



LETTERS

Bias Against DS

As a Diplomatic Security agent, I often find cause to disagree with articles presented in the *Foreign Service Journal*. Many times I have picked up my pen (or keyboard) to write you, only to end up scrapping the message for fear of appearing petty. I have even considered resigning my membership in AFSA over some of the more anti-security positions it has held over the years. So imagine my surprise when I opened my copy in September to see a whole issue dedicated to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security!

However, upon reading the issue, my previous opinions were validated, as your editors found it necessary to trot out critics of DS even in an issue designed to highlight its contributions. This type of criticism is not included when the *Journal* highlights other bureaus, and betrays what I perceive to be the deep-seated biases of your editorial staff and, indeed, some members of the Foreign Service.

I question the appropriateness of including an essay about Overseas Buildings Operations by Jane Loeffler, in an issue supposedly meant to tout DS. Ms. Loeffler is a longtime critic of DS, and it appears that no amount of security included in embassy design would be acceptable to her. She continues to cling to the past, when aesthetics were the only concern and award-winning architects were commissioned to produce buildings that

looked good, but wasted space, cost inordinately too much and were unsafe for our employees.

A discussion of the Office of Overseas Buildings' standard embassy design program has no business in an issue dedicated to DS. This program was put into place by OBO to save money and reduce project timelines, and has next to nothing to do with security. Congress continually criticized the former Foreign Buildings Office for overspending on extravagant designs and for taking too long getting embassies built. The result was reduced funding for new embassy construction. Say what you will about OBO's chief, retired Gen. Charles E. Williams, but at least he fixed the problem and got the funding spigot turned back on. Perhaps Ms. Loeffler is prepared to "err on the side of openness" and have hundreds of our fellow officers die in the process.

Out of nine articles on security, one was neutral (Honley), four were negative (Jones, Loeffler, Hannon and Anonymous), and four were positive (Griffin, Whitelaw, Johnson and Renzuli). Not surprisingly, DS employees wrote most of the positive ones. The sad thing is that this percentage probably reflects the attitudes of your editors and readership. Is it any wonder that DS employees feel alienated from the Foreign Service in general, and AFSA in particular? DS does its best to safeguard the lives of our fellow employees under difficult circum-

stances and to create a safe and secure environment for the conduct of diplomacy. Like no other federal security agency, it does so in a way that is sensitive to foreign culture and the need to conduct business. Instead of criticizing DS, I would recommend that the *Journal* do something to highlight the lives of the two agents who lost their lives in service of their country this year in Iraq. These DS employees were killed while protecting others so that critical Foreign Service objectives could be met.

In the mid-1990s, there was a move orchestrated by high-level officials within our own department to cede most DS responsibilities to another federal agency. I would venture to guess that the department would be remembering DS with fondness today if that had been allowed to occur. The bureau's employees will never feel fully integrated as part of the Foreign Service team until biases like the ones presented in the September issue are corrected, and the brave professionals that staff DS are made to feel that their contributions are valued.

Frank DeMichele
Regional Security Officer
Embassy Lusaka

Editor's Note: As with all topics the Foreign Service Journal covers, our intent was neither to "tout" the Diplomatic Security Bureau's accomplishments nor to condemn its short-



comings. We always strive to present a wide range of perspectives — positive, negative and mixed — in our pages and let readers make up their own minds.

Balancing Security and Openness

The *Journal's* September edition on Diplomatic Security is an important service to the foreign affairs community, and especially to the Foreign Service, but its contents are chilling and the policies described potentially self-defeating. It is true that foreign affairs professionals, both overseas and in Washington, are working in a dangerous world. It is also a world in which their effectiveness in their jobs is crucial to our nation's long-term security.

I'm afraid that the mind-set described by David Jones and others in that issue undermines that effectiveness. Walling ourselves off overseas will make the United States more vulnerable, because it will undermine our ability to understand and communicate with the societies with which we are dealing. Paranoia about losing a security clearance will also discourage Foreign Service personnel from understanding and communicating with these societies.

It was therefore encouraging and refreshing to read Jane C. Loeffler's article about the need for both security and openness in embassy design. If Karen Hughes' mandate to re-energize our public diplomacy is to have a lasting and positive impact, this balance has to be maintained. In the personnel arena, as AFSA General Counsel Sharon Papp argues, there is a need for a stronger system of checks and balances, one that protects the rights of employees threatened with loss of their security clearances.

The Foreign Service has known

times when security fears dictated policy and treatment of its employees. The nation's interests were not served then and will not be served now if such fears dominate our decision-making and our policy implementation.

Pierre Shostal
FSO, retired
Alexandria, Va.

One Service?

Two points were not touched upon in the series of articles in the September *FSJ* dedicated to Diplomatic Security. One, which ought to be a sore point within AFSA, is that DS officers are unique among Foreign Service professionals for their ability to earn overtime pay for doing their job. I always found it inexplicable, for instance, that embassy and department FSOs expect and accept the need to work long hours without compensation to prepare and execute a visit by the Secretary of State — while the Secretary's DS protection detail earns overtime pay for sitting outside a hotel room.

The other point is that DS service seems to attract a different kind of person than is drawn to traditional Foreign Service work. I joined the Service because I was interested in international affairs and wanted to experience life in other cultures. I have been struck that many DS officers appear to have little interest in the substance of the work done by their Foreign Service colleagues, but see themselves primarily as law enforcement personnel whose job is to separate official Americans from the world at large. This would perhaps not be so important if DS simply played a supporting role, but now that it is in a position to make or affect major department policies, we see this narrow perspective having a neg-

ative impact on key decisions such as embassy design, location and access.

Stephen Muller
FSO, retired
Troy, N.Y.

Good but Dark Fiction

I took the fiction issue of the *FSJ* with me to Baghdad and found it very enjoyable. In addition to being an appreciative reader of short fiction, I had submitted a story for consideration. Since it wasn't selected, I was curious to see my vanquishers.

Taken as a group, the stories are interesting and well-told. They certainly reflect a Foreign Service perspective, set as they are in exotic foreign places. But with the exception of "The Allemande Left Plan" and, to a certain extent, "The Interview," the events recounted were set in the foreign society at large, not in the insular world of diplomats and their diplomacy. I was also struck by two motifs that run through almost all the stories: they take place in a dark, malevolent world, and women are treated abusively.

In next year's fiction issue I'd like to see a greater range of subject matter and more relief from the oppressive mood set in most of them. I'd also like to see at least one or two stories told in a less conventional narrative style. Of course, that depends to a considerable degree on what gets submitted. I pledge to do my part to offer something along the lines I'm recommending.

Larry Lesser
FSO, retired
Washington, D.C.

A Ranking Error

Thanks for making me an ambassador (Letters, "Squandered Promise," September *FSJ*). Too late, alas. That honorable title belongs to my

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son, Stephen R., not to me, Stephen N. The letter, however, was mine, not his.

I served happily in the department's and USIA's Foreign Service at posts from Singapore to Helsinki from the 1940s to the 1970s. Now in my 93rd year, I have the enormous pleasure of seeing my children pick up where I left off. My work appeared numerous times in the *FSJ* in mid-century and mid-career.

Stephen N. Sestanovich
FSO, retired
Moraga, Calif. ■

We regret an error in "Breaking through Diplomacy's Glass Ceiling," by Ann Wright (*FSJ*, October 2005). In Chart 1, "Firsts for Female Diplomats," the entry for 1995 is incorrect. The first female ambassador to a Middle Eastern country was April Glaspie (FSO), who served as U.S. ambassador to Iraq from 1988 to 1990.



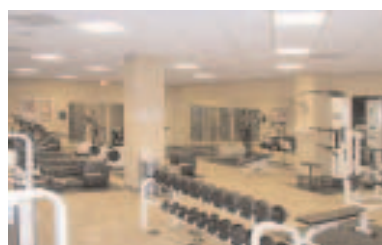
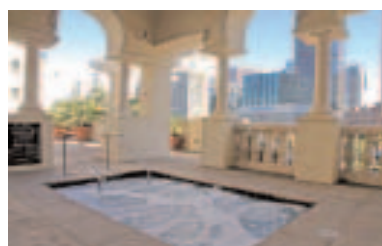
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