

ECONOMIC OFFICER

Susannah Cooper ■ Embassy Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates



“Like all economic officers, I am responsible for reporting on economic issues, following economic developments and policies, and delivering economic démarches,” says Embassy Abu Dhabi Economic Section Chief Susannah Cooper. Economic officers advance U.S. economic and commercial interests through diplomacy.

Cooper works in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a loose federation of seven emirates that shares a southern border with Saudi Arabia and an eastern border with Oman. The UAE constitutes the largest Middle Eastern export market for the United States. Embassy

Abu Dhabi is a large mission that works with the UAE on a wide variety of issues, most notably regional economic issues related to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other countries. “While the bilateral relationship is historically based on political and security ties,” Cooper explains, “in recent years cultural, educational, and commercial ties have grown significantly.” The economic relationship between the United States and the UAE has blossomed: more than 750 American companies are now based there, and more than 40,000 U.S. citizens live there.

In Abu Dhabi, Cooper’s job is to keep U.S. government agencies apprised of economic developments and policies that affect U.S. interests in the UAE. The execution of that goal is complicated by the fact that the UAE imports huge amounts of American goods and has the third-largest economy in the Middle East.

Cooper spends much of her time on issues related to nuclear power and renewable energy. Although, historically, the UAE economy was based on hydrocarbons, a sector in which many U.S. firms participate, the UAE is now investing in clean energy technologies to meet a growing demand for electricity and to diversify the economy. The embassy tries to play a constructive role in this process.

Cooper’s economic team helped finalize a bilateral energy cooperation agreement “supporting greater cooperation on the development and application of renewable energy technologies.” In 2009, the United States and UAE negotiated and signed a nuclear power cooperation agreement, which has led to technical cooperation on nuclear safety, security, and safeguards, as well as the creation of a Gulf Nuclear Energy Infrastructure Institute to train regional nuclear power officials.

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As the economic section chief, Cooper supervises six employees (five Americans and one Locally Employed Staff member). She is the primary adviser to the ambassador on all economic issues and

works closely with the Commerce Department representatives, who directly promote U.S. exports. She also works closely with the representatives of other federal agencies covering aviation (Federal Aviation Administration), financial affairs (Treasury Department), and customs cooperation (Department of Homeland Security/Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

A typical day for Cooper involves meetings with government officials “to discuss bilateral cooperation, review key economic developments, encourage economic liberalization and discuss upcoming bilateral visits.” She gets involved in the planning for the many high-level official visitors to the UAE, and often attends meetings during these visits.

Though she speaks Arabic, having spent most of her career in the Middle East, Cooper conducts most of her meetings in English, and the business culture, hours, and attire are similar to what they would be in the United States. She notes that “the UAE is a modern country, so the work environment is very much like that in any developed country.”

Her role as economic officer has also allowed Cooper to assist with the coordination of foreign assistance to countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Haiti. She has worked with the UAE government to provide these countries with billions of dollars for development projects involving education, health care, and other important issues.

“The economic officer covers the majority of policy issues that are not political in nature,” Cooper says, “which makes the work very diverse and rewarding.” The opportunity to help coordinate humanitarian aid, along with many other aspects of the job, makes for a unique and fascinating career.

Cooper, 37, grew up in Scarborough, Maine. She joined the Foreign Service in 1997 after completing a B.A. in international affairs from Sweet Briar College and an M.A. in Arab studies from Georgetown University. Besides Abu Dhabi, she



Cooper on a trip to Abu Dhabi's offshore Zirku Island oil export facility. PHOTO CREDIT: ZADCO

has served in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Kingston, Jamaica; Doha, Qatar; and Tunis, Tunisia. She and her husband, a Foreign Service consular officer, have a four-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter.

CONSULAR OFFICER

Donald Moore ■ Embassy Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Haiti is the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, so consular work at Embassy Port-au-Prince is especially challenging. Proximity to the United States, combined with extremely difficult economic, social, and political conditions, creates strong emigration pressures that lead people to risk their lives attempting to travel to the United States using illegal means, often aboard dangerous vessels.



Donald Moore holding a Haitian adoptee granted humanitarian parole.

It was on Donald Moore's watch as consul general, head of the Embassy Port-au-Prince consular section, that Haiti was struck by a massive earthquake on January 12, 2010, which brought tragedy and destruction on a massive scale, killing more than 230,000 people. Consular officers immediately began working to provide emergency services to Americans in the consular district. Foreign Service colleagues from posts near and far joined in the assistance effort. American and local staff slept in the office or in tents on the embassy grounds, dealt with

minimal sanitation and hygiene facilities, ate military ready-to-eat meals, and worked 12 to 18 hours a day.

The evacuation of American citizens on U.S. military flights began two days after the quake

The consular staff helped American citizens and adoptees evacuate Haiti in a round-the-clock effort.

and continued for more than a month until the resumption of commercial flights on February 19. The consular staff helped American citizens and Haitian adoptees evacuate Haiti in a round-the-clock undertaking. Moore's staff not only helped organize the effort and coordinated with the U.S. military and Haitian national police, but also provided an empathetic ear to the many traumatized American citizens while firmly enforcing strict guidelines to determine eligibility for evacuation. They set up makeshift offices by the tarmac at the airport and ran a frenetically paced control room there. More than 16,400 Americans were able to leave