

AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • December 2006

2007 AFSA DISSENT AWARDS

Call for Nominations for AFSA Constructive Dissent Awards

BY BARBARA BERGER, PROFESSIONAL ISSUES COORDINATOR

A FSA is seeking nominations for its 2007 Constructive Dissent Awards. These awards serve to honor and recognize those members of the Foreign Service who dare to challenge conventional wisdom, question the status quo or suggest alternative plans of action. An open and candid exchange of differing points of view on issues of foreign policy can only strengthen our Service and our country. Members of the Foreign Service receive years of intensive training in order to develop and practice their expertise in matters of diplomacy and promote the foreign policy goals of the United States. However, when there

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2007 AFSA PERFORMANCE AWARDS

Call for Nominations for Outstanding Performance

BY BARBARA BERGER, PROFESSIONAL ISSUES COORDINATOR

A FSA offers three awards for exemplary performance of assigned duties or voluntary duties at an overseas post that constitutes an extraordinary contribution to effectiveness, professionalism and morale.

• **The Delavan Award** acknowledges the work of a Foreign Service office management specialist who has made a significant contribution to post or office effectiveness and morale beyond the framework of her/his job responsibilities.

• **The M. Juanita Guess Award** goes to a community liaison officer who has demonstrated outstanding leadership, dedication, initiative or imagination in assisting the families of Americans serving at an overseas post.

• **The Avis Bohlen Award** recognizes the accomplishments of a family member of a Foreign Service employee whose relations with the American and foreign communities at post have done the most to advance

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CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2007-2009 BOARD

Make a Difference: Join the AFSA Board

“I have always believed that AFSA is the one entity looking out for the Foreign Service, and so have been active since I joined the Service. Being in Washington gave me a chance to help shape AFSA’s direction and contribute instead of just complaining about policies or work conditions. AFSA helped me out in the past, and I felt it was time to give back.” — *Joyce Namde, State Representative and Governing Board Liaison to the FSJ Editorial Board*

“Participation on the AFSA Governing Board was one way of giving back to the Foreign Service community that had given me so much pleasure. I have realized that the depth and breadth of issues that AFSA, its board and its staff handle far exceeded my expectations. I’m proud to serve this community.” — *David Reuther, Retiree Vice President*

“Serving in AFSA has given me two of my most satisfying years in the Foreign Service.” — *Steve Kashkett, State Vice President*

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AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



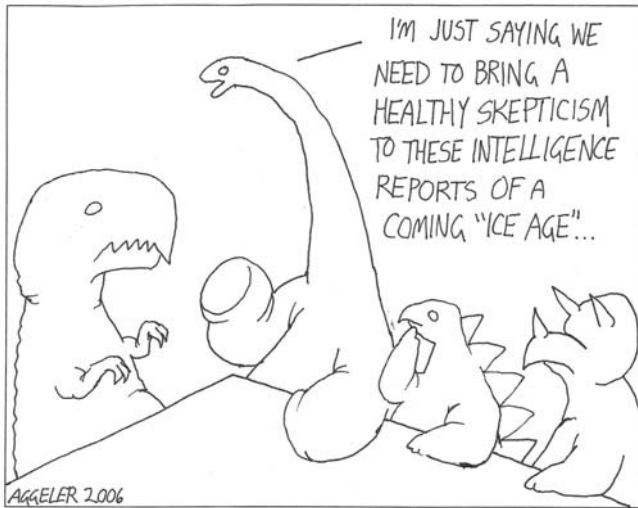
News from the AFSA Board

In October, Al Pessin of the International Broadcasting Board was appointed to fill the IBB representative position on the AFSA Governing Board. That position was left open when Sheldon Daitch resigned from the board in June to take an assignment to Morocco.

The board welcomed two new State representatives this September. Sandy Robinson, who joined the Foreign Service in 1984, is a management officer currently serving as executive director in the Bureau of Legislative Affairs. Andrea Tomaszewicz, who joined the Foreign Service in 2001, is an economic officer currently serving on the Iraq desk in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. They replaced James Roseli who resigned June 30 for an assignment to Embassy Baghdad, and Brad Bell, who resigned Aug. 27 for an assignment in Vienna as the U.S. liaison to the U.N. Special Envoy for the Future Status of Kosovo.

Life in the Foreign Service

■ BY BRIAN AGGELER



Two Names Approved for Memorial Plaque

At the October AFSA Governing Board meeting, the board approved the recommendation from the Awards and Plaque Committee to add two names to the AFSA Memorial Plaques in the State Department's C Street lobby: Margaret Alexander and Doris Knittle.

Margaret Alexander, an FSO with USAID, was killed on Sept. 23, 2006, in a helicopter crash in Nepal. She was the deputy director of the USAID mission in Nepal. (See In Memory, page 80.)

Also killed in the crash was Foreign Service National Dr. Bijan Acharya, who had worked for USAID/Nepal since 1999. He served as the environment and forestry program specialist.

Doris Knittle was a Foreign Service nurse assigned to Kabul when she was found murdered in her home there in August 1970. Recently obtained documentation confirms that the circumstances of her death met the criteria for inclusion on the plaque: that she was killed "in the line of duty."

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Stepping Up to the Plate in Iraq



We hear it all the time from right-wing pundits who are always looking for an excuse to bash the State Department, from neocon ideologues hunting for a scapegoat to blame for the failure of their grand schemes to reshape the Middle East, and — sadly — from some of our military colleagues at the Pentagon. Our detractors love to whisper that we diplomats of the Foreign Service are just not on board with the president's agenda, that we are not taking the tough jobs in the tough places, that we are not “stepping up to the plate” in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the Secretary of State has created the largest U.S. diplomatic mission in the world in Baghdad and is also staffing 16 provincial outposts scattered across Iraq with dozens of our people. The director general has made far-reaching changes in our assignment system and is conveying repeatedly to our members that service in Iraq is the administration's highest priority.

The Foreign Service is answering the call. The facts speak for themselves: during the past four years, more than 1,400 members of the Foreign Service have volunteered to serve in Iraq. Many State civil servants have leapt at the opportunity to serve there as well. All these patriotic employees assume the risks of living in a war zone, taking on an incomparably difficult task and spending a year or more away from their families. The number of volunteers is striking when you consider that the entire active-duty State Foreign Service worldwide, which has to staff 250 other embassies and consulates around the world — most of which are also in hardship spots — only hovers around 10,000.

Contrast this 10,000 with the Pentagon's 2.5 million members of the combined uniformed armed forces and reserves. Unlike our military counterparts, who go to war when their units are called up and ordered to go, our 1,400-plus Foreign Service members have all volunteered for Iraq; State has had no need to order anyone to go. Unlike our military counterparts, Foreign Service members courageously plunge into that war zone unarmed, untrained for combat and willing to take on the daunting task of trying to establish a new, democratic society and to rebuild a country while the war rages on around them.

Some would consider this task to be impossible to accom-

plish until the military has succeeded in pacifying and securing the country.

The stated mission of the Iraq Provincial Reconstruction Teams, which are led by Foreign Service members, includes ensuring stability and transparent democratic governance in each region of Iraq, fostering respect for human rights and the rule of law, ending corruption, establishing civil-society institutions, stimulating economic development and overseeing reconstruction of the country's infrastructure. Members of the Foreign Service and State Department Civil Service in Iraq are daily undertaking heroic efforts to accomplish this ambitious mission under the most difficult and dangerous conditions imaginable — but it is a tall order for unarmed diplomats struggling to function in a country still at war.

Security problems over which our people have no control affect every aspect of their work. Foreign Service members can only venture out of the International Zone in Baghdad with extensive protection and under military escort. These limitations on our members' ability to move about the country are often even more severe at PRTs, which are supposed to cover vast regions of Iraq, some of which remain dangerous even for U.S. military convoys. Threats and fears of reprisal often inhibit Iraqi contacts from coming to meet with our people in the IZ or at the PRTs.

Despite all this, Foreign Service employees have bravely put themselves in the forefront of the mission to rebuild Iraq and are doing their best in the chaotic environment created by the ongoing sectarian violence and the struggle between the U.S. armed forces and the insurgency. We understand the insurmountable challenges confronting our military colleagues and do not blame them for the lack of progress in bringing peace to Iraq. In the same vein, we expect understanding of the extreme constraints on unarmed Foreign Service members when they try valiantly to accomplish the Herculean tasks that have been left to them in Iraq.

We at AFSA hear frequently from our members serving in Iraq, and we know better than most the personal sacrifices they are making and the obstacles they have to overcome in their daily work. They deserve our highest consideration. □

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Dissent Awards • Continued from page 59

is an opportunity to offer their expert advice, many of our best personnel choose not to present a reasoned and constructive stand if it differs from the status quo view, because they fear negative repercussions to their careers.

Our country is facing enormous challenges in the conduct of foreign policy today in many areas of the world. When addressing critical issues relating to Iraq and Afghanistan, North Korea and Iran, to name a few, there is a need for the best expertise and creativity available in the Foreign Service.

As Senator Richard Lugar, R-Ind., chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, declared when he accepted AFSA's 2005 Lifetime Contributions to American Diplomacy Award in June of that year, "Our country depends on the Foreign Service to temper a world that is often uncertain and dangerous. We take for granted that FSOs will venture into hostile circumstances to advance American interests, often with far less protection than corresponding military units. Many Foreign Service officers have given their lives in service to their country. Innumerable others have made the deep personal sacrifices of being away from their families, of risking their health in difficult posts and of forgoing more lucrative financial opportunities in other fields. Rarely are these sacrifices celebrated or even understood by casual observers."

AFSA's Constructive Dissent Awards provide a means to honor and recognize the men and women of the Foreign Service who have demonstrated the courage and integrity to take an unpopular stand because they believe passionately that their professional opinion should be valued. Consider these examples of Constructive Dissent Award winners from the past few years:

- A mid-level officer sent a Dissent Channel cable in 2003 titled, "Let the U.N. Manage the Political Transition in Iraq." He was one of the first FSOs to volunteer for duty in Iraq with the Coalition Provisional Authority, and continued to identify issues

and propose alternative policies throughout his tour there.

- A mid-level officer felt the Department of Homeland Security's policies were hurting relations between the U.S. and Muslims in Panama, so he challenged and ultimately influenced DHS's passenger-screening procedures, as well as the embassy's approach to engagement with Panama's Muslim community.

- A Foreign Service specialist authorized the broadcast of a controversial news interview on the Voice of America, despite intense pressure against it, in an effort to defend VOA's congressional charter, which requires reporting to be "accurate, objective and comprehensive."

These examples demonstrate the intellectual courage and integrity of Foreign Service personnel who were willing to work within the system to bring about change. AFSA believes that members of the Foreign Service should not just be rewarded for superior performance of duties, but also for their willingness to ask tough questions, to present alternatives to the status quo and to take a stand for what they believe, despite the consequences.

AFSA's Constructive Dissent Awards have been a proud tradition for almost 40 years, with the establishment of the first award in 1968 in honor of Ambassador William R. Rivkin. Amb. Rivkin was first appointed to Luxembourg by President John F. Kennedy, and later served as ambassador to Senegal until his death in 1967. He was described by colleagues who had the privilege of working with him as someone who had "a fiery passion for truth and fairness." He was known for asking tough questions and expecting serious answers. He had the deepest respect for the career professionals in the Foreign Service, and he advocated that they be proud of their service and courageous in their convictions. The William Rivkin Award is presented to a mid-level officer.

Nomination Procedures

Please consider nominating someone for one of these four Constructive Dissent Awards:

The Tex Harris Award for Foreign

Service specialists;

The W. Averell Harriman Award for entry-level officers (FS 6-4);

The William R. Rivkin Award for mid-level officers (FS 3-1);

The Christian A. Herter Award for senior-level officers (FE OC-CA).

The nomination should include the following:

Part I — The name of the award for which the person is being nominated; the nominee's name, grade, agency and position.

Part II — The nominator's name, grade, agency and position, and a description of the association with the nominee.

Part III — The justification for the nomination. This narrative should discuss the actions and qualities which the nominator believes qualify the nominee for the award, giving **specific** examples of accomplishments that fulfill the criteria stated in the previous paragraph. Part III should not exceed 700 words.

All winners receive a monetary award of \$2,500 and a framed certificate, and are honored at a reception in late June at the State Department's Benjamin Franklin Diplomatic Reception Room. The Secretary of State is invited to participate in the ceremony.

Please note that the Constructive Dissent Awards are not for performance of assigned duties, however exceptional. Submissions that do not meet the above criteria of initiative, integrity and intellectual courage, which contributes to constructive dissent, as determined by our judges and the Awards & Plaque Committee, will not be considered.

Further details on nomination procedures, additional guidelines and a nomination form can be found on the AFSA Web site at www.afsa.org/awards.cfm. From there, you can also link to articles about the AFSA awards and find a comprehensive listing of past award winners.

Questions should be directed to Barbara Berger, Coordinator for Professional Issues, by e-mail: berger@afsa.org; telephone: (202) 338-4045, ext. 521; or fax: (202) 338-8244. The deadline for submitting all nominations is **Feb. 28, 2007**. □

If It Quacks Like a Duck ...

One of my favorite sayings goes like this: If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it must be a duck. This is a good analogy for the situation facing us at USAID. Are we being merged with State or not? Some of us can remember the days when Senator Jesse Helms, R-N.C., was intent on forcing a shotgun marriage between the State Department and our agency. Congress did not go along, and we seemed to have dodged that bullet. We were fairly sure that the issue had been put to rest, and became complacent. But today, we see signs all around us that the camel's nose is again sneaking back into our tent.

While we have heard official protestations from the likes of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, USAID Administrator Randall Tobias and others that "No, we are not merging," the duck keeps waddling back. Is it a matter of semantics or am I just paranoid? How does one explain these facts: the USAID administrator now has an additional title — director of foreign assistance — and occupies a very high-level position at the State Department, where he is spending most of his time. A large contingency of our Policy and Program Coordination staff has physically established residency at Main State. There are close to 50 State management officer positions listed for USAID executive officers to bid on in our latest Assignment Cycle Major Listing? Let's look at each of these developments.

The USAID administrator's office has, in the organizational charts as well as physically, been merged into the State Department structure under something called the "F" office. Ambassador Tobias reports directly to the Secretary of State, and the USAID program implements her transformational diplomacy initiative. USAID's budget and planning function now falls under the direct control of State. The result is that development programs, which are now under increasingly centralized control, have been redefined and in some cases cut to accommodate political imperatives of State Department staff over the advice of USAID technical experts and even mission directors.

As I indicated above, the Policy and Program Coordination staff, about 40 of them, have already relocated in offices at Main State. Since PPC is the heart and brains of our organization, this is more than a symbolic act. It is major surgery. Another

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telling sign that a merger has been in progress was the creation of country core teams in which hundreds of USAID staff were combined into planning teams with State experts. The first big meeting at the Loy Henderson Auditorium created some awkward, even comical situations. When a mass of about 500 USAID employees showed up at the appointed time at the diplomatic entrance, the guards became so annoyed at the large, unruly crowd, most of whom did not have State badges, that there was actually chaos, mass confusion and lots of head-shaking. Eventually everyone got through the gates, but the meeting started more than 30 minutes late. Not a very good start to our partnership. Now there has been talk about whether there is a need to have duplicate country desk officers at both USAID and State.

The latest sign of the merger was the inclusion of over 50 State positions (primarily management officer jobs, those people who run our embassies overseas) in the USAID 2007 Foreign Service Assignment Cycle Major Listing. This is called the "CAP" (Crossover Assignment Program), a program in which State and USAID employees can bid on each other's jobs. A lot fewer positions are available to State officers, however, who wish to bid on USAID jobs. The interesting thing here is that it seems that State is willing to allow USAID executive officers to manage embassies and USAID missions overseas, but most of the positions are in Africa and predominantly at hardship posts. As far as I know, none are in Paris or London. It makes sense to do this for many reasons, but does anyone doubt this is also a merger? Or did I miss something?

You might think that I am against such a merger. Maybe yes, maybe no. There probably are many excellent reasons to merge, such as increased efficiency, cost savings, alignment of program strategies and so on. There are also many reasons not to do so, such as weakening long-term development achievement for short-term political gains, losing the good faith of the international community concerning our true goals, and reducing our technical edge.

This is a political decision that the president and Congress have a right to make, for us to implement. I am concerned, however, by this death by a thousand little cuts. Let's just admit to what is happening and stop trying to keep the merger under the radar. It's quacking, so it must be a duck. □

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the interests of the United States, in the tradition of the late Avis Bohlen.

The Avis Bohlen Award was established in 1982 by the late Pamela Harriman to honor family members of Foreign Service employees. Avis Bohlen was the wife of Ambassador Charles E. Bohlen, and the Bohlens and Harrimans were close friends for many years. Mrs. Bohlen was known for her concern for the American staff at posts as well as for charitable works directed at the local community. While Pamela Harriman was alive, she personally funded this award each year and, whenever possible, would present it in person at the annual AFSA awards ceremony. After her death, the Mary W. Harriman Foundation, which also funds the Harriman Constructive Dissent Award, agreed to take over the funding of the Avis Bohlen Award as well. Every year since 1983, a family member of a Foreign Service employee has been honored with the award, except for last year, when we received not one nomination. Please help us continue this tradition of honoring FS family members by sending a nomination to AFSA.

The M. Juanita Guess Award was first given in 1995. Clements & Co. established it to honor community liaison officers for their valuable work assisting Foreign Service members, their families and the local embassy community with a multitude of issues regarding relocation and living overseas. Their efforts have contributed dramatically to improving the lives of Foreign Service communities worldwide, and AFSA is proud to recognize their achievements. The work of the community liaison officer has become more multifaceted and complex during these turbulent and dangerous times, but many posts continue to maintain a high morale and a strong sense of community due in large part to the outstanding work of CLOs worldwide.

The Delavan Award was established in 1990 to recognize the enormous contribu-

tions of office management specialists, both overseas and in the Department of State. As with the job of the CLO, in recent years the work of the OMS has become more complex and a much more integrated part of the embassy workforce. The OMS often works long hours for demanding bosses, and rarely receives appreciation and acknowledgment. The Delavan Award serves to highlight the recognition this group deserves.

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AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

Final Reminder: Support AFSA with Your CFC Contribution

Don't forget to make your Combined Federal Campaign pledge to support AFSA in 2007. When you select which worthy organizations to support, please consider an AFSA fund:

- (#2422) **The AFSA Scholarship Fund** provides scholarship money to Foreign Service children to help pay for their college education.

- (#2460) **The Fund for American Diplomacy** educates the public on the critical role of U.S. diplomacy in the world. Through grassroots education programs we show how the Foreign Service helps America's national security and economic prosperity.

For more information contact Lori Dec at dec@afsa.org or 1 (800) 704-2372, ext 504.



Let AFSA Help Fund Your Child's College Education

High school seniors and college undergraduates of Foreign Service employees (active-duty, retired and deceased) are eligible to apply for one-time-only AFSA Academic/Art Merit Awards and renewable need-based AFSA Financial Aid Scholarships. Awards range from \$1,500 to \$3,000. The submission deadline is Feb. 6, 2007. Visit AFSA's Scholarship Program Web page at www.afsa.org/scholar/index.cfm for complete details or contact Lori Dec at dec@afsa.org, (202) 944-5504 or 1 (800) 704-2372, ext. 504 (toll free).

Parents and students can also visit free, online scholarship search engines such as www.fastweb.com, www.wiredscholar.com, www.smexpres.com and www.brokescholar.com.

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

The System and You: A Successful Outcome

We are pleased to report that the problem described by Kenya Owens in the first edition of the feature “The System and You” has been resolved in his favor. In “A Housing Loss” (*AFSA News*, September), Owens explained how he and his wife, both Foreign Service specialists but assigned to different training facilities, were penalized for sharing lodging during training, even though they were married and it saved the government money.

Owens recently let us know that the vouchers have been recalculated, and it was determined that a mistake was made. He has been reimbursed for the difference. He tells *AFSA News*, “When I originally asked about challenging this, I was led to believe that the decision from the travel claim technician and/or the supervisor was final. The only reason I contacted AFSA was in an attempt to identify this to other couples so they did not potentially make the same mistake that we did. It is pretty daunting to think that if I had decided not to e-mail AFSA, the claim would have never been reviewed.”

The lesson? It can pay to question something that just seems wrong. Share your story of a struggle inside the bureaucracy with *Journal* readers by sending your submission (300-500 words) to dorman@afsa.org.

Inside Embassy for the Holidays: 5 for \$45

AFSA is offering a holiday discount on purchases of five or more copies of *Inside a U.S. Embassy*. This book is a great gift for family, friends and contacts who may not understand what the Foreign Service is and how an embassy works.

Go to www.afsa.org/inside for more information and to order, or call (847) 364-1222. Send questions to embassybook@afsa.org.



V.P. VOICE: FAS ■ BY ROBERT CURTIS, FAS REPRESENTATIVE

A Reorganized FAS



As you read this, the Foreign Agricultural Service will already have flipped the switch to implement the long-overdue reorganization. This is an exciting time for those of us in Washington as we attempt to make the reorganized FAS function as we envision it. For staff stationed overseas there will be less adjustment. The “new” FAS permits development of an overall USDA country/regional strategy to focus efforts and monies on the same policy goals. For years we have bemoaned missed policy opportunities: now we should be able to take full advantage of them with coordinated responses across the agency. Most FAS FSOs worked on — or provided valuable input into — the reorganization to address our concerns.

It surprises me how the reorganization magnifies the differing work attitudes and perceptions held by FAS employees from our two main personnel systems. FAS FSO comments focused on how to make the reorganization better for all employees. Most FAS overseas posts are now regional in nature, so we work in virtual offices within our region with our computer and cell phone. This work experience influenced reorganization comments expressed along the lines of, “just give me a computer and a phone and I can figure out how to work anywhere.”

Many of our Civil Service colleagues, on the other hand, asked career-focused questions about the reorganization, such as: “Exactly what will I be doing?” “What are my career advancement opportunities?” “What if I don’t enjoy my work?” “Where/when can I change positions?” While developing program area work strategy, the civil servants seemed more concerned about how activities and responsibilities would mesh with the other program areas (who would actually do what?), while the FSOs’ basic approach has been to figure things out over time. This reminds me of something Senior Executive Service member Richard Schroeter said 15 years ago, when he was assistant administrator for international trade policy: “I try to fill half of my (90-member) staff with FSOs: you guys just need a task, any task, and are happy to go off and do whatever is necessary to get the job done.” I believe these differing work attitudes, concerns and perceptions of employees in our two personnel systems combine to make FAS a much better agency, covering all aspects of the reorganization to be more responsive and to better serve our customers.

As overseas postings loom, a few of us reluctantly contemplate the task of addressing the procedure for assigning returning FSOs to Washington-based positions. This year’s Summer Placement Plan matched FSOs to positions in a bidding process in much the same way they were done prior to the establishment of the Washington Placement Plan. Now is the time to provide us your guidance and ideas on these two assignment systems and possible alternatives.

FAS/AFSA remains without a vice president to lead upcoming contract negotiations. Currently, a group of FAS AFSA advisers picks up many of the tasks normally handled by the VP. FAS needs one person to handle and effectively coordinate these various tasks. If you are interested in filling the vice president position, please contact me at roberto.curtis@fas.usda.gov, or call AFSA Executive Director Susan Reardon at (202) 338-4045, ext. 505. □

They Lost Me Over Day Care

I passed the Foreign Service written exam. Then I passed the oral exam. I passed the medical clearance and the background check. I even passed the Russian-language exam. After clearing all of those hurdles, I was finally offered a position as a Foreign Service officer. Then the real challenge began.

I had no idea how hard it would be to find good, affordable child care in Northern Virginia. When I called FSI's day-care center in July, I was told that they were full, but they expected an opening some time in December. They referred me to a list of day-care providers, but as I worked my way down the list, looking for someone with space available for an infant, I quickly grew discouraged. Every facility was full. Many didn't even bother to return my phone calls. One woman who did return my call informed me that the waiting list for infants at her facility was one-and-a-half years long. That's right — you have to put your baby on the waiting list nine full months before you even conceive.

Next, I began interviewing live-out nannies. But most of the people I could afford on a government salary spoke limited English, had limited experience or had questionable references. One woman forgot to show up for the interview. One listed her husband as her only reference. Another — who was actually my favorite — had no CPR certification and a fondness for heavy perfume.

Ultimately, I decided I had no choice but to turn down the

job — a job I'd been actively pursuing for almost two years. It's unfortunate. I think I would have made a good Foreign Service officer. Having served at three posts as an FS spouse, I understand the lifestyle and know what is expected of officers. As a Russian speaker, I would have been able to help fill a gap in the knowledge base of the Foreign Service. I was excited about the opportunity. But it wasn't worth jeopardizing the health and safety of my children.

I have no idea how much money the State Department spent to recruit me, but it couldn't have been cheap. After all, they had to pay for my background investigation, along with a full medical workup, a Russian-language exam and a daylong oral exam. State's Web site lists some of the benefits of joining the Foreign Service, and these benefits include on-site day care. Shouldn't they make sure this benefit is actually available? Couldn't they take some of the money they spend recruiting candidates and use it to expand the on-site day-care center at FSI?

It is too late to change the outcome of my job search, but money spent on expanding the day-care center might well net the State Department other qualified candidates down the road. □

Donna Scaramastra Gorman is a freelance writer whose work has been published in *The Washington Post*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Seattle Times* and *Horizon Air Magazine*. She and her family have been posted in Almaty, Yerevan and Moscow. They are leaving for Beijing in 2007.

AFSANEWSBRIEFS

Celebration of Charlie Bray

On Oct. 17, over 70 friends and colleagues of former AFSA chair Charlie Bray gathered at AFSA headquarters to celebrate and remember his many important contributions to his university, his profession and his community in Wisconsin. Charlie Bray was a leader of the Young Turk movement that turned AFSA into a change agent for the Foreign Service, based on the key concept that Foreign Service professionals must participate in the making of the rules that govern their careers. Charlie Bray was the force who led the design team and funding campaign to create the AFSA headquarters building. See the Appreciation on page 56 for more details.

New Assignment Rules: How's It Going?

The new assignment rules have changed the process for bidding and assignment, and AFSA would like to track the way the new process is playing out in implementation. One way for us to know is for you to tell us of your own experience navigating the system.

Send a note to *FSJ* Associate Editor Shawn Dorman at dorman@afsa.org and tell us how the bidding season is going for you.

AFSA Members Receive Service to America Medals

Two AFSA members, Ambassador Nancy Powell and Mark S. Ward, have won Service to America Medals. These awards are supported by the Atlantic Media Co. (which owns *Government Executive*, *National Journal*, and *The Atlantic*) and the Partnership for Public Service. Amb. Powell received a medal in the category of homeland security for leading a U.S. initiative to establish a worldwide protocol for response to avian influenza.

Mark S. Ward of USAID received the medal for the international affairs category. He was honored for his work in planning the allocation of millions of dollars in federal aid following the Asian tsunami and the earthquake in Pakistan.

Also, State Department lawyer Christina Sanford won the award for "Call to Service." An article on the awards can be found at: www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=35135&sid=7 □

Governing Board • Continued from page 59

“I would recommend serving on the Governing Board without reservation.”

— *Andrew Winter, Treasurer*

Every two years, AFSA members worldwide elect a new Governing Board. AFSA is currently seeking nominations for the 24 positions on the next Governing Board, which will serve from July 15, 2007, through July 14, 2009. The Governing Board directs the policies of this 82-year-old institution that represents all Foreign Service employees. As both the professional association and the union for the Foreign Service, AFSA’s principal mission is to enhance the effectiveness of the Foreign Service, to protect the professional interests of its members, to ensure the maintenance of high professional standards for both career diplomats and political appointees, and to promote understanding of the critical role of the Foreign Service in advancing America’s national security and economic prosperity.

Please consider running for a position on the next board, or nominate a colleague. Help make sure the voice of the Foreign Service is heard by management, on the Hill and around the country. Instructions on how to submit a nomination are in the November *AFSA News*, posted at www.afsa.org/news/index.cfm.

The officer positions to be filled in this election are:

- President (full time)
- Vice President for State (full time)
- Vice President for USAID (full time)
- Vice President for FCS (half time)
- Vice President for FAS (full time)
- Vice President for Retirees
- Secretary
- Treasurer

The constituency representative positions to be filled in this election are:

- State Department Representatives (eight positions)
- USAID Representative (one position)
- FCS Representative (one position)
- FAS Representative (one position)
- IBB Representative (one position)
- Retired-member Representatives (four positions)

Important dates in this election cycle:

Feb. 1, 2007 — Deadline for nominations

March 26, 2007 — Ballots and candidate statements mailed

June 1, 2007 — Ballots counted

July 15, 2007 — New board takes office

Why Serve on the AFSA Board?

In order to give a clearer picture of what service on the board is about, we asked our current board members to comment on their experiences. State VP Steve Kashkett says, “At a time when the role of the Foreign Service is under fire from many quarters — and when we are fighting to preserve a career with good promotion opportunities and flexibility in terms of assignments that are good both for professional advancement and for families — AFSA’s mission is vital.” He adds that “The AFSA board can speak out in defense of the Foreign Service in ways that no one else can — or will.”

“There is nothing more important that we can do for our colleagues than ensure the FS remains a professional, respected entity that fully utilizes the talents of those who join,” says State Rep. Namde. “It is vital that we all participate to help shape the FS tomorrow while keeping it a good place to work now. Especially in this era, AFSA is having a major impact and say in what the FS will look like and how management will treat its employees for years to come.”

State Representative Andrea Tomaszewicz, a newcomer to the board who entered the Foreign Service in 2001, says she joined the board because the Service “is at a moment of change for the way we work overseas, and I want to make sure that the way forward is an inclusive process. I believe AFSA plays an important role in this.” She found her first board meeting interesting, noting that “everybody was very welcoming.”

“The board and executive committee meetings are intellectually stimulating and personally fulfilling,” says Foreign Commercial Service Vice President Don Businger. “Each time we meet, I gain more respect and admiration for my AFSA board

colleagues, whether dealing with general issues, State Department problems, the Finance Committee or other functions.” He adds that “It is precisely the broad outward-looking function of being Commerce VP that I enjoy, the contacts with State, USAID, FAS and IBB in an attempt to make sense of our collective interests, as opposed to navel-gazing in a smaller function inside an HQ operation.”

Retiree Representative Gil Sheinbaum says that service on the board “has been very stimulating, since we have a hands-on role in following how the Foreign Service has had to cope with the needs of our foreign policy. There have been very interesting and impressive people on the board, including from the other agencies.”

Your Time

The president and the State, USAID and FAS vice presidents are full-time positions detailed to AFSA. The FCS vice president is detailed 50 percent of his or her time to AFSA. These employees are assigned over-complement and are eligible for time-in-class extensions. The Retiree VP position is a volunteer position that can take as much or as little time as desired, with a minimum of four hours a month for the board and executive committee meetings.

Board representatives are only required to spend a couple hours a month on AFSA business. “The State active-duty reps on the board make a small time commitment — just one two-hour board meeting each month,” says State VP Steve Kashkett. “But they get to have a big voice in helping define the future of the Foreign Service.”

The treasurer and secretary positions are volunteer positions. The secretary attends the board and executive committee meetings. The treasurer must be available for more hours, because he or she heads the Finance Committee. Treasurer Andrew Winter says that his position requires about six to 10 hours per month, which “is a little more work, but very rewarding.”

This is a challenging and critical period for the Foreign Service. Consider a term on the AFSA Governing Board, so you can contribute to ensuring the Foreign Service career is protected. □

LETTER TO THE SECRETARY

AFSA Protests Assignment System Abuse

FROM AFSA PRESIDENT J. ANTHONY HOLMES TO SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE

October 24, 2006

Dear Madam Secretary,

I am writing today with a sense of deep sadness to express AFSA's dismay at the recent, unfathomable decision by the Department of State — in violation of the department's own regulations, its negotiated agreements with AFSA, and the guidelines in the Foreign Service Act — to assign a mid-level civil servant from Under Secretary Karen Hughes' office to fill the recently established Senior Foreign Service position as chief of the department's highly-touted new Public Diplomacy Rapid Response Team in Brussels, which is meant to serve as the "hub" for our media outreach efforts throughout Europe on Iraq, Afghanistan and the war on terrorism. The creation of this important position and the manner in which it was assigned were processes that minimized employees' awareness of its existence and excluded many Senior Foreign Service officers who have extensive career experience in public diplomacy in Europe, the Middle East and South Asia.

As you know, the Foreign Service Act of 1980, bolstered by the Foreign Affairs Manual and subsequent administrative case precedents, makes it clear that only in truly exceptional instances should Foreign Service positions overseas be filled by non-FS personnel. In such rare cases, you or your designee justify this anomaly by executing a Certificate of Need that explains why the department was unable to find a qualified FS employee and what unique qualifications the non-FS employee has to warrant assigning someone from outside the Service. In this Brussels PD case, there are many highly qualified Senior Foreign Service officers with appropriate experience, far exceeding that of the non-FS person brought in, who might have jumped at the chance to take this key position in Brussels — if they had been made aware of its existence and given the opportunity to bid on

the position. At a time when the department is asking our members to devote a greater part of their careers to service in more difficult hardship and danger-pay posts — and when the global repositioning exercise is shrinking the number of positions at more comfortable European posts — it is incomprehensible that the department would deny this senior Brussels opportunity to career Foreign Service officers. This position might well have been a perfect fit and an ideal onward assignment for a veteran FSO coming out of an unaccompanied tour of duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia.

The AFSA Governing Board
has voted unanimously
to initiate an institutional
grievance to undo this
assignment.

I regret to tell you, Madam Secretary, that the department did not even follow its own standard practices to find a Foreign Service officer for a newly created, immediate vacancy. During your tenure as Secretary, the department has sent out 119 formal calls via cable for volunteers for 193 priority positions. Many of these positions came open unexpectedly, after the normal assignment cycle had run its course, and needed to be filled urgently. Yet the department made no such call to fill this Brussels PD position. Its refusal to issue such an announcement sends the message to our members worldwide that either it was a low-priority position (and thus one in which a non-Foreign Service employee would never be considered), or that the assignment process was manipulated so that the possible attention of unwanted applicants would be minimized. In either case, AFSA decries the failure of the department to follow its

own rules, its negotiated agreements with us, and its abuse of the assignment powers the Foreign Service Act provides you.

Moreover, other important rules were disregarded. The Senior Assignments Division did not "cede" the position, as must be done before a senior-level job becomes available to a non-senior officer for assignment. And particularly egregiously, the department did not execute, as required in advance of such an assignment, the Certificate of Need discussed above until well after the fact, and only after AFSA expressed its deep displeasure over the way this position had been handled. The cursory, minimalist nature of the department's efforts to find a Foreign Service officer feed our conclusion that this was a "pre-cooked" deal done in contravention of the department's own rules and standard practices.

Madam Secretary, over and above the inexplicable abuse outlined above, what AFSA finds so incomprehensible about this assignment is that it goes such a long way to directly undermine the message that you have been so determined to send about the need for Service discipline and your call for sacrifice. In his recent "The Future Is Now" cable to the field, the director general called for the Foreign Service "to renew our commitment ... to the principle of Service need." I can reiterate to you what you already know for yourself, that the Foreign Service is meeting this call. In your cable to all FS personnel sent last week, you asserted that "our assignment process must be fair to all employees." I must tell you that the Foreign Service also expects this same discipline on the part of State Department management in terms of following its own rules and resisting attempts to give special treatment and preferred onward assignments to staff members of senior department officials, be they career officers or political appointees. This assignment is devastating for morale and is both an abuse of the department's authority and an affront to the Foreign

Service. It creates a cynicism that only certain employees will be subject to Service discipline, while others will be able to thumb their noses at it — and at them.

Madam Secretary, as you know, AFSA has long cooperated with the department to develop and operate an open, transparent system in which qualified Civil Service employees can serve overseas. Formally designated “hard-to-fill” positions become available after a months-long process in which exhaustive efforts are made to find qualified Foreign Service applicants. Separately from the hard-to-fill program, we also work with HR to minimize vacancies at unaccompanied posts through Civil Service excursion tours. It has long been, and it remains, AFSA’s view that the department’s Foreign and Civil Service employees are all foreign policy professionals and part of the same team. But how these assignments are made, and why they are made, are issues crucial to the effective functioning of the carefully balanced sys-

tem the department has enjoyed until now. Unfortunately, this assignment compromises the integrity of both the FS assignment process and the “hard-to-fill” and unaccompanied posts programs.

One example of the good faith that AFSA has shown in cooperating on this sensitive issue, one that we have discussed before, is the recent case of a Civil Service officer being assigned to the high-profile, much-sought-after Foreign Service position of DCM in Baghdad. Baghdad is our largest embassy in the world, the ambassador there is a political appointee, and the DCM plays a number of roles of vital importance to both the huge FS contingent in Iraq and our foreign policy interests — roles that only a Senior Foreign Service officer can fulfill. You assured me that you believed the combination of the imperatives of the administration’s highest foreign policy priority and the truly exceptional circumstances that existed in Iraq justified that exceptional assignment.

On that basis, AFSA set aside its concerns and accepted your decision without protest or appeal. I would ask that you contrast those circumstances with this Brussels PD assignment, where not a single one of those special circumstances or policy imperatives exist.

For all of these reasons it is my somber duty to inform you that AFSA has concluded that it must defend the Foreign Service and the integrity of the Foreign Service Act and our negotiated agreements. The AFSA Governing Board has thus voted unanimously to initiate an institutional grievance to undo this assignment, which has now been formally filed.

Finally, Madam Secretary, even though all assignments are made in your name, we are not sure that you were aware of this issue before receiving this letter. If that is the case, it is an issue that we believe warrants your personal attention.

Respectfully yours, J. Anthony Holmes,
AFSA President □



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