



# CYBERNOTES

## FSJ Web Site Redesigned

In an ongoing effort to make the *Foreign Service Journal* more accessible to AFSA members and more widely available outside the Foreign Service, we recently redesigned our Web pages — [www.fsjournal.org](http://www.fsjournal.org) and [www.afsa.org/fsj](http://www.afsa.org/fsj).

The new *FSJ* home page gives readers an overview of the magazine and allows them to go directly to what they need, whether it is an article on the FS in Iraq, the latest obituaries or information on how to submit a letter to the editor. The page offers links to articles on specific topics (e.g., Iraq, FS in Transition), particular departments (e.g., FS Know-How, In Memory, Tax Guide, Family Member Matters) and practical information (e.g., contact, subscription, advertising), as well as a prominent link to *AFSA News*.

On a related note, we have shifted our production schedule so that we can succeed more often in getting the magazine out before the first of the month.

Our longer-term goal is to make the *Journal* totally searchable, thereby bringing its unique content (posted online in its entirety since June 2005) into the mainstream of online discussion and research.

Take a look and let us know what you think!

— Susan Brady Maitra,  
Senior Editor

Unless we correct the fundamental challenge of the violation of human rights of Latin American or Central American migrants crossing the border into Mexico, it's very hard for me to come up and wag a finger and say you guys should protect the rights of my citizens in this country.

— Ambassador of Mexico to the U.S. Arturo Sarukhan,  
*The Washington Times*,  
July 20.

## Latin America? We Don't Know and We Don't Care

During the last week of July, Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington think-tank, collaborated with Zogby International to conduct an online poll of more than 7,500 adults nationwide on the topic of America's southern neighbors. The startling results suggest, in the words of Inter-American Dialogue President Peter Hakim, that "American adults are badly misinformed about the region."

"Most Americans believe Brazil and Mexico are the U.S.'s best friends in the region, but the great majority cannot identify the president of either country," Hakim adds. "And they mistakenly identify Washington's closest ally in the region, Colombia, as an adversary." Only 10 percent of online poll respondents said they were familiar with Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the second-term president of Brazil;

and just 20 percent were familiar with Felipe Calderon, the president of Mexico who was elected last summer by a narrow margin.

Even more surprising, more than half of the respondents said they believe that Chinese involvement in Latin America represents a serious threat to American interests — 48 percent among self-identified liberal respondents and 76 percent among conservatives. "The poll results on China suggest a huge gap between U.S. public perception and reality," says Hakim. "Any threat from China is among the lower-priority worries the U.S. faces in the region."

On the topic of trade, American views seem to be very confused. While 55 percent said they believe the American economy benefits from Latin American migrant workers and 48 percent said the U.S. should pursue more free-trade agreements with Latin American nations, 48 percent believe that the U.S. has been harmed more than Canada or Mexico by the North American Free Trade Agreement signed in 1993.

For more information, go to [www.thedialogue.org/press/zogby.asp](http://www.thedialogue.org/press/zogby.asp).

— Susan Brady Maitra

## Trafficking In Persons: The 2007 Report

"Trafficking in persons is a modern-day form of slavery, a new type of global slave trade," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice writes in the *Seventh Annual Trafficking in Persons Report* ([www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007)). The State Department is mandated by the Traf-



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ficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 to report yearly to Congress on the efforts of foreign governments to stop the trafficking of humans.

This year's survey, released June 13, covers 164 countries and adds seven nations to the list of worst offenders. Algeria, Bahrain, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Oman and Qatar were added to the Tier 3 blacklist, which already included Burma, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Uzbekistan and Venezuela. Tier 3 countries are defined as those that do not and are not making a significant effort to comply with the minimum standards according to U.S. law. They may be subject to sanctions from the U.S., the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

China and India were downgraded from the Tier 2 list to the Tier 2 "Watch List," meaning that their efforts to prevent human trafficking, prosecute criminals, and protect their victims are considered insufficient, but not enough so to warrant sanctions.

Not surprisingly, the Chinese government dismissed the findings as "groundless." Venezuela, too, rejected the report, saying the U.S. simply wanted to damage President Hugo Chavez's standing international-

ly. And the chief of police in Burma said, "The report is politically motivated, unfair and biased." The Malaysian press complained that even though the country recently passed a new human trafficking bill, it was nonetheless bumped down to Tier 3. Meanwhile, China and India have remained on the Tier 2 list for three and four years, respectively.

The decision to keep India on the Tier 2 list has been especially harshly criticized by U.S.-based advocacy groups, which say there may be as many as 65 million forced laborers in that country. Rep. Christopher H. Smith, R-N.J., who sponsored the law requiring the report, issued a statement speculating that India's ranking was probably given out of fear of alienating its government. A spokesman for the department's Trafficking in Persons Office stated that "multiple factors" go into deciding the rankings.

— Anna Wong Gleysteen,  
Editorial Intern

## What Goes Around Comes Around

The State Department's four-year battle with the Greater London Authority over \$3 million in unpaid congestion fees and fines American diplomats have accumulated there is now reverberating stateside. New

## 50 Years Ago...

The fact is that if the Department of State had available to it adequate funds to pay the necessary cost of running our embassies abroad, we could fill every ambassadorial post with an able man whether he happened to be a career Foreign Service officer or a non-career appointee. ... The question again is whether the United States, the richest country in the world, is willing to pay what it costs to get the best men available in these jobs.

— Sen. Mike Mansfield, D-Mont., from a speech on Aug. 26, 1957, excerpted in "Heard on the Hill," *FSJ* October 1957.





**Site of the Month:  
<http://del.icio.us>**

*Del.icio.us*, which describes itself as a “social bookmarking” site, allows users to tag, save, manage and share Web pages from a centralized source. As a way to store bookmarks (favorites) on the Web instead of on your home computer, so that you can access them from anywhere, it is an obvious boon for peripatetic FS folks. It is also — and this is the “social” part — a way to share your bookmarks with others and sample their favorite finds, should you choose to do so.

After registering for a free account, users can begin saving bookmarks and set their accounts to either public (anyone can view the collection of links) or private. Instead of organizing the links in folders, as on a computer, users tag their links. There’s no limit on the number of tags that can be given to a link.

Users can also search for links on *del.icio.us*, either within their own collection or across the entire Web site. Because all of the links have been specifically added by a user (or users), it is a good way to discover smaller fun or useful Web sites that don’t appear on the first page of results from the larger search engines.

*Del.icio.us* is also a handy way to back up bookmarks in the event of a computer meltdown, as the accounts are Web-based and can be accessed from any terminal with an Internet connection.

For a user-friendly presentation of what the site is all about, see <http://del.icio.us/about/>. For the story of its creation as a hobby by Joshua Schachter in 2003 and its purchase by Yahoo in 2005, see <http://del.icio.us/help/team>. Yahoo has pledged to “provide the site with the resources, support and room it needs to continue growing the service and community.”

— Anna Wong Gleysteen,  
Editorial Intern

York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s vow that diplomats would pay up like everyone else under the new congestion-pricing plan for the city he has worked out with the U.S. Department of Transportation has been undercut by the State Department.

According to the Aug. 19 *New York Post*, fine print in the deal giving \$354 million in federal transportation funds to support the city’s anti-traffic program grants the State Department authority to waive fees on “vehicles owned or operated by any foreign government or international organization.”

U.S. officials have been arguing in London courts that assessing such

fees as the congestion charges levied by London in 2003 against foreign governments violates the Geneva Convention’s prohibition on collecting taxes from foreign governments.

As of April, the U.S. topped the list of embassies refusing to pay the charge, with outstanding fines that totaled approximately \$3 million. Second was the Nigerian Embassy, owing about \$1.5 million, followed by the mission of Sudan and Japan.

Mayor Bloomberg’s anti-congestion plan must still win legislative approval, and opponents have seized on the State Department clause. “It is galling that an Iranian diplomat could pay nothing while a senior citizen

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from Bayside would be charged to go for cancer treatment at a Manhattan hospital,” Josh Bienstock, spokesman for the Committee to Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free, told the *Post* ([www.nypost.com](http://www.nypost.com)).

— Susan Brady Maitra

### Terrorism Index: Losing the War

A recent survey of more than 100 of the top U.S. foreign policy experts — men and women who have staffed America’s national security apparatus over the past 50 years — found that 91 percent believe the world is becoming more dangerous for the U.S., up 10 percent from February. Fully 84 percent do not believe the U.S. is winning the war on terror, a 9-percent jump since February.

These findings are part of the third Terrorism Index produced by the Center for American Progress and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who teamed up to launch the semiannual survey in July 2006.

The stature and experience of the expert participants, and the fact that they range from liberal to conservative, give weight to the results. Eighty percent have served in the U.S. government — more than 50 percent in the executive branch, 32 percent in the military and 21 percent in the intelligence community.

Although the main government agencies with national security responsibilities were deemed to have improved their ability to do the job, nearly all of the government’s foreign policy efforts came in for heavy criticism, none more so than the Iraq War. Nearly all (92 percent) of the participating experts said the war in Iraq negatively affects U.S. national security, an increase of five percentage points from February. Significantly, negative perceptions of the war in Iraq are shared across the political

spectrum, with 84 percent of those who describe themselves as conservative taking a dim view of the war’s impact.

Published in the September-October issue of *Foreign Policy*, the complete Terrorism Index survey and results are also available online at ([www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/08/terrorism\\_index.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/08/terrorism_index.html)).

— Susan Brady Maitra

### Staffing Gaps and Language Shortfalls: No End in Sight

Though some progress has been made since implementation of the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative in 2002, significant staffing problems continue to compromise the State Department’s ability to function effectively. These are the findings of the latest Government Accountability Office study (GAO-07-1154T) of human capital issues at the department, released Aug. 1.

State’s staffing shortfall was the subject of a hearing that same day before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs’ Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Work Force, and the District of Columbia. The need for a greater American presence within the U.N. agencies was also on the committee’s agenda.

In addition to convenor Sen. Daniel K. Akaka, D-Hawaii, and GAO representatives, the subcommittee heard testimony from AFSA President John Naland (see *AFSA News*, p. 65), Foreign Affairs Council President Thomas Boyatt, and Deborah Derrick, executive director of the United Nation’s Better World Campaign. State Department officials included acting Director General of the Foreign Service Heather Hodges and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Organizations James Warlick.

All testimony on the broad staffing issue was in agreement on the problem definition: although the \$200-million DRI effort brought some 1,100 new Foreign Service personnel online to make up for staff shortages caused by the budget-cutting of the 1990s and to establish a crisis-response capability and training float, these new officers have been absorbed by the demand for personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan that began to soar in 2003.

In his opening statement, Sen. Abaka cited Amb. Boyatt and the FAC report to underline the fact that in the first two years of Secretary of State Rice’s tenure, no new resources were secured to address this problem. As a result, State officials told the GAO, more than 1,000 new positions are needed now to support foreign-language training needs and respond to crises and changing priorities. Yet, according to Hodges’ testimony, the department’s FY 2008 budget request asks for only 254.

GAO Director of International Affairs and Trade Jess Ford noted that State had not yet fully implemented its earlier recommendation to consider an assignment system that allows for longer tours and consecutive assignments in certain countries to hone critical language skills.

The GAO report is the latest in a series of reports on State’s staffing problems that the agency began in 2002. It concludes that until the department has a sufficient level and mix of staffing and language resources to fill all of the gaps, its ability to carry out foreign policy objectives and critical mission functions will continue to be compromised.

The hearing agenda and all testimony, including the complete GAO report, are accessible online at <http://hsgac.senate.gov/index.cfm>. ■

— Susan Brady Maitra