, dark tunnel.

My key pieces of advice would be as follows.

1. *Be very careful who you allow to evaluate your child and interpret the results.* The results, conclusions, and recommendations from an inaccurate evaluation can negatively affect your child for years, if not decades. We once followed the advice of our daughter’s school to let them do the psychoeducational evaluation since “they knew our child best.” Well known for its special needs program, the school was consid-

ered one of the best in the international community and had done a great job implementing the results of the previous evaluations done elsewhere.

However, in this situation, the school’s testing results and their interpretation of those results contradicted previous assessments and pointed toward a radically different educational trajectory. Yet they were certain that they were “right.”

In retrospect, there could have been a financial consideration for the school in wanting to do the evaluation themselves; and their recommendations might have had as much to do with what they were prepared to offer as a school as they did with our child’s actual abilities. Had we remained at that school, we would have had no choice but to follow their recommendation, which was to discontinue our child’s formal education and put her in a life skills class.

Instead, we immediately took our daughter back to the center that had done her initial evaluation and were advised to ignore the school report and “stay the path.” We never showed the school’s assessment to anyone else, and I still feel somewhat traumatized thinking back on that difficult time.



Our daughter is currently completing her senior year of high school, having been successful at three different schools since that school psychoeducational assessment was done. She has a GPA of 3.9 and has been accepted with a scholarship to the college of her choice.

2. *As Dr. Nelson points out, go through the results and recommendations very carefully before they are shared with anyone else.* Among other errors we have found, one report would have diagnosed our child with a completely erroneous genetic syndrome. Many children with special needs and/or individual education plans (IEPs) have extensive medical files. Errors happen.

3. *Find an evaluation center/team that welcomes parents, gives you an active role in the assessment process, and values and incorporates your input.* The fact is, we know our children best. We have been at every doctor’s appointment, helped them with their homework, seen their progress, and know where they struggle. We know the impact of our frequent international moves. And in the end, we are the ones to implement the results of any evaluation (working with the schools, of course).

Karen Sliter, a doctor of veterinary medicine (DVM), retired with the rank of Career Minister from the APHIS Foreign Service in 2021. She and her husband, David, have spent 25 years raising four girls on four continents. The family currently lives in Vienna, Austria, where Karen is working for the International Atomic Energy Agency.



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There is no one-size-fits-all for our unique and wonderful Foreign Service children.

The evaluation and its conclusions and recommendations need to “make sense” to and be helpful to parents. This can require advocacy on parents’ part. Do not unquestioningly accept a result or recommendation that goes against your own gut feeling.

Finally, know what you want from the assessment going in, and make sure you get what you need. (For example, do you need advice on educational trajectory? “Best fit” class models? A 1:1 instructor? Will a school’s proposed IEP be appropriate for your child?)

4. *Incorrect assumptions will still be made, and wrong things will still be written about your child.* Our approach has been to ensure that the most serious errors were corrected. We advocated strongly on those. Smaller issues we accepted and moved on.

5. *Be careful when it comes to psychiatric evaluations.* Having raised four daughters, we have found that their perspectives on how their life was going could change markedly from day to day, at times from hour to hour. This was particularly true of our daughter with special needs; and there were times she just needed to “vent.” Some psychiatrists were far better than others at sorting out a “bad day” from the signs of a deeper or more concerning issue. An inaccurate psychiatric diagnosis, however well intentioned, can have profound effects on a child’s future.

After one very negative experience, we insisted on only using the center that had made the original diagnoses and educational plan for our child. This provided long-term consistency of support; the evaluators came to understand our daughter and our family’s context. That center had more than 60 specialists (speech, occupational therapy, and so on) and a director who designed the assessment plan and determined which experts’ input was needed, and then brought it all together.

The director was able to cut through all the test results and various recommendations, find what was most relevant at the time, and use that to develop a forward plan. He was able to pick out the three to four things most relevant to our child’s learning struggles and to predict (when she was 7 years old) with tremendous accuracy what “fair” learning expectations for her would be. He gave our child a future.

This individual is now retired; I hope other families find someone like him and his team to support them on their journey. There is no one-size-fits-all for our unique and wonderful Foreign Service children. I hope that the Bureau of Medical Services will provide families with the Special Needs Educational Allowance support they need to ensure all our children get the education they need to have a future that is appropriate for them. ■

Ambassador Tracker: Congress' Latest

Since Nov. 1, 2023, the Senate has confirmed 13 nominees to ambassador and other senior positions in the foreign affairs agencies. These include nine career members of the Foreign Service to ambassadorships in Azerbaijan, Egypt, Gabon, Guatemala, Laos, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, and Papua New Guinea. In addition, career FSO Elizabeth Richard was confirmed as coordinator for counterterrorism at the Department of State.

Three political appointees were also confirmed: ambassadors to Barbados and Croatia as well as the USAID Inspector General, a position that had gone unfilled since December 2020.

As of this writing in early February, seven nominees are ready for a vote on the Senate floor. The Senate confirmed Kurt Campbell to be deputy secretary of State on Feb. 6.

In addition, on Jan. 31, President Biden selected John Podesta to replace John Kerry as his global representative on climate. While Kerry is currently the president's special envoy, Podesta's title will instead be senior adviser; as an adviser rather than a special envoy, he will not need to wait for Senate confirmation.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has a large backlog of nominations to work through: 22 ambassador nominations (mostly career FSOs), eight senior official nominations, and a whopping 383 FS promotions and tenures. AFSA will continue its tireless efforts to advocate on behalf of all career nominees.

AFSA currently counts 25 ambassadorial vacancies around the world as well as five unfilled senior positions at State and USAID, including two assistant secretary positions at State and—yes, still!—the Inspector General role at State.

Contemporary Quote

As though on the Titanic, leaders are steering the world toward catastrophe—more nuclear bombs, vast carbon emissions, dangerous pathogens, and artificial intelligence. Only the big powers like China, America, and Russia can pull us back. Despite deep antagonisms, they must cooperate—or we are doomed.

—Former California Gov. Jerry Brown, executive chair of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, in a Jan. 23 press release announcing the *Doomsday Clock* will remain at 90 seconds to midnight.

Trouble for Feds Joining Walkout?

Axios reported on Jan. 14 that House Republicans planned to push federal agencies, including the State Department, to punish employees who joined the group “Feds United for Peace” in a planned Jan. 16 walkout in protest of the Biden administration’s support for Israel in the Israel-Hamas conflict. House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) said ahead of the walkout that federal workers who join “deserve to be fired.”

In response, the group posted on their Instagram account that the event was not technically a walkout, calling it instead a “day of mourning” and encouraging other government employees to join the movement by taking the day off. As it turned out, Jan. 16 was a snow day in Washington, D.C., and federal offices were closed.

Two organizers of the event, both longtime government employees, told *Government Executive*—which granted them anonymity to speak—that they had discussed the planned protest with ethics officials at their agencies, who determined that as long as they took leave to participate, they would not be violating any laws or procedures.

Participants were also encouraged to communicate about the protest on their personal time using their personal

devices, thereby avoiding accusations of violating the Hatch Act.

Speaker Johnson said in a tweet that he plans to “initiate appropriate disciplinary proceedings” against participants. But John Mahoney, an attorney focusing on federal employment law, told *GovExec* that protesters “have First Amendment rights like anyone else to raise grievances with the government,” though they could still face disciplinary action if they misuse leave or engage in misconduct in a manner that “has a nexus to their employment.”

After AFSA contacted the State Department and asked it to put out guidance, the department issued a Jan. 22 cable reminding employees that its “political activities guidance does not prevent department employees from expressing their personal opinions about policies and issues” provided they do not connect the issue with a political party, partisan political group, or candidate for partisan political office.

AFSA encourages employees to contact their agency ethics officer if they have questions about permissible activities.

READINESS Act to Support Spouses

The Resilient Employment and Authorization Determination to Increase National Employment of Serving Spouses Act, or READINESS Act, was



introduced on Nov. 21, 2023. The bill was spearheaded by Reps. Jasmine Crockett (D-Texas) and Don Bacon (R-Neb.) and had 10 additional co-sponsors.

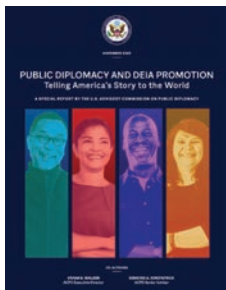
On Dec. 19, the Senate introduced its version of the same bill, sponsored by Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), and Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.).

Emmalee Greusen, a co-author of the act, wrote a letter about it in the January-February 2024 *Foreign Service Journal*, calling it “an initiative [that] creates a retention path for federally employed military and Foreign Service spouses during permanent changes of station.”

Report Details DEIA Public Diplomacy Programming Overseas

In November 2023, the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD) issued a special report titled “Public Diplomacy and DEIA Promotion.” To compile the report, ACPD interviewed more than 150 public diplomacy practitioners at the State Department, three quarters of whom were serving overseas, to better understand how the current emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) has influenced the practice of public diplomacy in the field.

ACPD found that public diplomacy officers and locally engaged staff members have produced “significant, and in some cases remarkable, outcomes” given limited resources and capacity constraints. The report’s authors made recommendations for improvement focused on resource and capacity building that



would enable posts to better promote DEIA principles.

The full report can be found at <https://bit.ly/ACPD-DEIA-Report-2023>.

State Announces Lateral Entry Program

On Jan. 24, the State Department announced the launch of the Lateral Entry Pilot Program (LEPP), a five-year, congressionally mandated program to recruit mid-level professionals with expertise in areas critical to U.S. foreign policy. The current pilot will bring in up to 35 new mid-level FSOs.

LEPP applicants must demonstrate proficiency in their designated specialties. The first jobs to be posted on the USAJobs website include cyberspace, climate diplomacy, and global health security. Applicants must be able to pass the Foreign Service Officer Assessment (FSOA).

According to cable 24 State 6722, LEPP is open to current entry-level and former Foreign Service officers, Civil Service employees, contractors, and the general public. More information on the program can be found at <https://careers.state.gov>.

A FSO does not support lateral entry into the Foreign Service.

State Bypasses Congress

As the clock approached midnight in December 2023, the State Department notified congressional committees that it would be bypassing a required congressional review process to send 13,000 rounds of tank ammunition, valued at more than \$106 million, to Israel. The rounds are part of a larger, 45,000-round order that is currently under review.

The New York Times reported on Dec. 9 that the department invoked an emergency provision in the Arms Export Control Act to bypass Congress. According to

the *Times*, the department has used the emergency provision “at least two times since 2022” to rush weapons to Ukraine.

In a statement, Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) wrote: “Congressional review is a critical step for examining any large arms sale. The administration’s decision to short-circuit what is already a quick time frame for congressional review undermines transparency and weakens accountability. The public deserves better.”

U.N. Workers Accused of Participating in Oct. 7 Attack on Israel

More than 150 employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) have died since the conflict in Gaza began on Oct. 7, when Hamas militants attacked Israel. On Jan. 26, Israel claimed to have evidence that at least a dozen UNRWA staff members were complicit in the Oct. 7 attack, causing the U.S., UNRWA’s largest funder, and many other governments to freeze their financial support of the agency.

UNRWA was established in 1949 to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. The agency’s commissioner-general, Philippe Lazzarini, said in a statement that he had “taken the decision to immediately terminate the contracts of these staff members and launch an investigation in order to establish the truth without delay.”

On Jan. 28, U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres called on UNRWA donors to resume funding, saying that while the “abhorrent alleged acts” of the 12 accused workers must have consequences, “the tens of thousands of men and women who work for UNRWA, many in some of the most dangerous situations for humanitarian workers, should not be penalized,” and the needs of the refugees they serve must continue to be met.

Podcast of the Month: Rational Security (bit.ly/Rational-Security-podcast)



This weekly podcast covers issues at the intersection of national security and the law. Hosts Quinta Jurecic and Scott Anderson are fellows in governance studies at the Brookings Institution. Jurecic is also a senior editor at *Lawfare*, and Anderson is a senior fellow in the National Security Law Program at Columbia Law School and a former attorney-adviser in the State Department's Office of the Legal Adviser.

The hosts have a knack for explain-

ing complicated topics in an approachable and even humorous way. Recent episodes include the "Dry January" edition, in which the hosts discussed the dangers posed by a cross-border attack that killed a senior Hamas official in Beirut, and December's "Arose Such a Clatter," in which they discussed recent attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea, along with the election of populist economist Javier Milei as the new president of Argentina.

The appearance of a particular site or podcast is for information only and does not constitute an endorsement.

U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that while any employees who participated in the attacks must be held accountable, their actions shouldn't cloud the work of UNRWA, which she called "the only organization on the ground that has the capacity to continue to provide that assistance. And their personnel have done extraordinary work—they've literally saved thousands of lives."

Of the 12 employees accused of taking part in the attack, Guterres said nine had been immediately terminated, one was confirmed dead, and "the identity of the two others is being clarified."

According to State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel, 23 U.S. citizens have been killed in the Israel-Gaza conflict since fighting broke out on Oct. 7, including a 17-year-old Palestinian American from Louisiana, Tawfic Abdel Jabbar, who was fatally shot in the occupied West Bank on Jan. 19, and 21 members of the Israeli National Police (INF).

According to *The Washington Post*, at least 32 Americans were killed by Hamas

during its Oct. 7 attack on Israel, and at least 10 Americans are believed to have been taken hostage by Hamas on Oct. 7—two of whom were later released under a hostage exchange deal.

Several U.S. government contractors have also fallen victim to the violence in Gaza. USAID contractor Hani Jnena, along with his wife and two daughters, was killed in an airstrike on Nov. 5, *The Washington Post* reported. An employee of Save the Children was killed on Dec. 10 along with his wife, four children, and several members of his extended family.

"The U.S. concern about these [humanitarian worker] casualties remains almost purely rhetorical. There is no policy leverage being put behind it whatsoever," Refugees International President Jeremy Konyndyk, a former Biden and Obama administration official, told the *Post*.

On Dec. 11, 2023, the leaders of several NGOs, including Mercy Corps and Save the Children U.S., penned an op-ed for *The New York Times*, writing in part: "Most of our organizations have been operating in Gaza for decades. ...

The aerial bombardments have rendered our jobs impossible. The withholding of water, fuel, food and other basic goods has created an enormous scale of need that aid alone cannot offset."

U.S. Troops Killed, Wounded in Jordan

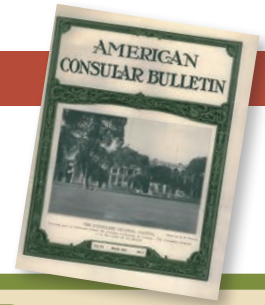
Three American servicemembers were killed and at least 34 injured in a Jan. 28 drone attack in Jordan.

The attack on Tower 22, a U.S. military outpost in the northeast corner of Jordan on the border with Syria, was the latest in a series of attacks carried out by Iranian proxies in the region. Since the start of the Israel-Gaza conflict on Oct. 7, 2023, there have been more than 160 attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria.

Project 2025 Aims to Dismantle "Administrative State"

On Jan. 21, *The New York Times Magazine* published a long-form interview with Kevin Roberts, Heritage Foundation president since 2021. Heritage's "Project 2025" aims to, in Roberts' words, "destroy the administrative state," in part by instituting "Schedule F," removing employment protections from the federal workforce and creating a system that allows any administration in power to hire and fire federal employees at will.

When asked to elaborate, he said that "people will lose their jobs. Hopefully their lives are able to flourish in spite of that. Buildings will be shut down. ... Most importantly, what we're trying to destroy is the political influence [the administrative state] has over individual American sovereignty, and the only way to do that, or one of the ways to do that, is to diminish the number of unelected bureaucrats who are wielding that power instead of Congress."



Retired Ambassador Arrested for Espionage

On Dec. 3, 2023, the Associated Press broke the news that Manuel Rocha, a retired Foreign Service officer and former U.S. ambassador to Bolivia, had been arrested for espionage, accused of working as an agent of the Cuban government. He pled not guilty on Feb. 14.

Rocha, who was born in Colombia and raised in New York City, received a B.A. from Yale and M.A.s from both Harvard and Georgetown before joining the Foreign Service in 1981.

Ambassador (ret.) John Feeley, who served with Rocha in the past, told *The New York Times* on Dec. 4 this was one of the worst intelligence breaches in recent history, saying: “Manuel literally had the keys to the kingdom. If it had to do with Cuba, he got to see it.”

Bill Miller, former director of the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS), told NPR on Dec. 6 that DSS and the FBI would begin damage assessment and damage control. The fact that Rocha left government service two decades ago would make the task much more difficult.

It wouldn’t be as easy to pull off such a feat today, Miller said, “because our technology has advanced to the point where we can do more routine monitoring, especially of social media, those things which could prove what we would refer to as undue influence.”

First the Boston Tea Party, and Now This

A U.S. chemistry professor sparked controversy in the U.K. after claiming that adding a pinch of salt to tea makes for a tastier brew. On Jan. 24, the U.S. embassy in London issued a statement assuring the “good people of the U.K. that the unthinkable notion of adding salt

100 Years Ago

Agreeable Experiences En Route to Post

Interesting and fascinating as Constantinople is, I began to wonder how I was going to get to Alexandria, being then not much nearer than when I first started upon my journey. “Travelling Tredwell,” as Maxwell Blake, at that time in Constantinople, named him, whispered that he had heard that a destroyer might be going to Alexandria. In a day or two the muffled conversation regarding the destroyer’s trip ceased for it had been decided that No. 220, the U.S.S. *MacLeish*, was to go, and through the courtesy of Admiral Mark Bristol, the High Commissioner, we were to make the voyage together with two naval officers on leave. We were known as the “damn Passengers”!

—FSO Ernest L. Ives in “From Pillar to Post,” in the March 1924

American Consular Bulletin (precursor to the FSJ).

to Britain’s national drink is not official United States policy. And never will be.”

The release went on to say that the proper way to make tea is by microwaving it. This jab at British friends reprised



a 2020 scandal that began when a U.S. TikTok user recommended microwaving tea. At the time, U.K. Ambassador to the U.S. Dame Karen Pierce called in the military to explain to befuddled Americans how a cup of tea should be brewed.

In these (earl) grey times, we’ll take any opportunity for a spot of levity in the news.

NYT on Assignment Restrictions

On Dec. 31, 2023, *The New York Times* reported on assignment restrictions at the State Department, interviewing several Asian American Foreign Service officers who believe they have been unfairly scrutinized because of even distant family ties to Asia. Several said they have been banned from working in the region.

AFSA State Vice President Tina Wong, who was also interviewed for the article, called the situation “problematic.”

The *Times* reports that the list of posts affected by assignment restrictions includes Russia, Vietnam, and Israel.

FSO Thomas Wong, who fought the department for years over an assignment restriction before finally winning an assignment to Beijing in 2023, told the *Times*, “We should be asking ourselves how to deal with the risk, not cutting off the people who have the best skills from serving altogether. That’s a self-inflicted wound.” ■

This edition of Talking Points was compiled by Donna Scaramastra Gorman.

Needed: A New Approach to Protecting America's Diplomatic Treasures

BY GLYN DAVIES

The celebration this year of the 100th anniversary of the modern Foreign Service and the approaching 250th anniversary of our nation's founding offers hope that the story of diplomacy's contribution to America's success will be well told. How did a small, isolated, experimental republic gain acceptance and ultimately assume global leadership?

Our success depended on how well we could navigate among nations. As an acknowledgment of that, the Department of State was established in 1789 as the first administrative arm of the U.S. executive branch. Thomas Jefferson, the first Secretary of State, oversaw just two diplomatic posts, London and Paris, and 10 consular posts. No real estate came with the job, and there was no interest in acquiring any.

Remarkably for a nation among the wealthiest by 1900, the United States largely avoided obtaining property to house its diplomats until after World War I. Yet we now have hundreds of historic properties and thousands of artworks, antiquities, and artifacts on six continents. They are a tangible representation of how American diplomacy navigated our way to world leadership.

Either we dramatically raise awareness of them and adopt a new, robust philanthropic approach to their care, or we risk losing them.

Their historical and cultural value is inestimable.

But our nation's diplomatic treasures are a fragile national resource. Many are centuries old. They require conservation and restoration for which public funding at scale will never be available. Either we dramatically raise awareness of them and adopt a new, robust philanthropic approach to their care, or we risk losing them.

What Brought Me to This Challenge

I grew up in a Foreign Service family and served 38 years as an FSO, visiting, working, and even living in some of State's heritage properties. But I never fully understood how we came to own some 260 culturally, historically, or architecturally significant structures. I knew even less about the collections of more than 16,500 artworks and artifacts housed in our missions and residences. And I had no inkling of the challenge

State faces in maintaining, much less restoring, it all.

In retirement, by luck and coincidence, I found myself serving as a senior adviser to a small team in State's Office of Cultural Heritage (CH), part of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations. I was drawn to it after a lifetime in the Foreign Service and an interest in history and the power of cultural diplomacy.

The Office of Cultural Heritage is responsible for cataloguing, assessing, setting standards for, and assisting colleagues worldwide in caring for our many culturally significant properties and far-flung collections.

It is not quite a decade old. But the architects, engineers, historians, conservationists, and others among its dozen or so professionals have made great strides in bringing coherence and attention to the challenge of protecting State's overseas heritage.

I learned from them that inadequate funding to address the growing backlog of maintenance creates an especially acute problem for our older properties, typically ruling out needed restoration work or the installation of modern, more environmentally sound systems. We



Ambassador (ret.) Glyn Davies served 38 years as a Foreign Service officer in Australia, Africa, Europe, Asia, and at the State Department and White House. He was permanent representative to United Nations agencies in Vienna and U.S. ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand.

often hear from ambassadors about the problems they confront when they walk through their front doors.

An Alternative to Public Funding

There is, however, a path to address the challenge that does not involve securing more public funding. After all, the demands of ongoing diplomatic operations will always be more urgent and compelling. This alternate path entails developing a culture of philanthropy based on the stories these places and artifacts tell.

Analogous philanthropies already exist at State, namely those supporting our Art in Embassies Program and Diplomatic Reception Rooms. And we have the example of a trust set up to help maintain an overseas property, Winfield House in London, established decades ago by Ambassador Walter Annenberg.

The Fund to Conserve U.S. Diplomatic Treasures Abroad, the private sector partner of CH, was founded in 2012. Since then, it has undertaken fundraising efforts for small, one-off decorative arts conservation efforts. Today its evolving mission and organizational structure also provide a vehicle for supporting historic buildings considered heritage assets by the Department of State.

A Short History of America's Public Property Abroad

When Benjamin Franklin arrived in Paris in December 1776 as America's first diplomat, he had a daunting assignment—to win French support for our independence. But he was left to arrange his own lodging and so stayed in a small mansion lent by a rich aristocrat. The house is gone, but the precedent

endured. Until the 20th century, our envoys largely fended for themselves.

We obtained our first property abroad in 1821, when the Sultan of Morocco presented us with a building in Tangier to cement a friendship begun when his kingdom became the first state to recognize the United States. The Tangier American Legation served as a diplomatic post for a record 140 years. The only building beyond our borders listed on the Secretary of the Interior's National Register of Historic Places and now a nonprofit library, museum, and study center popular with neighbors, scholars, and visiting Americans, the legation's future is uncertain.

The first property we *purchased* abroad was the Seoul American Legation, acquired in 1884 and in U.S. possession longer than any other official residence. Our first in Europe was the Palazzo Corpi in Constantinople, bought by our ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in 1907. (Sadly, the popular report that its funding was won in a poker game with congressmen is only legend.)

America's growing global role and early 20th century Foreign Service reforms began to change the status quo. Villa Otium, an Oslo landmark, was the first residence purchased in Western Europe, and we also acquired Schönborn Palace, our Prague embassy whose spotlight flag symbolized freedom during the Cold War.

The exquisite Palacio Bosch in Buenos Aires, now an Argentinian national monument, was bought in 1929. The Foreign Buildings Office (now the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations) also began building. Our landmark Tokyo residence, in which Douglas MacArthur received Japan's emperor after World War II, was completed in 1931.

During the postwar period of U.S. global primacy, we bought and built at a fevered pace. The State Department balked at buying Winfield House for a token dollar from Barbara Hutton, fearing its upkeep would be ruinous, but President Harry Truman ordered its purchase.

Collections: Art & Artifacts

Many know that State's Diplomatic Reception Rooms house priceless early American antiques and art, from Jefferson's desk to Paul Revere's silver. Far fewer are aware of the rich collections in our overseas missions and residences.

Worldwide, our residences, embassies, and consulates house more than 16,500 works of art and artifacts, acquired over generations—statuary conveyed with property, artwork donated by collectors or artists, public art purchased for new buildings, even an antique boat bought to serve an embassy's needs. CH experts work to catalogue, appraise, assess, and advise our posts on their conservation, care, and display.

The crown jewel of our collections is likely Giambologna's *Cesarini Venus*, a 16th-century marble statue that conveyed with Palazzo Margherita, our Rome embassy. The art world raved when it went on tour, including to Washington's National Gallery of Art.

"Washington at Princeton," a portrait painted in 1780 by Charles Willson Peale, was meant as a diplomatic gift to the Dutch during the American Revolution but was seized at sea and kept as a prize of war in Britain for 165 years. Sold into American hands after World War II, it was bequeathed to our ambassador's residence in Paris. The *New York Times* published an article in early 2023 about CH's successful effort to authenticate the enigmatic portrait.

A graceful motor launch named *Hiawatha* has been a well-loved presence in its host city of Istanbul since 1932. Now docked at a museum, it is still in diplomatic use. Ambassador Jeff Flake, his colleagues in Türkiye, and the Fund to Conserve U.S. Diplomatic Treasures Abroad have raised \$300,000 toward saving this symbol of U.S.-Turkish friendship.

Diplomatic Treasures Tell Our Global Story and Deserve Support

The State Department manages more than 3,500 buildings in 190 countries. Of those deemed culturally, historically, or architecturally important, 15 percent are in UNESCO World Heritage areas, and 44 are listed in the Secretary of State's Register of Culturally Significant Property. Secretary Antony Blinken calls it an "honor to preserve our landmark American properties abroad," describing them as "physical representations of our longstanding diplomatic relationships."

In preserving them we face a tall order. The Paris residence alone, for instance, needs a breathtaking \$200 million for deferred maintenance, upgrades, and restoration. Either we divest and downsize, deaccessioning our history, or we tell their stories and raise endowments for their care. We have begun to develop a more systematic approach to setting up endowments, which will take time. But there are always small steps we can take to raise the profile of our heritage assets.

Our residences and chanceries receive many visitors, both in-person and virtually, and when time and resources allow, our colleagues have created materials to tell their stories. CH has begun to develop virtual tours, films, and studies of some properties for U.S. and local audiences. To celebrate the centennial of Villa Otium, our Oslo residence, U.S. Embassy

Speaking Out is the *Journal's* opinion forum, a place for lively discussion of issues affecting the U.S. Foreign Service and American diplomacy. The views expressed are those of the author; their publication here does not imply endorsement by the American Foreign Service Association. Responses are welcome; send them to journal@afsa.org.

Oslo enlisted a local celebrity to conduct a lighthearted tour on social media. The public reacted positively. On Wikipedia the entry for Spaso House in Moscow shows how to bring a place to life.

We can do more to open up residences and embassies, mindful of security strictures, especially where cities set aside a weekend or a week to publicly showcase local landmarks. Independence Day celebrations at our heritage properties present opportunities to relate their histories with visual displays for host-country and American guests and the media.

Developing awareness and a culture of caring for our notable properties and collections will take time. We have work to do to prepare detailed resources for those wishing to start endowments, but take a look at what the Fund to Conserve U.S. Treasures Abroad has accomplished in a short time to showcase the Tangier Legation, Paris residence, Istanbul's *Hiawatha*, and "Washington at Princeton" (see <https://fundtoconserve.org/>). And the fund has now been accepted for inclusion in the Combined Federal Campaign, allowing everyone to contribute.

This year's Foreign Service centennial and America's coming 250th form a favorable backdrop to efforts on behalf of America's diplomatic heritage. For those with an interest in American diplomacy and all it has done to advance our nation's interests, now is a good time to answer the Secretary's call to save the landmarks that tell our nation's diplomatic story. ■



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NEW ENGLAND
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Learn more

A Century of Service ≈ Firsthand Accounts from U.S. Diplomats

Over the 10 decades since the Rogers Act created the modern Foreign Service, America's diplomats have made extraordinary contributions to advancing our nation's security, prosperity, and ideals. At posts around the world, practitioners from U.S. foreign affairs agencies have been promoting the national interest in concrete ways, serving our citizens overseas as well as American farmers, businesses, and workers back home. Their service often goes uncelebrated, and so *The Foreign Service Journal* turns to the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST) and its Foreign Affairs Oral History Program to help tell their stories.

Drawing from ADST's collection of more than 2,600 oral histories, these accounts from across a century of service illus-



Tom Selinger is a career Foreign Service officer on detail as executive director of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. He and his tandem spouse have served in five countries across three continents and counting.

trate the breadth of the work individual American diplomats do at home and abroad and the challenges they routinely overcome. Evacuating citizens, controlling immigration, negotiating alliances, promoting trade, protecting farms, preserving jobs, defending health, responding to crises, fostering peace, reuniting families, and sometimes simply living up to the ideal America represents to the rest of the world—the list of their duties is long, their dedication exemplary.

Founded in 1986, ADST is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting understanding of diplomacy and diplomatic practitioners. The core of the association's work involves capturing and sharing the oral histories of diplomats. ADST's collection—including compilations focused on particular subjects and countries, as well as the full oral history of each diplomat in this article—is accessible at <https://adst.org>. In addition, ADST assists in the preparation and publication of books on diplomacy and contributes to case studies and educational materials for both practitioners and students of diplomacy. Its innovative outreach efforts include podcasts, social media, lesson plans for high school teachers, and an online series, "Moments in Diplomatic History," presenting key international developments and humorous aspects of the Service through the eyes of its practitioners.



Infantry of the Polish Army during the Battle of Warsaw, August 1920.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Our mere presence in Warsaw after the others had left was an encouragement to the Poles, and we felt that American prestige would be enhanced by our remaining until the very last moment. But what was the very last moment? —Jay Pierrepont Moffat



This centennial year, ADST is redoubling efforts to collect and amplify firsthand accounts of extraordinary contributions by America’s diplomats through the “Century of Service and Sacrifice” initiative, an effort to bolster public awareness and appreciation of the role diplomacy plays in advancing our national interest. As part of this effort, ADST is spearheading a coalition of foreign affairs associations, including AFSA, in advocating for congressional passage of the United States Foreign Service Commemorative Coin Act (H.R. 3537/S. 789)—bipartisan, budget-neutral legislation directing the Treasury Department to mint a coin commemorating 100 years of the modern U.S. Foreign Service. Proceeds from sale of the coins would go to support ADST’s foreign affairs oral history program. Go to <https://adst.org> for more information on joining the coin effort or submitting your own story for the “Century of Service and Sacrifice” initiative.

The team at ADST is dedicated to honoring the remarkable accomplishments of America’s diplomats. We hope you enjoy this journey through a century of service.

—Tom Selinger, Executive Director,
Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training

1920

Preparing an American Evacuation as Bolsheviks March on Warsaw

*In one of the earliest accounts in ADST’s collection, Foreign Service Officer **Jay Pierrepont Moffat** records in his journal how the tiny U.S. legion in Warsaw coped with an ultimately unsuccessful Soviet push to take over Poland, coordinating with a Polish government under siege, burning documents, and evacuating American citizens. Moffat would later serve as U.S. ambassador to Canada during World War II.*

The Bolsheviks were by now at the gates of Grodno. The time had come to make plans for evacuating the American colony. ... So far as we knew there were at least a thousand Americans in Warsaw. Most of them were naturalized [U.S.] citizens who had come to Poland for the sole purpose of persuading their relatives to return with them to the United States. They had come, they said, to save these poor unfortunates, and they were not going to leave without them. ...

The Polish authorities when approached became exercised at the mere thought of evacuation. The minister of railroads told me that any concerted exit of Americans would produce a panic in Warsaw. ... Were we not acting prematurely? Would we not withdraw our request for rolling stock? Under questioning he had to admit that with each day's delay there would be fewer and fewer railway carriages available.

At last I got a contingent promise of a special train to take the Americans to Danzig [today Gdansk], though the minister made it clear that no luggage or heavy effects could be transported. One freight car would be reserved for the chattels and records of the Legation, but that was the limit of what he could do. I spent a good part of the next day trying to rent some barges to float heavy luggage down the river. ...

Nothing could now be seen that was to save Warsaw from its doom. ... Jack White [fellow member of the U.S. legation] called in the heads of the various American groups and told them in unmistakable terms that the time had come for the evacuation to begin. Two hundred places were reserved on the Danzig train the following night. But to our chagrin, many declined to go, selfishly declaring that they wished to be the last to leave. ...

Meanwhile I went upstairs and started burning documents. For four hours on a summer day I stood before a huge open hearth, feeding papers to the flames, neither too fast nor too slowly, and breaking up the glowing ash with a heavy poker. Let no one who has not done as much belittle that fatigue. ...

Jack White and I reviewed our own situation. We had instructions from Washington not to risk capture by the Bolsheviks for fear we might be held as hostages. On the other hand, our mere presence in Warsaw after the others had left was an encouragement to the Poles, and we felt that American prestige would be enhanced by our remaining until the very last moment. But what was the very last moment? And how could we determine it? We finally decided to remain until the Poles blew up the two great bridges crossing the Vistula between Warsaw and its suburb Praga. ...

We tried to work, but it was a meaningless shuffling of papers. ... It was not until after seven o'clock that we left the Legation. ... To our surprise the Great Square was roped off, but lined up within the cordon we could see row upon row of unarmed soldiers, standing sullen and sweating in the August heat. We looked again

and sure enough, the uniform they wore was Bolshevik. ... A thousand prisoners taken that morning in battle could mean only one thing—a sizable Polish success. ...

At the very moment when all seemed lost, there came a transformation in the Polish spirit, born of a realization that if Warsaw fell, there could be no survival for the Polish state, no future for the Polish race. Fired by an idea, the Poles gained an ascendancy in morale and this they retained through the remaining weeks of the war.

1931

Promoting American Trade in Bogotá

Growing up on a ranch in Montana, Aldene Alice Barrington became a teacher in Puerto Rico and then joined the U.S. Commercial Attaché Office in Colombia in 1927. By 1931 she had risen to the rank of assistant trade commissioner, one of the earliest members of what became the Foreign Commercial Service. She tells of preparing Commerce Department reports, compiling information we now know as Country Commercial Guides, and assisting American companies in entering the market—all while quietly breaking professional barriers for women.

In the beginning, I was somewhat unusual. American companies locating there would have loved to have found available English-speaking people to employ for clerical jobs in their offices. I was, more or less, office manager ... and we had to do an awful lot of reporting. I started on my own—I was really pushed into it, because everyone was so very busy—reporting on different commodities and opportunities for trade and investments because that was primarily what the Department of Commerce wanted. I can remember getting that department pouch off, which was quite a task, every week. ...

I remember one of the reports that I was pushed into writing was about doing business in ... not Latin America, but the specific country. And you had to answer a lot of questions about their legal requirements and points of view and what the American company had to do in order to establish itself, pointing out the difficulties

I realized that, sometimes, with my credentials, I could get into places that women had not been in. I was never refused at all, although maybe some eyebrows were raised. —Aldene Alice Barrington



and the differences, which most Spanish-speaking countries probably inherited from Spain. The government had control of industry, and certainly of natural resources, and their many minerals, which included petroleum. Such widespread government ownership was foreign to the American point of view, because we didn't have similar strict controls here. ... And one had to explain the differences and difficulties and what the company had to overcome.

Americans, by and large, just took for granted those obstacles they had to overcome or comply with and decide whether it was worthwhile for them to be located there. No, there weren't any adverse feelings. It was just a matter of taking into account and knowing what you had to do in order to become entrenched in the country.

There was the Barco concession for oil. Gulf Oil and Standard Oil were already there, and Phillips, with others, all were negotiating to get a slice of the concession. ...

There were so many products not locally produced; and as tariffs were not too high, a lot of consumer goods could be imported without difficulty. And, of course, we were trying to increase exports from the U.S. ... Our office would put an American exporter in touch with a prospective local representative for their products.

My category was changed to assistant trade commissioner, which is officer status. It was unusual [for a woman], but I never felt it, really. It was just a job to be done, and I never thought of that aspect of it. I realized that, sometimes, with my credentials, I could get into places that women had not been in. I was never refused at all, although maybe some eyebrows were raised. But anyplace I've been I have always made friends with the local people and devoted a lot of time to that.

Later, in Brazil, for instance, the things I handled required doing things, and some things I probably didn't have to do, but I wanted to do, such as going down in the São João del Rei mine. I think it's one of the deepest gold mines in the world, in Minas Gerais, Brazil. Well, of course I didn't realize it at the time, but there is a feeling that it's bad luck if a woman goes down. I ... was informed I could go down. Later I realized they were a little bit hesitant about it. But they let me go down that elevator shaft, and it was quite an experience.



JDC ARCHIVES

In Havana, on April 24, 1948, at least 10 years after Jewish refugees first landed in Cuba, the Community Kitchen Restaurant holds a Refugee Community Seder for Passover, funded by the Joint Distribution Committee and organized by the Federation of Ex-Ghetto and Concentration Camp Prisoners.

I never felt there was anything but sympathy for this tremendous problem and the people involved in it. There was a difference between our attitude toward these people, how we handled them, and what the laws enabled us to do for them.

—William Belton



1938

Exercising Compassion and Quotas as Jewish Refugees Flood Cuba

Arriving in Havana, newly minted Vice Consul William Belton walked into a wave of Jewish refugees who had escaped Europe and were waiting to become eligible for U.S. visas. As deputy chief of mission in Brazil 30 years later, Belton would negotiate the release of Ambassador Burke Elbrick after his kidnapping.

Havana was flooded with European refugees. This was just before the outbreak of the war. The city was just full of German Jews who had been unable to get U.S. visas while they were still in Europe; so [they] had come to Havana to wait until their numbers came up on the quota system for the United States. ... I never felt there was anything but sympathy for this tremendous problem and the people involved in it. There was a difference between our attitude toward these people, how we handled them, and what the laws enabled us to do for them.

Thousands of people were eventually going to get into the United States, one way or another. We knew that. It was a tragedy

that we had to keep them sitting there on the benches in the parks of Havana for years on end sometimes, before they could come. When they walked into the office, we did the very best we could under extremely difficult circumstances. Understandably, the visa applicants themselves weren't always models of patience.

I remember on one occasion we received a complaint from the United States about how somebody was treated at the reception desk. The consul general, Coert du Bois, was a very imaginative and gung-ho officer. When he got this complaint, he had a photographer come and take a picture of the receptionist at work.

It was a very dramatic picture. There was this young woman at her desk surrounded by at least 20 people, all with their arms out, shouting at her, trying to get her attention, trying to get in. The poor woman was trying to cope with this great crowd of people.

I honestly don't feel that there was anything untoward about the way we handled the people in general under the circumstances that existed at the time, which were extremely difficult for everybody, on our side and theirs as well. ...

The people were swarming into Cuba, not only from Germany but from many other countries. We had people from 30 or 40 nations, it seemed, all lined up there waiting for their visas.

1941

Destroying Classified Code Books in Yokohama

Before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Vice Consul Niles W. Bond was spending most days reporting to the Navy Department on Japanese ship movements in Tokyo Bay, which he observed from a telescope on the roof of U.S. Consulate Yokohama. After war broke out, Bond was considerably closer to the action. When Japan's military police, the Kempeitai, took over the consulate, he and a colleague defied their captors to keep the Japanese from breaking U.S. secret codes.

I turned on the radio and ... all of a sudden, the news-reader interrupted and said the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, and Japan was now in a state of war with the United States and Great Britain.

My vice consul colleague, Jules Goetzman, and I decided that the thing at the top of our list was getting those code books back, out of the vault, and destroyed, before the Japanese got them. —Niles W. Bond



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Noncommissioned officers of the Imperial Japanese Army's military police, the Kempeitai, in November 1935.

It was about five-thirty [a.m.] by the time I got that, and so I woke my colleague, the other vice consul. We had some things to burn. ... After two or three hours of this, the Kempeitai arrived in force and took over everything. ... One thing we had kept, at the consul general's insistence ... he said: "The last things you want to burn are the code books, because we may get a coded message from the Embassy that we will have to be able to read." So we kept the code books, and they were still there when the Japanese arrived.

The truckload of Kempeitai guards were commanded by a major. He made us go around and open all the files and show him what was inside. He saw the code books. They were in a vault in the consul general's office, but he didn't touch them. He didn't touch anything. He just closed them up and put a Kempeitai seal on them. ... This was a mistake on his part, because my vice consul colleague, Jules Goetzman, and I decided that the thing at the top of our list was getting those code books back, out of the vault, and destroyed, before the Japanese got them and read them or used them. ...

There were two doors to the consul general's office, one of which opened into a hallway that led to our apartments upstairs. The other led to his secretary's office, which was now being used as a sleeping area for the [Kempeitai] guards. The vault that held the code books was right up against the wall on the other side of which they were sleeping.

So we found one night that they had failed to shut tight the one door that we had access to. About midnight ... we went downstairs very quietly and carefully opened the vault. Every time we turned the thing we heard this "clunk" inside. It sounded horribly loud to

us, but nobody woke up. ... We took the books out and closed the safe very carefully. ... We had to break the Kempeitai seal, of course, to get in.

Then we went upstairs and spent the rest of the night burning the two code books. We finished between five and six in the morning. ... About an hour later, someone knocked on my door: one of the subordinates of the guard detachment. He said, "The major wants to see you downstairs right away." ...

The major took us into the consul general's office, pointed to the broken seal on the safe, and asked if we knew anything about it. When we nodded, the major ordered us to open the safe. ... He saw the empty space where the code books had been [and] demanded that the books be returned to him at once. My colleague replied that they had already been destroyed and offered to show the major the ashes. The major, in a rage probably fueled as much by fear for his own head as anything, drew his sword and demanded an explanation. Recalling a discussion we had had the night before while burning the code books, Goetzman and I, in an inelegant mixture of English and Japanese, endeavored to explain the destruction of the codes in terms of *bushido*, the traditional samurai code of loyalty and honor.

We pointed out that Americans, too, had such a code of conduct and tradition of loyalty, which demanded that we risk our lives to protect our country, in this case by protecting its codes.

My colleague then asked the major what he would have done in the same situation. The major slowly sheathed his sword, drew himself to attention, and then quietly began to weep as he left the room. From that moment on, nothing more was heard from the Japanese about the incident—or about the major, whom we never saw again. But the books were burned, and I was told when I got back to Washington that they were still uncompromised at the time we destroyed them.

1949

Creating the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

As chief of the State Department's Division of Western European Affairs, FSO Theodore Achilles describes negotiating the NATO treaty and how he helped coax a reluctant Portugal into the Alliance that would bring decades of peace to a Europe devastated by World War II.

It would still be several months before we would admit out loud that we were negotiating a treaty. The acting secretary and the ambassadors met once in a while, but the treaty was actually



President Harry S. Truman signs the Washington Treaty forming NATO on April 4, 1949, in Washington, D.C. Secretary of State Dean Acheson stands to his left with the document folder.

negotiated “despite them” ... by a “Working Group,” whose members became lifelong friends in the process.

We met every working day from the beginning of July to the beginning of September. ... The NATO spirit was born in that Working Group. Derick Hoyer-Millar, the British minister, started it. One day he made a proposal which was obviously nonsense. Several of us told him so in no uncertain terms, and a much better formulation emerged from the discussion. Derick said, and I quote, “Those are my instructions. All right, I’ll tell the Foreign Office I made my pitch, was shot down, and try to get them changed.”

He did. From then on, we all followed the same system. If our instructions were sound, and agreement could be reached, fine. If not, we worked out something we all, or most of us, considered sound, and whoever had the instructions undertook to get them changed. It always worked, although sometimes it took time.

Two years later we began in London to put the “O” on the NAT by creating the organization. Some of the members of the delegations had been members of the Working Group, some had not. I was our representative on one committee; the French representative had not been. He made some unacceptable proposal, and I told him it was unacceptable.

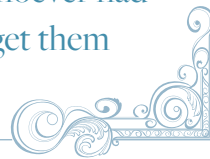
“Those are my instructions,” he said flatly.

From force of habit, I said bluntly, “I know, but they’re no good, get them changed to something like this.” He was sorely offended. A little later in the meeting I made a proposal under instructions I knew to be wrong. He and several others objected. I said, “I know, those are my instructions. I’ll try to get them changed.”

I have never seen a more puzzled-looking Frenchman. “What,” I could see him thinking, “is this crazy American up to? Is he stupid, or Machiavellian, or what?” But he got the idea in due course. ...

During the fall the main discussion related to membership. ... Of considerable importance was the question of the “stepping stones,” the Atlantic islands. In those days the range of planes was considerably less than it is today, and those islands were considered of great importance should it become necessary to get U.S. forces to Europe in a hurry. The islands concerned were Greenland, which meant including Denmark; Iceland; and the Azores, which meant including Portugal. ...

If our instructions were sound, and agreement could be reached, fine. If not, we worked out something we all, or most of us, considered sound, and whoever had the instructions undertook to get them changed. —*Theodore Achilles*



The Portuguese wanted no part in European unity, which they felt would be used both to take over the colonies and undermine her basic sovereignty. Having had this fully explained to me by the Portuguese ambassador, my good friend Pedro Teotonio Pereira, I drafted a personal message from [President] Truman to [Portuguese Prime Minister]

Salazar in which I still take a certain satisfaction. It states that we understood and shared Portugal’s reluctance to get involved in European integration or internal continental squabbles, as our whole history showed. Like Portugal, we were [an] oceanic, seafaring, Atlantic power, with a great interest in maintaining the security of the Atlantic area and not just the continent of Europe.

It worked, and the Portuguese joined the negotiations in the last days.

1952

Supporting the Work of Mother Teresa in Kolkata

Leila Wilson was a comforting figure to many orphans, refugees, and American evacuees during her husband Evan Wilson’s Foreign Service career. While in India she accompanied Mother Teresa through the slums of Kolkata (then Calcutta) and organized the first public effort to fund her work.

We were [in Calcutta] from 1951 to 1953 and we put on a bazaar to raise money for Mother Teresa in 1952. The important point was that it was the first time that anyone ever had raised money for her publicly. She had been supported by the church and communicants before that.

It was through a Roman Catholic friend that I had met Mother Teresa and gone around with her on her rounds through the backstreet *busti* [the poorest slum areas] of Calcutta ... a view that gave me nightmares for a week, beyond which you cannot imagine anything more horrible. But it was that that convinced me that here was something we could do, no matter how little money. We only raised about \$3,000, but it was a fortune as far as she was concerned. We thought we’d done pretty well, because



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mother Teresa, head of the Missionaries of Charity order, cradles an armless baby girl at her order's orphanage in what was then known as Calcutta, India, in 1978.

it was a bazaar participated in basically by Indians. We had silly games of chance, we had dancing, we had people who sang and people who ran booths of entertainment so that there was something for everybody to do, and of course food.

I was in charge. I was the head of the [American Women's] club, and there was a group of us who kind of fought our way through. There were those who thought we should not support Mother Teresa, because she was not Hindu. Anyway, it was argued out, and we decided to do it, because it was Hindus, Moslems, anybody who was dying and in terrible shape, leprosy and cholera and typhoid and tuberculosis patients that she was ministering to day by day and running little schools of sorts for their children.

... She had been teaching in a sophisticated school for Indian girls in Calcutta. She decided she had to leave that way of life and devote herself to those who were totally poverty-stricken and totally helpless and hopeless. She could at least give them love and hope, and it was a pretty emotional thing to go around and see what she was doing and accomplishing with just plain nothing.

... They had a very simple house, minimal rooms, minimal equipment, just running water. I think they had electricity, but nothing elaborate whatsoever. But it was organized, and she had six or seven nuns working with her in 1952. All the reports describe her as having begun her mission in 1952, so we were really in there on the ground floor.

She could at least give them love and hope, and it was a pretty emotional thing to go around and see what she was doing and accomplishing with just plain nothing.

—Leila Wilson

We have to be concerned about the health of people in other countries, because everything is related to everything else.

—Dr. Julius Prince

1958

Combating Malaria in Ethiopia with USAID

Dr. Julius Prince pioneered international programs to train local health workers as head of the Public Health Division in the Ethiopia Mission of what would soon be known as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). With malaria killing thousands each week, Dr. Prince recounts how the mission supported the Ministry of Health's efforts to rapidly respond to the epidemic.

I had been interested in international health problems. ... I was completely "converted" to the belief that we are not ... "an island." And similarly, I believed that we have to be concerned about the health of people in other countries, because everything is related to everything else. So that is the philosophical reason why I wanted to do this kind of work.

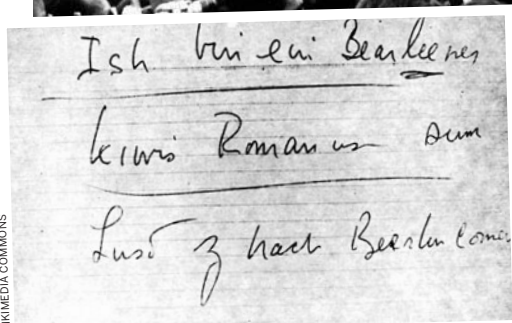
The minute I got off the airplane in Addis Ababa my staff was there and said: "Dr. Prince, come on, we've got to get to work with the ministry. Ethiopia is in the grip of a terrible malaria epidemic." And never having had any experience with malaria epidemics, I was astonished. The reasons why such things apparently ... exist are ... the epidemic's likely relationship to the peculiar ecology of the country and lack of malaria immunity among the relatively high-altitude inhabitants, who were usually not exposed to the disease.

Basically, it had to do with the altitude and meteorological conditions necessary for mosquitoes to breed under certain conditions. But in 1958 things were just right, we suspected, in terms of temperature, humidity, rainfall, and the like, for mosquitoes to breed in locations even well above 5,000-foot altitude.

Well, we went directly to the Ministry of Health that morning and joined the planning already underway. And the only thing to do was rapidly to get as much chloroquine tablet medication as possible into the country and distribute it for emergency treatment of all individuals found to be febrile as widely as one could over the affected areas and also do that as rapidly as possible;



KEystone PRESS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



U.S. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy gives the 1963 public speech in West Berlin where he famously said, “Ich bin ein Berliner.” Inset: John F. Kennedy’s phonetic transcription of the German and Latin phrases in the “Ich bin ein Berliner” speech, West Berlin, 1963.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

for time was of the essence. It was mainly a logistics problem; and that is what the Ministry of Health undertook. From the mission we sent cables to the U.S., U.K., and Kenya to try and obtain chloroquine tablets in sufficient amounts and in the shortest possible time to deal with this enormous epidemic.

1963

Giving President Kennedy His “Ich bin ein Berliner” Line

*Growing up as the son of the Associated Press Bureau Chief in West Berlin, U.S. Information Agency Officer **Robert Lochner** possessed language skills that were invaluable when President John F. Kennedy came to the divided city, where Lochner was directing “Radio in the American Sector” broadcasts. He served as Kennedy’s interpreter throughout his historic visit to West Germany, coaching the president on his German pronunciation and translating the line that sent a poignant message of solidarity in the depths of the Cold War.*

When we stopped for his major speech and walked up the stairs to the City Hall, he called me over and said: “I want you to write out for me on a slip of paper ‘I am a Berliner’ in German.” —Robert Lochner



A few weeks before [Kennedy’s] visit I was called to Washington and [National Security Adviser] McGeorge Bundy asked me to prepare a few simple phrases in German and to try to rehearse those with the president. So on a typewriter with large letters I prepared a few very simple sentences. McGeorge Bundy took me into the Oval Office, there was nobody else there, and presented me.

I gave one copy to the president and slowly read out the first sentence in German and asked him to repeat it. When he did and looked up, he must have seen my rather dismayed face, because he said, “Not very good, was it?”

So what do you say to a president under those circumstances? All I could think of was to blurt out, “Well, it certainly was better than your brother Bobby.” He had been to Berlin and tried some sentences in German and had butchered them in such a fashion that one couldn’t possibly guess what he was trying to say.

So fortunately the president took it lightly. He laughed and turned to McGeorge Bundy and said, “Let’s leave the foreign languages to the distaff side.” Of course, everybody knows that Mrs. Kennedy spoke fluent French. So he had not intended to make a single statement in German. ...

I interpreted for him the whole three days that he was in Germany starting at the airport in Bonn. The receptions in Bonn, Cologne, and Frankfurt were as enthusiastic as you could wish, but the one in Berlin overshadowed everything that we had experienced in Western Germany. ...

When we stopped for his major speech and walked up the stairs to the City Hall, he called me over and said: “I want you to write out for me on a slip of paper ‘I am a Berliner’ in German.”

We first went to [West Berlin Mayor] Willy Brandt’s office while

hundreds of thousands cheered outside. I quickly, by pencil, wrote it out in capital letters and he rehearsed it a few times. And that is really the whole story. ...

After the speech we came back for a little while to Willy Brandt's office where there was a short reception with some of the top politicians; and, of course, I had instructions to stay close to the president in case he talked to some Germans.

So I couldn't help overhearing McGeorge Bundy saying to him, "Mr. President, I think that went a little too far." So, McGeorge Bundy, like myself and many others, instantly realized that his making this statement in German gave it that much more weight than if he had said it in English. ...

The president seemed to agree ... and then and there made a few changes in his second major speech later on at the university, changes that amounted to making a few more conciliatory statements, if you wish, toward the East. ...

It didn't have any effect on the famous statement, of course, but it is interesting to me that McGeorge Bundy, like myself, had this instant reaction that the statement was that much stronger for having been made in German, and millions of Germans since then have repeated his "Ich bin ein Berliner" while they probably would not have quoted "I am a Berliner."

1966

A Bizarre Diplomatic Hostage Crisis in Guinea

FSO Robinson McIlvaine arrived as U.S. ambassador to Guinea after President Sékou Touré had granted asylum to deposed Ghanaian President and fellow Marxist Kwame Nkrumah, appointing him honorary "co-president" of Guinea and outraging Ghana's new revolutionary government. McIlvaine soon discovered how representing the United States can make diplomats a target, even when the dispute is between African rivals. McIlvaine also served as ambassador to Dahomey [now Benin] and Kenya.

We were the first diplomatic hostages. That was before Tehran. The entire American community, everybody in U.S. Embassy Conakry, all the Peace Corps—we had several hundred Peace Corps volunteers—were all put under house arrest, and there was a big

He said, "Oh, well, there's been some problem. It's very serious. You have captured our foreign minister." I said, "I have?"

—Robinson McIlvaine



brouhaha about that. It happened within days of our arrival. ...

There was a meeting coming up of the Organization of African Unity, OAU. The foreign minister of Guinea, Mr. Beavogui, was going to that meeting. ... Anybody going to Addis Ababa from the west coast had to go on Pan Am. So all the other foreign ministers were getting

on as the plane went down the coast.

[The plane] came to Accra, Ghana, where Kwame Nkrumah had been overthrown, and the new "revolutionary government" wanted his hide. They saw that the Guinean foreign minister was on the plane; and they went on and roughly hauled him off and arrested him. ... The Ghanaians then told Sékou Touré: "All right, you want your foreign minister back? Give us Kwame Nkrumah."

...The first thing we knew of [our house arrest] was on a Sunday morning. ... DCM Charlie Whitehouse was coming around to pick us up. I went to the gate, and there was a soldier there on guard. Charles came to the gate, and couldn't get in, and I couldn't get out. So we wanted to know what it was. The soldier didn't know.

We finally reached the top civil servant in the foreign ministry, and he said: "Oh, well, there's been some problem. It's very serious. You have captured our foreign minister." I said, "I have?"

The long and the short of it was, you see, [the Guineans had] put two and three together. Because it was a Pan Am plane, that made it an official plane: it must be a CIA plot. We were the tools of that regime in Accra, Ghana. So, by God, they were going to sit on me and all the other Americans until the Ghanaians gave up the Guinean foreign minister. ...

A mob had been organized ... brandishing signs about "A bas l'imperialisme américain [Down with American imperialism]!" There were about 3,000 people all milling around the chancery, and then I heard on the radio from my wife that a similar group was doing the same thing at the residence. Well, that one got out of hand, broke all the windows, and it was pretty scary for my wife and two kids, who were then 3 and 2. They were all holed up in the second floor, and these characters came through the windows. The long and the short of it was that in the end, nothing much was done except breaking all the windows. ...

I'll never forget, after the mob went away, and my wife came down. I hadn't gotten home yet, but she went down, and she started with a broom to sweep up all the broken glass, and a little guy appeared out of the bushes and said, "Oh, no, *madame*, we did it. Let me sweep it up." And he took the broom from her and swept it up. ...

I got to see Sékou Touré at 3 in the morning after we discovered we were hostages ... and, I believe, convinced him that we had nothing to do with the kidnapping of his foreign minister. However, the Americans were Touré's only leverage on Ghana. So he did not release us until his foreign minister was returned about 10 days later.

1975

Evacuating Refugees as Saigon Falls

Foreign Service Officer Mary Lee Garrison arrived at her first assignment in Saigon's consular section in the waning months of the U.S. presence in Vietnam. She soon found herself scrambling to give refugees whatever documentation could be mustered to get them on flights to safety.

Junior officers were pulled off or brought up from the various consulates and sent out to the airport. The Immigration Act basically got thrown in a cocked hat. I was supposed to try to follow the revised rules that we got from Washington in the consular section, but out at the airport what they were doing was taking a look at the folks who showed up and making an assessment whether they had half a prayer of making a life in the States, and if they did, they put them on a plane. ...

The rules went out the window. ... You had to be practical. I found it very difficult, though. This was my first assignment in the Foreign Service. I was all of, at the time, 22 years old, and you find yourself making literally life-and-death judgments, and that's not easy.

There is one, one thing that's going to haunt me until the day I die. It was the case of a sergeant in the military who married a woman with several children from a previous marriage. Several is an understatement. I think there were six, and they had several of their own. ... This was not the 18-year-old marrying a 24-year-old bar girl. This was a sergeant of some standing marrying a mature woman with whom he fell in love. And right before the family was to leave for the States, grandma convinced two of the kids not to go, one of the girls and one of the boys. In the confusion when they got to port of entry in the States, one of the girls who was close in age ended up using her sister's immigrant visa.

This was my first assignment in the Foreign Service. I was all of, at the time, 22 years old and you find yourself making literally life-and-death judgments, and that's not easy.

—Mary Lee Garrison



South Vietnamese refugees walk across a U.S. Navy vessel. Operation Frequent Wind, the final operation in Saigon, began April 29, 1975.

It took us ages, over a year—because the case started before I even got to Vietnam—before we could get to the truth of who had traveled and who hadn't, and then try to get new immigrant visas issued for the two children who had stayed behind. The girl by this time was about 14 and the boy was 12 and able to be drafted. They had been actively trying for a good six months by March 1975.

The last I saw of them, I handed the girl the files that we had; we took the petitions and everything else related to it and were starting to put them into manila envelopes, initial them, seal [them] with the consular seal and tape them shut and hand them to folks who we presumed were getting on the evacuation flight, saying, "Give this to the Immigration and Naturalization Service when you get there"—because we were so far from any possibility of doing visas then.

I gave them to her, and I said, "See if you can get your brother out to the airport and give them this." ... I still don't know if they got out.

1977

Documenting the Plight of Argentina’s “Disappeared”

As one of the early officers to take on a human rights portfolio in the Foreign Service, F. Allen “Tex” Harris became a point of hope for thousands of families in Argentina whose loved ones had been kidnapped, tortured, and clandestinely executed by the military junta during the so-called Dirty War. Documenting nearly 14,000 cases, his work changed public perceptions and government policies around the world.

Well, what I did was very straightforward. I opened the door to the embassy, and people started coming. Then we worked the operation like a high turnover doctor’s or dentist’s office. We had two inside offices. Blanca Vollenweider [a USAID employee who assisted Harris] put the people in the office, and she took down on a five-by-eight card—this was before computers—their name, their address, their telephone number, the name of their child or relative that had disappeared or friend who had disappeared, the date of the disappearance, and that was it. ... If they had any papers, she took the papers from them, or any papers that they had filed with the police or other governments.

Then she would go out, I would come, and I would interview the person, generally in Spanish ... getting the facts, writing the information down on the card, and then I would thank them, and I would leave. I would go into the other office ... and I would interview. Meanwhile Blanca would go back, escort the first interviewee to the elevators ... and bring in the next person who wanted to report the disappearance of a loved one, and take their information. Then I would come from office number two to office number one, and we did this ping-pong every afternoon. ...

Now there were literally 13,500 disappearance cases that came to our attention during the time that we were collecting information. We sent what was probably the largest airgram ever sent to the Department of State listing the names of the Disappeared. ... When I visited Washington after coming back from Buenos Aires, on both the desk officer’s desk and in the Human Rights Bureau,

Here was this great big, huge guy ... easy to spot, easy to point to; and, lo and behold, the United States of America is interested in the disappearance of their children. That meant a lot to them, and it meant a lot to me to be able to do that. —Tex Harris



there was our airgram out there in piles A to F, G to M, and all the other parts of the alphabet with markers on them, so that when somebody called and they complained about information on a disappearance, they would go and look in the airgram and find the page where we had xeroxed two to a page our five-by-eight cards, so the airgram was about 700 pages in length. ...

I became extremely close to a number of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. ... Every Thursday afternoon they would gather in front of the Casa Rosada, the Pink House, and march around with signs. ... I would go to the Plaza de Mayo, not every Thursday but I would go often. ... There wasn’t anything that I could really do to bring their kids back. [But] here was this great big, huge guy

... a 250-pound, six-foot-six, two-meter fellow who pitches up and is easy to spot, easy to point to; and, lo and behold, the United States of America is interested in the disappearance of their children. That meant a lot to them, and it meant a lot to me to be able to do that.

I got to know a lot of the mothers and the supporters of the mothers and became friends with them. It was really tough, because these were people who were just going through not only the hell of losing your child—the ritual of going to the gravesite was terribly important in the culture—these people didn’t have a body to bury. These people did not have any information as to how their children died or if their children were still alive or if they were being tortured or if they were in great pain, so the emotion and the suffering that these folks went through was absolutely horrific.

1981

Restraining Japan’s Auto Exports to Preserve American Jobs

As trade officer in the economic section in Tokyo, Aurelia “Rea” Brazeal took on coverage of the auto sector, contributing to negotiation of the voluntary export restraint agreement that limited the export of Japanese cars to the United States, protecting the jobs of U.S. auto workers. The first Black woman to rise from the entry level of the Foreign Service to ambassador, Brazeal drew lessons from her work protecting American industry.

Aurelia “Rea” Brazeal speaks at an American trade fair in the early 1980s during her tour as trade officer in the economic section of U.S. Embassy Tokyo.

COURTESY OF REA BRAZEAL



With the Japanese, we moved from complaining about one particular product to talking to them about entire sectors, and we also began structural adjustment talks. For automobiles, of course, the voluntary export restraint [VER] agreement was negotiated [restricting the annual import of Japanese-made passenger cars to 1.6 million units for three years]. I think on the economic side, we were making progress in terms of levels of sophistication to understand that you can't solve economic problems writ large by negotiating product by product. You have to talk sector by sector, or especially systemically. ...

The Japanese were making smaller, more fuel-efficient cars, but Americans weren't buying them in large numbers, until the first oil crisis, where we had long lines in this country for gasoline; at that point Americans saw the attraction of a smaller, more fuel-efficient car. The Japanese had the product and the inventory, so sales really increased. ...

I'd always believed we made a mistake as a government on the voluntary export restraint agreement, because, from my point of view, we should have extracted an agreement from the U.S. auto industry that it would use the time frame of the VER to make changes and become competitive. ... The U.S. auto industry, from my point of view, pocketed the protection they got from the VER and kept doing business the same way as before. ...

I do support what's generally considered free market economics and also the global trading system. And I do agree that it's very difficult for governments to pick winners and losers; and ours, by and large, shouldn't try to do that, because we're really not very good at it.

But, that said, if you are going to give protection to an industry ... as a government, we should extract something from that American industry that would press it to take steps to become competitive. In the steel industry, you can see we've lost the huge steel-

We were making progress in terms of levels of sophistication to understand that you can't solve economic problems writ large by negotiating product by product. You have to talk sector by sector, or especially systemically. —Rea Brazeal



making plants, but what we have gained are niche steelmaking companies where we are still very competitive; people did retool, and those who are in business now are much more competitive, even internationally, than they would have been, I hope, had no protection been given.

I think you have to acknowledge some role for government that isn't too intrusive; but governments usually step in with protection for any number of reasons, most of them political and not economic. ...

Both sides [saw] a maturing of the relationship to the point that you could get to talk about the structural issues ... because they could be an engine for growth globally, as opposed to the U.S. having the only engine. They could burden-share, if you will, the responsibility for growth. ...

There are very few embassies around the world that influence or affect economic policymaking, and Tokyo is one. And, therefore, that is another illustration of the importance of the relationship, because our reporting out of Tokyo could affect decisions made in Washington vis-à-vis our own economy and how we saw things, and I think that is important.

1985

Assisting American Hostages from the Achille Lauro

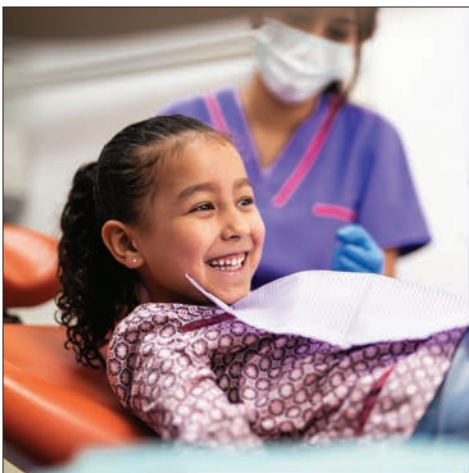
After surviving his own detention by Palestinian guerrillas in Beirut 10 years earlier, FSO Edmund James Hull was deputy political counselor in Cairo when four Palestine Liberation Front terrorists hijacked the cruise ship Achille Lauro off the coast of Egypt with 11 Americans aboard. After the hijackers surrendered and the ship approached Port Said, Hull tells below of boarding to identify and assist Americans on board, then accompanying them to Italy, where in a stunning turn of events, they were able to identify the apprehended hijackers. Hull went on to become ambassador to Yemen.

We knew [the ship] was coming into Port Said. So Ambassador [Nicholas] Veliotes asked me to accompany him to Port Said. I had a few minutes to pull my thoughts together, which included such practical things as getting a list of the names of the hostages

as we knew them, and then we drove up to Port Said. ... We actually met the boat at sea in Egyptian waters before it was able to come into Port Said. ... We got onboard, and we found a traumatized crew and passengers.

The hijackers had already been removed from the boat so ... the first thing we did was to verify the well-being of the American citizens onboard. It was early morning, and the passengers were asleep in their cabins. I had my list of American passengers, so I systematically went around knocking on cabin doors. I found all but one passenger.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Veliotes had engaged with the crew, who didn't have a lot of English but who were by gesturing and pantomime explaining to us that something had happened ... Leon Klinghoffer, an old and infirm American, had been killed by the terrorists. He was in a wheelchair at the time, and his body had been dumped over the side. The crew took me to the location, and you could still see on the side of the vessel bloodstains from where Mr. Klinghoffer's body had struck the side in going overboard. ... We had a very difficult situation because not only



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

After medical examinations at a U.S. base in Europe, Americans held hostage aboard the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro* depart for the U.S. aboard a military aircraft. Right: The *Achille Lauro*.

did we have the problem of taking care of the hostages, but now the Egyptians were really on the spot because the hijackers, who had been taken into custody, were now clearly guilty of murdering an American.

On the way back to Port Said, my primary mission was to try to take care of the hostages as best I could, and that meant trying to give them assurances that now they had U.S. government representatives there to help them, that their needs would be taken care of, that Klinghoffer's murder would be pursued. ... One thing that I decided would be good to do to fill the time would be to have all of them sit down with pen and paper and to write out an account of their experiences. That would give something written for the Egyptian investigators. ...

When we finally got in Port Said ... we were joined by the regional psychologist from Embassy [Cairo]. We ... boarded a C-130 to be flown to Germany for medical examinations. I accompanied the hostages.

In midair, we had news that American military aircraft had intercepted the Egyptian airplane that was taking the terrorists from Egypt to Tunisia, which at the time was the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization. President Reagan had made the decision that we would intervene and force the

I had my list of American passengers, so I systematically went around knocking on cabin doors. I found all but one passenger.
 —Edmund James Hull

Egyptian airplane down at the U.S. Naval Air Station in Sigonella, Sicily. ...

We were diverted from Germany to Sigonella to give some of the hostages the opportunity to identify the terrorists, and that process took place at the military base. We were joined there by the team from [U.S.] Special Operations Command, which had been shadowing the *Achille Lauro* at sea. So, we had an interesting situation

in which the hostages, the terrorists, the U.S. special operations personnel, and U.S. diplomats were colocated and to some extent could discuss the incident.

At that time, I learned the special ops team had been prepared to storm the vessel. The hostages ... expressed relief that it had not occurred. ... At least some of the hostages believed that if the storming had occurred, the hijackers would have opened up with automatic weapons, and there would have been many casualties.

1992

Demobilizing Insurgents in El Salvador

When mid-level insurgent commanders began resisting the final stages of the negotiated demobilization of fighters in El Salvador, Chargé d'Affaires **Peter Romero** took to the hills to speak to them himself. The next year, Romero was appointed U.S. ambassador to Ecuador and later the department's first Hispanic assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs.

It was the last week before the guerrillas had to demobilize completely; they demobilized in stages, and of course they kept their best guns and their best fighters for the last iteration of demobilization.

We were called by a contact who had been the deputy head of one of the largest guerrilla-fighting factions. The FMLN was the umbrella group, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation

Front, and then you had five factions of fighters underneath that umbrella. And the largest one was a group called the ERP, the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, and these were some hard-fighting guys, and they were supposed to have demobilized their last units, which were their crack units. ... [U.N. Secretary General] Boutros Ghali, because this was a U.N.-sponsored event, the critical stage of the peace process ... was coming down to bless the demobilization of the guerrillas and the demobilization of the quick reaction battalions in the army.

I talked to my subordinate who had close contacts with the deputy of this particular ERP faction, because he had warned that the mid-level commanders weren't demobilizing, they didn't see anything in it for them, they expected to have benefits. ... This was the last faction. Boutros Ghali is expected in literally a matter of hours.

[I was told] that the mid-level commanders ... were all meeting on the slopes of the San Salvador volcano at a Catholic orphanage.

"Find out where it is," [I told my subordinate] ... "because we're going."

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I said, "... I have to talk to them, because their superiors have obviously lost control of them. They're the last ones, and talking to us might make a difference." —Peter Romero

He said, "You can't just show up to a meeting with these guys. These guys will kill you."

I said, "No, they won't kill us. They'll be surprised, but I have to talk to them, because their superiors have obviously lost control of them. They're the last ones, and talking to us might make a difference."

So without any instructions, I did it. ... We had six hours of meetings with these guys. ... All of the "imperialist" acts of the last 40 years I had to answer for. And then the discussion got on to what they cared about, and that is that they had been sold a bill of goods, that they felt that they would be left destitute, that they had fought hard for all of these reforms that were being enacted and that they should have something to show for it, other than basically dropping their guns and going home.

We had put lots of benefits out there to assist the Salvadoran government. You could go back and complete high school, you could go to college ... you could get a small parcel of land, you could get vocational training. We had all kinds of stuff in place for both sides, for both the demobilized military and demobilized guerrillas.

But they expected a cash payment, and I had to tell them: "You're not getting a cash payment, but there's lots of things out there that would be really good." ... We had ... about \$300 million a year for a country of 5 million people, so we could do a great deal to assist with demobilization and reform.

And we walked through all of this, and then this little commander—I remember so distinctly—in the back of the room raised his hand and said: "I always dreamed of having my own auto parts store. You think I could get a visa to go to the United States and buy auto parts for my store?"

"Absolutely," I said. And after that the conversation turned to "Maybe I'll go back to college," "Maybe I'll start my own business," "Maybe I'll start that little grocery store that I always wanted."

The whole thing changed. They demobilized, Boutros Ghali came, Vice President [Dan] Quayle came down, [it] was a resounding success.

1994

Securing and Eliminating Kazakhstan's Nuclear Arsenal

When FSO Janet L. Bogue took over as chief of the political, economic, and science section at U.S. Embassy Almaty, the State Department was focused on securing the nuclear assets of the Soviet Union's successor states. Bogue soon found herself in the middle of Operation Sapphire, a secret project to remove Kazakhstan's highly enriched uranium.

One day ... the science minister was skiing with a colleague of mine, and said to him at the end of day, "Do you mind if I tell you a secret?"

The fellow said, "Well, no. Go ahead."

[The minister] said: "Well, we have around 500 kilograms of highly enriched uranium, which could be made very easily into warheads. We would like to get rid of it. We would like you to have it. We would like you to box it up and take it away. And we would like this all done quietly so that nobody grabs it in the meantime or starts bidding for it."

The U.S. government at first wanted nothing to do with it. We could not get anyone interested—although that didn't stop all of them taking credit once it happened. Finally, the U.S. government agreed that we could move this 500 kilograms of highly enriched uranium from Kazakhstan to safe storage in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. It was a highly secret project called Operation Sapphire. The reason it was so secret is that once the stuff, the uranium, is bundled up in a safe way, this is the best time for the bad guys to take it because it is safe for them to grab. There had already been cases in the former Soviet Union of someone walking out of a facility with a briefcase full of unprotected things and dying three days later in a hotel room of radiation poisoning. ...

First the U.S. government said, "It can't be highly enriched uranium." So the embassy actually went and took samples of it and sent them back. Sure enough, it was. Finally, reluctantly, the U.S. government ... negotiated a deal in which, essentially, we would purchase it. ...

It really was one of those moments in your career when you felt like, "I actually did a concrete thing that made the world safer."

—Janet L. Bogue

President of South Africa Nelson Mandela (right) with Bishop Desmond Tutu in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1994.



SIPA USA/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

The whole project was well over a year, including bringing over a whole crew of fellows from Oak Ridge, who lived up at the site while they did what they had to do to package up the uranium in what almost looked like little beer kegs. They are lead and make it possible for you to move it in a safe way. Then, flying in C-5s, huge cargo aircraft ... they flew straight to the States with midair refueling. ...

They landed at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. The material was transferred onto a truck convoy, highly protected, and taken straight to Tennessee and put deep underground. Once that was announced Secretary [of State Warren] Christopher, Secretary [William J.] Perry of the Defense Department, and Secretary [Hazel] O'Leary of the Energy Department all did a press conference.

It was very late at night already in Kazakhstan, but we all converged on a colleague's house and brought some vile, sweet Kyrgyz champagne from the champagne factory there. It really was one of those moments in your career when you felt like, "I actually did a concrete thing that made the world safer." Five hundred kilograms of highly enriched bomb-grade uranium is stuck away where whoever in this neighborhood, or whatever rogue elements, cannot get at it. That was a wonderful thing. ...

It was old-fashioned human diplomacy. It was the fact that one of our guys was out skiing with the science minister, because they had developed a very friendly relationship and they liked to ski together. The science minister had developed enough confidence over time that he felt he could pose this question on behalf of his government.

1996

Supporting Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa

In the wake of Ambassador Edward Perkins' work to bring an end to apartheid in South Africa (read the FSJ's interview with Ambassador Perkins in the December 2020 issue), Aaron Williams became one of USAID's mission directors in Pretoria and led programs supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the core of South African efforts to deliver transitional justice. Beginning his career as a Peace Corps volunteer, Williams retired after 22 years with USAID and returned to the Peace Corps in 2009 as the first Black man to serve as director. For an on-the-ground view of the fall of apartheid in South Africa, see also the oral history of six-time Ambassador William "Bill" Swing on ADST's website.

We funded a portion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's budget, as did other donors, e.g., the British, the Canadians. ... We contributed significant funding to cover some of the operating costs. ... And I traveled and observed the TRC hearings all over South Africa. The commission was national in scope, so they had regional hearings in every region. Archbishop [Desmond] Tutu, as chairman, would often travel to chair a specific hearing of national importance. The hearings were very complex and well-planned sessions.

Archbishop [Tutu] was just crying, due to the emotional toll that this had taken on him. But he also said that these were also tears not just of sorrow but of joy because people were confronting their demons in a way that could improve the greater society.

—Aaron Williams



The hearing I vividly remember was held in Paarl, in the Cape Town region, in the heart of the wine country. This beautiful, idyllic part of South Africa had been the locale for terrible, heinous crimes during the apartheid era.

I took Assistant Secretary [for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor] John Shattuck to attend one of the 26 hearings. ... Susan Rice [then National Security Council senior director for Africa] also accompanied him to this hearing.

The hearing was at a local school. They had the stage in the auditorium surrounded by flowers. The families of the victims and the perpetrators were seated in separate sections of the hall. The process allowed the accused to present themselves to apologize and express their contrition for what they had done and ask for reconciliation and amnesty. Translators were present to manage the five major languages of South Africa, and the hearing used simultaneous translations. Psychologists were on the scene to deal with the anticipated emotional breakdown of the accused and/or the victims' families during and after the testimony. ... Obviously, heavy security was in place. It was a surreal setting.

Archbishop Tutu chaired the hearing. This was a case where a young Black man had disappeared in Paarl region, and his family wanted to know what had happened to him in the 1980s. He had gone out drinking with his friends in a bar. He never came home—he had disappeared 10 years ago.

The local police commander of the squadron that killed him came forward to testify and admit to his guilt. Turns out that the young man that they killed was not an anti-apartheid activist. He was just in the wrong place at the wrong time in that bar. They killed him and buried his body by the river. The policeman pointed out where the body was so that his remains could be recovered. The man's widow was there with his children. A tragedy, one of hundreds of thousands that occurred during the apartheid era.

In the second case, the accused were ANC [African National

Congress] cadre that had kidnapped an Afrikaans policeman, then tortured and killed him. After that they tossed the body in a pit, never to be recovered. These men came forward and testified and described the events of that night. They asked for amnesty, and of course the victim's family was present in the hall.

We took a break after two hours of these heavy-duty emotions. We went to a break room to join Archbishop Tutu and the rest of his commission for coffee. ... The archbishop was just crying, due to the emotional toll that this had taken on him. But he also said that these were also tears not just of sorrow but of joy, because people were confronting their demons in a way that could improve the greater society.

It was just one of the most emotional, heart-wrenching days that I had ever experienced, and I believe that it was the same for most of us in that school that day.

No country has been able to replicate the TRC's process with the effectiveness of the South African authorities. ... President [Nelson] Mandela ... was an extraordinary leader and certainly a unique figure in the 20th century, someone who had achieved the impossible in many ways, a feat that most human beings are incapable of doing, which is to set aside anger and hate and disappointment and suffering. To have the courage and determination to ignore such powerful human feelings and look to the future in a positive manner. To set forth on the path to reconcile a diverse nation that had lived through the injustice, pain, and tragedy of the apartheid era. To give hope and democratic governance as a platform for a historic transformation the likes of which the world had never seen.

Very, very few people in humankind's history have ever been able to accomplish such monumental things.

2004

Disaster Assistance After the Indian Ocean Tsunami

After serving as ambassador to Malaysia, Marie Therese Huhtala returned to Washington as the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs deputy assistant secretary covering Southeast Asia. Just months into the job, the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami hit, wiping parts of the territory off the map. Ambassador Huhtala shifted full time to coordinating U.S. emergency assistance to the devastated region. For a U.S. Embassy Jakarta account of coordinating civil-military rescue efforts in Aceh, see also Ambassador Lynn Pascoe's forthcoming book in ADST's Diplomats and



U.S. NAVY

On Dec. 26, 2004, a powerful earthquake and resulting tsunami struck in the Indian Ocean with a devastating impact on coastal Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand. Banda Aceh, Sumatra, shown here, was one of the hardest hit areas, with the highest death toll and destruction of most homes. U.S. military personnel assisted local authorities using helicopters to transport supplies, bringing in disaster relief teams, and to support humanitarian airlifts to tsunami-stricken coastal regions.

Diplomacy series: Dealing with Dragons, Bears, and Some Nice People Too: A Diplomatic Chronicle.

On December 26, the Asian tsunami struck. The whole EAP [East Asia and Pacific Affairs] Bureau worked around the clock from that day on to coordinate the U.S. government response and facilitate various trips out there. [Secretary of State] Colin Powell set out immediately to visit the region, so we put together a briefing book for him on a crash basis. At the same time the State Department had a task force going, we were working to put together assistance, and to get the U.S. military engaged. The province of Aceh in Indonesia was absolutely devastated. It was just scraped clean, the town of Banda Aceh on the coast was obliterated. ...

We had a carrier battle group, the USS *Lincoln*, that was in liberty in Hong Kong on the day the tsunami struck. It was on its way home from the Persian Gulf. Admiral [Thomas B.] Fargo, the commander of Pacific Forces, turned them around that very day, the day of the tsunami, and they began steaming for Indonesia. They got there by January 1 and began providing assistance. The U.S. was, by any measure, the first nation to respond.

We also had a Marine battle group, the Belleau Woods, on its way to the Persian Gulf, that was diverted and sent to Aceh. Those two battle groups did an absolutely fabulous job saving lives. In Aceh, there was no clean water, no food, no medical facilities; the military provided all of that to survivors.

We also brought a hospital ship, the USS *Mercy*, which arrived about a month after. But the crucial thing that the first responders did was to bring in bladders of clean water and to send their helicopters out for search and rescue because there were a lot of people trapped in isolated areas. The coast road had been

It was chaotic, dangerous and hotter than hell. But by golly, they did fabulous work.

—Marie Therese Huhtala



destroyed. They plucked them out and brought them to safety. It was very, very impressive. Of course we immediately began getting food out there, as well.

I got to see it twice. Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense, went out to visit in February, and I went along on that trip. He was a former ambassador to Indonesia and was very deeply concerned about the tragedy; he also wanted to observe the heavy military involvement in the relief effort. Then I returned in early May when Bob Zoellick, who was now deputy secretary of State, went out. I saw in the two and a half months interval that there had been some progress in cleaning the debris and very tentative attempts at rebuilding. But it was clear that the region was going to take a generation, at least, to recover. ...

That first time we landed on the airstrip at Banda Aceh, it was like a scene out of “Apocalypse Now.” It was crazy. We arrived on a C-130 from Thailand that was loaded with food, really well supplied. The aircraft parked in the middle of a landing strip, and we got out. My God, there’s a helicopter zooming by! And here there are people coming over to greet Wolfowitz, right under the shadow of the plane. Somebody else has the back door open, and they’re taking out relief supplies; here comes another plane landing from some Dutch NGO. It was chaotic, dangerous, and hotter than hell. But by golly, they did fabulous work.

2014

Keeping India's Khapra Beetles and Other Pests Out of U.S. Food Supplies

As agricultural minister-counselor in New Delhi, Foreign Agricultural Service FSO **Allan Mustard** oversaw USDA programs to keep invasive pests such as khapra beetles, a serious threat to American grain supplies, out of India's agricultural shipments to the United States. Mustard went on to become U.S. ambassador to Turkmenistan.

The big issues were basmati exports to the United States and exports of mangoes, because India is the home of the khapra beetle, which is the absolute worst quarantine pest you can imagine. We required that all basmati rice shipped to the United States come from a limited number of facilities that met APHIS [Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service] standards for insect control, and this included use of stainless steel silos for storing the rice in bulk. They would not use burlap bags; they would only use polypropylene bags for shipping the rice, because burlap is a natural habitat for the khapra beetle. They eat it, then they breed, so you know, you had to take all these measures to make sure that there would be no khapra beetles.

Then of course there were very stringent inspection requirements. So any basmati rice shipped to the United States from India could only come under these rather stringent conditions, which cost money, and that was the complaint. Burlap is cheaper in India than polypropylene, why do we have to do this? This is unfair. It's a trade barrier. ... No trade barrier, we're not barring your trade. We want your rice. We just don't want the khapra beetles to come with it.

Similar thing with the mangoes; everything had to go through a radiation facility to sterilize any insect pests [such as fruit flies] that were in the mangoes, and that way when the mangoes arrived in the United States, if live insects came out, they would be sterilized, they wouldn't be able to reproduce. Again, it was expensive to ship all your mangoes to this one place, have them irradiated, pay for the irradiation, and then

There was a certain cost associated with meeting our standards, and they resented that. I just had to tell them, look, it's this or nothing, either do this or your mangoes don't go to the United States.

—Allan Mustard



Prem Balkaran, an inspector with the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, examines mangoes being packaged for shipment to the United States. Inset: An irradiation seal (pictured here) certifies that irradiation has sterilized any insects that might have infested the mangoes inside this box, making the fruit safe for export to the United States.

COURTESY OF ALLAN MUSTARD

take them to the airport, put them on a plane, and fly them to the United States. We also required special boxes that had to be sealed so that insects couldn't get in after they were irradiated. So for every box of mangoes that went, there was a certain cost associated with meeting our standards, and they resented that. I just had to tell them, look, it's this or nothing, either do this or your mangoes don't go to the United States. ...

Indians constantly complained about this because it meant that all the mangoes that were shipped to the United States had to come to one facility, go through the irradiation, that could only be done while the APHIS inspector was present to make sure there was no monkey business. They had to pay for it, they had to pay for his room and board, they had to pay for all of his expenses, they of course had to pay for the transportation to the facility, the operation of the facility, and then they would ship these mangoes by air because mangoes have a very short shelf life. You have a



U.S. MARINE CORPS

Evacuees wait to board U.S. military aircraft at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug. 23, 2021.

shelf life of five days so then you would put them on a plane, you ship to the United States, by the time you get there the shelf life is about three days, you put them out on the street, and you try to sell them as quickly as you can before they spoil.

So they were complaining to me that these mangoes, when they arrive in the United States, they cost \$10 a piece, and they're being undercut by the Mexican and Puerto Rican and Haitian mangoes. We sat down and did the cost calculation, and what we discovered was that if you took the cost of production, irradiation, including all the expenses related to irradiation, and transportation, including flying them from India all the way to New York City, it came out to \$4 each. Importers were taking \$6 of profit for every \$10 that they sold a mango for.

The Indian diaspora wanted their Indian mangoes, they wanted this particular variety, the Alfonso mango, [and] some of the others that are very good, very tasty. So we went back, and we pointed out, well, this high cost is not all because of the expensive irradiation. Sixty percent of the cost is due to price gouging on the part of your importers on the other side, and one of the nasty little secrets about trade between the United States and India is that most of it is a family affair. You have a member of the family in the United States who is the receiver of the goods, collects the money, pays the shipper of the goods, who is a brother or cousin or some other relative, and that's how the business is done. And if you were to reduce the price gouging, you would be able to sell at a lower price. Of course they didn't want to hear that, didn't want to get into that argument.

2021

Reuniting Families of Afghans Fleeing Taliban Rule

Returning to the State Department out of retirement from a storied career, Ambassador A. Elizabeth “Beth” Jones took leadership of the office wrestling with the enormous challenges of assisting and relocating Afghan refugees after the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Kabul. She tells how her team reunited a family with a son they thought had died in the Abbey Gate suicide bombing.

It was one of the most difficult jobs most of us who worked on this have ever done. We were having to invent ways to do it and ways to overcome obstacles all the time. Every step of the way, we had in mind that we're dealing with the lives of human beings who are potentially truly in danger. They're having to make heart-breaking decisions about leaving family members behind if they were going to get out themselves. In addition, we were dealing with a huge number of unaccompanied minors who'd ended up in the U.S. in federal care. ...

At one point, we were told that there was a 7-year-old boy in Kabul whose family had left, and we had to find his family. ... He'd been with his family at a gate at the Kabul airport, that there was a huge explosion right next to him, and he then lost his family. He didn't know what happened to his family. And he looked around, looked around, couldn't find them, and finally decided

Every step of the way, we had in mind that we're dealing with the lives of human beings who are potentially truly in danger.

—Beth Jones



he would walk home. ... He went to his neighbor and said, "I don't know where my family is." ...

The explosion, of course, that he heard was the Abbey Gate explosion. The neighbor got hold of somebody in the AfghanEvac Coalition, who then called the liaison person, March Bishop, to say, "There's this little boy who lost his family, and maybe that family is in the United States, and here's his name." So we were able to find the family at a base in Indiana. Our colleagues went to the family to say, Hamid says that he's in Kabul and that you're his family. And they said, "What?! ... We thought he was killed in the explosion."

The people talking to them said, "Do you have any evidence that this boy is your son?" Because there was a lot of concern about trafficking and that kind of thing. And they said, "Yes, we have his passport." And they did, so they gave the passport to my colleagues on the base, who got the passport out to Doha for us, and we made arrangements for the little boy to be linked up with an Afghan family that were family members of an American citizen. Or I think the man himself, the American citizen, was there. And we linked Hamid up with him and had the Qataris take his passport in on the Qatar Air flight to Kabul so that he could show the Taliban—because the Taliban insisted everybody had a passport—that he had a passport, and eventually got him on a plane.

And we saw pictures of little Hamid with his American citizen escort and got him to Doha. Then got him on a plane to Dulles Airport. In the meantime, we got his family to Dulles, as well, and then my colleague, March, who was the one who had orchestrated this whole thing, which took weeks and weeks. ... March went out to the airport to greet little Hamid when he came in, to see him reunited with his parents. ■

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Diplomatic Security Service

Early Days

The Diplomatic Security Service has collected a wealth of personal stories from Foreign Service specialists across the decades—and they are now available to the public.



1916 badge of the Secret Intelligence Bureau.

The law enforcement and security arm of the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) personnel—like their fellow Foreign Service colleagues—have many stories to tell, having been present for major events that shaped not only the United States but the world. Yet, for many years, these stories remained untold.

DSS was founded in 1916, when then-Secretary of State



Angela French is the deputy director for the Office of Public Affairs at the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service. She oversees strategic planning and outreach for the organization as well as serving as the executive producer of the DSS After

Action podcast. Angela has worked in the national security field since 2006. Prior to joining DSS, she was a senior communications expert at the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency. Previous positions include serving as an intelligence analyst and as a speechwriter for Secretaries of Defense Robert Gates and Donald Rumsfeld.

Robert Lansing created a State Department-led, international law enforcement task force to investigate ongoing German espionage and passport fraud. Over the ensuing years, DSS special agents, security engineering officers, security technical specialists, diplomatic couriers, Civil Service employees, contractors, and other personnel carried out the DSS mission, collecting stories of intrigue and adventure along the way.

A few personal remembrances were written over the years, but in 1991, to celebrate its 75th anniversary, the DSS Office of Public Affairs (DSS/PA) began to capture firsthand accounts from both current and retired personnel, creating a video archive that preserves these fascinating tales. Captured with digital voice recorders and VHS tapes, DSS officials recorded more than 20 oral histories, detailing events such as the discovery of bugs planted by Soviet spies in the 1970s and 1980s, the effect the 1968 Tet Offensive had on the U.S. embassy in Vietnam, and the role of diplomatic couriers in escorting classified cargo across Africa in the 1960s.

The effort to capture oral histories waned over the next couple of decades. But in 2015, when the organization began planning activities to recognize its centennial, DSS/PA staff once again began interviewing individuals and archiving their stories.

Shortly thereafter, DSS/PA began systematically archiving and preserving boxes and boxes of VHS tapes, audio files, DVDs, and other files. As public affairs officers viewed these interviews, they realized DSS had decades of history, experience, and stories that ought to be shared with the American people.

The complete archive is available at https://bit.ly/DSS_from-the-archives. Below are a few excerpts from those who witnessed history.

—Angela French

There at the Beginning

My father [Robert C. Bannerman] was one of the original agents in the establishment of the Office of Security [which later became the Diplomatic Security Service]. ... He was engaged in many special activities, covering, you might say, foreign agents working in the United States against the United States and against the German cause; British agents checking on German activity in the United States [focused on] trying to convince President [Woodrow] Wilson to stay in his neutral position. These and a number of other things were taking place, all highly sensitive.

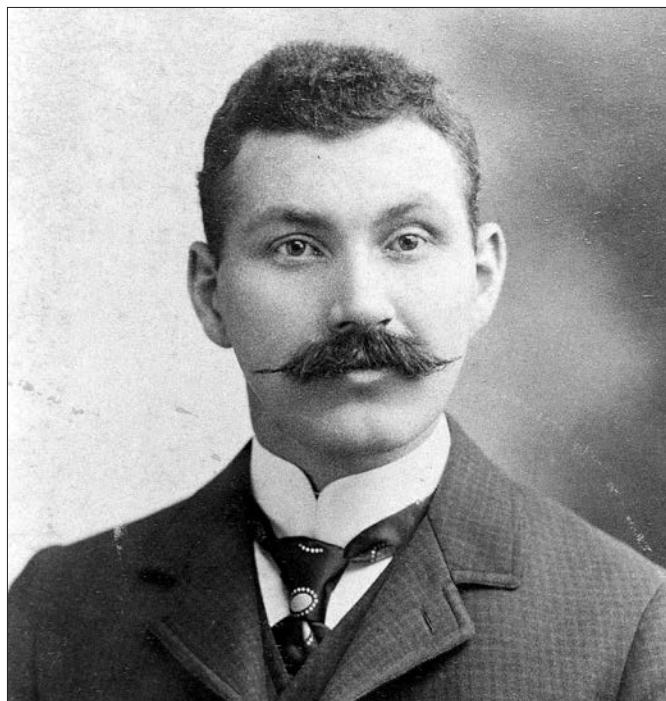
In February 1916, Secretary [Robert] Lansing directed the chief special agent and his staff to establish a tap on the German embassy [in Washington, D.C.] to get all possible information within the embassy, and outgoing and incoming calls. This was accomplished by the chief special agent's office, in which my father was playing an important part. The taps were monitored, and daily, a report was written and placed on the desk of Secretary Lansing of the most important events over the tap for the past 24 hours.

I am sure that Secretary Lansing passed this information on to President Wilson. He gave him an added element of information that he could not have obtained in any other way. I feel that in some small way, it may have convinced Wilson that the German overtures toward peace were unfounded, and not sincere.

This led the president to go ahead and declare war on Germany in April 1917.

... I didn't enter [the Office of Security] until about 1936. But at that point, there were only about four of us, and we covered the whole United States. In this period—I call it the period of growth—we were growing in our responsibilities, but the other agencies were not.

—Special Agent Robert L. Bannerman,
active duty from 1936 to 1947, recorded in 1991.



BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY

Robert C. Bannerman led the Office of the Chief Special Agent, the DSS predecessor organization at the U.S. Department of State, from 1920 to 1940. Bannerman expanded the Office of the Chief Special Agent's duties to include many tasks still held by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security today: background investigations, passport fraud, oversight of couriers, protection of foreign dignitaries, and internal investigations.



BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY

Robert L. Bannerman was director of the Security Office, a DSS predecessor organization at the U.S. Department of State, from 1945 to 1947. As a special agent he conducted hundreds of passport fraud and counterintelligence investigations and identified several high-profile incidents of German espionage. In 1941 Special Agent Bannerman coordinated the detention of more than 1,000 Axis diplomats until U.S. officials could negotiate an exchange with the Axis powers.

Crossing European Borders After the War

Most memorable trip? Perhaps making the first trip into Switzerland, in 1944, after Paris was liberated. The border of Switzerland had been sealed off for four years, and I had just been assigned to the embassy in Paris to start a courier service there, three weeks after it was liberated.

Our transportation, Jeeps, came from SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force], General [Dwight] Eisenhower's headquarters. Gave me a Jeep and another Jeep with a couple of soldiers in it. We traveled across France to the Swiss border; we were the first Americans that the Swiss had seen for four years. They had a wonderful time with our passports [and] visas. They finally let me in. The two soldiers stayed at the border.

I took a train up to Bern. Allen Dulles, John Foster Dulles' brother, was head of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) there. And he was highly interested, of course, that there was the beginning of a courier service into Switzerland which he had great use for.

—*Diplomatic Courier Robert Clark, active duty from 1941 until the early 1960s (est.), recorded in 1991.*



BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY

Robert Clark, who became a diplomatic courier in 1944.



BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY

Special Agent Patricia "Patti" Morton, who became the first female special agent in 1972, during target practice in the 1970s.

First Female Agent in Wartime Vietnam

Within 20 months of coming on board [as a DSS special agent], I was told by telephone one day that I had been reassigned and would become the first female RSO [regional security officer] in Vietnam, which was, of course, at war. Anyone who wanted, at that time, could refuse an assignment to Vietnam and was told it would not go against their career. I, however, never even considered that option and said, "Yes, I will go."

I arrived there in March or April of 1974. My immediate situation was being one of four RSOs. ... I was put in charge of the main security guard company, following their daily activities. I also was to physically survey all our consulates, which were throughout Vietnam.

One of the major areas people considered women would have a problem in would be handling Marine security guards [MSGs]. In fact, even before going to Vietnam, when I was out at the graduation class mess night, Saigon-bound MSGs told me that they felt they deserved to have the first woman security officer since they were the largest Marine company in the program.

The Marine security guards were also impressed with my ability with weapons. When I would go out to the training fields such as the Vietnam military shooting site, I was able to hit, even with the bazookas and the larger weapons, things that they had not been able to zero in on in the various times they had gone out shooting. So that also helped in that I had their respect.

—*Special Agent Patricia "Patti" Morton, active duty from 1972 until the late 1990s (est.), recorded in 1991.*

Security Engineering Officer John Bainbridge in 1978, searching for Soviet listening devices in a chimney at the U.S. embassy in Moscow after recovering an antennae system hidden there by the Soviets.



BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY

Soviet Bugs

When I look back on my career of 34 years in DS, I reflect on my first inspection trip to Moscow, when we found the [Russian KGB

“bugging”] attack against our typewriters. That was 1978, and no one understood until 1984, when they collectively examined the office equipment and stumbled across [the listening devices].

Over six years they had actually gotten into 16 of our typewriters, three in Leningrad and 13 in Moscow. They couldn’t control where those typewriters went in our building, so they bugged as many as they could. And we didn’t understand it for six years. I fear that at some point in time after our initial discovery they must have realized that they could turn [the listening devices] back on. So, yeah, there was my first encounter with the Russian KGB.

And then the second memory, obviously, was when we had to take a brand-new embassy apart. That’s kind of a unique distinction to have. It cost us dearly in terms of time and in terms of dollars. I was part of that project for a period of years. And then, when I was the ST [security technology] director, we discovered that they had actually gotten into the Harry S Truman building and pulled off an attack. I went down the hall to Peter Bergen, [who] at the time was our principal DAS [deputy assistant secretary], and I said, “Pete, we need to start inspecting the building.”

Ever since that day and that time, we’ve had inspection teams go through the building routinely. We have a whole program for that now. Because if anyone goes into a wiring closet and starts looking at the nest of the fiber cables running hither and yon, one realizes how easy it would be if you had access to that. Why would you attack U.S. missions overseas if you already had their headquarters building?

That put the fear of God in me, and Pete agreed. We immediately started assembling teams, and we’ve been going through the building routinely ever since.

—Security Engineering Officer John Bainbridge, active duty from the 1970s through the 2000s (est.), recorded in 2015.

101 Recommendations for Change

I came into the [Administration] Bureau in late 1983. Tom Tracy was my predecessor. He was the assistant secretary for administration. ... Tom said, “Bob, we had an embassy blown up in Beirut in March.” He added: “There are going to be more embassies blown up.”

And Tom was right. I was in the job a very short period of time when the embassy in Kuwait [was] blown up [by terrorists]. We could see vulnerabilities. The Secretary of State, George Shultz, asked me one morning, “Bob, how many other places do we have like Kuwait that could be blown up?” And I said, “Sir, we’ve looked at that in security, and we think we’ve got 13 to 15 embassies that could be blown up today. We do not have adequate security for our embassies.” And the word from the Secretary and the White House was: “Stop it. Make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

We created a whole range of measures. Probably the most important social change that has happened in the Department of State since the Second World War was the creation of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. It was an enormous task to get the department to recognize that its mission was much broader than simply the transmission of diplomatic messages, but in fact [included] the protection of data and the protection of people who are doing our country’s work abroad.

It was an exciting time. We got a lot of outside help and the most important single element in that outside help was a panel that was chaired by Admiral Bobby Inman, a former number two at the CIA, former head of the National Security Agency, and a smart man. Admiral Inman looked at the whole range of functions of the Department of State and how they needed to be changed, what we needed to do better, and he prescribed, I think it was, 101 recommendations. Incredibly, virtually the entire list of 101 were ultimately done. I know of very few government panels that had so many of their recommendations accepted by the agency, and these were far-reaching recommendations.

—Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (1986-1989) Robert E. Lamb, recorded in the summer of 1991.



This is just a small sample of the impressive work that is still performed by the Diplomatic Security Service today. DSS/PA continues to interview its personnel and publish oral histories on its YouTube channel and via its *After Action* podcast. ■

A Look at the New Learning Policy

How, When, and Where Do State Department Employees Learn?

The Learning Policy is intended to stimulate a culture shift around learning and training at the State Department.

BY SARAH WARDWELL

There is a clear consensus that the State Department needs to take a more systematic approach to professional training and education for all its employees. As Secretary of State Antony Blinken articulated in October 2021, “We need to put the State Department in the best possible position to confront the challenges facing our country, and we need to build, support, and protect the workforce that makes everything that we do possible.”

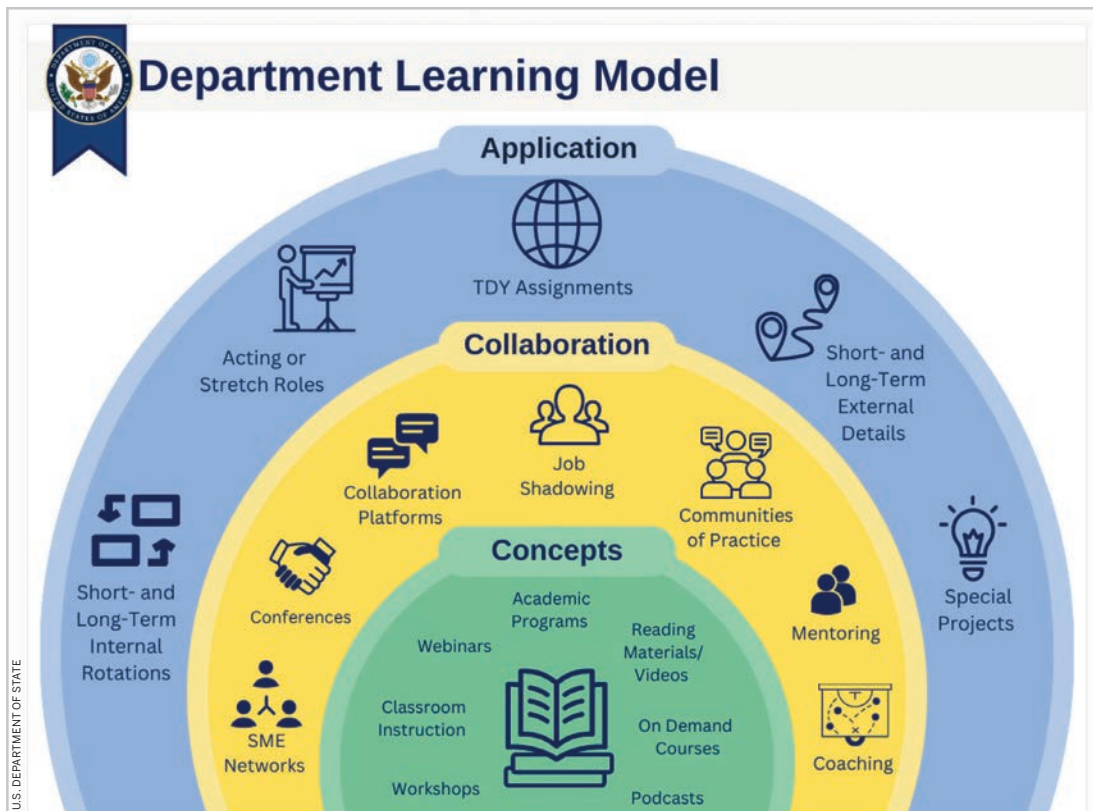
Traditionally, the State Department has leaned on mentorship or learning on the job to develop the skills of employees during the middle of their career. While these are important

parts of a professional development program, former senior leaders suggest the department needs a more methodical approach (see the report by Ambassadors Nicholas Burns, Marc Grossman, and Marcie Ries, “A U.S. Diplomatic Service for the 21st Century,” Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, November 2020, pages 26–27 and 29–35). Similarly, a needs assessment completed by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) School of Professional and Area Studies in 2021 identified concerns with respect to the training and performance of the department’s mid-career Foreign Service (FS) and Civil Service (CS) professionals (FS-3/2 and GS-12/13/14).

Recognizing the need to nurture a culture shift around learning, Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Richard Verma (D-MR) introduced State’s first Learning Policy in September 2023, as part of Secretary Blinken’s Modernization Agenda. The Learning Policy redefines the department’s approach to learning. It prioritizes learning as a part of the department’s culture by dedicating more time for learning, empowering employee-manager learning partnerships, and expanding learning opportunities.



Sarah Wardwell is currently serving as an innovation adviser in the Bureau of Global Talent Management. She is a consular-coned Foreign Service officer. She has previously served in the Bureau of Consular Affairs’ Office of ICA, Santo Domingo, and Jakarta.



A diagram of the State Department's new learning model.

The main elements of the new Learning Policy include:

- The new Core Curriculum for mid-career professionals.
- Up to 40 hours of dedicated learning hours per employee per year.
- Expanded use of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for all employees.
- Additional professional development and training options, especially in support of critical mission areas and Civil Service professional mobility.

The new policy applies to all State Department U.S. direct-hire employees and eligible family members (EFMs) on family member appointments (FMAs). The department is encouraging overseas posts to adopt similar practices to the extent possible for locally employed (LE) staff and other employed EFMs, in accordance with other agency policies and local labor laws.

To help employees navigate the new policy, FSI and the Bureau of Global Talent Management put together an internal “Learning@State” website that outlines the policy, along with frequently asked questions, and links to relevant learning materials.

Cynthia Davila, a management-coned Foreign Service officer currently serving in Mexico City, helped to craft the new Learning Policy while serving domestically in the Director General’s Innovation Unit. Reflecting on the importance of the new policy,

Although there may not be a YouTube video to teach diplomacy, in today’s world there are many alternate ways to learn beyond the traditional classroom.

she said: “The Learning Policy widens the aperture of what learning can look like beyond the traditional classroom—coaching, listening to podcasts, attending seminars, etc. Consciously integrating learning into the continuous professional development of our employees ensures that State’s workforce upskills and is fully prepared to meet tomorrow’s challenges.” The general services section in Mexico City has already begun implementing the Learning Policy, and Davila hopes other sections will follow their lead.

The Core Curriculum

Early in 2023, FSI introduced the Core Curriculum to help employees build the skills they need to succeed in their careers.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs' dedication to continuous learning is a model for workforce development.

This was the first step in the State Department's broader efforts to foster a culture of career-long learning and to help ensure employees are afforded greater opportunities to participate in professional development and training. The Core Curriculum is a recommended set of courses for mid-career professionals designed to develop a common foreign affairs skill set. It focuses on a broad spectrum of critical skills, ranging from leadership to strategic planning, negotiation, and working in the interagency.

The Core Curriculum contains a mix of existing and new courses as well as a few that are still in development (see sidebar). Feedback from the post-course evaluations to date has been overwhelmingly positive. Zachary Segal, a Civil Service employee in the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, was one of the first students to take a new Core Curriculum class, "Succeeding at State: Core Skills for Mid-Career Professionals." In a follow-up conversation a few months after completing the course, Segal said the course taught him useful skills such as strategic empathy, ways to leverage your network, and understanding the pressures your colleagues and supervisors experience. He said the course was general enough to apply to everyone in the department and that it brought together a unique group of employees who shared their diverse experiences.

The course spurred real change for Segal. He shared that he had never considered taking on a managerial role, as he had always seen himself as a subject matter expert. Following the course, he realized that he was ready to take the leap and work toward a management position, a positive move forward in his career that he had not anticipated.

As Deputy Secretary Verma said in his message rolling out the policy, "This policy is an essential investment in you, your professional development, and in our organization's agility and effectiveness in a rapidly changing world." But as one of the Core Curriculum course designers noted, "A five-day course won't fill the gap of the continuous learning need." Individuals still need to supplement their growth with additional learning. And although there may not be a YouTube video to teach diplomacy, in today's world there are many alternate ways to learn beyond the traditional classroom. This is why the Learning Policy has



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*Courses are under development/coming soon.

two other key components: dedicated learning hours and the expansion of IDPs. Industry experts found that planning and dedicating time to learn are the most important components in building a learning organization, one that remains at the forefront of their industry and continues to attract and retain top talent.

Dedicated Learning and the IDP

Dedicated learning hours allow employees to take advantage of the myriad ways that people consume information in the modern age—such as taking an online course, watching videos, listening to a podcast, attending a conference, or even

reading a particular book. Not all learning happens in a classroom; accordingly, dedicated learning hours are not limited to classroom coursework.

To determine how best to spend learning hours, the new Learning Policy encourages employees to create their own IDP. Working with their supervisor, employees identify and establish learning goals that will help them achieve their mission and professional development goals. Civil Service employees are already familiar with creating an IDP. It is logical to expand this beneficial planning document to Foreign Service personnel, EFMs on FMAs, and limited non-career appointments—including consular fellows and LE staff. The IDP is different than the counseling sessions that are currently part of the Foreign Service performance evaluation and management system. The IDP is designed to take a longer-term look at the employee's professional aspirations and goals.

For some bureaus, asking employees to set aside special time to focus on learning is not a new concept. The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) has been particularly innovative, holding annual Consular Leadership Days since 2001. CA designates an annual theme for these leadership days based on one of the Consular Leadership and Management Tenets. Teams close the consular section to routine appointments for a day and focus on team- and skill-building. Consular sections are expected to hold monthly training and development days so that all staff are working to develop needed skills. CA's dedication to continuous learning is a model for workforce development.

The Learning Policy provides the framework to create lasting change in our workforce. Employees and supervisors alike play an important role in implementing this policy for meaningful results. It will take collaborative commitment to see an institutional shift to a learning culture.

As Alexis Ludwig, retired FSO and former director of the Core Skills for Mid-Career Professionals pilot, said: "You have to take the initiative with your own career. It is the responsibility of each of us to think deeply about what we need to do in the coming year to improve." Given the ever-growing amount of information available, the Learning Policy explicitly promotes greater collaboration between employees and supervisors on identifying learning goals and how to achieve them. Both employees and supervisors can consult not only the FSI catalog but also look at what other industry leaders are reading, watching, and listening to. Staying on top of emerging trends, from China to artificial intelligence (AI), will require engaging more with quickly evolving media, such as expert-written blogs, podcasts, and videos.

To determine how best to spend learning hours, the new Learning Policy encourages employees to create their own Individual Development Plan.

The policy encourages 40 hours of dedicated learning, which can be broken down into time increments that make the most sense for the individual's learning goals and best fit into their schedule. If someone wants to work on job-related language needs, they may decide to take a mentor-guided course for eight hours of learning time, using one hour per week. Learning a language requires more regular practice, so the individual may carve out 15 minutes on other days of the week to focus on language learning. This practice may consist of study with a language app, searching for videos to work on a specific grammatical issue, or practicing with an LE staff member.

For some offices, it may work best if the entire team sets aside one hour per week to focus on individual goals. Setting aside time on individual or office calendars can be a helpful reminder to make sure that working days are not fully consumed by meetings or taskings. For others, working on a dedicated course or type of learning during a season when the workload is more manageable might make more sense.

Flexibility Is the Key

As he stated during a town hall earlier this fall, Deputy Secretary Verma emphasizes that flexibility is a key component of the policy designed with employees in mind. Ultimately, the policy is meant to be a springboard for culture change—truly integrating continual learning into the fabric of our organization. Many have suggested that to really change the culture, the policy's major components (Core Curriculum, dedicated learning hours, and IDPs) should be mandatory, otherwise the press of other business will always win out. Those concerns are valid, particularly given the pace and volume of work the workforce faces.

The decision to strongly encourage, not mandate, at the present time stemmed from two related considerations. First, the architects of the policy believe that this form of culture change would be best achieved through voluntary compliance. Mandatory requirements can achieve compliance—but the policy seeks not to check a box but rather to win over hearts and minds, something better accomplished through persuasion and positive experiences than by a hammer. Second, the new policy

takes into consideration the current state of the workforce as it recuperates from the myriad challenges the past few years have presented.

The Learning Policy reinforces the idea that learning is not something employees do in addition to their work; it needs to be a fundamental part of the work. As FSI's Director Joan Polaschik said during a December 2023 town hall about the Secretary's Modernization Agenda, "The learning policy really is about creating that expectation that we're doing learning as part of our normal work week." That is the only way the department will stay abreast of emerging demands, opportunities, and modalities in the critical mission areas and beyond, and it's how members of the workforce can stay competitive in their fields for future service in the department—or outside it. So, we must create the space to integrate learning. Doing so will require increasing focus on identifying existing tasks that teams and individuals can "stop doing" or can do more efficiently, e.g., through use of artificial intelligence, and making learning as accessible and flexible as possible. Moreover, research shows that learning something new can actually reduce stress and restore energy at work.

Future improvements to the Learning Policy will include additional external training opportunities focused on critical mission priorities and an expanded program to support attendance at relevant workshops and conferences. FSI is revamping an existing program that funds external training to expand opportunities for employees looking to further their knowledge and skills.

The long-term goal of these changes is to create a culture shift within the State Department where employees are continually acquiring new skills and knowledge. Speaking directly to employees at the December 2023 town hall, Director General Marcia Bernicat described this shift as a "revolution." She said: "I would urge each of you to think of what it is you do on a day-to-day basis that you shouldn't be doing anymore. ... Let's reprioritize." She described ways her own team has used technology to save time and urged middle managers especially to work with their teams to think about how they can do work differently, explore the power of AI, and end the cycle of burnout. By changing the culture to work strategically and build in lifelong learning, the department will build teams that are ready to tackle current foreign policy challenges, as well as the challenges of the future. ■

Straight from the Source is the *FSJ* space for the foreign affairs agencies to inform the FS community about new policies or innovations in operations. What are your thoughts about the new Learning Policy? Please send your feedback as letters to journal@afsa.org or comment on *FSJ* LinkedIn.

Pomelo Diplomacy

Through the pomelo, the quintessential Thai fruit, the U.S. and Thailand recently celebrated almost two centuries of collaboration.

BY MARC GILKEY

In 2023 the United States and Thailand celebrated 190 years of fruitful ties.

Life in the Foreign Service offers numerous challenges, and it is the job of the diplomat to turn the challenge into an opportunity. My challenge was to identify a contribution from the

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) appropriate to the celebration of this diplomatic benchmark.

The foundation of almost two centuries of collaboration and cooperation with Thailand was built through the 1833 Treaty



of Amity and Commerce. With this treaty, Thailand became the first country in Asia to establish diplomatic relations with the United States.

Over the ensuing years, the two nations worked together on numerous fronts, such as collaboration during World War II (which continues today); safeguarding of the health of U.S., Thai, and international communities through medical research, innovation, and public health initiatives; promotion of sustainable resource management; conservation of biodiversity; and economic collaboration.

The United States is Thailand's largest export market. Trade ranges from consumer goods and agricultural products to cooperation with defense industries, which has spurred collaboration in fields outside the economic realm, including security and space technology.

Later, defense pacts established a useful military cooperation, and these promises were upheld throughout the Cold War. When terrorism emerged as a global threat, we supported each other; when global pandemics surfaced, our bonds were tighter than ever in sharing vaccines and keeping safe and resilient trade moving between both nations.

What could I add to this story?



Marc Gilkey is a Senior Foreign Service officer who has served with the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for 30 years.

He is currently posted in Bangkok, where he serves as the regional manager for South Asia. He has served previously in Afghanistan, Mexico, India, Belgium, and Colombia, in addition to assignments in Washington, D.C., with USAID. He is a U.S. Navy veteran. He wrote for the FSJ in 2019 on avocado diplomacy in Colombia and in 2022 reflected on agricultural work in Afghanistan.

Pomelo Diplomacy!

I thought about the unique talents of APHIS. For those who don't know, we are the smallest Foreign Service agency, but our impact is at the heart of most agriculture trade issues.

The APHIS Foreign Service, called "International Services," is the platform by which APHIS delivers technical talent to support international agricultural diplomacy. We actively back and cultivate the capacity of communities, institutions, and governments to manage threats to agriculture in a way that is sustainable, effective, and protects plants, animals, and the finely interwoven global agricultural community.

International Services encompasses a range of technical experts in entomology, plant pathology, animal health, aquaculture, and risk management, ultimately creating a forum that leverages expertise across APHIS. Through collaboration with foreign counterparts at diplomatic, policy, and technical levels, APHIS promotes science-based regulatory transparency that leads to safe and resilient agricultural trade.

Suddenly, inspiration struck! Pomelo diplomacy! In 2022, fresh Thai pomelo, the "king of citrus fruits," completed the necessary regulatory steps and became the eighth Thai fruit cleared for entry to the U.S. The result of more than 15 years of collaborative work between Thai and American agricultural scientists, it is a unique example of the mutual benefits of the U.S.-Thai 190-year relationship.

The eight fruits approved under the preclearance program between Thailand and the U.S. include the mango, longan, lychee, mangosteen, rambutan, pineapple, dragon fruit, and now the pomelo. Unfortunately, when the process concluded in early 2022, the news was swallowed up in the fog of the COVID-19 pandemic. With supply chains strained and many times not working, inflation pushed prices for shipping fresh fruit sky high. No fresh fruit was making the journey to the U.S. from Thailand. My idea was to rally around the pomelo, the quintessential Thai fruit, to cut through the fog to celebrate the 190 years of U.S.-Thai collaboration.



The author (third from right) with Director General of the Thai Department of Agriculture Khun Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs (third from left) and other Thai dignitaries, at the airport, prior to exporting the irradiated fruit, where a ceremony was planned to commemorate the first shipment of Thai pomelo fruit to the U.S.

Thailand became the first country in Asia to establish diplomatic relations with the United States.

For the 2023 celebration the Thai government planned a July 4 event on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., where the king of citrus fruit would be featured.

How It Worked

Pomelos, Latin name *Citrus maxima*, are grown in large quantities in Thailand and native to southeast Asia, where they are also known as *sum-oh*. The pomelo can grow as large as two pounds and is an original nonhybrid citrus now used to cultivate other varieties of fruit. For example, the grapefruit is a cross of a pomelo and a sweet orange.

Thailand is a major exporter of pomelo fruit, with most going to neighboring countries and China. My goal was to make the U.S. the next recipient of this truly magnificent fruit. As in many places I have worked, I had to start at the beginning: What does that mean? Market access request, pest list development, pest risk analysis, risk mitigation options, rulemaking, all of which can take time. All of this was done, and it was not a small task. The next step would be putting all the pieces together and offering a hand of friendship to Thailand with encouragement and commitment to help make it a reality.

In APHIS we work on both the animal and plant kingdoms, so I got to work with our agricultural scientist and veterinarian Dr. Jitlada Vasuvat (Dr. Mai). Our Thai counterparts at the Thai Department of Agriculture were led by Khun Rapibhat Chandarasrivongs, the director general. I have worked with Dr. Rapibhat for more than 15 years, and we were both familiar with the numerous steps to safely export pomelos: surveilling plant pests, pest trapping, and ultimately certifying the phytosanitary integrity of shipments exported to the U.S. The special ingredient in this process is the use of ionizing radiation. Yes, atomic energy—this was rocket science!

We want to make sure that insect pests of economic significance do not travel with the fruit to the U.S. and reproduce, insects that could cause serious harm to U.S. agriculture (like the Mediterranean fruit fly has been doing in Florida since 1929).

Employing a *peaceful use of nuclear energy* developed more than 60 years ago, this elegant technique, called the sterile insect technique (SIT), is among the most environment-friendly



The author (center) with the inspection team, at the irradiation facility verifying the pallet configuration and insect proof boxing before it enters the irradiation chamber.

insect pest control methods ever developed. Irradiation is used to sterilize mass-reared insects so while they remain sexually competitive, they cannot produce offspring. Once the target pest is sterilized, sterile males are systematically released by air over infested areas, where they mate with wild females resulting in no offspring and a declining pest population.

So, if you can irradiate insects for large-scale pest suppression, you can use irradiation as a treatment for trading agricultural products. By using an effective dose of radiation to target pests of concern, you can render any pests sterile and nonreproductive. APHIS advocates the use and application of irradiation as the most effective phytosanitary treatment method. I have had the opportunity of establishing and expanding irradiation programs in Mexico, India, South Africa, Vietnam, and Thailand.

Use of irradiation technology is becoming increasingly important today because methyl bromide, an ozone-depleting fumigant still widely used as a quarantine and preshipment treatment for quarantine pests, is known to contribute to climate change.

The July 4 Event

For the July 4 celebration of pomelo diplomacy and 190 years of U.S.-Thai relations, there was much to do. With only weeks until the event in the U.S., we got to work. Fortunately, Thailand had been using an irradiation facility for other fruits over the years, and that would be our base of operations where we inspected the fruit and treated it in carefully arranged pallet configurations that ensure full dosage



JITLADA VASUVAT

Thai pomelo, “the king of citrus fruits,” is carefully configured in insect-proof boxes to ensure each fruit receives the proper dose of radiation to sterilize target insect pests.

is delivered to each fruit. This is tedious, methodical work but so critical in ensuring safe trade and program integrity.

Khun Rapibhat at the Department of Agriculture gave his full cooperation and attention to make this happen and get the fruit halfway across the globe in time for July 4. We just about completed all the technical requirements; on the other side were the logistics: the fruit was flying first class and leaving the Bangkok airport the night of June 27. Khun Rapibhat indicated there would be a small ceremony at the airport to commemorate such an auspicious event.

We started early that day, receiving boxes of fruit from approved packhouses to the irradiation facility, sampling and inspecting fruit for pests, configuring the boxes on pallets, and trying to stay cool in the sweltering irradiation



Explore



afspa.org/aip



Dental AFSPA offers four dental plans to meet the needs of our worldwide membership - Cigna International, Cigna HMO, Cigna PPO, and Dominion National.



Tax Consulting AFSPA offers members a complimentary 20-minute consultation for all your tax questions and a 10% discount on standard hourly rates.



Members of Household Health coverage designed for family and friends residing with you while outside of their home country.



Group Term Life Insurance AFSPA's policy offers a term life insurance that provides you and your family protection up to \$600,000. It allows early access to a portion of your benefits to use towards chronic and terminal illness. Open Enrollment coming soon.



Legal/Financial/Retirement/Long Term Care Consulting Receive expert guidance and analysis when planning for the present and future



Discount Care Programs AFSPA offers a three-in-one package discount plan for purchase. It includes savings on dental, vision, and LASIK. (For U.S. members only)

Some restrictions apply.

facility. Pallet after pallet going into the totes and whisked behind the thick concrete walls on the conveyer, irradiated, and then right out for loading on the truck for the journey to the airport.

It was a journey I would take the next day with my family, heading to the U.S. for a much-needed home leave. Khun Rapibhat knew I was leaving the next day for home and wanted to make sure I was there for the special event—an event I had no idea would be *so* special. He mobilized his staff and pulled together an amazing venue, with mascots, lots of fruit, a ribbon cutting, and many heartfelt words *khob khun khrup* and *kha* (“thank you” in Thai).

When all was done, the crowd had left, and the smoke settled, my amazing staff of three—Dr. Mai, Kannika Teeraakaravipas (Khun Ju), and Ronnapat Benjakunasatapawn (Khun Pat)—turned to me and said, “You need to pack!”



As I headed back to Bangkok on that warm night, my excitement mounted with the thought of home. In the Foreign Service

The United States is Thailand’s largest export market.

you are separated from so much, and soon I would see my mom. The next day we went to the airport to make a similar journey the pomelos had embarked on a few hours before. Flying across the Pacific Ocean to San Francisco, I thought of all the voyages across this massive blue expanse that forged 190 years of U.S.-Thai diplomatic relations that so many have taken for two centuries, each trip bringing us a better understanding of each other.

I would like to think I did my part in these efforts, even if it wasn’t a treaty, or a silk robe, or a gold scabbard. Perhaps it was actually a bit more, because the pomelo represents the journey that the U.S. and Thailand have taken together. The pomelo looks and feels like a globe, and when you next hold one in the palm of your hand, think of all the journeys that have taken place and the story that will unfold for the next two centuries. ■

APPLY FOR AN AFSA SCHOLARSHIP



Recipients of AFSA’s 2023 Merit Award Scholarships with FS Director Marcia Bernicat (center)

Nearly \$350,000 in Merit and Financial Aid scholarships will be awarded, in total.

Applications will be accepted starting **December 5, 2023**.

Deadline to apply is **March 11, 2024**.

For more information, visit www.afsa.org/scholar.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT | ART MERIT | COMMUNITY SERVICE | FINANCIAL AID

AFSA Webinar

Constructive Dissent Today

On Dec. 7, 2023, AFSA hosted a webinar on the history and importance of internal dissent in the Foreign Service. AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi moderated this lively panel discussion.

Panelists were FSO Holly Holzer, former deputy director of the policy planning staff (S/P), where she oversaw the Dissent Channel; Sara Berndt, Ph.D., a historian at the State Department Office of the Historian; and former AFSA President Ambassador Eric Rubin.

Berndt and Holzer wrote the cover story for the December 2023 edition of *The Foreign Service Journal*, "The State Department Dissent Channel: History and Impact."

Amb. Rubin received the William R. Rivkin Dissent Award in 1994 as one of a group of FSOs advocating for alternative policy positions in the Bosnia conflict.



Sara Berndt



Holly Holzer



Amb. Eric Rubin



Tom Yazdgerdi

More than 150 AFSA members listened in as the group discussed the history of dissent and the evolution of the department's Dissent Channel against the backdrop of the current Israel-Hamas conflict and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The channel was created during the tumultuous years of the Vietnam War, when many Foreign Service members joined ordinary citizens in opposition to the war. Today, the Dissent Channel offers Foreign Service and Civil Service members of the State Department and

USAID a way to register their dissent internally, without fear of retribution. Since its establishment in 1971, more than 400 messages have been sent through the Dissent Channel.

Holzer called the channel "emblematic of the culture of dissent that we want to nurture and encourage here at the department," while Berndt discussed common misconceptions and four specific dissents in history that she found interesting.

Amb. Rubin talked about "constructive dissent," explaining "it's not enough

CALENDAR

Please check <https://afsa.org> for the most up-to-date information.

March 5
12 p.m.

Webinar: Focus on Retirement Portfolios

March 20
12-1:30 p.m.

AFSA Governing Board meeting

March 21
1 p.m.

Retiree Webinar: The View from Washington

April 17
12-1:30 p.m.

AFSA Governing Board meeting

May 2
AFSA Foreign Service Day Open House

May 3
Foreign Service Day

May 23
AFSA Centennial Gala

May 24
Centennial of the Rogers Act of 1924



to just say 'I think the policy is wrong.' Constructive means you have some ideas to suggest."

"Anybody can dissent on anything," said Rubin, "but it's powerful if you really know your stuff."

The speakers all agreed that intentionally leaking these internal messages can be deeply damaging.

Members can listen to the discussion at <https://afsa.org/videos>. ■



Spotlight on EERs and the New Scoring Rubric

The Foreign Service is abuzz with talk of our new scoring rubric for employee evaluation reports (EERs). Throughout 100 years of our modern Foreign Service, the State Department has continually refined its performance evaluation toolkit.

This new scoring rubric is, by far, one of its biggest updates. For the first time, employees can see a specific breakdown of their average scores.

AFSA has long supported our members in advocating for clear and transparent measures in our performance and evaluation system. The department certainly still has more to do to explain to the workforce what all these scores mean and how to leverage them to improve on the process of drafting annual evaluations (EERs), but it is an important start on this journey. I want to dive deeper into AFSA's specific role in these efforts.

As your AFSA State VP, I am charged with the responsibility to negotiate with the department on the core precepts and the procedural precepts, two very important documents guiding the Foreign Service selection and tenure boards.

The core precepts affect multiple rating periods and provide the guidelines for tenure and selection boards to determine tenure and promotability among the department's Foreign Service

members. Think of the core precepts as the building blocks of your EER—these are the elements that boards will use to make assessments about your promotability.

Even easier to miss but perhaps more important are the procedural precepts that AFSA negotiates annually with the department. Procedural precepts are the specific instructions to the boards. They establish the organization and responsibilities of the Foreign Service selection boards and describe the precise criteria boards use to reach their determinations.

The procedural precepts can be found at the Bureau of Global Talent Management Office of Performance Evaluation's (GTM/PE) intranet page under the "references and forms" tab.

I am a strong proponent of the new core precepts: management; leadership; substantive and technical expertise; communications; and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). The new scoring rubric now sheds light on how employees scored, on average, in each precept. AFSA will continue to pursue additional board feedback on the meaning behind these precept scores beyond the published factsheets and FAQs.

Focus your attention on the "Scoring Core Precept Narratives" section of the procedural precepts. Scoring is very specific: a score of "5" requires demonstrated

mastery of the precept and leading/mentoring others in mastering this precept; "4" requires demonstrated mastery in all facets of this precept; "3" requires consistent demonstration of skilled competence in a majority of behaviors in that precept; "2" means skilled competence in some areas of that precept; and a score of "1" means there was little or no demonstrable competence in a majority of behaviors in that precept.

The bottom line: Read the procedural precepts with a fine-tooth comb before you, your rater, and your reviewer start writing your EER. Better still, design your work requirement statement and counseling session around strategizing ways for you to demonstrate impact aligned with mastery in all aspects of each precept.

I also want to myth bust about the DEIA precept. It is simply untrue that our EERs were devoid of any requirements for or references to elements of diversity and inclusion until the 2022-2023 rating period.

Check out the 2013-2018 and 2018-2022 core precepts: Under "Team Building," an element of leadership skills specifically cites work in an "inclusive" manner at the entry level, calls for creating "an environment that facilitates open exchanges of ideas" at the mid-level, and "embraces diversity and inclusion" at the senior

level. This is just one of many examples from these past core precepts.

This doesn't mean that having written anything related to DEIA before it was a stand-alone precept directly correlates to your final score in that precept. Your EER must still demonstrate to the boards your impact and mastery of that precept.

AFSA is open to your ideas about ways to educate and equip every Foreign Service member with fair and equitable opportunities to demonstrate and master every precept.

We continue our work on this, including meeting with the Bureau of Global Talent Management's Office of Performance Evaluation monthly to discuss further reforms. We are collecting feedback from the promotion boards and directly from our members and employee organizations. I also encourage you to answer the annual call to serve on the promotion boards. Email GTM-PEQuestions@state.gov for more information on how to volunteer.

Regarding ongoing reforms, AFSA supports the introduction of decimal points to the scoring of each precept. With this year's addition of the sixth area of cross-functional competency (also known as class-wide promotions), count on us to press for clarity in its scoring. Write to me or member@afsa.org to share your ideas. ■



Promotion Evaluation Reforms

March 31 marks the end of another performance cycle. The next 30 days will be a mad dash to the finish: advising, writing, arguing, reviewing, fretting, sharing, disagreeing, panicking, coping, negotiating, waiting, hoping, and stressing. For better or worse, an up-or-out system like ours requires it.

After 19 years, evaluation season hasn't gotten easier for me. Some of that's on me and my own inability to just sit down and devote time and energy to it. I usually get a jump-start, but it's not so easy to keep up the momentum when you're crashing on D.C. and congressional taskers, CODELs, emergency responses, and other issues. When I finally press the "submit" button, an overwhelming sense of relief hits. Now it's up to the gods of the Promotion Board.

When I joined USAID in 2004, we had an annual evaluation form (AEF) and an appraisal committee (AC). Back then, we created performance plans containing three work objectives and two performance measures (PMs), wrote a "role in the organization" statement, and developed an employee statement. Our supervisors (wink wink) wrote our mid-term reviews and completed the final narrative, the assessment of performance, skills, and potential.

The narrative incorporated 360 feedback, detailed

any PM achievements, and demonstrated proficiency in at least one subskill among the four skill areas. Some ACs provided detailed comments and edits, while others focused only on the minimum reporting requirements. In April, AEFs took priority over everything. It was the system: We didn't complain, we just put in the work.

In 2017, multisource ratings and the promotion input form were introduced, officially putting the reporting burden on the FSO and relegating the supervisor/rater to a single narrative addressing performance, readiness, and ability. These changes were rolled out over a two-year period as the agency developed guidance, conducted pilots, held webinars and trainings, and fine-tuned the process. It was not without controversy and resistance; but, as always, we focused on the work, moved forward, adapted, and evolved.

Now USAID is once again launching new promotion reforms. It has commissioned an evaluation of the current system, removed "complexity" from the scoring rubric, and will add diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) reporting as a performance measure in the 2024-2025 cycle. There has been a concerted effort by the agency, led by dedicated FSOs, to

AFSA and USAID signed a memorandum on the reform process in spring 2023, giving AFSA the opportunity to participate and offer our suggestions in working groups and stakeholder forums.

include diverse voices in this process.

AFSA and USAID signed a memorandum on the reform process in spring 2023, giving AFSA the opportunity to participate and offer our suggestions in working groups and stakeholder forums. Agency leaders are listening. There is much that we have agreed on, and there are areas where we don't and won't agree; but AFSA and USAID FSOs are, have been, and will continue to be at the table as these reforms are developed.

This year DEIA achievements will be reported under the "advancing agency objectives" section, as announced last March and reiterated by Counselor Clinton White's July message, "Updates to Foreign Service Performance Management to Create a Future-Ready Workforce." This notice and others included links to support FSOs implementing DEIA and to prepare them for this upcoming performance report.

It's not the first time an administration has asked FSOs to demonstrate that they've met a specific

agency policy. Under Administrator Rajiv Shah, FSOs were directed to address the "USAID Forward" reform agenda. DEIA is not new to USAID, and the vast majority of USAID FSOs already embody and employ DEIA principles. This year, though, we need to be explicit in detailing how.

By early 2024, the agency should have hosted several sessions on the upcoming promotion cycle and published more resources. These, along with others developed since 2017 and 2018, are helpful guides.

Refer to the "Employee Performance and Development" and the "Office of the Chief Diversity Officer" webpages on USAID's intranet for help. Finally, the TindAAR group is an FSO-led, peer-to-peer program intended to help you survive promotion season.

It's a tough time of year, but remember: Help is available, so don't hesitate to ask me or others in your network. It's never too early to start, and never too early to prepare for 2025 and the inclusion of DEIA as our fifth core competency. ■



Signs of a Spring Thaw?

Not long ago, AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi and I met with Arun Venkataraman, the Commerce Department's assistant secretary for global markets and Director General (DG) of the Foreign Commercial Service. I believe it was the first time that Global Markets leadership in this administration has taken the time to meet with the union.

We enjoyed a cordial, frank, and open conversation about the state of our Service. While many things are going well for Global Markets and the International Trade Administration (ITA), we continue to face significant headwinds—budget woes and operational

inefficiencies chief among them. Good news tends to flow upward in organizations, so it was not surprising that leadership appeared concerned when I shared some insights about the culture and other challenges that officers are facing.

As the AFSA VP for FCS, I often only see one side of the organizational balance sheet. I tend to hear about the difficulties that occur in ITA, as I am far removed from overseas and many of the rewarding aspects of our roles. It's no wonder that AFSA and management see things differently at times. Thankfully the meeting with

Arun helped paved the way for further discussion and collaboration on issues that affect the professional and personal lives of our officer corps.

In December, Tom and I received a kind and thoughtful year-end message from Secretary Gina Raimondo. Her grandfather, she told us, was a union member, and she strongly supports the work and role that unions play at Commerce and in the United States.

This was the first time in memory that AFSA has received such a letter from the Secretary of Commerce. I hope to see her at our cen-

tennial gala this May, where I can thank her in person for her note.

I have also been fortunate to meet other top leadership within ITA and Commerce to share our stories and advocate for our cause. More doors are opening for AFSA, which will pay dividends in the coming months.

Many issues between AFSA and FCS management are still unresolved, yet with the relationships being nurtured in the Herbert Clark Hoover building and with the administration, I remain hopeful that 2024 will be a good year for our officer corps and for Commerce as a whole. ■

Federal Benefits Series 2024 Insurance Update

On Nov. 16, 2023, AFSA welcomed Paula Jakob, CEO and executive vice president of the American Foreign Service Protective Association (AFSPA), for an online presentation on the 2024 Federal Employee Health benefits (FEHB) insurance program, including a discussion of Medicare and FEHB updates. She fielded questions from active-duty and retired members about their FEHB and Medicare benefits.

Paula stepped down from her position at AFSPA in December 2023 after a long and distinguished career. She was known as an unflagging advocate for providing the best care possible for participants in the Foreign Service Benefit Plan (FSBP) and as an expert in the complex world of the FEHB and health care writ large. Kyle Longton, who was formerly AFSPA's chief operating officer, has succeeded Paula.

Members can view a recording of the event at <https://afsa.org/afsa-videos>. ■



AFSA Governing Board Meetings

December 6, 2023

The following action item was decided upon:

Legal Defense Fund Request: With one recusal, the board agreed to provide up to \$10,000 in Legal Defense Fund support for a retired member who was called to testify on Capitol Hill regarding the Afghanistan withdrawal.

January 17, 2024

The following action items were decided upon:

Advocacy Reports: The board approved the advocacy list for the second session of the 118th Congress and ratified the list of AFSA-supported bills introduced in the 118th Congress.

Resignation/Appointment: The board accepted the resignation of Lisa Ahramjian, effective July 1, 2024, from the position of FAS vice president due to her reassignment overseas. The board appointed Evan Mangino to serve as FAS vice president, effective July 1, 2024. ■



Esprit de Corps

At AFSA headquarters recently, a draft message to members circulated for Governing Board clearance. When I saw that it referred to the “foreign service” four times in all lowercase letters, I immediately responded that, while international business executives and religious missionaries may participate in “foreign service,” we are in *the* Foreign Service, which is always capitalized.

Not all newspapers follow that rule, but it is always capitalized in federal law, executive branch documents, federal court decisions, and in *The Foreign Service Journal*. HQ corrected the draft before

transmitting the message to members.

Capitalization may seem to some like a minor editing issue, but it is not. The Foreign Service enjoys a variety of financial and other benefits that are not afforded by federal law to the Civil Service, including enhanced retirement benefits, special consideration when applying for in-state college tuition, and beneficial treatment when calculating capital gains tax due upon the sale of a primary residence after an extended absence.

To maintain our benefits, it is vital for the Foreign Service to continue to be recognized

as a corps of professionals distinct from the Civil Service. While that includes capitalizing “Foreign Service,” the substantive basis for the differentiation is that our conditions of service more closely resemble those of the uniformed military than of the Civil Service. Any drift in our conditions of service towards that of the Civil Service could someday prompt Congress to reconsider our unique benefits.

A future Foreign Service must keep its rigorous exam process to remain distinct from the Civil Service. A future Foreign Service must also welcome diverse members while ensuring worldwide staffing needs are met. And while I would support raising

the mandatory retirement age to 67 to match the full Social Security retirement age, a complete abandonment of mandatory retirement would make the Foreign Service less distinct from the Civil Service.

As a Foreign Service retiree, I no longer have “skin in the game” by serving overseas in harm’s way. As a baby boomer, I undoubtedly have some opinions that differ from those of the current generation of Foreign Service members.

Thus, I believe that it is primarily up to current and future Foreign Service members to chart the future of their profession. But, having invested three decades in that profession, I hope that they choose carefully. ■

AFSA Welcomes New USAID Class

On Nov. 14, 2023, AFSA hosted USAID’s newest Career Candidate Corps class.

AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi and USAID Vice President Randy Chester welcomed the 10 members of Class 38 to the Foreign Service and outlined the benefits of becoming an AFSA member. USAID AFSA Representative Christopher Saenger and Sue Bremner, AFSA’s USAID labor management adviser, also met with the class.

The 10 class members combined speak nine foreign languages and have worked or studied in 54 countries. Seven class members have prior experience working for USAID, six have worked in other government agencies in the past, four have Peace Corps experience, and four have worked in the private sector.

They include a glass blower, a pilot, a soccer player, and even someone who traveled 32 hours by bus just to run a marathon—that person ought to do fine on a 24-hour journey to their new post.

Please join us in welcoming Class 38 to the Foreign Service. ■

College Scholarships Available

Applications are now open for nearly \$400,000 in college aid to children of AFSA members.

Financial Aid: In 2024, AFSA will award \$223,000 in need-based financial aid to incoming or current college undergraduates. Last year, 71 students were awarded scholarships ranging from \$2,000 to \$6,000.

Merit Aid: In 2024, AFSA will award \$143,500 in merit aid to high school seniors. Last year, 158 students applied, and 39 received grants. Most scholarships amount to \$3,500 and will be given in four categories: academic merit, art merit, community service, and best essay.

The AFSA Scholarship Program is made possible through generous donations from our partners at BlueCross BlueShield and DACOR, as well as numerous donations from individuals. No AFSA membership dues are used for the AFSA Scholarship Program.

The application deadline is midnight on March 11, 2024. For full details or to apply, visit <https://afsa.org/scholar>. ■





Third Year of Robust Authorization Acts

In late 2023, AFSA celebrated the inclusion of our priorities in the 2023 State Department Authorization Act, which was attached to the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (FY24 NDAA). For the third year in a row, the State Department Authorization Act was part of this larger authorizing vehicle and became law. AFSA is especially grateful for the lawmakers and congressional staff who prioritized the passage of this annual authorization bill at a time when few bills stand a chance of becoming law.

In December 2023, we saw the passage of arguably the most robust State Department Authorization Act yet. Provisions in this bill will affect large and varied segments of the Foreign Service including pet owners, tandems, and those serving in hardship posts.

For example, the bill included a Fly America Act exception for FS members traveling with pets. This provision will build on an earlier AFSA advocacy win: a separate allowance for pet travel up to \$4,000, which the State Department implemented in spring 2023.

The 2023 State Authorization Act also includes a provision requiring the department to provide and pay for internet services on U.S. government owned or leased property in foreign

countries where personnel receive a 30 percent hardship post differential.

Provisions pushed by AFSA in this year's bill largely focused on easing life in the Foreign Service and on retention. Thus, members of the Foreign Service have many provisions to celebrate in the latest authorization bill, as well as the continued trend of passing a large-scale authorization bill that includes Foreign Service-related provisions.

Throughout a two-year Congress, it is typical for more than 300 bills to become law. In the first year of a two-year Congress, we typically see close to 100 bills become law. In 2023, or the first year of the 118th Congress, just 34 bills or resolutions were signed.

The challenging congressional environment of thin partisan margins in both chambers means AFSA must find the few existing opportunities to push our legislative priorities. We are fortunate to have a broad authorization bill that gives us a fighting chance.

As a reminder, bills affecting the Foreign Service have been attached to the NDAA since 2021. In the FY22 NDAA, we saw passage of the Foreign Service Families Act separate from the State Department Authorization Act. This bill provides in-state tuition rates at

AFSA is especially grateful for the lawmakers and congressional staff who prioritized the passage of this annual authorization bill at a time when few bills stand a chance of becoming law.

public institutions of higher education in one's state of domicile to members of the Foreign Service, their spouses, and dependents. It also extends provisions of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to the Foreign Service, including the ability to terminate residential leases, motor vehicle leases, and telephone service contracts without penalty when given orders to serve overseas.

We also saw passage of the 2021 State Authorization Act in this same NDAA, which included a provision enabling State employees subjected to an assignment restriction or preclusion to have the same appeal rights as provided by the department when a security clearance is denied or revoked.

In December 2022, AFSA saw the passage of another State Department Authorization Act. This one included third-party verification of employment to ease implementation of the lease-breaking provisions in the Foreign Service Families Act, as well as a provision providing members of the Civil Service on DETO (domestic

employee teleworking overseas) agreements locality pay or overseas comparability pay (whichever is less). This addition allows more Foreign Service families to move overseas without significant cuts to spousal pay.

Moving forward, AFSA hopes to build on its past wins and expand any beneficial provisions that do not apply to all foreign affairs agencies. We can push for adjustment of past legislation where necessary and advocate for changes as new challenges emerge and long-standing problems are exacerbated.

AFSA will also continue to advocate for provisions it has sought in past authorization bills, such as per diem for new local Foreign Service hires and the protection of pensions for retirees who are re-employed by the State Department.

AFSA's advocacy centers on passage of this bill each year with the hope that annual State Department authorization bills can continue. ■

On the Agenda: Road Safety

On Dec. 5, 2023, AFSA leaders met again with Rochelle Sobel, president of the Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT), continuing a discussion of ways in which the two organizations can combine forces to raise awareness and push for enactment of global road safety measures.

Sobel founded ASIRT in 1995, after a bus accident in Türkiye killed her then 25-year-old son, Aron, and 22 other passengers. AFSA leaders explained that improving road safety overseas and domestically is a key priority for our members; AFSA is pushing to get road safety added to new employee briefings at every post overseas.

Former AFSA President Ambassador Eric Rubin wrote about ASIRT and the urgent need for improved road safety in the April 2023 edition of *The Foreign Service Journal*.

As Amb. Rubin noted, road safety is a serious issue for the Foreign Service. In fact, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, car accidents are the leading cause of death for U.S. citizens—including Foreign Service members—living and working overseas. One of the State Department's

own awards is named after the late Hayden Brown, a Foreign Service officer who lost his life in a car crash while on assignment in India in 2017.

Today, ASIRT publishes road safety reports for its members overseas; they offer AFSA members a 20 percent discount on the reports. Go to <https://bit.ly/Register-ASIRT>, enter \$40 as the payment amount (the original price is \$60 per report), and select “corporate/nonprofit agreement” as the subscription purchase level.

AFSA conducted a road safety survey of its members in 2023; the results can be found in the September 2023 *Foreign Service Journal*. For more information on ASIRT, visit www.asirt.org. Stay safe out there. ■



At the ASIRT Gala on Nov. 15, 2023, from left: AFSA/ASIRT board member Kimberly Harrington, ASIRT founder Rochelle Sobel, AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi, and Amb. Eric Rubin.

AFSA/SEAN O'CONNOR

AFSA Meets with Employee Organizations

In late 2023, following the horrific Oct. 7 attack on Israel by Hamas and the subsequent Israeli response and humanitarian crisis in Gaza, AFSA management met with several employee organizations at the State Department to discuss their priorities and concerns.

In each of these meetings, AFSA reiterated the importance of the internal Dissent Channel for constructive dissent on policy issues and discussed AFSA Governing Board efforts to increase department mental health services.

On Oct. 30, AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi, State VP Tina Wong, and State Representatives Greg Floyd and Lynette Behnke met with employee organization **American Muslims and Friends at State**.

AMFAS was started to foster community among Muslim employees and those employees interested in Muslim cultures. This EO provides members with mentoring, professional development, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) resources, and opportunities for employees and prospective employees to learn about the U.S. Department of State, and to advance diversity, inclusion, and equity in the department. AMFAS leaders discussed the need for prayer or meditation rooms to accommodate religious practices, both at Main State and overseas; they specifically noted the lack of a

prayer room in the Harry S Truman Building.

Members interested in joining or working with AMFAS should email AMFAS@state.gov.

On Nov. 1, Yazdgerdi, Wong, Floyd, and State Representative Kim Harrington met with members of **Arab Americans in Foreign Affairs Agencies**. AAIFAA works to promote and protect cultural, linguistic, personal, and professional assets shared by Arab Americans. AAIFAA leadership discussed the rise in anti-Arab and Islamophobic sentiment in the United States and ways to support Arab American staff at the department.

Members interested in learning more can contact AAIFAABoard@state.gov.

On Jan. 9, Yazdgerdi, Wong, Floyd, and Behnke met with members of the **Jewish Americans in Diplomacy** employee organization. JAD advocates for Jewish employees' religious and cultural needs and concerns, counters antisemitism, and promotes religious tolerance and human rights within the department. JAD leadership discussed concerns about rising antisemitism at the department and across the U.S.

For more information, please contact JAD-board@state.gov.

AFSA continues to meet with employee organizations to keep in touch with their concerns and offer support. ■

AFSA Releases Cost of Living Survey Results

The 2024 AFSA Cost of Living Survey generated a higher response than any previous survey, with 2,868 responses out of approximately 13,000 active-duty members—a 22 percent response rate.

Respondents were from diverse demographics, many cones and specialties, and multiple AFSA constituent agencies. As with our other surveys, most respondents came from the mid-ranks.

Survey respondents overwhelmingly told us that the cost of living in the Washington, D.C., region and in other expensive U.S. cities has had a marked, negative effect on members' willingness to bid on domestic positions. When asked if the cost of living affects their willingness to bid on Washington jobs, fully 79.9 percent of respondents said it had a "substantial effect" and 16.9 percent said it had a "moderate effect."

This poses challenges for individual career growth and for the health of the Foreign Service as a whole: For some, missing out on the knowledge and understanding of the policymaking process could reduce their effectiveness in later positions, especially at senior levels. In addition, having an unbalanced skills and experience base could undermine the long-term institutional influence of the Foreign Service.

AFSA has shared the survey results with senior agency officials and is in active

discussion with them on possible incentives to serve in Washington, D.C. Among our principal requests are an increase in the Home Service Transfer Allowance (HSTA), a separate and improved electronics replacement allowance, boosted childcare and transportation/parking subsidies, more services to enable faster and easier spouse employment, and expanded access to the student loan repayment program.

Washington Housing Costs Beyond Reach. More than 80 percent of respondents identified housing as the major factor in the high cost of living in Washington, D.C., (and some other expensive domestic assignments like New York) and the driving force in decisions not to pursue Washington positions.

Those in domestic assignments now or in the recent past noted that they are liv-

Respondents were from diverse demographics, many cones and specialties, and multiple AFSA constituent agencies.

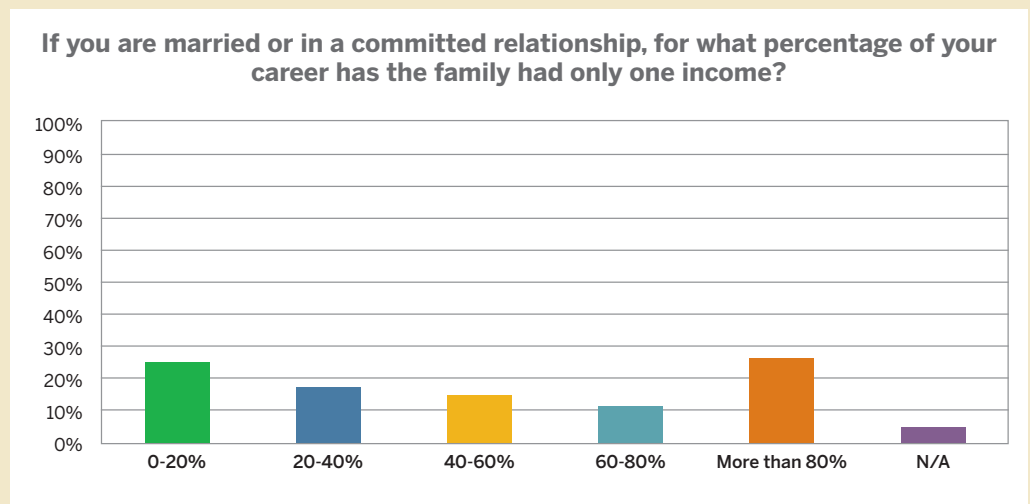
ing farther and farther from work to be able to afford their housing. Seventy-nine percent of respondents told us they would live closer to work if expense were not a factor.

For the largest number of respondents, food and groceries as a category was the second-highest expense, followed by transportation. For parents/caregivers, dependent care costs were slightly higher than transportation. Other significant expenses mentioned by members were health care costs and student loan repayments.

Commuting Longer, Paying More. More than half of our respondents travel or traveled between 30 and 60 minutes to work, and 15

percent travel more than an hour. The majority use public transit; most of the rest drive, bike, or van pool. Commuting costs decreased markedly during the pandemic, when working from home was mandatory, but times have changed. Eighty-five percent of respondents told us that if telework policies were further tightened, it would increase their overall commuting expenses by between 20 and 40 percent.

Lack of Consistent Second Income. Survey respondents pinpointed the lack of a consistent second income in households with at least one dependent as the factor having the most harmful impact on finances.



The overwhelming majority of families lived on one income for a significant portion of a Foreign Service member's career. More than a quarter of respondents with at least one dependent said that for more than 80 percent of the Foreign Service member's career, they have relied on one income.

When asked about possible factors that would help Foreign Service members with spouses or partners, having a consistent second income was the preferred situation, with more tandem and DETO opportunities coming in second.

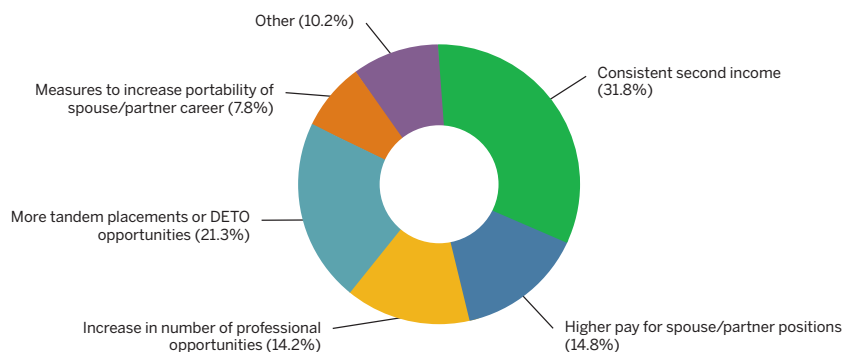
High Costs for Childcare—Many Bearing Costs Alone.

The survey showed that most respondents pay between \$2,500 and \$3,500 per month for childcare/dependent care, and almost half of survey respondents with dependents told us they are solely financially responsible for these dependents.

When given a choice of remedies for the high cost and low availability of childcare, most respondents chose an increase in the childcare subsidy over an increase in the availability of on-site childcare, citing the flexibility of the subsidy.

Regarding telework and childcare/dependent care, 60 percent noted that a return to the office four or five days a week would have a moderate or substantial effect on their child and dependent care arrangements.

Which possible solution would be most financially beneficial to your family?



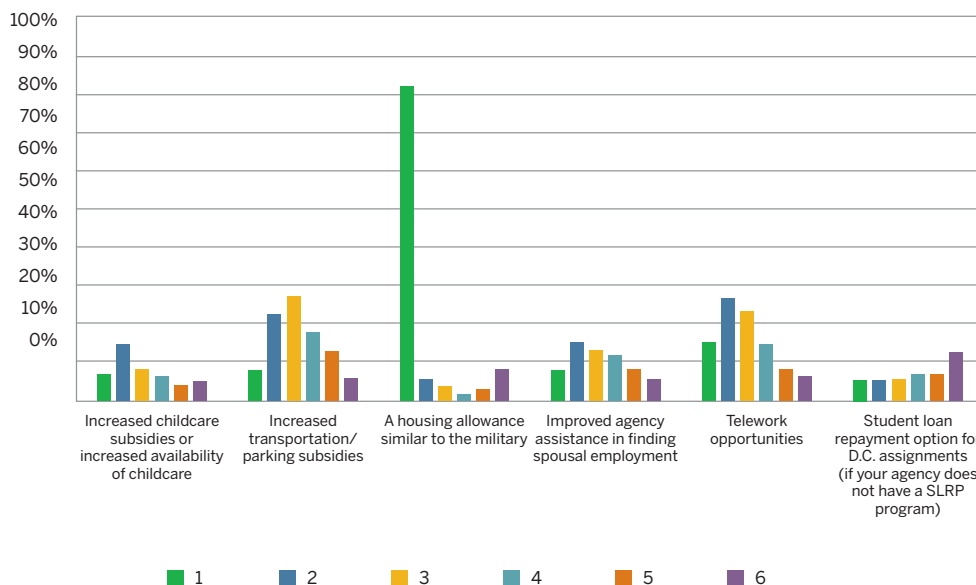
Domestic Housing Allowance Preferred Incentive.

When asked which incentives to serve domestically would have the most impact, more than 80 percent of respondents mentioned a housing

allowance, akin to the military's; some mentioned an increase in locality pay or an increase in parking or childcare subsidies. Respondents' recommendations for other incentives included an

increase in some allowances, linked assignments from Washington, D.C., overtime pay, flexible work hours, and an expansion of the student loan program to include those serving in domestic positions. ■

What incentives would be most useful in persuading you to bid on a Washington, D.C. job? Please rank the options in the matrix below on a scale from 1 to 6 with #1 being the most useful.



Employee Spotlight: Ásgeir Sigfússon

It seems likely that, as a kid growing up in Iceland, Ásgeir Sigfússon never heard of the American Foreign Service Association. So we had to ask: How did a boy who grew up in Iceland end up as the executive director of a D.C.-based, global organization focusing on issues of importance to the U.S. Foreign Service?

"A relative was a diplomat in Iceland, and we visited them at post a couple of times," explains Ásgeir. "My family also knew one of our foreign ministers and her husband personally, so that felt cool and completely attainable as a future career goal."

Thus armed with dreams of diplomacy, Ásgeir left Iceland in 1997 to attend the University of Pennsylvania, where



Ásgeir Sigfússon

he majored in international relations. From there, he moved to Washington, D.C., to earn a master's from the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

But why AFSA?

"I stumbled into an internship with AFSA during my first semester of grad school at Georgetown in August 2001, and I was on the Hill with our advocacy team on September 11," says Ásgeir. "You would think that might have scared me away from staying, but no: I stayed with AFSA as an intern throughout graduate school and was offered a full-time position when I graduated."

Ásgeir became a full-time employee of AFSA on July 7, 2003, and he's since become an invaluable part of the organization, rising from assistant

to the vice president to director of new media to director of communications before becoming executive director.

"I love how every day at AFSA is different," Ásgeir says. He finds the variety essential to being challenged at work. He also likes the fact that AFSA is a small organization because "it's possible to make positive organizational change without slaying too many dragons along the way." He adds, "It's great to have worked with a succession of supportive boards and presidents."

Current AFSA President Tom Yazdgerdi says: "Ásgeir is a tremendous asset to our organization. He knows our history and believes in our goals. We're fortunate to have him on our team."

Ásgeir still returns to Iceland as often as possible. "My COVID madness was to purchase an apartment in



Ásgeir and his husband, Sean, in Sapporo, Japan, in January 2020.

COURTESY ÁSGEIR SIGFÚSSON

Reykjavík and we have been enjoying the process of creating a home there although there is no plan to live there for long periods until retirement." He loves taking road trips and tries to visit two new countries each year.

Ásgeir points to family and friends as a source of happiness. "I consider myself extremely lucky in the family and friends that surround me, and I spend as much time with them as I possibly can."

Here at AFSA, we consider ourselves lucky to have Ásgeir as a friend and trusted colleague. ■

AFSA Editorial Board Welcomes New Member

The Foreign Service Journal is excited to welcome Ambassador Jennifer Zimdahl Galt to its editorial board.

Amb. Galt is a Senior Foreign Service officer and longtime AFSA member currently serving as an assessor with the Board of Examiners in Washington, D.C. She joined the Foreign Service in 1989 and has served in

Taipei, Mumbai, Beijing, Shanghai, Brussels, Guangzhou, Honolulu, and as ambassador to Mongolia (2015-2017).

Her breadth of experience as an FSO and leader, and as a mentor for others, is a welcome addition to the Editorial Board. Her June



Jennifer Zimdahl Galt

2015 *FSJ* article, "Diversity in Diplomacy: The Mentorship Dimension," is still relevant today.

Galt says the *Journal* "plays a critical role as a forum for Foreign Service professionals to share policy challenges, reminding newer members of the historical

context for today's crises and providing information on the unique features of FS life, from moving to education to financial planning."

Editorial Board member and retired Foreign Service Officer Jane Carpenter-Rock has moved on after completing a two-year term on the board. We thank Jane for her always thoughtful insights and guidance. ■

AFSA Welcomes New Comms Director

AFSA is pleased to welcome Nikki Gamer to the team. Nikki joins AFSA as the director of communications and outreach, responsible for developing public relations strategies and engaging with various external audiences in support of AFSA's mission and goals.

Nikki comes to AFSA with more than 15 years of experience in public relations and journalism, most recently as senior public affairs manager and writer for the global aid agency Catholic Relief Services (CRS). During her nearly nine-year career at CRS,

Nikki led the organization's media relations efforts, which included working with the international press corps to cover humanitarian emergencies and stories tied to global poverty.

Nikki's job at CRS took her to more than 25 countries and allowed her to work closely with the organization's Capitol Hill team on advocacy-driven communications. She won the 2022 award for excellence for op-eds/editorials from the Public Relations Society of America—Maryland Chapter.

A journalist by trade, Nikki is a passionate story-

teller who once produced a daily news and talk show on Baltimore's NPR-affiliate station, WYPR-FM. She is an adjunct professor in communications at Towson University and a volunteer mentor with the Baltimore-based nonprofit Adelante Latina.

Nikki holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from Brown University and a master's in journalism from Northwestern University.

Initially from Danvers, Massachusetts—close enough to Salem to develop a fondness for early Ameri-



Nikki Gamer

can history—she lives in Baltimore with her husband, Marc, and their two dogs. When not working, Nikki plays pickleball and tries (often unsuccessfully) to garden. ■

Next Stage: Life After the FS So You Want to Be an REA?

If you're thinking about retiring in the next few years, you probably know what "REA" stands for. If not: You should.

REAs—re-employed annuitants—are retirees who return to work for the State Department on a temporary, flexible basis. REA jobs, which used to be called WAEs for "while actually employed," offer a terrific opportunity for retired officers and specialists who want to continue working in some capacity even after they step down from their current positions. The jobs range from serving as a temporary chief of mission at a post in need to

reviewing FOIA requests.

On Oct. 24, 2023, AFSA's Retiree Counselor Dolores Brown invited Department of State Global Talent Management (GTM) Office of Talent Services Branch Chief Amy Merritt (who oversees the re-employed annuitant program) and REA Bureau Coordinators Sheila Hernandez and Dana Johnson to participate in an informational webinar for AFSA members who want to learn more about the inner workings of the REA program.

More than 800 people registered for this first-of-a-kind collaboration between

AFSA and GTM. As webinar participants learned, FS retirees from any agency can apply to be State Department REAs who assist with special projects and fill staffing gaps, both domestically and overseas. The positions are part-time; an REA cannot work more than 1,040 hours in an appointment year. REAs maintain their annuity payments while working.

Employees who are 30 days away from retirement can request to be added to GTM's REA registry. Hernandez and Johnson both emphasized the importance of approaching bureaus in

which you are interested to determine if there are positions available that match your experience and interests.

For a list of bureau coordinators, go to <https://bit.ly/REA-coordinators>.

As with most things related to the Foreign Service hiring process, there's some paperwork involved, so allow time to get processed. And make sure the contact information on your resume is up to date!

For more tips on becoming an REA, listen to the full talk at <https://bit.ly/REA-webinar-Oct23>. ■

Diplomats at Work

Lynette Behnke on Evacuating Ukraine

On Oct. 25, 2023, AFSA invited Foreign Service Officer Lynette Behnke to be our guest on AFSA's "Diplomats at Work" series. Behnke is currently the unit chief for the Republic of Korea and Mongolia in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

Behnke served as deputy political counselor in Kyiv ahead of Russia's 2022 attack on Ukraine. She currently serves as a State Department representative on the AFSA Governing Board.

Behnke talked about the work she and the rest of the team in Kyiv were doing in the leadup to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, when the U.S. and its allies were still working to determine exactly what the Russian government was planning.

"As we started to get inklings that something bigger might be coming, we had to really go into overdrive to try to figure out what was going on, what the Ukrainians were thinking about it, what our partners and allies were thinking about it," said Behnke. "I remember going to a meeting with the defense minister with the chief of mission and having a really hard and kind of scary conversation about what might come to pass."



Lynette Behnke

Later, with the invasion imminent, Behnke had to send her family out of Ukraine while she herself stayed on. She recalled taking

her kids sledding the night before they left for good.

"We didn't really know what was going on, but we did have to explain to my 4-year-old that she was

leaving, and mom

wasn't coming, ... she has to help keep the bad guys out of Kyiv. And so [my daughter] made me a sword out of cardboard. She cut out a sword and colored it and left it with me and said, 'This is to help you keep the bad guys out of Kyiv.'"

"I think it's one of the things that is incredible and not that well known about the Foreign Service: the sacrifices that all our families make. ... It's disruptive. Your kids have to make new friends; your partner has to find a new job. Families make these incredible sacrifices, and it became really obvious in that moment, with my family and with many other families. But it's true around the world."

Behnke commented on the stoic way Ukrainians took warnings of an imminent Russian invasion. "There was a real dissonance between the conversations we were having

internally with the government, and then walking around this city that was living its life to the fullest," in part because, she explained, "they were already occupied."

Ukrainians had been at war with Russia for eight years, and "they were used to the level of fear and

uncertainty that came with some of these stark warnings in a way that I certainly wasn't. ... I think the first time I heard an average person on the street talking in any way seriously about a Russian invasion was the weekend before I left the country."

Behnke also discussed the importance of diplomacy more broadly. She said a good diplomat is a "cross between a journalist and a lobbyist." Like journalists, she said, diplomats gather information and write reports. But like lobbyists, she explained, "you are going in and advocating and lobbying for issues or actions the U.S. government wants another government to take."

When asked what makes a good political officer, Behnke said interpersonal skills are important, as are writing skills. Diplomats need to "have hard conversations where people don't necessarily agree, whether that's



Lynette Behnke at the airport in Kyiv ahead of the Russian invasion.

COURTESY LYNETTE BEHNKE

with your colleagues or a foreign government."

A broad knowledge of global affairs is also important for any Foreign Service generalist. "You don't need to come in being an expert on South Korea in order to succeed," said Behnke, speaking of her current role. But you will need to "become an expert on South Korea in about one month, when you're then called on to speak for the U.S. government on Korea policy, for example."

Many thanks to Lynette Behnke for taking the time to share her experiences for Diplomats @ Work, an AFSA virtual speaker series designed to share inspiring stories about the work of Foreign Service officers with university students, community colleges, and other local organizations throughout the U.S.

Listen to the entire conversation at bit.ly/Behnke-Evacuating-Ukraine. ■

Keeping It Clean

After nearly two decades, we are pleased to inform our members that the State Department recently made changes to 14 FAM 563.2(4), allowing all Foreign Service employees traveling on temporary duty (TDY) within the United States for more than four consecutive nights to claim laundry, dry cleaning, and pressing costs as part of their incidental expenses.

In 2003 the department removed laundry and dry-cleaning benefits for FS employees in U.S. domestic TDYs, and we've been working to reinstate the benefits ever since.

This policy change will enable Diplomatic Security special agents involved in protective details and other assignments, as well as all those on TDY to New York City for the United Nations General Assembly and other U.S. domestic locations, to be reimbursed for the cost of keeping clean.

Contact us at member@afsa.org if you have any questions about the policy. We regret to inform you, however, that we cannot tell you how that tiny washer/dryer combo in your temporary lodging works. For that, we recommend asking your new neighbors. ■

AFSA Welcomes LM Intern

AFSA welcomes intern Shivane Anand to our Labor Management team. Shivane is a senior at George Washington University, where he is majoring in international affairs, with a concentration in conflict resolution, and minoring in both international business and Spanish.



Shivane Anand

Shivane says "I've fallen in love with the endless possibilities we can create in a democratic and diplomatic world."

Shivane has played golf with his dad since he was 4 years old, and he is currently the captain of the GW club golf team. He also enjoys cooking, working out, reading, and traveling. ■

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Honoring Fallen Colleagues The AFSA Memorial Plaques

The AFSA Memorial Plaques that grace the walls and columns of the Department of State's diplomatic entrance originated from a 1929 proposal by an AFSA member whose name was not recorded to create an honor roll memorializing American consular and diplomatic officers who died in circumstances distinctive to overseas service since the founding of the republic.

The original plaque, which is now displayed on the west wall of the C Street lobby, was unveiled on March 3, 1933,

L. Stimson stated that the memorial, "should serve as a means of bringing home to the people of this country the fact that we have a Service in our Government devoted to peaceful intercourse between the nations and the assistance of our peaceful commerce which, nevertheless, may occasionally exact from its servants a sacrifice the same as that which we expect from our soldiers and our sailors."

AFSA owns and manages the plaques, as authorized by a 1933 joint resolution of

Congress approving their placement on government property. New plaques have been added over the years as earlier plaques filled up.

A major expansion in 2021 replaced four panels dating from 1985

with reinscribed versions that added the dates and causes of death and inserted in chronological order the names of 67 early consuls and diplomats whose deaths had been recently discovered by researchers mining online databases. That expansion also placed six new black granite panels on the lobby columns, providing space for the names of 102 future colleagues should the sad

toll of Foreign Service deaths continue.

Criteria for inscription have varied over the decades, as the AFSA Governing Boards in different eras have wrestled with defining precise interpretations of eligibility. While there is a natural tendency to want to honor all overseas deaths of Foreign Service members including those from natural causes or in circumstances that could have happened domestically, doing so would diminish the emphasis on the distinctive dangers of life and work in the Foreign Service such as terrorism and vehicle accidents during official travel.

Moreover, with more than 1,000 recorded overseas deaths of early consuls and diplomats and post-1923 Foreign Service members, there is insufficient space in the C Street lobby to inscribe them all.

As of March 2024, 321 names are inscribed on the AFSA Memorial Plaques. Behind each name is the story of a colleague who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. The AFSA website (<https://afsa.org/memorial-plaques>) includes summaries of their service and circumstances of their death.

The website also features

AFSA's Good Works

To celebrate the centennial of AFSA's founding in 1924, each issue of The Foreign Service Journal this year will profile an AFSA program that advances the collective or individual interests of its members. This issue features the AFSA Memorial Plaques.

a virtual plaque where AFSA since 2021 has commemorated fallen colleagues from past decades and centuries as their names are newly discovered by researchers. Memorializing those historical names virtually preserves space on the physical plaques to honor future Foreign Service deaths.

In addition to the polished stone AFSA Memorial Plaques, AFSA sponsors five smaller bronze plaques in the C Street lobby. They honor Foreign Service family members who died overseas (co-sponsored by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide), diplomatic couriers who died in the line of duty, Foreign Service Nationals killed in the line of duty, military service members killed in the 1980 Iran hostage rescue attempt, and Foreign Service members who died of COVID-19 contracted overseas early in that global pandemic.

Annually for the past 50 years, AFSA has organized a ceremony in cooperation with the Department of State to unveil the names of newly fallen colleagues and commemorate existing names. This year's ceremony will be held on May 3.

—John K. Naland



The AFSA Memorial Plaques.

in the State, War, and Navy Building next to the White House (known today as the Eisenhower Executive Office Building). Made of Virginia greenstone, it was inscribed with 65 names beginning with William Palfrey, elected by the Continental Congress as consul in France, who died in 1780, lost at sea en route to his post.

At the unveiling ceremony, Secretary of State Henry

■ **Edward Alexander**, 103, a retired public affairs officer, passed away on Oct. 5, 2023, in Bethesda, Md.

Mr. Alexander was born in New York City in 1920 to survivors of the Armenian genocide. He earned a bachelor's degree in musicology from Columbia University followed by a master's degree from the Columbia School of Journalism. He joined the U.S. Army in World War II, serving in Europe on the staffs of Generals Eisenhower and Bradley in the psychological warfare division.

After the war, Mr. Alexander worked as public relations director to Sir Laurence Olivier on two Shakespeare films, "Henry V" and "Hamlet."

In 1950 he joined the Voice of America, organizing broadcasts to Soviet Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Tatarstan. He spent 10 years as chief of the Armenian Service with VOA.

During the Cold War, he served as a public affairs officer in West Berlin, Budapest, Athens, and East Berlin. He played a key role in the visits of President Kennedy to Berlin in 1963 and President Nixon to Bucharest in 1969.

During his career, Mr. Alexander arranged numerous cultural exchanges of renowned American musicians, conductors, composers, and actors, introducing European audiences to performances by Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Kirk Douglas, and Zsa Zsa Gabor, among others.

During his tour as deputy director for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Mr. Alexander traveled throughout the Soviet bloc supervising American press and cultural affairs.

Following his Foreign Service postings, he served on the Board for International Broadcasting, overseeing Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty broadcasts, at

the State Department in the Freedom of Information Division, and was spokesperson to three international conferences on human rights.

He was official escort and interpreter for the White House visit of Catholicos Vazgen I with President Bush in the Oval Office and also for the visit of former Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan. Shortly after Armenia's independence, Mr. Alexander was invited to Armenia to serve as adviser to the Foreign Ministry.

Mr. Alexander wrote three books: *The Serpent and the Bees*—about the 15-year attempt by the Soviet KGB to recruit him; *A Crime of Vengeance*—about the Berlin trial of the murder of Talaat Pasha, interior minister of the Ottoman Empire (a feature film based on his book is in production); and *Opus*—a novel about the search by two Armenian diplomats for a stolen Beethoven manuscript.

Mr. Alexander was an avid tennis player well into his 90s, a golfer, jazz authority, and devotee of gin martinis.

He leaves behind his wife of 77 years, Roseann; son Mark (and spouse JoAnn Palazzo); son Scott (and spouse Cathy Davis); son Christian (and spouse Arlene Saryan); and grandchildren Derek, Maya, Miranda, Garen, and Sean Alexander.

On a date yet to be determined, a memorial service will be held and his remains will be laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his memory to Traveling Doctors (for Nagorno-Karabakh refugees) at www.travelingdoctors.org, or to the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research at www.naasr.org.

■ **Maryfaith Blanchard (née Gastel)**, 78, a Foreign Service spouse, passed away peacefully on Dec. 4, 2023, at Shands

Hospital in Gainesville, Fla., of complications from sepsis.

Ms. Blanchard was born in Pittsburgh, Pa., on Nov. 25, 1945, the youngest of three children born to Ralph and Irene (née Nagy) Gastel.

As a child, Ms. Blanchard moved from Pittsburgh to Palm Springs, Calif., and considered this her hometown. She attended St. Theresa's Catholic School through the eighth grade and graduated from Palm Springs High School in 1963.

While in high school, she was a member of Teen Angels, an organization of young women who did charitable work in the area and raised money for the Angel View Crippled Children's Hospital.

She also worked as a fashion model for Robertson's department store until she moved with her family to McAllen, Texas, in 1965. There she became a local television fashion model for an upscale women's clothing store. She met her future husband, Philip Blanchard, while in Palm Springs, and they were married in Mission, Texas, in November 1966.

Ms. Blanchard accompanied her husband, a specialist with the Diplomatic Telecommunications Service (now IRM), on assignments with the State Department to La Paz (1967-1969); Paris (1969-1971); Manila (1971-1973); Kinshasa (1973-1974); Kuwait City (1974-1975); Washington, D.C. (1975-1980); Bonn (1980-1983); Cairo (1983-1985); Washington, D.C. (1985-1987); London (1987-1990); and Albuquerque, New Mexico (1990-1992).

Ms. Blanchard and her husband remained in New Mexico after his retirement in 1992, until they moved to The Villages, Fla., in 2000. She enjoyed traveling, meeting people, and making new friends wherever she lived.

Ms. Blanchard was outgoing and gregarious, a beautiful soul with an infectious smile. She was kind, generous, and full of

love for her family and friends. She was also very proud of her Hungarian heritage on her mother's side. In 2016 she was able to visit Budapest, on a Viking river cruise, to see her grandparents' birthplace.

Ms. Blanchard was devoted to her family, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. She enjoyed walking, water aerobics, and socializing with family and friends, and, most of all, she enjoyed spending time with her devoted husband, Philip. She will be deeply missed by her family and friends.

Ms. Blanchard was predeceased by her parents, Ralph and Irene Gastel, and her brother Dennis.

She is survived by her husband of 57 years, Philip Blanchard; sons Ted (and spouse Allison), Matthew (and spouse Lesli), and John (and spouse Dawn); daughter Candace Jimerson (and spouse Jonathon); and six grandchildren: Autumn (and spouse Thomas) Campbell II, Jacob Blanchard, Justin Blanchard, Trinity Barker, Jayden Barker and Noah Blanchard; great-grandsons Landon and Liam Campbell; brother Robert Gastel (and spouse Bonnie, deceased); and numerous nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, please donate in Ms. Blanchard's memory to Haven of Lake and Sumter Counties, 2600 South St., Leesburg FL 34748.

■ **Stephen W. Buck**, 82, a retired Foreign Service officer, passed away peacefully at home from congestive heart failure on April 30, 2023. He was preparing with his family to celebrate his 83rd birthday.

Mr. Buck was born on May 6, 1940, in Bronxville, N.Y., to Guernsey S. Buck and Kathryn Fay Symmes Buck. Most of his childhood was spent in Scarsdale, N.Y., with trips to Mill Valley, Calif., where his mother's family lived. When he was 14, his great aunt Ruth took him to Europe,

where he discovered his love of travel and began learning German.

On breaks from school, Mr. Buck was always hardworking and persuasive, whether delivering papers, mowing lawns, working his way up from the mailroom at a brokerage firm in New York, or selling Vicks VapoRub in the summer in the Midwest—becoming their best salesman ever despite having never used the product!

He attended Scarsdale High School before earning a full scholarship to Yale, where he was a history honors major and a ranking scholar.

One summer during college, he went to Düsseldorf with AIESEC, a program for American students interested in international economics. The following summer he studied Turkish in Ankara with AIESEC. He became fascinated with the Middle East, but realizing Turkish would allow him access to only one country in the region, he shifted to learning Arabic.

In the years to follow, he earned two graduate degrees from the Fletcher School at Tufts: an M.A. in law and diplomacy and an M.A. in international relations and international economics. He also earned an M.A. in Middle Eastern studies from Harvard.

After hearing President John F. Kennedy speak at his Yale graduation, Mr. Buck was inspired to become a Foreign Service officer. He entered the Foreign Service in 1963 while completing graduate work at Harvard. In 1965 he was posted to Algiers and was the most junior officer to remain there when most of the embassy was evacuated during and after the 1967 war.

Shortly afterward, Mr. Buck was sent to study Arabic in Beirut, where he met his wife and soulmate, Hala Lababidi, a Lebanese interior designer and translator who was working as assistant to the cultural affairs officer at the U.S. embassy.

The two were married in Beirut and moved to what was then South Yemen just a few weeks later.

On the Bucks' one-year anniversary, South Yemen broke relations with the U.S., and the couple experienced their first of several evacuations.

Between tours in Washington, D.C., Mr. Buck helped reopen the embassy in Mauritania; served as head of the economic/commercial section in Kuwait (1975-1979); deputy chief of mission (DCM) in Oman (1979-1983); DCM in Iraq during the final years of the Iran-Iraq War (1986-1988); minister counselor for political affairs in Canada (1990-1992); consul general in Saudi Arabia (1996-1999); and office director for North Africa (1992-1995).

After retiring from the Foreign Service in 2002, he and his wife made their home in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., where Mr. Buck continued to teach, speak, and write professionally. He edited *The Gulf, Energy and Global Security*, and authored articles in numerous publications, as well as serving on the editorial board of *The Foreign Service Journal* for many years. He taught courses on national security and energy economics at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (now the National Defense University) and discovered his love for teaching in the process.

Mr. Buck liked to say that he was lucky to have two careers: the Foreign Service and mentoring. He became active in the group Boys to Men and several other organizations mentoring and supporting young men and boys, many of whom looked to him as a beloved elder, known fondly as Grandpa.

He founded the Middle East Lunch Group at DACOR, co-founded the Middle East Task Force at River Road Unitarian Church, and founded a men's support group that has been active for 30 years.

Friends recall Mr. Buck had a wonder-

ful sense of humor and wore his broad knowledge and experience with unusual humility. He was also profoundly curious about things, people, and places that were unfamiliar to him.

His curiosity came with a lot of courage, whether trekking across North Africa in the 1960s; sleeping in Bedouin tents and making friends along the way; diving into the internal journeys of therapy, men's groups, and mentoring across the economic and racial divides of Washington and beyond; or facing the ultimate challenge of incurable disease. He encouraged his family, friends, mentees, and loved ones to "go for it" in every way possible and was there to cheer for them every step of the way.

His memorial service was packed with people of many ages, races, reli-

gions, and cultural backgrounds who spoke with deep emotion of how his generosity, support, and drive to help others had affected them and, in several cases, saved their lives.

Mr. Buck is survived and deeply missed by his sister, Ruth Ifversen, also a retired FSO thanks to her brother's wise counsel; his beloved wife, Hala, a writer, counselor, artist, art therapist, and cross-cultural educator; daughter Kathryn Leila, a writer, performer, educator, and facilitator; son-in-law Adam Abel, a visual artist and filmmaker; and beloved granddaughter Zayya Noora Buck Abel, who carries his bright blue eyes, beaming smile, boundless curiosity, love of people, food, and exploration, and his big loving heart.

■ **David "Dave" William Carr**, 87, a retired economist and Foreign Service officer, died on Dec. 29, 2023, at Peakview Assisted Living in Centennial, Colo., of Alzheimer's disease.

Mr. Carr was born on March 23, 1936, in Cambridge, Mass., to Earle and Penelope Carr. He grew up in Hingham, Mass., with his older brother, Robert. He graduated from Princeton University in 1958 and obtained an M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1959.

Mr. Carr married Kathleen Adelia Hanley on July 2, 1960, in Hingham, Mass. His first overseas posting with the State Department was to Amman (1960-1962). While posted to Beirut (1962-1964), his first daughter, Cynthia, was born.



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From 1964 to 1967, he was in Aden, where his second daughter, Elizabeth, was born.

The family returned to Beirut in 1967, just in time for Kate and the kids to be evacuated to Athens for six weeks due to the Six-Day War. They stayed in Beirut until starting a new assignment to Jeddah for six months in 1968.

In 1969 the family moved to Eastchester, N.Y. Mr. Carr worked for the National Foreign Trade Council in New York City for nine years. His third child, Christopher, was born in Massachusetts, and Mr. Carr earned his Ph.D. from New York University during that time.

In March 1979, he began working for USAID. He was posted in Damascus (1979-1980), Nouakchott (1980-1983), Cairo (1983-1987), and Washington, D.C., where he remained until his retirement in January 1993.

After retirement, Mr. Carr and his wife moved to New Bedford, Mass., until 2001, when they moved to Fort Collins, Colo. In 2018 the couple moved again, this time to Centennial, Colo.

Mr. Carr enjoyed playing tennis, collecting stamps, walking, biking, canoeing, kayaking, and generally being active. Travel was a passion, and he especially loved Kauai, Hawaii.

Mr. Carr was predeceased by his middle child, Elizabeth Leila Carr Zariello, and his brother, Robert W. Carr.

He is survived by his spouse, Kate Carr; daughter Cynthia Carr (and spouse Mark) of Centennial, Colo.; son Christopher Carr of Encino, Calif.; and grandchildren Daniel, Rebecca, Ian, and Leila.

Mr. Carr will be buried in Newington, N.H.

■ **Elizabeth Petersen Spiro Clark**, 86, a retired Foreign Service officer, died of cancer on Oct. 31, 2023, in Chevy Chase, Md.

Ms. Clark was born in New York City on May 30, 1937, to Howard and Elizabeth Petersen. She grew up in Washington, D.C., where her father was a senior War Department official, and then in Radnor, Pa. She graduated from the Agnes Irwin School and Radcliffe College.

After college, she held positions in public radio in Amherst, Mass., and Washington, D.C., and pursued a career as an operatic singer. She accompanied her first husband, Herbert Spiro, to Cameroon in the mid-1970s, where he served as ambassador to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea.

Upon her return to Washington, D.C., she was a consultant at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. While there, she co-edited *Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy* (1979), one of the first modern-era treatments of the topic.

Ms. Clark entered the Foreign Service in the political cone as part of its mid-level program in 1980. She had assignments in Reykjavik, Johannesburg, and Oslo.

For her reporting in Johannesburg, she was the first FSO to be awarded the National Intelligence Community's Exceptional Collector National HUMINT Award.

She also served as special assistant to the under secretary for political affairs. She subsequently directed the newly established State Department Human Rights and Democracy Fund in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

In 1993 she married Foreign Service Officer Warren Clark.

After retiring in 2000, she served as an election observer for the National Endowment for Democracy, with missions to Lebanon, Jordan, and Yemen.

Ms. Clark was as an editorial board member of *The Foreign Service Journal*, in which she published several articles. She was an active member of the Women's National Democratic Committee, serving

among other capacities as vice president for political affairs.

Ms. Clark was predeceased by her husband, who died in 2018. She is survived by two sons from her first marriage, Peter and Alexander Spiro; stepchildren Sarah Clark Stuart, Warren Clark, and Hope Clark; and eight grandchildren.

■ **Susan Woolley Hopper**, 82, a retired office management specialist and Foreign Service spouse, died of cardiac arrest due to mesenteric ischemia on Sept. 18, 2023, in Cooperstown, N.Y.

Ms. Hopper was born in Buffalo, N.Y., on Aug. 25, 1941. She joined the Foreign Service in 1968 and served in Accra, Zagreb, Bangkok, Stuttgart, and Cairo before marrying David Hopper, a State Department Foreign Service officer, in 1979. They then served together in Abu Dhabi, Krakow, Stockholm, Warsaw, and Beijing.

Ms. Hopper also spent time in the Political-Military Bureau and the bureaus of Near Eastern Affairs, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and Diplomatic Security in Washington, D.C.

Ms. Hopper retired in 2001 and accompanied her spouse to assignments in Melbourne, Chennai, and Ottawa. When Mr. Hopper retired in 2010, the couple moved to the small college town of Hamilton, N.Y., where she actively supported the hospital, library, garden club, and other local causes.

Ms. Hopper is survived by her husband, David, and daughter Ann, an FSO with USAID.

■ **Kit Allison Junge**, 66, a retired Foreign Service officer, died on Dec. 9, 2023, in Surprise, Ariz., from heart failure.

Ms. Junge was born on March 26, 1957, in Chicago, Ill., to Joyce and Hubert Junge. She grew up in the Seattle/Tacoma area

in Washington state and graduated from Foss High School in Tacoma in 1975. She attended the University of Washington.

In 1999 Ms. Junge joined the Foreign Service as a management officer. She served in Yerevan, Baku, Kolkata, Kigali, and Tunis before attending the Air War College in Alabama. She worked in Washington, D.C., before the start of COVID-19, when she began teleworking from her home in Arizona.

She retired from the Foreign Service in May 2021. In retirement she enjoyed building wooden ship replicas, cooking for friends, and taking care of her mom.

Those who served with her will remember her as a warm colleague who was always ready to happily brainstorm solutions to thorny problems, and one

who always had a kind word and a sympathetic ear. They will also remember her as an avid motorcyclist.

She had a generous heart and would help anyone in need. She will be greatly missed by all who loved her.

Ms. Junge was preceded in death by brother Scott Junge in August 2021. She is survived by her mother, Joyce Massick; sister Nina Bray; nieces Kristina Junge and Jessica Rooney; and nephews Dan Junge and Abraham Bray.

■ **Kurt Keith Kunze**, 80, a retired USAID Foreign Service officer, passed away on Dec. 14, 2023, in Salem, Va.

Born on March 6, 1943, in Chicago, Ill., to Otto Albert Kunze and Muriel Alyce Johnson, Mr. Kunze spent his early years

on his great-aunt's farm in Boone County, Ill. He graduated from North Boone Consolidated High School before earning a B.A. from Elmhurst College in 1965. He received a master's degree from Northern Illinois University in 1968.

Mr. Kunze married the love of his life, Amparo Fernandez Sanchez, on Aug. 5, 1967, embarking on a 56-year journey with her. From 1967 to 1977, he was active duty in the United States Air Force rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Air Force Reserves before his honorable discharge in 1992.

In 1977 Mr. Kunze joined USAID and served as a regional inspector general in Panama City (1977-1981), Nairobi (1985-1989), and Cairo (1992-1995). He was USAID's special agent in charge of central

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offices, Eastern Europe, and the Near East when he retired in 1997.

After retirement, Mr. and Ms. Kunze settled in Buchanan, Va. Over the next 26 years, they lovingly renovated their 19th-century home, cultivating a welcoming space for hosting family and friends. Mr. Kunze's love of nature, classical music, culinary pursuits—including gardening, foraging, and canning—and the companionship of his dogs defined his retirement years.

Mr. Kunze's gentle demeanor, kindness, and generosity endeared him to all who knew him.

The family extends heartfelt appreciation to the friends, family members, and neighbors who have reached out, sent messages and care packages, and offered their support during this challenging time.

He is survived by his wife, Amparo Kunze; three children, Erik Werner Kunze, Emily Allison Kunze, and Katia Maria Kunze; and his brother, Donald Charles Kunze (and spouse Eleanor Smith). He was predeceased by Bessie Church, Hattie Meyers, Otto Kunze, and Muriel Johnson.

A memorial service to honor Mr. Kunze's legacy will be announced by the family at a later date. Condolences and other communications can be sent to kurtkunze@gmail.com.

■ **André J. Navez**, 89, a retired Foreign Service officer, died in his sleep on Nov. 7, 2023, at his home in Hopkinton, Mass.

Mr. Navez's parents were Belgian. His father, Dr. Albert E. Navez, came to the United States after World War I in the first group of Commission for Relief in Belgium Fellows, spent 10 years at Harvard, and later was on the faculty of Boston University. He was Belgian consul in New England for many years.

Mr. Navez was born in Cambridge, Mass., and graduated from Milton Academy, Harvard College, the Fletcher School

of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and the National War College. He served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army at Thule Air Base in Greenland for 16 months and was an antiaircraft artillery battery commander in Belmont, Mass.

In 1960 Mr. Navez entered the Foreign Service as a political officer. Over the next 25 years, he was posted in Vientiane; Stanleyville and Bukavu in the Congo; Fort Lamy; Brussels; Addis Ababa; Djibouti; and in Washington, D.C., where he had assignments in the Executive Secretariat, Bureau of Personnel and Bureau of African Affairs, and on detail to NASA's Office of International Affairs.

After retiring in 1985, Mr. Navez returned to an old farmhouse that had belonged to his parents in Hopkinton, Mass. He expanded and modernized the house, doing much of the construction himself, cleared and planted fields and gardens, raised sheep and chickens, and grew vegetables.

He also volunteered on numerous town and private organization committees and boards with a focus on land and ecological preservation. He was especially happy to arrange to preserve the 48 acres of his property from development by giving most of the land to the state as a wildlife sanctuary abutting the Upton State Forest and protecting the remaining six acres around the house and gardens with a conservation restriction.

In retirement he pursued a lifelong interest in the natural world, antique cartography, birding, and foreign travel.

Mr. Navez is survived by his beloved wife, Christine R. Whittaker, who was a British civil servant and became a lawyer and Episcopal priest after immigrating to the United States.

His first wife, Judith L. Grapperhaus, died in 1992 after 29 years of marriage. There are no children from either marriage.

Consistent with his beliefs and wishes, there were no religious services. He donated his body to medical research and the education of future physicians.

Memorial donations may be made to Sudbury Valley Trustees, 18 Wolbach Road, Sudbury MA 01776.

■ **André Peter de Nesnera**, 72, a retired Foreign Service officer with Voice of America, died at home on Dec. 25, 2023, of complications from Parkinson's disease and long-term Guillain-Barré syndrome.

Born in Paris on Oct. 5, 1951, Mr. de Nesnera immigrated to the U.S. with his parents in 1954 and became a U.S. citizen at the height of the Vietnam War in 1972, when he was eligible to be drafted.

He received a B.A. in journalism from Fordham University, also in 1972, and an M.A. in international relations with a specialization in Soviet studies from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in 1977. He was fluent in French and Russian.

In the 1970s, Mr. de Nesnera worked as a French interpreter for the State Department's Visitor Escort Program. In 1972 he was hired as a desk assistant at CBS News in New York.

In 1980 Mr. de Nesnera began working for the Voice of America in Washington, D.C., as a general assignments editor and reporter, occasionally filling in at the White House, Capitol Hill, the State Department, and the Pentagon.

In 1984 he was named bureau chief of VOA's new Geneva bureau where, with his fluency in French and Russian, he covered OPEC and the U.S.-Soviet arms talks.

Popular, highly regarded, and known by everyone from high-ranking U.N. diplomats to security guards, he was soon elected president of the United Nations Press Association by his colleagues, who

amended the bylaws to allow him to become the first journalist to serve as president for three consecutive terms.

In 1989 he became VOA's first bureau chief in Moscow in the waning days of the Gorbachev era and the end of the Soviet Union. Covering a country with 15 republics that spanned 12 time zones meant the work was nonstop and exhilarating—a dream job for someone with his language skills and deep knowledge of Soviet history and culture.

On Dec. 7, 1990, however, he was medically evacuated from Russia, stricken with a rare but reversible total paralysis known as Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS). He would spend the next six months in Washington at Walter Reed Army Hospital, where he learned to walk, write, eat, and move all over again.

Eight months later, he returned to VOA's Washington headquarters in a wheelchair, where he became editor of the Russia desk and continued intensive physical therapy to regain his strength and mobility. Eventually, he could walk with the use of a cane, though he never recovered fully from GBS.

In 1994 he was sent to London as senior European correspondent focusing on the Northern Ireland story and the peace process. He covered other European stories as well as narrating the funeral of Princess Diana in 1997 for a worldwide radio audience.

Back in the U.S. in 1998, he became national security correspondent until he was named news director in 2000, a post he would hold for four and a half years.

Responsible for 185 journalists and support staff worldwide who provided news for an international audience of more than 300 million, he oversaw coverage of 9/11 and its aftermath as well as the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003.

A decision to air a news story that

included a portion of the last interview with Mullah Mohammed Omar, the head of the Taliban, brought the wrath of the State Department down on him in addition to several blisteringly critical op-ed pieces in *The New York Times*.

Despite persistent, intense heat, he held his ground, insisting that the principles of the VOA charter governed his decision to run the story.

For his courage and integrity, he was awarded the 2002 Tex Harris Award for Constructive Dissent by the American Foreign Service Association and the 2002 Payne Award for Ethics in Journalism by the University of Oregon.

The fallout from the Mullah Omar interview never let up, however, and in 2004 he was reassigned as VOA's senior diplomatic correspondent, a position he held until he retired in 2015. But the furor over what was seen as a politically motivated dismissal led to widespread coverage in the press along with massive protests by VOA newsroom journalists, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and the International Press Institute.

In a final note to his staff as news director, he wrote: "We must continue to be objective, to present all sides of a story and to tell the unflinching, unvarnished truth. That is the basis of our credibility. We cannot permit anyone to spin a story, omit a fact, slant a viewpoint. Though the government pays our salary, it has never bought our conscience. ...

"There must always be a place here for constructive dissent and we must brook no tolerance for anyone who would construe it as disloyalty, or worse, make it a punishable action or a reason for retaliation. To quote Edmund Burke, 'All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.' Or in the words of my countryman Voltaire: 'I may

not agree with what you say but I will defend to my death your right to say it.'"

Mr. de Nesnera is survived by his wife of 41 years, novelist Ellen Crosby; his sons, Peter (and spouse Claudia) of Stuttgart; Matt (and spouse Kristin) of Chicago, Ill.; and Tim of Fairfax, Va.; granddaughter Maeve; and siblings Alex (and spouse Susan) of Concord, N.H., and Elizabeth of Olivebridge, N.Y.

■ **Peter Tarnoff**, 86, a retired Foreign Service officer and former president of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), died on Nov. 1, 2023.

Mr. Tarnoff was born on April 19, 1937. He earned a B.A. in philosophy from Colgate University in 1958. He joined the State Department and went to his first post, as a political officer in Lagos, in 1962.

During 25 years in the department, he served in Nigeria, Vietnam, Germany, France, Luxembourg, and Washington, D.C. During the Carter administration, he served as special assistant to Secretaries of State Cyrus Vance and Edmund Muskie (1977-1981).

After retiring, Mr. Tarnoff became executive director of the San Francisco-based World Affairs Council of Northern California. He then became president of CFR (1986-1993) before returning to the State Department from 1993 to 1997 as the under secretary of State for political affairs.

In 1997, then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright presented Mr. Tarnoff with the State Department's highest award, the Distinguished Service Award, for extraordinary service in advancing American interests through creative and effective diplomacy.

■ **Lecile Webster**, 101, a retired Foreign Service member, died on Dec. 2, 2023, in Silver Spring, Md.

The daughter of Irene and Richard Webster, Ms. Webster was born on Jan. 7, 1922, and grew up in Fort Smith, Ark. She graduated from Lincoln High School—a historic segregated “colored school”—in 1940.

After World War II, she attended the Cleveland College in Cleveland, Ohio. In need of housing, she was referred to Ms. Mabelle Perry, who introduced her to the Baha’i faith.

Ms. Webster’s desire to secure meaningful employment and to be of service to humanity as implored by Baha’u’llah, founder of the Baha’i faith, led her to apply to the Foreign Service of the U.S. Department of State. She was working as a stenographer when she was invited to Washington, D.C., to take the Foreign Service exam.

Ms. Webster joined the Foreign Service during the Eisenhower administration in 1954 and served in Washington, D.C., Tokyo, Seoul, Mexico City, La Paz, Rio de Janeiro, Oslo, and Paris. She enjoyed interacting with people and exploring the cities where she was assigned.

Photographs she took while posted in Seoul were included in a book and an exhibit titled *Revisit: 1956-1957 Korea* at the Czung Institute for Contemporary Art (CICA) Museum.

In addition, as an active member of the Baha’i faith, Ms. Webster was recognized for her organizational and people skills. She was often called on to serve in volunteer administrative and leadership roles for local and national Baha’i spiritual assemblies in the countries to which she was posted. Also, she was invited to Haifa, Israel, to prepare the first staffing plans for the volunteers who were supporting the Universal House of Justice.

Ms. Webster used her vacation time to teach about the principles of the Oneness of Humanity in places including

Uganda, the U.K., Hong Kong, Macau, Iran, Malaysia, and India.

Ms. Webster retired in 1976 during the Ford administration. In retirement, she opened an international travel agency. In her spare time, she facilitated an exhaustive search and purchase process for a 44-acre regional Baha’i property in Prince George’s County, Md.

She will forever be remembered and cherished for her courageous service, loving kindness, and steadfast religious life and legacy.

Ms. Webster was preceded in death by her parents and by siblings Ardelia Dora, Richard, and Adams Jesse. She is survived by her extended family and many friends around the world.

■ **William J. Weinhold**, 84, a retired USIA Foreign Service officer, died on July 8, 2023.

Known to all as Bill, Mr. Weinhold was born on Jan. 13, 1939, in Sheboygan, Wis., to Wilmer and Gertrude Weinhold.

Mr. Weinhold grew up in Kohler, Wis., and graduated from a trade school in Chicago as a radio technician.

Inspired by President Kennedy’s 1960 speech announcing the creation of the Peace Corps, he successfully applied to be a Peace Corps volunteer in its inaugural year, 1961, and was sent to what was then Malaya (present-day Malaysia).

He met his future wife, Mary, in the same group of volunteers. As some of the very first Peace Corps volunteers, their cohort was seen off at the airport by Sargent Shriver, the first director of the Peace Corps. In Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Weinhold’s Peace Corps assignment was to help expand Radio Malaya, the national radio station.

He and Mary were married in Kuala Lumpur in 1962. It was one of the very first overseas marriages between

Peace Corps volunteers, and the wedding was covered by Voice of America (VOA) in its international broadcasts.

After serving two years in the Peace Corps, the Weinholds traveled extensively in Southeast and Central Asia before returning to Wisconsin, where Mr. Weinhold earned his B.A. from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee in 1966.

In 1967 Mr. Weinhold joined USIA and served in public diplomacy positions in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Burkina Faso, Myanmar, and South Africa. In Washington, D.C., he served in the Office of American Studies, the Bureau of African Affairs, and in what was then the Human Resources Bureau.

He retired in 2000 with more than 35 years of federal service.

In retirement, Mr. Weinhold actively served those in need in a variety of roles, including delivering meals, participating in musical performances at care institutions, and volunteering at The Closet, a charity store in Herndon, Va. He was also a participant in the Encore Chorale.

An avid sports fan, he was a fervent supporter of the Green Bay Packers, Milwaukee Brewers, and Washington Nationals.

Mr. Weinhold is remembered as being loving, kind, and generous.

He is survived by his wife, Mary; children Scott, Shana, and Patrick; and nine grandchildren. ■



If you would like us to include an obituary in In Memory, please send text to journal@afsa.org.

Be sure to include the date, place, and cause of death, as well as details of the individual’s Foreign Service career. Please place the name of the AFSA member to be memorialized in the subject line of your email.

How Pop Inspired War

We the Young Fighters: Pop Culture, Terror, and War in Sierra Leone

Marc Sommers, *University of Georgia Press*, 2023, \$32.95/paperback, e-book available, 488 pages.

REVIEWED BY ROBIN HOLZHAUER

The children on the cover of *We the Young Fighters* do not look particularly vicious, but they were. These youth—and the thousands they represent—maimed, raped, and killed thousands of people during Sierra Leone’s 11-year civil war that began in 1991.

Additional cognitive dissonance occurs when author Marc Sommers reveals that pop culture figures inspired the violence, including musician Bob Marley, rapper Tupac Shakur, and actor Sylvester Stallone’s Rambo character.

The seed for this book sprouted more than 20 years ago when Sommers interviewed refugees in Gambia. They spoke of Operation No Living Thing, a country-wide attack that ended on Jan. 6, 1999, in Freetown, Sierra Leone’s capital, where rebels, including teens, murdered infants and old men, burned people alive, gang-raped women, and tortured hospital patients. The refugees strongly recalled the aggressors’ drug use and what many wore—Tupac shirts and Rambo-style bandanas.

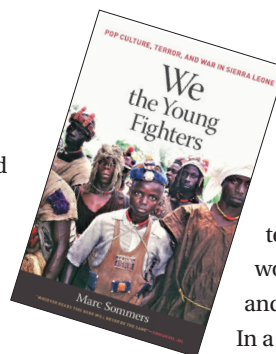
Thus began Sommers’ quest to learn more about how and why pop culture stars played an oversized role in inspiring children to kill. He learned people looked to Marley for inspiration, Tupac for friendship, and Rambo for instruction.

More than a treatise on pop culture, *We the Young Fighters* shows how Sierra Leone society, values, and history led to the war. Most significantly, it shows how

a “big man” patron concept propagated both by locals and colonizers put power into the hands of an older cohort of men, allowed for local and regional high-level figures to form and control warring factions, and left scant room for children to develop independence or have an adolescence.

Instead, girls became women only when they married. Boys could not achieve manhood without the support of a patron to make a living or marry. Would-be mentors withheld that support to enrich themselves. Males in their 40s could be “youth,” while pre-teen girls were “women” if they had a child.

Rebellion by youth against this “big man” concept, yet simultaneously serving older men as soldiers, is one of many contradictions in the civil war of Sierra Leone. Another is how men denied women education and subjected them to gross sexual violence because they thought women were powerful and must be dominated lest they take over.



as ruthless as the ones who massacred their families.

Of the atrocities committed during the war, the abuse of women stands out for its cruelty and its continuation after the war. In a 2013 research trip, Sommers found most prostitutes were girls under age 18; society did not see women as useful unless they were married; female genital mutilation occurred at ages even younger than before the war; and efforts at securing human rights for women or educating them were seen as disruptive to society.

Also of concern is the way people dealt with their trauma—by not talking about it. Trauma cannot be forgotten. If not worked through, it can manifest in destructive ways.

Scholars in African affairs will appreciate Sommers’ work and his use of others’ research in discussing academic and diplomatic controversies.

People with less knowledge about the continent may find some of the acronyms, names, and connections confusing, but

Scholars in African affairs will appreciate Sommers’ work and his use of others’ research in discussing academic and diplomatic controversies.

Sommers traces the effects of slavery, colonialism, and the devastating influence of Liberia’s Charles Taylor and Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi, Sierra Leone’s leaders, and diamond traders. All share blame for the chaos, including the recruitment of boys as young as 3 years old to armed groups. Often forcibly drugged and past victims of violence themselves, the new recruits became

Sommers reiterates and explains the varied strands of information, so readers need not be experts to understand the events and his conclusions.

Themes include the destructiveness of corruption, youths’ desire for growth, and the need for local leaders and international experts to rethink development aid if operating procedures exacerbate inequities.

Practitioners of diplomacy, development, and defense will find *We the Young Fighters* interesting for the missteps and mistakes highlighted and the optimism reflected in the “framework for reform” for fragile states. The framework redefines the terms “youth” and “gender”—the former often focusing on males and the latter on females—to better reflect their interconnectedness and to ensure girls are part of programs and policies.

A bigger draw for some will be learning how artists and characters they adore could inspire war crimes. Sommers does a fantastic job explaining how youth saw these icons—especially Bob Marley—as messengers who justified savagery and massive drug use.

Sommers does not blame the creators for how people interpreted their work, but I wonder how the influencers still living, such as *First Blood* author

David Morrell and actors Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger, would feel about their work fueling massacres.

Sommers says pop culture can validate indignation and provide a rationale for manipulation. This is not unique to Sierra Leone, as recent populist movements across the globe attest. Readers outside Africa may find inspiration from the book to aid domestic efforts to fight alienation, promote democracy, and ensure more equitable societies.

We the Young Fighters is more than history. Events in 2023 show the war’s lasting impact in Sierra Leone. The African Union assessed progress on reintegrating children affected by the war, and violence flared when the current president, who helped overthrow the government in 1992, won reelection. High levels of poverty and unemployment in some sub-Saharan African countries—and the

number of recent coups—show local and international actors must learn from Sierra Leone or the tragedy may repeat.

The mix of history, continuing ramifications of the war, and the framework for use in future unstable states makes *We the Young Fighters* an appealing read for scholars, diplomats, history buffs, and pop culture enthusiasts.

Robin Holzhauer is the senior editor at “Diplomatic Diary” and consults on communications, entrepreneurship, and foreign affairs issues. She previously served as a U.S. Foreign Service officer, worked as a journalist, and founded a not-for-profit public relations firm. During her 23 years in the Foreign Service, assignments included Russia, Kosovo, Venezuela, Lebanon, Gabon, Washington, D.C., Rhode Island (at the Navy War College), and Connecticut (at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy).

America’s Unsteady Emergence on the Global Stage

The Ghost at the Feast: America and the Collapse of World Order, 1900-1941

Robert Kagan, Knopf, 2023, \$35.00/
hardcover, e-book available, 688 pages.

REVIEWED BY JOSEPH L. NOVAK

Robert Kagan’s *The Ghost at the Feast* illuminates the contours of U.S. foreign policy in the early 20th century. It is the second volume of a projected historical trilogy, which began with *Dangerous Nation: America’s Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (2007). The arc of this narrative encompasses the Spanish-American War, World War I, and America’s sub-

sequent retreat into isolationism in the 1920s and 1930s.

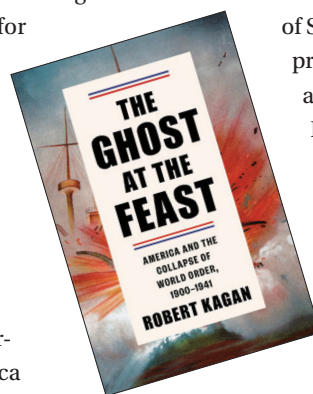
As a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a columnist for *The Washington Post*, Kagan is a veteran commentator on geopolitics. Sometimes referred to as a neoconservative, he is particularly well known for his past advocacy of U.S. intervention in Iraq.

More recently, he has persuasively argued that America and its allies must support Ukraine and counter the challenge to the rules-based multilateral order posed by Russia and China. His other books include *The Jungle Grows Back* (2018) and *The World America Made* (2012).

Additionally, Kagan maintains strong links with the State Department. In the 1980s, he served as Secretary of State George P. Shultz’s principal speechwriter and as a member of the Policy Planning Staff. In 2019, he co-wrote an article in *The Washington Post* with Antony Blinken, the future Secretary of State, promoting “active diplomacy and military deterrence.” He is

married to Acting Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer and ambassador.

In his most recent book, Kagan lucidly charts the course of the Spanish-American War of 1898 and its aftermath. While granting Cuba its independence in 1902,



Washington decided to retain other territories acquired during the war, including the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam.

Placing America's new imperial role in context, the author comments that it was "small beer" when contrasted with the British Empire, which at the time "stretched across more than 11 million square miles, with colonies on every continent."

Much of the book explores the U.S. response to World War I. Initially, President Woodrow Wilson and a large majority of the American public rejected "entanglements" in Europe and backed neutrality as a policy. The slogan of Wilson's successful presidential reelection campaign in 1916 was even the emphatically nonbellicose: "He has kept us out of war."

Kagan evocatively describes how American perspectives rapidly shifted due to Germany's missteps, most notably its resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. By 1917, Wilson was proclaiming his support for a world "made safe for democracy," and America—newly aligned with Britain and France—was in the war. Cited by Kagan as one of his sources, A. Scott Berg's 2013 biography of Wilson is essential in understanding the 28th president's startling transformation from a domestically focused politician to a globally renowned statesman.

The next section chronicles how the Senate's final rejection of the Treaty of Versailles in 1920 ended any chance of the United States assuming postwar multinational security responsibilities. As Kagan observes about the noninterventionist temper of the times: "Americans simply could not conceive of themselves as would-be global hegemony."

With America out of the picture, an international power vacuum was created, enabling the eventual rise of predatory

With America out of the picture, an international power vacuum was created, enabling the eventual rise of predatory autocracies.

autocracies. The U.S. government would remain on the sidelines as Imperial Japan, Fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany serially invaded other countries from the early 1930s onward.

Despite facing intense "America First" pressure at home, President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized that the Axis powers presented an acute threat to U.S. security. Kagan vividly relates how the president, going "as far as he thought the American public would allow," boosted the defense budget and extended assistance to Britain. The account ends with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. The "date which will live in infamy" would open the door to a new era of U.S. global engagement.

In navigating this complex terrain, Kagan always seems to come up with an illustrative quote. The book's title, for example, is derived from the following allusion to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* made by Harold Nicolson, a British delegate to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919: "The ghastly suspicion that the American people would not honour the signature of their own delegates was never mentioned between us: It became the ghost at all our feasts."

As is the case with most of his writings, a central theme in *The Ghost at the Feast* is Kagan's preference for assertive American leadership and the deployment of U.S. capabilities when it can make a difference. He convincingly contends, for instance, that Wilson's 1917 decision to join the war against "ruthless" Prussian militarism was the right one.

Kagan also underscores that America's sharp inward turn after World War I was a grave mistake because it foreclosed Washington's ability to shape European events. It's hard to deny the validity of his conclusion that the "determination" of Americans "in the 1920s and '30s never to be drawn into a war in Europe again had the effect of depriving them of the means and the mentality necessary to avoid precisely that fate."

Although *The Ghost at the Feast* is dense with information, the writing is fluid and elegant. It is also a genuine milestone with respect to synthesis and analysis. The endnotes go on for 124 pages and are an authoritative resource in and of themselves, as are the detailed maps and the comprehensive bibliography.

Judging by *Dangerous Nation* and *The Ghost at the Feast*, there is ample reason to look forward to the author's concluding installment in his history of U.S. foreign relations. Through his expanding catalog of works, Kagan has demonstrated that he has the stuff to rank among the most accomplished of diplomatic historians. Anyone seeking a deep dive into American statecraft would be wise to turn to his impressive oeuvre. ■

Joseph L. Novak is a writer based in Washington, D.C. He is a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in London and a retiree member of the American Foreign Service Association. A former lawyer, he was a Foreign Service officer for 30 years.

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David L. Mortimer, CPA / 69
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INSURANCE

AFSPA – AIP / 55
 AFSPA – Dental Plan / 33
 Clements Worldwide / 35
 FEDS Protection / 12

MISCELLANEOUS

Eyes & Ears / 42
 FSJ Gift Subscription / 3
 Fund for American Diplomacy / Inside Back Cover
JaggedLines magazine / 75
 State Department Federal Credit Union / 4

REAL ESTATE & PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Chambers Theory / 83
 Corporate Apartment Specialists / 84
 FSJ Guide to Property Management / 84
 McEneaney Associates / 85
 Peake Real Estate Group / Back Cover
 ProMax Management / 85
 Property Specialists, Inc. / 84
 Richey Property Management / 82
 Washington Management Services / 85
 WJD Management / 83

SUMMER CAMPS & PROGRAMS

Camp Soles / 49
 Girls First at The Madeira School / 42
 New England Innovation Academy / 19
 Westover School / 73

Serving at the Panda Post

BY DOUG KELLY

When I took up my assignment as consular chief in Chengdu in 1998, little did I know what I was getting into. Everyone understood that it was the jumping-off point for Tibet and that Tibetans and other minority nationalities lived just a few hours west and south of the city. That was a big reason why I had bid on the post and endured two years of Mandarin at the Foreign Service Institute.

But soon I was made aware of a fact that came to define the post for many: Chengdu was Panda Central. AmConsulate Chengdu spent a considerable amount of time ensuring that official visitors felt satisfied they had taken advantage of their visit to enjoy the Panda Experience.



Whether it was the deputy chief of mission in Beijing, China desk people from State, or congressional staff aides, they all clamored for photos of themselves with one of these cuddly creatures. For those not satisfied with a tame visit to the nearby Chengdu Panda Research Center, that meant taking the



Born in Charlottesville, Virginia, Doug Kelly joined the Foreign Service in 1987 after working as a surgical nurse in Vermont and a Peace Corps health volunteer in Congo. He spent most of his 22 years as an FSO in China and India. Doug and his wife, Laurel, now split their time between Berkeley, California, and Ludlow, Kentucky.



A trio of pandas chomp on bamboo at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in Sichuan, circa 2011.

visitors on an all-day trip deep into the mountains to the high bamboo forests of the Wolong National Nature Reserve.

All of us at the consulate reveled in Chengdu's reputation as the home and center of all things panda. We entertained our visitors with panda jokes (A panda walks into a bar ...), and the consulate's monthly newsletter was "The Panda Post." We even thought of dressing a colleague up in a panda suit and letting him roam the atrium for our guests' entertainment. He demurred.

What is it about pandas that elicits this response in people? Whatever it is, it is certainly real, and now with the recent decision by China to recall the pandas from American zoos, a certain national

"panda withdrawal" is going on among the general public.

The National Zoo's panda family—Mei Xiang the mom, Tian Tian the dad, and their son, Xiao Qi Ji—flew back to Chengdu in early November of last year.

This news got me thinking of when they first came to America, and the small part I played in their journey.



By way of background, in 1972, during President Richard Nixon's groundbreaking visit to China, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai announced a gift of a pair of pandas. The pair, Ling Ling and Hsing Hsing, produced five cubs during their time at the National Zoo, but none of them survived

more than a few days after birth. When both Ling Ling and Hsing Hsing passed away in the 1990s, there were no pandas left in the zoo.

Panda lovers clamored for new pandas to fill the void. The consulate in Chengdu was ground zero in the search, and we cooperated with local authorities to find a pair to send to the National Zoo. Finally, a pair was selected.

I don't remember exactly why I was picked to represent the United States at the pandas' Dec. 6, 2000, farewell at the Chengdu airport. I suspect it was because no one else "volunteered" to get up before dawn on a predictably damp, chilly winter day and listen to a speech wishing the

All of us at the consulate reveled in Chengdu's reputation as the home and center of all things panda.

eyes at this time). They were in their cages, about to be hoisted up to the door of the airplane.



I was told by the airport authorities that it would only be proper for me to accompany them to the plane's entrance, and as there seemed to be no other way to get up there, I gingerly stepped onto the metal platform supporting the pandas' cages.

looked into the brightly lit, retro-fitted-for-pandas first-class cabin. The smartly dressed, eager American flight attendants were excited to meet their VIP passengers.

I asked one of them about the flight path, and she proudly responded: "Direct nonstop to Washington, D.C." That seemed incredible to me at the time—nonstop flights for humans between Chengdu and the U.S. didn't start until 14 years later.

So I said my goodbyes to Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, stepped back onto the unsteady platform, and was lowered back down to the tarmac, little realizing that 23 years later, they would once again become pawns in the game of diplomacy.



In November 2023, there were no Americans to greet the pandas when their flight landed in Chengdu. China had ordered the closure of American Consulate Chengdu in July 2020, after the U.S. ordered the closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston a few days earlier.

There are reasons, however, to be optimistic about the future of pandas in America. At the recent Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting this past November in San Francisco, the Chinese floated the idea of sending a pair of pandas to the San Diego Zoo. Some observers see this as a sign of a thaw in bilateral relations. Can panda diplomacy once again lead to improved relations between the United States and China?

China hands would agree that Chengdu may have been the most fun post in China, and being Panda Central was certainly a big part of that. Eats shoots and leaves, we miss you. ■



The author with a panda in Wolong National Nature Reserve in Sichuan province in 1998. "The panda looks resigned to the (exciting for me, not for him) photo-op," notes Kelly.

pandas *yi lu ping an* ("bon voyage" in Mandarin Chinese) while shivering in the unheated departure lounge.

After the speech, I joined Mei Xiang and Tian Tian at the side of the chartered American airliner on the tarmac (their son, Xiao Qi Ji, was only a gleam in their

With a jerk and a clang, the platform was hoisted up toward the plane's door. My charges ignored me as they noisily munched clumps of bamboo, with me a few feet away clinging to a metal rail for balance in full formal diplomat attire.

When we finally reached the door, I

LOCAL LENS



We are grateful for the travel opportunities our Foreign Service life offers. Sometimes these opportunities live up to the hype. While researching our trip to New Zealand, we read about a church on an inland lake in the middle of South Island that is well known as a backdrop for spectacular sunrises and sunsets.

We arrived at Lake Tekapo midafternoon, with plenty of time to plan our sunset photo. As the hour approached, we observed a beautiful full moon, but other colors were decidedly lacking. A bit disappointed, we reminded ourselves we had a couple more days in the area and set our sights on the next morning's sunrise.

Though we arrived later than planned, we were rewarded with the stuff travelogues and dreams are made of: this stunning sunrise over the Church of the Good Shepherd in Lake Tekapo. Our jaws dropped as each minute that passed produced slightly different but equally breathtaking hues of the colors seen here. ■

Please submit your favorite, recent photograph to be considered for Local Lens. Images must be high resolution (at least 300 dpi at 8" x 10", or 1 MB or larger) and must not be in print elsewhere. Include a short description of the scene/event as well as your name, brief biodata, and the type of camera used. Send to localens@afsa.org.

Carole Fenton is the spouse of FSO Tom Fenton. She took this photo with an iPhone 13 Pro. Currently posted to Canberra, the couple have also served in Bangkok, Budapest, and Khartoum.

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