



# LETTERS

## Lesser Posts?

One inescapable and perverse consequence of Henry Ensher's clanging defense of promotion priority for those serving in posts linked to "the time and attention an issue gets from our political masters" (January Letters, "Iraq Is More Important") is that the next master class will, in turn, inherit the right to call the tune on career promotions, and so on into the future. I served in Accra, Athens, Brussels and Khartoum, but never thought of any of them as one of Ensher's "lesser posts."

*Alan D. Berlind  
Senior FSO, retired  
Bordeaux, France*

## Concerned FSOs

The September *FSJ* highlighted the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's impressive performance protecting American lives and diplomatic property and investigating criminal cases overseas, as well as serious problems in investigation and adjudication of security clearance suspension or revocation cases. My 18 years of experience as a DS special agent indicates both points are true. I have worked with some very fine DS officers, who do outstanding work.

As a member of the group Concerned Foreign Service Officers, I have also had the opportunity to see first-hand numerous examples of malfeasance or incompetence in security clearance cases. DS's laudable successes do not negate the need to correct these failures. The protection of national security does not justify the use of coercive interview techniques,

false statements, suppression of evidence, improper seizure of personal property, misrepresentation of regulations or other improprieties by those entrusted to protect us. If DS has to resort to such means to justify the suspension or revocation of security clearances, then something is badly in need of repair.

It is not just our careers that hang in the balance. When trained and experienced FSOs are suddenly curtailed, sidelined for years or forced out of the agency, operations are interrupted, efficiency is reduced and the ability of the department to perform its core mission is seriously eroded. Concerned Foreign Service Officers is a coalition of current and former Foreign Service officers concerned about these issues. Additional information can be found on our Web site, [www.worldcrafters.com](http://www.worldcrafters.com).

*William Savich  
DS Special Agent  
Concerned Foreign Service  
Officers member  
Herndon, Va.*

## Dialogue with Iran

Bravo for printing the article by Bruce Laingen, "25 Years Later, Time for Dialogue with Iran," in your January issue. I thought readers may be interested in the following note I sent Ambassador Laingen on the topic:

"It was with great interest and admiration for your professional uprightness and integrity that I read your article. You will recall that I made the same suggestion in messages to the Academy of Diplomacy some months

ago. Coming from you, the plea is more meaningful and perhaps also more acceptable to policy-makers.

"Among the bilateral issues that need to be addressed by the American and Iranian authorities, you list 'claims by Iran that the U.S. is illegally holding assets frozen by President Carter at the start of the hostage period ... .' I would like to suggest that those interested in that issue consult the documents I donated to the U.S. National Archives (partially available to the public through the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library) that include specific reference to the blocked funds. In a message from Secretary of State Cyrus Vance dated Jan. 19, 1980, I had the honor to transmit to Chairman Arafat in Beirut a communication regarding the return to Iran of the assets removed by the shah from Tehran. Arafat offered to have the issue referred to the International Court of Justice of The Hague for an advisory opinion. The implication is clearly that in the American view, the blocking of funds in the U.S. is a political act and must be solved by the two countries directly involved and not by an international organization.

"The Iranian Foreign Minister at the time, Sadeg Ghotbzadeh, considered the assets to belong to the Iranian people. The U.S. government believed at the time that 'it will not be possible for the U.N. Security Council to recognize the legitimacy of Iran's claim ... as to the return of assets removed by him from Iran. Questions such as recovery of assets are subject to the sovereignty and law of individual nations involved and must be pur-



sued between the two nations concerned.”

By the way, with interest, the \$8.5 billion in assets the U.S. froze in 1979 are now worth close to \$20 billion. The issue remains a major subject of discord between Iran and the U.S. Bruce Laingen is correct to urge both sides to start talking about their problems.

*John Gunther Dean  
Ambassador, retired  
Paris, France*

### Clarification on Promotions

I must apologize for an error in my February Speaking Out column (“It’s Not Who You Know, It’s Where You Serve”), in which I stated that none of the section heads at post during my tenure in Vienna were promoted. In fact, the consul general there was promoted into the Senior Foreign Service. His promotion was, however, chiefly related to an extended temporary duty tour in Moscow, not directly to his service in Vienna. I believe this squares with everyone’s understanding.

*John Allen Quintus  
FSO, retired  
Newark, Del.*

### Horns for Understanding

The review of Richard Arndt’s book *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (November *Journal*) mentions Louis Armstrong as one of the main artists sent abroad through programs created by the then-Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. As deputy director of the office of cultural affairs in the early 1960s, I sometimes briefed performers prior to departure overseas.

One such briefing was for Mr. Armstrong, his wife and several others in his group. The Congo, one of the stops on the tour, was faced with civil disturbance. This bothered Mr. Armstrong. However, after listening

to the security measures volunteered by Congolese authorities, he said, “Mr. Hussey, if you tell me to go and blow, I’ll go blow!” And did he ever, not only to the delight of crowds in the Congo, but in every African country where performances were given. Louis Armstrong and his group, like those invited to participate in the cultural program, both before and after, indeed provide a valuable understanding and appreciation of American culture.

*Bill Hussey  
FSO, retired  
Laguna Woods, Calif.*

### Condor Classification

I’d like to back up Jim Blystone’s remarks about his diplomatic work in Chile (“The Domino Effect of Improper Declassification,” January *FSJ*). From early 1975 to late 1976, I was assigned by Embassy Santiago as the only American official in the south. This placid territory, from Chiloe to Chillan, encompassed the beautiful lakes region dotted with quiescent volcanoes. However, the Chilean government deemed the country to be in a state of siege and strictly enforced a *toque de queda* (curfew) after midnight.

In mid-1976, when Chile hosted the conference of the Organization of American States, I traveled to Santiago to help man the embassy press center around the clock. This was the base for American reporters accompanying the U.S. delegation headed by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. But before I could start work, the regional security officer sent me to the headquarters of DINA (the Chilean secret police) to apply for a curfew pass. While there, I had coffee and polite conversation with the staff of this elite military unit whose personnel appeared in mufti. Presumably, the name of every American diplomat who visited this office was fair game. Any defector from this unit

could later publicly accuse him or her of association with Operation Condor. (This was purportedly the network of various Latin American military commands to combat local subversives). I believe Blystone — who met with DINA twice — when he says that he was unjustly linked to Operation Condor, whose existence he knew nothing about.

During my tour, I never heard about this operation from regime supporters nor from critics of the military government. In fact, when I first arrived, I had significant culture shock about why a vulture named “Condorito” was a beloved mascot and cartoon character a la Donald Duck. Chileans told me that the condor is a majestic bird in flight, much admired by them as we do our American bald eagle. But as an Asian-American, I knew that the Parsees in India and the Tibetans traditionally use hungry vultures to complete the open-air funeral of their dead.

Was this esoteric funeral rite in Asia the metaphor for Operation Condor in Latin America — if it existed at all? The prudent, bureaucratic response is “We don’t know. And we don’t want to know.” State’s stonewalling of the Argentines, especially passing the buck to Blystone, seems to fit this pattern.

*Jose Armilla  
FSO, retired  
Former USIS director in  
Concepcion, Chile  
Vienna, Va.*

### Drafters’ Identities

I was saddened but not surprised to read the article by James Blystone. Inclusion of drafting and clearing information in cables released under the Freedom of Information Act has been a problem since at least the late 1970s.

When I served as desk officer for Congo (then Zaire) from 1979-1981, I consistently refused to clear FOIA

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responses that did not delete the drafting and clearing information from all documents, whether cables, airgrams, letters or memos. But mine was not a common position. I'd become sensitized to the problem when a young officer who had previously served in Embassy Kinshasa was pilloried — by name — on the Hill and in the animal-rights community over a gift primate that had become the ambassador's household pet. The officer had no direct involvement with either the treatment or disposition of the animal; all he had done was draft a polite response, for the ambassador's signature, to an overwrought animal activist. But he was listed as drafter on the bottom of the released copy of the letter.

Twenty years later the problem persisted, as FOIA requests reached my desk at the Haiti Working Group with drafting information intact. It was not at all clear from my discussions with the individuals handling those FOIA requests that they had been given any guidelines regarding redaction of drafting and clearing information, or that they shared my concern over its exclusion. It seems that the further passage of five years has not brought either clarity or consistency.

When I joined the State Department in 1973, I was told that cables and airgrams left post over the ambassador's name because once a message was duly cleared it ceased to be the point of view of the drafter and became the point of view of the mission. Similarly, instructions from Washington were not those of a particular bureau or assistant secretary; they were instructions from the Department of State. The Carter administration's initiative to have drafters identify themselves in the body of incoming and outgoing messages — nominally so that overseas drafting officers could get credit in Washington for their good work — was based on a profound lack

of understanding that the department and overseas posts must speak with one voice. It seems to have irreparably weakened that concept.

It's past time for the department's FOIA managers to give their troops clear instructions that drafting and clearing information should always be redacted from documents released to the public. The public's right to understand how policy is formed is met by the substance of the paper trail, not the minutia of the drafting process.

*Mary Lee K. Garrison*  
FSO, retired  
Alexandria, Va.

### Keeping in Touch

Mikkela Thompson's article in the December issue was most interesting and enjoyable ("Lost and Found: International School Reunions"). I copied it and sent it to my son, Stephen Prosser, now serving as an FSO in England.

Steve attended several international schools in his elementary and high school years. Three years ago he and several classmates of his at the International School of Kenya arranged a 20th-anniversary reunion of their high-school graduating class in Vienna, Va. It was attended by about 25 students, out of a class of 42! They came from the four corners of the globe.

Many of the observations made in your article applied equally to those students of the 1970s and 1980s. From 1985 to 1986, I served on AFSA's Committee on Education, a position I thoroughly enjoyed. The AFSA scholarship program celebrated its 10th anniversary in 1986. I volunteered to do a research project asking the 220 merit awardees questions about how Foreign Service life affected them at the time compared to 10 years later. I was impressed by the informative responses and large percentage of awardees replying. The

June 1986 issue of the *FSJ* featured a cover story entitled "Teens Overseas." As part of that, I wrote an article about the results of my research project of the 220 merit awardees.

*James F. Prosser*  
FSO, retired  
Green Bay, Wis.

### FS Blogs

I read with interest the January report on various blogs by FSOs (Cybernotes). As an AFSA member, I would like to let you know about this one: <http://FSOglobetrotter.blogspot.com>.

Its unique subject is food, faces and airplanes as seen through the eyes of a diplomat. It includes many pictures of food.

*Nathan Tidwell*  
FSO  
Embassy Lahore

### An FSO Resigns

With deep sadness I depart the State Department, prematurely ending a 24-year Foreign Service career. I voluntarily leave what had been a largely rewarding career in which I raised two daughters to know and appreciate the world I spent almost four decades traveling. I take this action because I believe that State is no longer effectively representing the values and priorities that have been the foundation of our security and the source of American strength. The dissonance between many of the actions and policies implemented — cherry-picked prewar intelligence, pre-emptive war, secret foreign CIA detention centers and torture, warrantless domestic spying — and my own values, common sense and experience has simply become too great.

I recognize that successful Foreign Service officers must have an exceptional tolerance for ambiguity. And I understand that higher strategic aims often necessitate compromises in pursuit of the ultimate objective. During

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my postings in South America, the Caribbean, Russia, the Middle East, Africa and Washington, I have also had serious doubts about some of the policies of previous administrations. Until recently, however, I took some solace in the belief that State itself, while ultimately the policy-implementation arm of the administration, was playing an important role within policy-making councils as a voice of reason, experience and realism. I can no longer take such comfort. Like our intelligence agencies, State is increasingly becoming a mere political arm of the administration which, for political reasons, continues to exploit post-9/11 emotions.

One need not be an expert to see the damage that the conduct of the faultily-conceived, poorly-understood and ineptly executed Iraq War, as well as the politicization of the "War on Terrorism," have done to our standing in the world and to the ideals that historically have been our most powerful attributes. We are failing to accurately analyze why the world is responding as it is and instead focus our efforts on how to force the rest of the world to accept our values and perception of the way life should be. American leadership must, by example, be worthy of emulation, in order to build a worldwide support base. Force will not replace this long-term need, and the backlash will eventually obliterate the good for which the United States historically has been a beacon of light.

Additionally, State is now unable to truly effectively serve as an adviser on, or implementer of, its public diplomacy mission. State's public diplomacy role is suffering from poor but superior-pleasing management, decreased funding and an inability to recognize and respond to current realities. Our best minds are often managing illusions or treating symptoms, not addressing underlying causes. Meanwhile, the military, however, which has almost unlimited resources to pro-



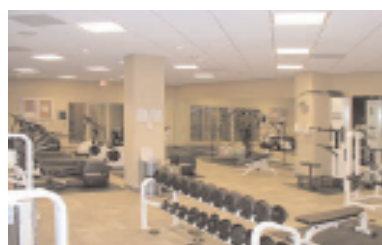
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ject the administration's "message," is incrementally taking over State's public diplomacy operation.

Our current policies directed at developing countries also fall far short of their purported goals, inviting disaster. Despite our rhetoric to the contrary, we have gradually become part of the problem. In Africa, for example, the few continue to grow richer while more than half of the 900 million Africans live in destitution, earning no more than a dollar a day — literally not a cent better off than when I first set foot in Africa in 1968.

Within State's Africa Bureau, where I most recently handled public diplomacy for 16 countries of West Africa and served as the public affairs liaison on HIV/AIDS, I see distressingly few significant results of our policies, despite the valiant efforts of officers everywhere. This is particularly

true of policies related to the \$15 billion HIV/AIDS program executed by the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator with a constant eye to maximizing positive domestic political publicity. The recent appointment of OGAC's political-appointee head (and former CEO of pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly) Randall Tobias to head USAID, as well as function as overall foreign assistance director, will result in even further politicization of our foreign assistance program.

The administration's indifference to suffering everywhere — now evident both at home, post-Katrina, and in our activities internationally — makes it increasingly difficult to be optimistic. Despite the administration's truly massive PR, its HIV/AIDS policy will eventually become a permanent blot on our record as millions perish unnecessarily. This policy is making an entire generation of Africans unwilling pawns in its quest to impress American voters with its own perceived morality.

The disease is the biggest threat faced by Africa, where two-thirds of the world's 40 million HIV/AIDS patients live. It contributes to a marked drop in productivity and to increased despair and is feeding a growth in political instability. Of the 40 million stricken, only 471,000 now receive anti-viral treatment from our \$15 billion program. African leaderships have been pushed by the U.S. to emphasize abstinence and de-emphasize condom use — or lose funding. These policies will lead to a reversal of progress in the treatment of AIDS. Simply stated, Africans in the millions are expendable if it serves the re-election needs of politicians. This, coupled with African leaderships sometimes mired in increasingly skillfully-executed corruption (which we verbally criticize but often effectively ignore when in our perceived "interest" to do so) simply adds to growing frustration.

Careerism at State cripples critical thinking. And within the department's internal bureaucracy, professional punishment and sophisticated, targeted retribution for any deviation from "the message" are increasingly effective and expertly hidden behind a shield of multiple maneuvers using personnel system "mechanisms" designed and scripted for deniability. Officers are discredited, promotions, tenure and assignments jeopardized, careers destroyed.

Edward R. Murrow said that we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home. It is truer than ever today, when loyalty and being "on message" trump critical analysis and forthright honesty. I fully realize that for others in the department who may privately share my views, my decision to depart may be unacceptably costly in personal terms. I personally regret, however, that I did not take this action earlier. I clung to the hope that we would right ourselves. Unfortunately that has not happened in the years since 9/11 and I do not see it on the horizon.

I hardly believe that my premature departure from State will have any effect on the course of U.S. foreign policy, but I am compelled to add another voice to what I hope becomes a groundswell against the directions we have taken. Were I to remain silent any longer, I would be contributing to this deception by lending credence to the illusion that things are as they ought to be. They are not.

*Peggy S. Zabriskie  
FSO, newly retired  
Holetown, Barbados ■*

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