

# AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • October 2007

## SAFEGUARDING YOUR RIGHTS

### AFSA's Protest Leads to New Hearing

BY SHARON PAPP, GENERAL COUNSEL

Last year, the AFSA Governing Board unanimously agreed to pay the legal fees of private counsel to seek reversal of the Foreign Service Grievance Board's erroneous dismissal of the separation-for-cause case of a Foreign Service member. The FSGB dismissed the case after the acting director general advised the board that she had withdrawn the proposed separation for cause, because the employee had allegedly voluntarily resigned from the Foreign Service. The issues at stake in this case — an employee's right to challenge procedural violations committed during the

revocation of his security clearance and to have the FSGB decide whether his separation from the Foreign Service is warranted — are of the utmost importance to AFSA and its members.

Given the State Department's abuse of procedures, the FSGB's erroneous dismissal and the dangerous precedent it could set, AFSA has been closely involved in this particular case. On July 25, the Grievance Board granted the grievant's motion for reconsideration, in part, stating it would retain jurisdiction over the "voluntariness"

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## ESSAY CONTEST INTRODUCES STUDENTS TO THE FOREIGN SERVICE

### Secretary Rice Meets AFSA Essay Contest Winner

BY TOM SWITZER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

On July 11, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice presented the first-place award for AFSA's 2007 National High School Essay Contest to Sumit Malik of Great Falls, Va. Malik is a rising junior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. His winning essay was titled "The Role of the Foreign Service in the Reconstruction of Iraq." (You can read the essay at [www.afsa.org/essaycontest/winningessay07.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/essaycontest/winningessay07.cfm).)

The first-place winner received \$2,500, and his school received \$500. The second-place award of \$1,250 went to Jeff



Essay Contest winner Sumit Malik with Secretary Rice.

Derbyshire, a rising senior at St. John's School in Houston, Texas. His essay topic

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## AFSA SITS DOWN WITH SEC. RICE

### Relations Renewed Between AFSA and the Secretary

AFSA officers met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on July 26, just two weeks into the new Governing Board's term. AFSA asked the Secretary to contact key members of Congress to urge them to eliminate the overseas pay disparity and to fully fund the State Department's Fiscal Year 2008 budget request for additional personnel and operating costs. Other issues discussed at the meeting included Iraq staffing and security, family-friendly initiatives, the proposed diplomacy museum and support for greater diversity in Foreign Service hiring.

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# AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



## Support AFSA with Your CFC Gift: #11759 and #10646

Please consider supporting AFSA with your 2007 Combined Federal Campaign donation. The AFSA Scholarship Fund has a new number for 2007: CFC-11759, as does the Fund for American Diplomacy: CFC-10646. Your contributions help fund college scholarships for FS children and provide public education programs on the importance of a strong Foreign Service.



## Journal Board: Comings and Goings

AFSA would like to thank the following outgoing *Foreign Service Journal* Editorial Board members for their dedicated service: Kent Brokenshire, Tony Chan, William Jordan, Kay Webb Mayfield, John Naland, Joyce Namde and Christopher Teal.

There were 36 applications for the six new vacancies on the Editorial Board.

The AFSA Governing Board has appointed the following individuals to two-year terms: Joe Bruns, Julie Connor, Jim DeHart, Jeff Giauque, George Jones and Yvette Malcioln. In addition, the Governing Board reappointed current Editorial Board Chairman Ted Wilkinson and returning members Stephen Buck, Josh Glazeroff and Laurie Kassman to new two-year terms.

Thanks to all of these members who volunteer their time to make AFSA's *Foreign Service Journal* the magazine for foreign affairs professionals.

## AFSA Launches FS Women's Web Discussion Forum

AFSA is now hosting an online forum exclusively for Foreign Service women. It is a place to chat, share stories, reach out and air concerns. The forum provides an opportunity to connect anytime, anywhere.

Join discussion leader FSO Della Cavey to discuss the unique challenges and opportunities facing the women of the Foreign Service today. Go to [www.afsa.org/discussionforum.cfm/](http://www.afsa.org/discussionforum.cfm/) to get in on the conversation. Tell your friends.

## East Africa Bombings Anniversary

On the ninth anniversary of the Aug. 7, 1998, terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the State Department held an emotionally moving ceremony at the Arlington Cemetery memorial to the victims of those bombings. The event was attended by survivors, senior State Department and USAID officials, African Affairs and Diplomatic Security Bureau veterans, representatives of the Kenyan and Tanzanian embassies and others. AFSA President John Naland attended and laid flowers beside the memorial stone.

## BOOKFAIR Opens Oct. 12

The 47th annual BOOKFAIR of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide opens Friday, Oct. 12, at 2 p.m. for employees, spouses and escorted guests. BOOKFAIR takes place in the exhibit hall of the Truman Building, and continues Oct. 15-19, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. for this same group. During two weekends, Oct. 13-14 and Oct. 20-21, the sale is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For questions, go to [www.aafsw.org](http://www.aafsw.org), e-mail [aafsw.bookroom@erols.org](mailto:aafsw.bookroom@erols.org), or call (202) 223-5796.

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Herman Cohen, Howard Jeter

## Support for Separated Families

As the Foreign Service becomes more like the military, with a significant percentage of our members doing unaccompanied tours of duty in war zones and other danger-pay posts, it is a lot harder to ignore the stark contrast between the way the State Department treats the families left behind and the support structure institutionalized by the U.S. military.

On the military side, there are numerous government-funded programs to advocate for families separated by deployments, to subsidize housing and loans, to assist with parenting and child care, to facilitate spousal employment, to cover spouses' tuition for higher education and to teach personal financial management. There are endless clubs, support groups, commissaries, mental-health professionals, social activities and organizations standing ready to help military families. The military takes seriously the job of caring for families left behind and devotes both staff and extensive budgetary resources to it.

On the State Department side, nothing like the above exists to support the families of civilian U.S. government employees serving in those same war zones. The small staff of the Family Liaison Office has done its heroic best — with almost no resources — to try to develop some low-cost outreach activities for families separated by unaccompanied assignments. These include orientation sessions held every other month, “no-host” monthly lunches, an information fair held last November, a live Internet/phone seminar on managing stress last February, a pre-departure seminar, the creation of a coordinator position for unaccompanied tours and a Web portal.

But it is disheartening to discover that M/FLO receives no department funds whatsoever to support even these limited information-sharing activities. Everything M/FLO has tried to do in support of separated families has been financed through private contributions from the Una Chapman Cox Foundation.

Of course, we all understand that it is easier for the military, which is more than 200 times larger than the Foreign Service, to furnish tangible, concrete support for families through its network of subsidized commissaries, schools and residential bases, infrastructure that State does not have. We all understand that the Pentagon's vast budget can afford far greater resources for actual assistance to families. But seriously ... *no* new State Department money allocated to M/FLO in recent years for the hundreds of separated Foreign Service families?

There is one relatively straightforward way for the department to address this glaring problem: by substantially increasing or even doubling the Separate Maintenance Allowance. The SMA is the only material support that FS families get when the employee goes off to Iraq or Afghanistan. We at AFSA believe — and have heard constantly from members serving at unaccompanied posts —

that the SMA is insultingly inadequate. At the current rate, an employee serving in a war zone can get about \$850 per month to maintain a spouse at a separate location, or just over \$1,200 per month to maintain a spouse and a couple of kids. These amounts are little more than a token contribution to the actual expenses that an unaccompanied employee incurs in maintaining his/her family back home.



For example, in the area of lodging expenses in the Washington metropolitan area, the current SMA realistically covers barely half of the average rental costs for unfurnished dwellings alone. This is to say nothing of all the other expenses of food, utilities, transportation, clothing, activities, long-distance phone calls to the missing spouse/parent, etc.

The State Department will say that the SMA exists only to help “defray” the costs of maintaining families thousands of miles away, but the current SMA rates are insufficient to make a meaningful difference. Although Foreign Service members do get a hardship differential and danger pay during these most difficult assignments, they are forced to spend these extra monies — and often to go out-of-pocket — to maintain their families elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the department benefits financially from sending employees alone on unaccompanied postings. Lower housing costs at post, lower utility costs, lower transportation costs, no family overseas health care costs, and complete elimination of schooling costs all combine to provide substantial savings to the department. These savings, we believe, far exceed the amount that the department pays out in SMA.

Moreover, at a time when we are struggling to fill more than 800 unaccompanied positions overseas every year, dramatically increasing the Separate Maintenance Allowance to bring it more in line with reality would provide a powerful incentive to employees to volunteer for such postings.

AFSA has repeatedly raised with the department our urgent proposal to increase SMA, starting with a formal letter in November 2005. We have mentioned it to the Secretary of State at every meeting since then, and we highlighted it in AFSA's “wish list” for the new director general in summer 2006. Nearly two years have passed, but the SMA remains at the same paltry level.

Until the department demonstrates a willingness to devote actual resources to the support of the growing number of Foreign Service families separated by war-zone and other unaccompanied postings, the words of senior officials about family-friendliness will ring hollow. □

## Taking a Fresh Look

The last time I wrote to you from this corner, our nation had just gone to war with Iraq. It was March 2003. By the time my piece appeared in the *May Journal*, we were fully engaged in a massive military campaign in Iraq.

We assumed that the Pentagon would be urgently taking precautions to protect the lives of our fighting men and women. I argued that parallel measures to preserve the safety and security of our diplomats stationed in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Muslim world — dangerous regions in the best of times — should also be taken.

What I fretted about in that column has, of course, come to pass. The Foreign Service is squarely in the thick of it, both in Iraq and Afghanistan. Major front-burner issues are how to staff Embassy Baghdad, the largest embassy in the world, with

[The last time I wrote you from this corner, our nation had just gone to war with Iraq.](#)

some 300 FS positions, and how to find FSOs of suitable rank and experience to head up the score of Provincial Reconstruction Teams tasked to bring economic initiatives and good government practices to the Iraqi hinterland.

What, you may ask, do these issues have to do with AFSA's retiree agenda? A good bit, I'd say, because the Foreign Service's claim to its rightful place in the foreign policy arena depends on how well it fulfills its mission — and this, in turn, depends on receiving the funding and resources needed to do so. Active-duty Service members need our support, as they, unlike retirees, have only limited means of pressing their concerns directly within the system.

Returning to the AFSA Governing Board after a hiatus of four years, I find several retiree issues are still on the agenda from that earlier time, including the need for a department commitment to seek wider authority to hire When Actually Employed retirees not subject to a salary cap and the creation of a standardized and centralized WAE program designed to address the department's critical staffing shortfall.

The new team is taking a fresh look at these questions. We mean to show steady progress on them all, despite the less-than-forgiving environment in which we operate. Chief among them

is a resource-constrained Department of State whose priorities are heavily, if not totally, skewed toward the Iraq War. Given the looming cost of that conflict and the larger campaign against Islamic fundamentalists — which the Iraq Study Group estimated could cost as much as \$2 trillion (yes, trillion) — it is crucially important that AFSA keep retiree bread-and-butter issues at the fore. When the nation's fiscal health is under extreme pressure, ways to cut back public employee benefits are sure to come under intense review. We need to lay the foundation now for the battle, if and when it comes, to preserve our hard-won benefits.

In this connection, let me reiterate a pitch I made back in the February 2002 *FSJ* regarding retiree membership statistics. Out of a retired annuitant base totaling 15,720 people, only 3,778 are members of AFSA — an anemic 24-percent retiree membership rate. Compare this to the Military Officers' Association of America, with a retiree membership rate of nearly 60 percent of its pool of potential members. With 372,000 members, MOAA is admittedly an elephant compared to our mouse; but such a robust membership base earns it enviable clout on Capitol Hill.

Within AFSA, the comparable rate for State active-duty members is 75 percent. The AFSA Governing Board and I warmly commend Member Services Director Janet Hedrick for her tireless efforts to increase AFSA membership among almost 12,000 FS annuitants who remain outside AFSA, the lone voice of the Foreign Service on Capitol Hill.

An increase of just 200 retired members would enable AFSA to expand the hours of its retiree services unit, where Bonnie Brown labors three days a week handling every conceivable inquiry relating to annuity computation, health insurance, death benefits and a myriad of topics too arcane to list. We need seriously to consider expanding Ms. Brown's unit and adding a part-time understudy to her one-person staff.

Finally, my four retiree colleagues — Herman (Hank) Cohen, Harry Geisel, Howard Jeter and David Passage — will share this column space on a more or less rotating basis so that we can tap into a wider range of opinion and expertise. We are eager to hear your concerns and comments as our term unfolds. You may contact us through Bonnie Brown at tel: (800) 704-2372, ext. 509; or e-mail: brown@afsa.org. □



## LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS UPDATE

### AFSA Testifies on the Hill

On Aug. 1, AFSA President John Naland testified alongside Foreign Affairs Council President (and former AFSA president) Ambassador Thomas D. Boyatt before the Senate Subcommittee on Oversight and Government Management, chaired by Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii. The hearing, "Building a Stronger American Diplomatic Presence to Meet the Challenges of a Post-9/11 World," gave AFSA a chance to present its position on the need for increased resources and personnel for diplomacy. In his testimony, Naland noted that "the last three years have witnessed serious backsliding as new Foreign Service staffing demands in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere have far outpaced appropriations for personnel."

The AFSA testimony concluded: "[The] underinvestment in Foreign Service funding, staffing and training is undermining U.S. diplomacy. ... AFSA respectfully asks this Congress to fully fund Secretary Rice's FY 2008 budget request, to implement Overseas Comparability Pay and to move forward in FY 2009 with creating the robust training float that will provide our Foreign Service with the knowledge, skills and abilities that are essential to successful foreign policy development and implementation."

On the issue of overseas pay disparity for members of the Foreign Service, Naland stated that "ending this disparity would help validate the significant efforts and sacrifices made by the men and women of the Foreign Service and their families who serve our country abroad." This continues to be a high-priority issue that AFSA will be actively pursuing during the fall session of the 110th Congress.



AFSA President John Naland (left) and Foreign Affairs Council President Thomas Boyatt being sworn in at the Aug. 1 Senate hearing.

Representatives from the State Department, Government Accountability Office, United Nations and other organizations also testified at the hearing.

### New Legislation Introduced on Overseas Pay Disparity

In a major step forward, legislation was introduced in the House on July 27 to correct the overseas pay disparity. There are two versions: one simply implementing Overseas Comparability Pay and the other closing the same pay gap in conjunction with implementing a pay-for-performance system. (Go to [www.afsa.org/congress/overseas\\_comp\\_pay.cfm](http://www.afsa.org/congress/overseas_comp_pay.cfm) for background on the issue.)

The Bush administration supports the pay-for-performance concept, but many Democratic members of Congress are wary of that model based on the experience of attempting to implement such a system for civilian employees at the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security. The AFSA Governing Board,

meeting on Aug. 1, reaffirmed AFSA's position that either version is acceptable. The priority is to close the pay gap between FS employees serving in Washington and overseas, and to remedy the inequity of Senior Foreign Service members getting Washington comparability pay when no one else does.

The new House legislation is co-sponsored by Reps. Tom Davis, R-Va.; Donald Payne, D-N.J.; David Scott, D-Ga.; Chris Smith, R-N.J.; Chris Van Hollen, D-Md.; and Frank R. Wolf, R-Va. AFSA greatly appreciates their support.

The two bills were referred to the House Foreign Affairs and the Oversight and Government Reform Committees. In early August, AFSA President John Naland and Legislative Director Ian Houston met with Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Ill., and Rep. Sam Farr, D-Calif., seeking their support. (Sen. Whitehouse grew up in the Foreign Service and his father, Charles, served as AFSA president from 1981 to 1982.)

Pursuing another angle on the issue, Naland and Houston met July 31 with State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs Assistant Secretary Jeffrey T. Bergner and Deputy Assistant Secretary Joseph MacManus to discuss efforts to eliminate the overseas pay disparity and fully fund the department's Fiscal Year 2008 budget request for personnel and operating costs. The H Bureau officials detailed State's concerted efforts to achieve those legislative goals, which have already included personal contact with key members of Congress by Sec. Rice, outgoing Under Secretary for Management Henrietta H. Fore and other senior department managers. The H officials said they were confident that such high-level involvement would continue as needed. AFSA expressed appreciation for this advocacy of measures critical to the success of U.S. diplomacy in the coming years. □

## Penny Wise and Pound Foolish

In previous articles, I have referred to the “Operating Expenses” crisis at USAID, citing my concern that this situation is bad for our agency and nation. Below is a more precise, factual and, I hope, convincing summary to make my case. This information is a result of our close collaboration with InterAction, a nongovernmental umbrella group representing more than 165 organizations, in response to an official request from Sen. Richard Lugar, R-Ind., ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In terms of real dollars, operating expenses have actually decreased over the last 25 years, a decrease that is even more significant when viewed as a percentage of USAID’s total budget authority. This decrease has limited the agency’s ability to fill critical positions with experienced and qualified direct-hire staff and impaired the planning and implementation of its programs.

The charts below show USAID OE levels over the last 25 years, USAID’s total budget authority for that period, and OE as a percentage of USAID’s budget authority. The first chart shows both USAID’s operating expenses and total budget authority as adjusted for inflation. The second depicts the downward trend in OE funding relative to total budget authority from 1982 to 2007.

Over the last 15 years, larger and larger portions of this account have been consumed by costs such as computer tech-

nology, rent and security needs that were not as substantial in the 1980s when OE was generally funded at its highest levels. These increasing costs, when combined with decreasing appropriations for OE, have forced the agency to operate with an ever-smaller work force, which, in turn, compromises program effectiveness.

Operating expense constraints have also resulted in the hypercentralization of USAID planning and program design.

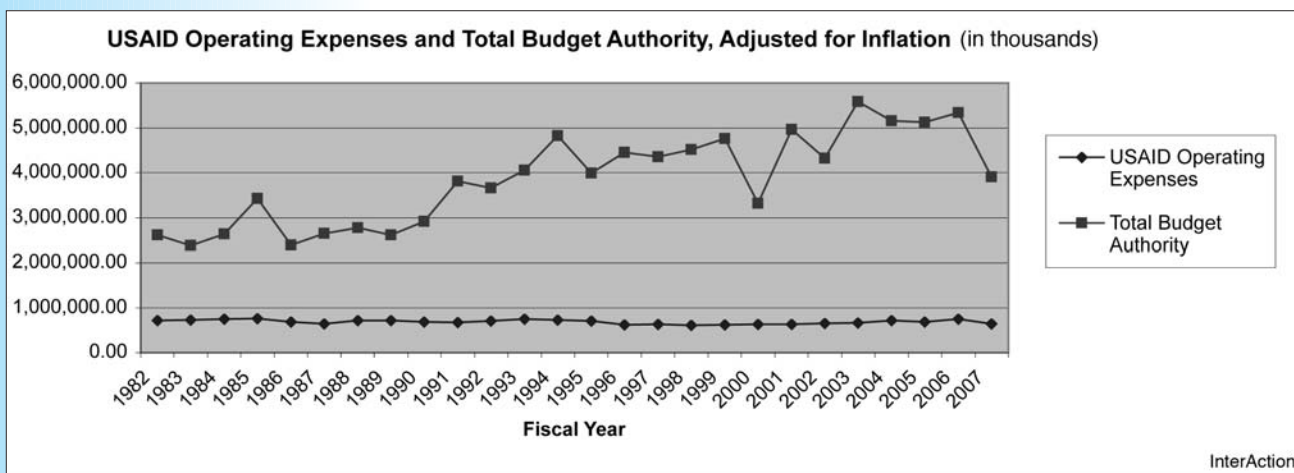
In the months since Secretary Rice’s announcement of her transformational diplomacy initiative in January 2006, that hypercentralization has even manifested itself in the suggestion that missions should close in certain “non-strategic” countries around the globe. In an April 12 memo to all USAID field staff, then-Director of Foreign Assistance Randall Tobias

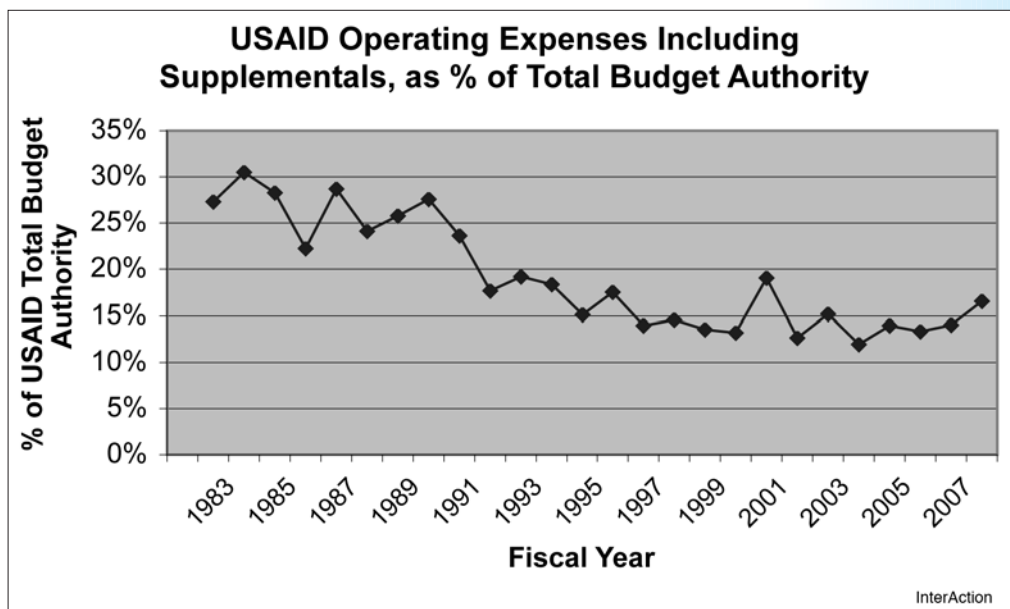
said, “[USAID] will need to shift resources away from some functions, including those nations where USAID’s full-scale mission platforms are not critical to delivering U.S. assistance effectively. Specifically, I will propose the deployment of USAID ‘development attachés’ to assist U.S. chiefs of mission and country teams in such nations.”

It would seem that, during a time when the White House has acknowledged the importance of development relative to defense and diplomacy, the administration should be looking



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for ways to *expand* USAID's presence in the developing world. Instead, the administration's total OE request for FY 2008 was 15 percent lower than the FY 2006 actual budget for OE. Budgetary and management decisions such as these that lead to the overcentralization of USAID's strategic planning and program management processes will compromise aid effectiveness by moving strategic decision points from the field to headquarters.

The staffing situation is also critical, as the number of USAID direct hires has decreased substantially over the last 15 years, causing a troubling loss of technical expertise at the agency. In the 1990s, for instance, 37 percent of the agency's work force left without being replaced, or were laid off in the 1995 reduction-in-force.

The number of FSOs working overseas dropped by 29 percent between 1992 and 2005, from 1,173 to 833. The current attrition rate is outpacing new hires by more than 2-to-1. In 2006, 65 FSOs retired while only 29 were hired, and about half of all FSOs have been recruited in the last six or seven years. Even when new officers are hired, it takes two years to fully train them for entry-level jobs. The result is that the work force increasingly lacks institutional memory and technical knowledge. Because of the ever-shrinking size of USAID's staff, the agency has been forced to manage an increasingly large portfolio with fewer and fewer personnel. For instance, while the average federal contracting officer manages around \$10 mil-

lion in contracts per year, a USAID contracting officer oversees an average of \$57 million in contracts. As overseas missions get smaller, the system's management and oversight capabilities will become overstressed.

The operating expense constraints at USAID have also led to a proliferation of personnel systems at the agency. Up to 13 different personnel systems have operated between 2001 and 2005, many of them designed to circumvent OE and human resources restrictions. The agency tried to address this several years ago by consolidating many positions into the existing Foreign Service Limited hiring mechanism, using program funding. The FSL mechanism is normally a way to staff positions overseas with Civil Service officers on an exceptional basis when qualified Foreign Service officers are not available. However, this only exacerbated and distorted the FS career system, causing more problems and concerns for regular FS employees.

On a positive note, both houses of Congress are supporting our call to increase OE. It is our hope that by the time this column is published, the administration will have concurred. It is the only logical and sensible solution left to correct years of neglect. We hope that the administration will finally provide adequate funding for USAID to carry out the nation's foreign assistance programs, which, after all, are our most cost-effective and best first line of defense. □

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The meeting was held at the invitation of Sec. Rice. Participants were AFSA President John Naland, State Vice President Steve Kashkett, AFSA attorney Neera Parikh, acting Director General Heather Hodges, Chief of Staff Brian Gunderson, and State's Chief Labor Management Negotiator Steve Polson.

Naland remarked that his election campaign had focused on AFSA's interest in maintaining a positive dialogue with the Secretary and other key interlocutors. Sec. Rice said that her top priority was "our people and what happens to them" and expressed great respect for the Foreign Service.

Naland raised the urgent need to address the pay disparity issue and obtain more resources for diplomacy, asking the Secretary to contact key members of Congress, at the appropriate point, to urge them to pass legislation that would eliminate the overseas pay disparity and to fully fund the State Department's FY 2008 budget request. Sec. Rice expressed strong support for those legislative goals, adding that she had personally played a key role in securing White House support for correcting the overseas pay disparity.

Turning to Iraq, VP Kashkett affirmed that AFSA remains committed to working with the department to find creative incen-

tives to encourage voluntary bidders — rather than resort to directed assignments — for the many positions in Iraq, as the association has done for the past two years. He noted that AFSA has agreed to numerous State Department initiatives and assignment rule changes to encourage bidding on these extreme hardship posts. Kashkett reiterated AFSA's desire for an increase in the Separate Maintenance Allowance.

AFSA seeks to avoid directed assignments to a war zone, believing that would be detrimental to the individual, the post and the Foreign Service. The Secretary said that she, too, hoped to continue to rely on volunteers, but that staffing Iraq was a top priority and she was prepared, if needed, to direct Foreign Service members to serve there. One persistent concern raised by AFSA members that Kashkett put forward at the meeting is the safety of residential trailers at Embassy Baghdad. The Secretary said that she did not believe that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security would allow an insecure condition to go unaddressed.

Asked her view of the future of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq, the Secretary said that the PRTs have been a success. She said that while an original plan may have envisioned a scaling back of the teams, this would likely wait until Iraq has been stabilized to the point that traditional consulates and other diplo-

matic-presence posts can take over local coordination.

Naland raised the plan to create a Museum of American Diplomacy in the Marshall Wing of the Truman Building. He noted the potential for this project to educate the American people on the vital role of diplomacy. Sec. Rice agreed on the need to tell the story of diplomacy, but expressed concern about securing private funding for the \$30-million-plus startup cost, which, she said, should not be funded with State Department money. She encouraged Naland to seek solutions and get back to her with ideas. On July 30, Naland toured the space reserved for the museum and plans to pursue options for supporting the project.

Sec. Rice closed the meeting by urging AFSA to do whatever it could to support greater diversity in Foreign Service hiring. AFSA, in fact, has a solid track record in this area, including sponsorship of a minority internship at State, the nationwide High School Essay Contest and the wide distribution of AFSA's book, *Inside a U.S. Embassy*.

Subsequent to the meeting, AFSA scheduled meetings with the Bureaus of Legislative Affairs and Diplomatic Security for follow-up. AFSA looks forward to continued discussions with the Secretary. □

**Essay • Continued from page 61**

was "The Birth of Democracy: The Role of the Foreign Service in Establishing a Democracy in Sudan."

The third-place prize of \$750 went to Michelle Fang, a rising senior at Milton Academy in Milton, Mass., who is from British Columbia. Her essay topic was "Reforming Liberia, Stabilizing West Africa: The Work of the Foreign Service to Create Good Governance in Liberia."

Twenty-three finalists received honorable mention certificates for their excellent essays.

An AFSA advisory panel of judges selected the winners. This year the top three winners' essays were separated by only one point, making this the closest competition

in the history of the contest.

The goal of AFSA's essay contest, now in its eighth year, is to encourage interest in possible Foreign Service careers among top-quality high school students nationwide. AFSA promotes the contest widely through direct mailings to social science teachers, as well as through listings on various Web sites popular with students. Teachers become AFSA's key promoters and mentors of the contest in schools. Sumit Malik's English teacher and mentor, Michael Miller, was also received by Sec. Rice during her meeting with Malik and his parents.

For the 2007 essay contest, AFSA received more than 100 submissions from high school students nationwide covering

a wide variety of topics. Students were asked to analyze and explain how Foreign Service members promote U.S. national interests by participating in the resolution of today's major international problems.

The contest is open to all students in grades nine through 12 attending a public, private, parochial or home school; or participating in a high school correspondence program in any of the states, Washington, D.C., or U.S. territories; or U.S. citizen students attending schools overseas. Students whose parents are members of the U.S. Foreign Service or have served on the Advisory Committee are not eligible.

AFSA consultant Perri Green deserves much credit for ably administering the contest since its inception. □

**New Hearing • Continued from page 61**

of the employee's resignation. It suspended the remaining issues that were raised in the motion for reconsideration pending the outcome of a hearing on the voluntariness of the resignation.

**Facts of the Case**

In late 2003, the director general proposed the separation for cause of an FSO after his top-secret security clearance was revoked based on his inappropriate use of government equipment in 2000. [Note: In 2002, the department attempted to discipline the employee for the same incident, but the Grievance Board found that the maximum reasonable penalty was an admonishment, a cautionary letter that is not put in the employee's official file and is destroyed after one year.]

Under the Foreign Service Act, employees (other than those who have been convicted of a crime) are entitled to a hearing on separation for cause before the FSGB, unless they waive that right. They are placed in a leave-without-pay status pending the outcome of the hearing.

The FSO in this case did not waive his right to a hearing, so the parties engaged in protracted discovery and litigation for 19 months.

The employee alleged that the Diplomatic Security Bureau and the Security Appeal Panel committed grave procedural errors during the revocation of his security clearance. For example, DS employees had ex parte communications with the panel after the employee and his counsel were excused from the meeting. In addition, the SAP and the director of DS, in revoking the employee's clearance, relied on witness statements that the employee was not permitted to view. These procedural errors denied the employee the right to notice of, and an opportunity to respond to, the reasons for the clearance revocation.

The employee also alleged that his firing would not be in the best interest of the Foreign Service, because he was continuing to make a meaningful contribution to the State Department despite the revocation of his security clearance. He noted that he had been recommended for promotion

to FS-2 in 2000 as well as 2004, despite his lack of a clearance. However, the promotion was held up due to the discipline case discussed above and the subsequent separation-for-cause proceeding.

The employee also cited compelling personal factors that militated against his firing. These included the fact that, at the time, he had only three years to go before becoming eligible for voluntary retirement, so his family's pre-existing medical conditions made it essential that he maintain his government health insurance.

**A Legal Catch-22**

As the sole breadwinner for his family, the employee needed to find other employment while fighting his separation for cause before the Grievance Board. He took low-paying, part-time jobs in the private sector until, after 19 months of mandatory leave-without-pay status, he was able to secure a position at another federal agency. When that agency requested that the State Department send over his official personnel file, State refused, stating that it could not release the file until the employee resigned.

Fearing that he was placing his new job in jeopardy, and under severe financial duress, the employee tendered his resignation in 2006, but stated in his resignation letter that he intended to pursue his appeal rights before the Grievance Board. Upon receipt of his resignation letter, the acting director general, without prior notice to the employee or his counsel, withdrew the proposed separation for cause, claimed the board no longer had jurisdiction over the case and sought to terminate all of the employee's appeal rights.

Unfortunately, the Grievance Board dismissed the employee's case, acting on the mistaken belief that the State Department's withdrawal of the proposed separation deprived it of jurisdiction over all of the issues that the parties had been litigating for the past 19 months. The department argued, and the board agreed, that prior to going off the rolls of the department, the employee was required to file a separate grievance with the department alleging all

## AFSA Creates Legal Defense Fund and Seeks Contributions

Over the years, the AFSA Governing Board has contributed money toward the legal fees of Foreign Service members with cases that are of institutional importance to AFSA and its members. For example, AFSA contributed \$5,000 to assist a Foreign Service officer as he sought to have the U.S. government protect him from a private lawsuit by a Russian national who was injured in a car accident in Vladivostok, where the FSO was serving as consul general. (For details, see "The CG Is On Duty 24/7: Court Agrees," October 2006, *AFSA News*.) AFSA also contributed to the legal costs of two USAID employees who were forced to go to court to enforce favorable Grievance Board decisions. To date, these contributions to assist members facing high legal fees have come from the limited resources of AFSA's Labor Management Office.

Many federal unions have legal defense funds in place so that they can finance private counsel to pursue cases of significance to the union and its membership. While AFSA's four full-time attorneys work tirelessly to help our members (without charging them), some cases, especially those requiring a hearing, require the time and expertise of private counsel. With this in mind, AFSA announces the creation of its own legal defense fund.

Individuals — especially those who have benefited from free legal representation by AFSA — are encouraged to make a contribution to the fund. Please make out your check to "AFSA Legal Defense Fund" and mail it to AFSA (Attn: Legal Fund), 2101 E Street NW, Washington DC 20037. Please note that contributions are not tax deductible, but we hope that will not discourage you from contributing to this important fund.

Continued on page 74

## AFSA Issue Brief

With this inaugural edition, we begin a new series of articles that will outline AFSA positions on critical issues. These "Issue Briefs" will run in AFSA News several times a year and will help keep the membership informed about current AFSA priorities.

# Training America's Diplomats: Better than Ever, but Is It Enough?

## HOW UNDERINVESTMENT IN FOREIGN SERVICE TRAINING IS HURTING U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

BY JOHN K. NALAND, AFSA PRESIDENT

Never have Foreign Service members received as much training as they do today. Enrollment at the Foreign Service Institute—including classroom and distance learning—is up 62 percent since 2001. FSI course offerings have increased to over 500 per year. Mandatory leadership and management training has been fully phased in. FSI, a facility that seemed half-empty when it opened in 1993, is now so overcrowded that some foreign-language classes have been split into morning and afternoon shifts.

Thus, America's diplomats are receiving more training than ever before. But is it enough training of the right type in view of the needs of 21st-century U.S. diplomacy? And, given our nation's far greater investment in education and training for the uniformed military, is the relative underinvestment in Foreign Service education and training contributing to an erosion of the Department of State's role as the lead foreign affairs agency?

### How the Other Half Trains

While some Foreign Service members may question being compared to the uniformed military, the fact is that the Foreign Service personnel system was purposefully modeled on that of the U.S. military. For example, the Foreign Service's "up-or-out" promotion system, implemented in 1946, was based on the U.S. Navy's personnel system. Because both the Foreign Service and the military work under difficult and often hazardous conditions throughout their careers, members of both are allowed to retire with a pen-



sion after 20 years of service.

As is the case in the military, Foreign Service assignments are heavily influenced by the needs of the Service. For that reason, Congress included only the Foreign Service and the uniformed military in a 2003 law providing a longer period to meet the occupancy requirements to qualify for exemption from the taxation of capital gains on the sale of a primary residence.

Unfortunately, the similarities between the two personnel systems do not carry over into the area of professional educa-

tion and training. Take, for example, the U.S. Army, which I know firsthand, having spent three years as an armored cavalry lieutenant 25 years ago and graduating from the U.S. Army War College via a State Department training detail in 2006. The chart below depicts the U.S. Army officer education system.

As the chart shows, Army officers undergo extensive training even before they are commissioned. Upon entering active duty, they attend an Officer Basic Course lasting three to five months depending on career track (e.g., armor, infantry, etc.). At about year five of service, Army officers undergo six months of training at a Captain's Career Course, followed by the Combined Arms and Service Staff School. Between years four to 17 of service, some officers attend advanced civilian schooling to pursue a master's or Ph.D. degree. At about year 12 of service, they are assigned to year-long Intermediate-Level Education (formerly called the Command and General Staff Course). At about year 17

### U.S. Army Officer Education System (major courses)

Pre-Commission	Company Grade (Yrs. 1 to 11)	Field Grade (Yrs. 12 to 29)	General Officer (Yrs. 30 +)
West Point, 4 yrs. or ROTC, 2-4 yrs. or Officer Candidate School, 14 wks.	Officer Basic Course, 12-20 wks. and Captain's Career Course, 6 mos.	Intermediate-Level Education, 12 mos. and Pre-Command Course, 2-11 wks. and Army War College, 9 mos.	Capstone 7 wks.

of service, the highest-rated 35 to 40 percent are assigned to the nine-month Army War College course (most via resident instruction, while some take the equivalent distance-education course).

While those courses include training on technical and tactical topics, they also educate officers on non-military-specific topics such as management, human resources, planning, organizational behavior, critical thinking and interagency coordination. All officers wishing to be promoted must complete these courses.

Given the Army's career-long commitment to classroom training and professional education, the only real point of similarity between Foreign Service and Army officer training is at swearing-in. New Army officers receive 12 to 20 weeks of orientation and functional training while new Foreign Service members typically receive 13 to 17 weeks (typically, the "A-100" course plus consular training). There the similarities between the Foreign Service and Army approach toward education and training end.

It is true that most Foreign Service members receive from 6 months to 3 years of assignment-specific foreign-language training during their careers — something that few Army officers receive. However, most Army officers spend a similar amount of time in on-the-job operational training, such as weapons practice and field maneuvers.

### Trying to Close the Gap

No one has spoken more eloquently about the need for expanded training for Foreign Service members than did former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. As a retired Army officer himself, Sec. Powell explained that "in my 35 years, almost 36 years of service, I was in school for close to six years — an enormous investment on the part of the Army in getting me ready for whatever came." He contrasted his military schooling to that of a typical Senior Foreign Service member, who might have received only a few months of non-language training during a 30-year career. During his tenure at State, Sec. Powell

launched several initiatives to begin to reduce that disparity.

For example, with AFSA's strong support, he established the requirement to complete leadership and management training to be eligible for promotion. That marked a culture change for Foreign Service members, who often avoided any training (except for foreign-language instruction) due to the perception that it would slow their promotions by taking them away from their day-to-day duties. The resulting four new FSI leadership courses are highly regarded. However, added together, they total just three weeks of instruction prior to promotion to the Senior Foreign Service — compared to 30 months of midcareer schooling that the average Army officer receives.

He also sought funding to create a "training float" — such as the U.S. military services have — equivalent to 10 to 15 percent of the staffing level required to fill existing overseas and domestic jobs. Only with such "bench strength" could the Department of State significantly expand long-term language and functional training without leaving hundreds of regular positions vacant worldwide. Unfortunately, while Sec. Powell did secure some funding for additional training positions, the creation of a large training float was abandoned once all available positions were shifted to Iraq.

The net result is that, despite important initiatives in the last decade that afforded America's diplomats more training than ever before, most Foreign Service members still receive far less professional training than does the average U.S. Army officer.

### Militarizing U.S. Foreign Policy

What is the impact on U.S. foreign policy of this relative underinvestment in Foreign Service training? This question is difficult to answer because several other factors are simultaneously at work, including shortfalls in Foreign Service staffing levels and underinvestment in foreign affairs agency program budgets.

Looking at the net impact of all of the

shortchanging of diplomacy, the December 2006 report "Embassies as Command Posts in the Anti-Terror Campaign," issued by the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee under then-Chairman Richard G. Lugar, R-Ind., found that "The current 12:1 ratio of military spending to spending on the diplomatic and civilian foreign aid agencies risks the further encroachment of the military, by default, into areas where civilian leadership is more appropriate."

The report quoted one U.S. ambassador who noted that "the military has significantly more money and personnel and is so energetic in pursuing its newly created programs and in thinking up new ones, that maintaining a management hand on military activities is increasingly difficult." The report went on to warn that "U.S. defense agencies are increasingly being granted authority and funding to fill perceived gaps [in diplomacy, international information programming, and foreign assistance]. Such bleeding of civilian responsibilities overseas from civilian to military agencies risks weakening the Secretary of State's primacy in setting the agenda for U.S. relations with foreign countries."

As the Senate report indicates, the result of skimping on diplomatic readiness while building up military muscle is that the highly-trained and well-resourced members of the U.S. armed forces are increasingly taking on tasks once rightfully assigned to diplomats. That is not a criticism of America's can-do military, which is only stepping into a partial vacuum to get the job done. However, if left unchecked, this trend could erode the Department of State's role as the lead foreign affairs agency and reduce our nation's options when responding to foreign challenges. As the old saying goes, "If the only tool you have is a hammer, then every problem looks like a nail."

Even former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich, a past critic of the State Department and current member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board, now argues that too many tasks have devolved to the military and that a sig-

nificant increase in the State Department budget is needed in order to reverse that trend. This past April, Gingrich had this to say:

“You have to have about a 50-percent bigger budget for the State Department. ... The State Department is too small to have the training program and the secondment of personnel needed to grow a genuine professional institution. It is impossible for the current Foreign Service to get the level of education it needs. They recruit really smart people [but] they grossly underinvest in training them. It’s a very significant problem ... The reason I became a convert to the fundamental transformation of the State Department is you want to move things away from defense that it’s currently doing. ... You do not want [the] uniformed military having to do all sorts of things that you want to, frankly, give to other agencies if you could count on them doing it.”

### Value Added

What, then, are the knowledge, skills and abilities that our 21st-century Foreign Service currently does not have to a sufficient degree, but could obtain with expanded education and training? To answer that question, it is necessary to first identify what diplomats uniquely should be able to bring to the table.

The Foreign Service exists to provide the president with a worldwide-available corps of professionals with unique abilities that are essential to successful foreign policy development and implementation. Those abilities include: keen knowledge of the history, politics, economics, cultures and languages of other countries; skill at employing that body of knowledge to keep Washington informed of the realities on the ground in the host country; the ability to influence foreign governments and publics; skill at managing programs and projects assigned to foreign affairs agencies; mastery of the interagency process at home; and the ability to coordinate and integrate the efforts of other country-team members in the host country.

To live up to that definition, Foreign

To emulate the Army’s proven model, the State Department could implement at least one long-term professional training course to be taken by all Foreign Service members.

Service members must possess a range of knowledge, skills and abilities. Those include: foreign-language fluency, advanced area knowledge (including history, culture, politics and economics), leadership and management skills, negotiating skills, public diplomacy skills, project management skills and job-specific functional expertise. Unfortunately, the Foreign Service exhibits shortcomings in each of these areas. For example:

- An August 2006 Government Accountability Office report found that 29 percent of overseas language-designated positions were not filled with language proficient staff. The report said that this situation “can adversely impact State’s ability to communicate with foreign audiences and execute critical tasks.”

- Most Foreign Service members — including ambassadors, deputy chiefs of mission and principal officers — who do not go to their new assignment via language training do not receive up-to-date area studies training.

- While one might expect that every U.S. diplomat would receive training in how to negotiate, only about 50 Foreign Service members take FSI’s introductory negotiating course each year. Given that rate of instruction, less than 15 percent of current U.S. diplomats have received even basic instruction in negotiating techniques.

- Despite the current “transformational diplomacy” focus on shaping outcomes and running programs, few Foreign Service members receive training in program management.

### Squaring the Circle

Two major obstacles stand in the way of providing Foreign Service members with the knowledge, skills and abilities that are essential to successful foreign policy development and implementation: lack of time and understaffing/under-resourcing.

The first obstacle is time. Currently, the typical FSI course runs for one to five days. Few non-language courses last longer than three weeks. The reason for such short courses is that, after new-hire training, the only opportunities that most Foreign Service members have for non-foreign language classroom training are during a brief window of availability every few years while between assignments or while leaving their in-boxes untended during infrequent domestic tours. Even over a 30-year-long career, taking a few short courses every couple of years adds up to less than 10 months of non-language training during an entire career — one-third of what the typical U.S. Army officer receives.

As previously mentioned, the Army avoids such time constraints by permanently reassigning officers to long-term training three times during their first 20 years of service for six to 12 months each time. By making training a permanent-change-of-station assignment, the Army takes officers fully offline for the academic year that is needed to master the course material.

To emulate the Army’s proven model, the State Department could implement at least one long-term professional training course to be taken by all Foreign Service members. One suggestion is to create a nine-month “career course” to be taken by newly tenured employees. That course could offer a common core curriculum comprised of existing FSI courses (for example, negotiations, public diplomacy basics, global issues, Washington tradecraft, congressional relations and various information-technology, leadership and management courses) along with newly created segments (for example, national security strategy, instruments of national power, diplomatic history and first-responder training). Participants could

then separate into subgroups for advanced functional and area studies training, depending on their specific cone/specialty and anticipated primary regional focus. The course could also have a community-service component permitting students to do volunteer work, such as mentoring in local public schools.

In addition to creating a course for all employees at about year four or five of service, State should continue to expand language training — especially for hard languages in strategic regions, such as Arabic and Chinese. For example, to ensure uninterrupted language capabilities at one-year Arabic posts such as those in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, three officers are required: one at post, one in the first year of language training, and one in the second year of training.

State could also expand non-FSI long-term training opportunities for employees between about years 12 to 17 of service. Examples include the various U.S. military war colleges, university training and developmental details at nongovernmental organizations and within private industry. Currently, fewer than 75 Foreign Service members (mostly at the FS-2 and FS-1 grade levels) are given such opportunities each year — representing less than 3 percent of all mid-level employees.

However, before additional long-term training opportunities could be created, another obstacle would need to be overcome: understaffing. The State Department is simply not staffed to permit additional long-term professional training. The dilemma is summed up on the Web site of the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas:

"We do not have interagency students in every classroom [because] ... U.S. governmental agencies do not have the same robust training and education personnel accounts that the military services have to support a continuous professional military education that includes institutional education and training throughout an officer's career ... U.S. governmental agencies would be hamstrung to let their 'front line' subordinates attend a yearlong curriculum

at CGSC. Unfortunately, these agencies tend to be 'one deep' in their manning."

Overcoming this "one deep" problem can only be achieved by creating a larger education and training float. For example, to permit all newly-tenured Foreign Service generalists and specialists to attend a nine-month "career course," approximately 600 student positions and 25 instructor positions would be required. Another 75 positions would be required in order to double the number of mid-level employees in long-term training and developmental assignments. Another 200 slots could be dedicated to expanded long-term language training. Creating those 900 new positions would represent a huge step toward implementing the robust training float that Sec. Powell and others identified as necessary.

### Spare a DIME?

Obviously, creating a large training float would cost a lot of money. But without a fully staffed and well-trained Foreign Service, the future will likely see, as the recent Senate report warned, "further encroachment of the military, by default, into areas where civilian leadership is more appropriate." That is something that no one, including the overstretched U.S. military, should want.

In fact, U.S. military doctrine teaches that there are four elements of national power — diplomacy, intelligence, military and economics — with military force almost always being the last, not first, tool that should be employed to achieve national security goals. Thus, the military recognizes the value of a diplomatic corps that is sufficiently staffed and trained to enable it to, whenever possible, achieve national goals without necessitating military-led "kinetic" intervention.

All of this argues for a rebalancing in the current 12:1 ratio of military spending to spending on diplomacy and foreign assistance. Instead, as things stand now, that imbalance is set to worsen. Consider the suggestion that 900 Foreign Service training positions be created. The U.S. Marine Corps alone — the smallest of the

uniformed services — is slated to expand its active-duty ranks by 30 times as many (27,000) by 2011. The U.S. Army is slated to add 65,000 more soldiers to its permanent rolls. Thus, 900 new Foreign Service positions would amount to less than 1 percent of the planned military expansion — barely a rounding error when compared to additional resources being dedicated to the Department of Defense which, for example, already has more musicians than the State Department has diplomats.

But even if the administration and Congress were to fund a larger training float and a nine-month "career course," there would still be a need for additional training at regular intervals throughout the employee's career. One suggestion is to require supervisors at the beginning of each rated period to set a minimum number of days of training expected of each employee to strengthen currently needed skills or for general career development. This, of course, would be easier for D.C.-based employees to do than for overseas employees, but FSI could help by continuing to expand its online course offerings and its courses given at regional centers. The goal would be to make both managers and employees see education and training as an ongoing professional requirement that is a key to work force effectiveness.

In conclusion, while America's diplomats are receiving more training than ever before, it is not nearly enough in view of the needs of 21st-century U.S. diplomacy. This underinvestment in Foreign Service education and training is contributing to an erosion of the Department of State's role as the lead foreign affairs agency. To reverse this trend, State needs the resources to provide Foreign Service members the education and training necessary to equip them with the knowledge, skills and abilities that are essential to successful foreign policy development and implementation in the coming decades. □

*John K. Naland, a 21-year veteran of the Foreign Service, is AFSA president.*

**New Hearing • Continued from page 69**

of the things the parties had been litigating over for the past 18 months before the FSGB. It further asserted that the employee was a “former member” of the Foreign Service and claimed it was too late for him to file a separate grievance over these matters.

**AFSA Supports FS Grievant**

The AFSA Governing Board believes the State Department abused its discretion in withdrawing the proposed separation without the employee’s knowledge or agreement, especially since the employee’s resignation letter made clear that he wished to continue with his grievance. In addition, the FSGB’s decision was severely flawed and contrary to federal case law and its own precedents. AFSA maintains that Foreign Service employees should be afforded the right to challenge procedural violations committed during the revocation of their security clearance, as well as their separation for cause, before an impartial tribunal, such as the Foreign Service Grievance Board.

Because the department’s procedural maneuverings denied the employee these fundamental rights, the AFSA Governing Board unanimously agreed to seek reversal of the Grievance Board’s decision and pay the fees of private counsel.

AFSA maintains that  
Foreign Service employees should  
be afforded the right to challenge  
procedural violations committed  
during the revocation of their  
security clearance.

In February 2007, attorney Beth Slavet, a former chair of the Merit Systems Protection Board, filed a motion for reconsideration with the Grievance Board seeking reversal of its dismissal of the case. As

stated above, in July, the FSGB granted the motion for reconsideration, in part, and ordered a hearing on the issue of whether the employee’s resignation was voluntary or was, in effect, a forced resignation or “constructive discharge.”

That hearing will likely occur this fall. Should the employee prevail on this issue, it is unclear whether the department will be permitted to reinstate the proposal for separation for cause. In any event, this employee probably has a long legal battle ahead of him as he seeks justice before the FSGB. As this will be an expensive proposition, AFSA is seeking contributions from its members for this worthy cause. See sidebar (p. 69). □

**AFSA Meets with Diplomatic Security PDAS**

AFSA President John Naland, State Vice President Steve Kashkett and senior AFSA staff members met with Diplomatic Security Bureau Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Greg Starr on Aug. 3. They covered such topics as security for Foreign Service members in Iraq and Afghanistan, including the security conditions in the Baghdad International Zone and the upcoming move to the new embassy compound.

DS gave an upbeat progress report on two longstanding issues: the out-of-date contact reporting requirements and the security clearance suspension process. DS expects to have the final draft of a complete revision of the regulations concerning foreign contact reporting ready in the near future. AFSA looks forward to having an opportunity to review and comment on that final draft before it is incorporated into the Foreign Affairs Manual. AFSA’s relationship with DS encompasses a wide range of vital issues, and AFSA appreciates the open lines of communication with the current DS leadership. □

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