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PRESIDENT'S VIEWS

Hail and Farewell

BY JOHN LIMBERT

Colin Powell has been a remarkable leader of the Department of State. On his first day on the job he promised he would lead, and would expect excellence from those who worked for him. He would, in return, make the well-being and safety of his employees his top priority. Many other Secretaries of State have promised this; few have done it as well as this one.



He understood the importance of tone and symbols. For example, he made a point of swearing in every new ambassador and every new class of Foreign Service generalists and specialists. Small things? Perhaps, but hardly trivial; and, when compared to the actions of his predecessors, acts of great symbolic importance by expressing publicly his trust in the Foreign Service professionals who work for him.

He understood the operational and symbolic importance of material support. He well understood the corrosive effect of the notorious "do more with less" mantra, which had let our missions and bureaus sink below critical mass and prevented us from performing like the professionals we are. If anything typified our department and our service in the 1990s, it was demoralized people coping with long staffing gaps, personnel shortages in key posi-

John Limbert is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.

*The professionals
of the Foreign
Service will serve
Dr. Rice with the
same loyalty,
dedication and
self-sacrifice that
they offered her
predecessor.*

tions, antiquated equipment, and unsafe and dilapidated buildings. The tragic events of 1998 in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam evoked not only heroism, but also a depressing round of finger-pointing about why our missions, despite warnings from the ambassadors and others, remained dangerously exposed to terrorist attacks. For years the prevailing message to the Foreign Service, to paraphrase the famous 1974 *New York Post* headline, had been: "Drop Dead."

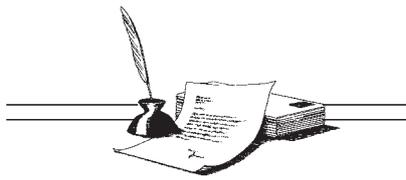
Secretary Powell's departure, and Dr. Condoleezza Rice's nomination as his successor, have provoked bizarre commentary from pundits on both left and right. On one side has appeared a "woe is us" message, warning that the last bastion of rationality will soon fall to rampant ideologues. On the other side has

appeared an "it's about time" message that urges "taming," "bringing to heel" and "reining in" some kind of rogue agency. Judging by these messages, the State Department in general, and the Foreign Service in particular, are nothing more than dens of rebellious and fractious liberals who need to be taught who's in charge.

Both the wailers and the gloaters are wrong. Secretary Powell had the affection and devotion of his employees because he was a leader. He put into practice the maxim, "Take care of your people, and they will take care of you." He understood that he had working for him a group of uniquely talented and skilled men and women, who willingly went into harm's way to serve our country in the most difficult and dangerous conditions.

Dr. Rice can count on the same from the professionals of the Foreign Service, who will serve her with the same measure of loyalty, dedication and self-sacrifice that they offered her predecessor. She deserves no less and, as professionals, we will provide no less.

AFSA says a fond farewell to Secretary Powell and thanks him for all he has done to rebuild the service and restore the pride of our profession. He departs with our best wishes for the future. We also say "welcome" to Dr. Rice and look forward to working with her in representing the American people and advancing American interests overseas. She can count on our complete support in her mission. ■



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY STEVEN ALAN HONLEY

Happy New Year! In keeping with that theme, I am pleased to announce the launch of two new departments in the *Journal*. The first is **Cyberbytes**, which will appear, as the name suggests, in our Cybernotes section. We envision it as a forum to share brief (100 words or less) vignettes about Foreign Service life, either humorous or serious. Imitation being the sincerest form of flattery, one model for submissions might be the Sunday *Washington Post*'s "Life as Haiku" column. Or you can think of these items as mini-Reflections (see below for guidance on what the full-fledged version entails). Either way, we hope those of you who are simply too busy to submit articles or letters will seize on this opportunity to dash off a quick e-mail reacting to something you read in our pages, or discussing a subject of interest to your colleagues.

Our second new department is actually a revamping of a current one. After an encouraging start three years ago, the stream of submissions for our FS Finances column has pretty much dried up, leaving us with a (very) occasional column. So, effective with this issue (see "When 24/7 Duty Isn't: A Cautionary Tale," p. 21), we have changed the department's name to **FS Know-How**. We still want to offer financial information and guidance for Foreign Service personnel, but we also welcome contributions on topics ranging from managing one's career and cutting red tape to parlaying one's professional skills in retirement. In other words, we're looking for practical, "how to" advice for FS members, be they active-duty or retired.

Let me also take this opportunity to remind you of ongoing opportunities to contribute to our pages. The Speaking Out department is your forum to advocate policy, regulatory or statutory changes to the Foreign Service. These columns (approximately 1,500 words long) can be based on personal experi-

ence with an injustice or offer your insights into a foreign affairs-related issue.

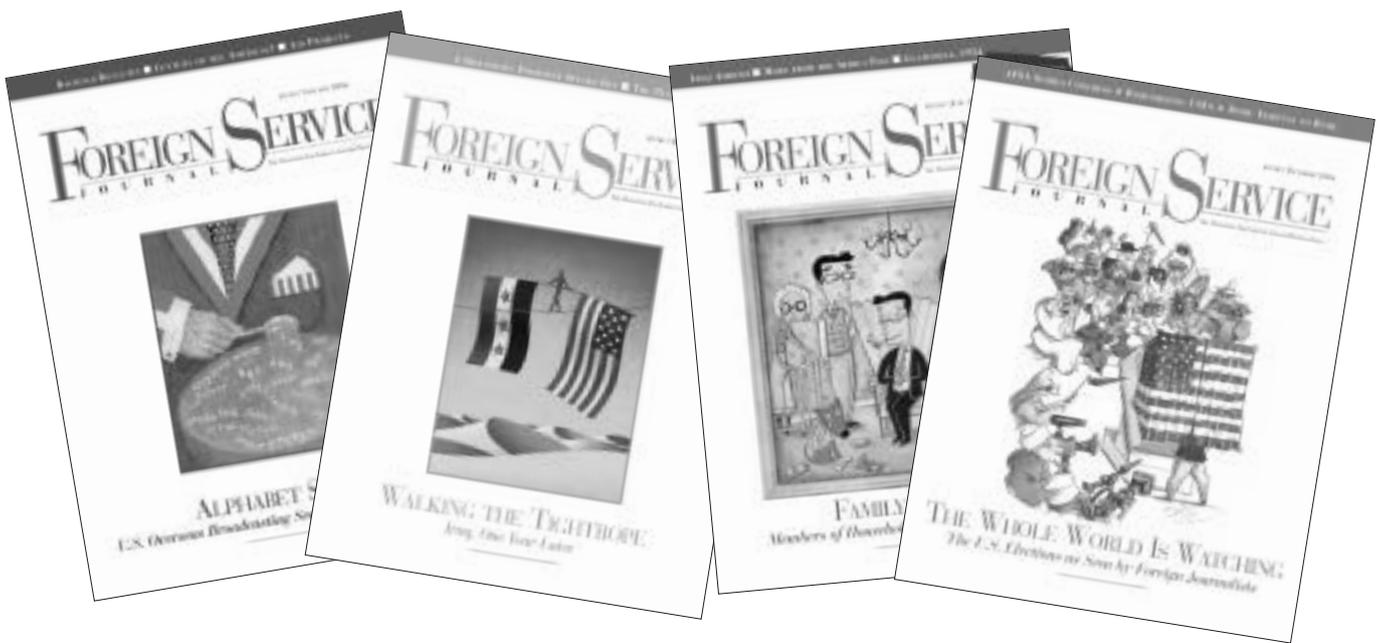
Each issue of the *Journal* features a focus section examining various facets of an issue related to the Foreign Service or international relations. We commission most of the articles for these sections from different sources, but warmly welcome contributions (2,000-3,000 words is the usual range, though shorter submissions are also accepted) from FS personnel who are familiar with these issues.

As you can see, most of these themes relate

Here is a list of the focus topics our Editorial Board has identified for the coming year (subject, of course, to revision):

2005 EDITORIAL CALENDAR for the FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

| | |
|-------------|---|
| JANUARY: | Foreign Service Memories |
| FEBRUARY: | The Powell Legacy/Transition to Secretary Rice |
| MARCH | "The Baghdad Effect" (2nd anniversary of Iraq War) |
| APRIL | 25th anniversary of Foreign Commercial Service |
| MAY | China |
| JUNE | Acquiring/utilizing FS expertise |
| JULY/AUGUST | FS Summer Fiction |
| SEPTEMBER | Security & Diplomacy (including Diplomatic Security Bureau) |
| OCTOBER | Dealing with "rogue" states (Iran, North Korea, Libya) |
| NOVEMBER | "In Their Own Write" (annual roundup of books by FS authors) |
| DECEMBER | "Wiring State" (Info technology & the Foreign Service) |



directly to Foreign Service professional and lifestyle issues, so I hope many of you will consider sharing your insights and expertise on them with your colleagues. Please note that because of our lead time for publication, and the requirement for Editorial Board approval, we need to receive submissions at least two months (and preferably longer) prior to the issue's release date. Thus, we have already lined up authors for the February and March issues, but there is still time to submit manuscripts for later months.

If those choices don't grab you, or if you feel we have not devoted enough space to a professional concern or functional issue, please consider writing a feature article (generally 2,000-3,000 words long) about it for us.

We hope those of you with a more literary bent will enter our annual summer fiction contest (now in its tenth consecutive year). Please note that entrants are restricted to one story of 3,000 words or less, which must be e-mailed to *Journal* Business Manager Mikkela Thompson at thompsonm@afsa.org no later than April 1. For more details, see the ads elsewhere in this issue or contact Mikkela directly.

On a related note, we invite those of you who expect to publish a book between now and the fall to send us a copy, along with promotional materials, for inclusion in our sixth annual compilation of recently published books by Foreign Service-affiliated authors, "In Their Own Write." Note that Sept. 1 is the deadline for inclusion in the roundup, which will run in November.

*There are many
ways you can share
your insights
in our pages.
Let us hear
from you.*

Our Reflections department features short commentaries (approximately 600 words long) based on personal experiences while living or traveling overseas. These submissions should center on insights gained as a result of interactions with other cultures, rather than being descriptive "travel pieces."

Don't forget that the monthly *AFSA News* section offers many different ways for members to share their experiences, thoughts and concerns regarding professional issues. For more information, contact *Journal* Associate Editor Shawn Dorman at dorman@afsa.org.

Finally, let me invite you to share your reactions, positive and negative, to what you read each month. Just bear in mind that, as with all periodicals, the briefer and more focused your letter is, the more likely we'll be able to print it in full.

Please note that all submissions to the *Journal* must be approved by our Editorial Board and are subject to editing for style, length and format. For information on how to submit a column or article, please contact us at authors@afsa.org and we will be delighted to respond. (Please note the new e-mail address.) For other inquiries — letters, changes of address, subscriptions, etc. — e-mail us at journal@afsa.org.

Let us hear from you. ■

Steven Alan Honley is the editor of the Foreign Service Journal. An FSO from 1985 to 1997, he served in Mexico City, Wellington and Washington, D.C.

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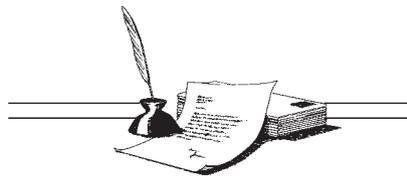
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LETTERS

The Afghanistan Model

The November article by James Goodby and Kenneth Weisbrode, "Rescuing the U.N. Security Council," offers thoughtfully prescriptive and timely advice regarding the Bush administration's failure to secure international cooperation against common threats, notably in Iraq.

Strangely, however, this excellent analysis fails to address the one example of U.S.-U.N.-NATO cooperation that offers a potentially successful model for the future: Afghanistan. In 2001, the international community, working through the U.N., created a political framework that has yielded a government which is perceived by most Afghans and the international community as legitimate. Moreover, U.S. and NATO troops have provided the security space that government needed to establish itself.

To be sure, this venture is not yet a success. The failure of the U.S. and NATO to adequately address the still-grave threat to the Karzai regime posed by opium-enriched warlords, and the still-inadequate levels of international development support for the regime, could yet doom this undertaking.

But even at this fledgling stage, international efforts in Afghanistan offer some lessons. International action grew out of a broad consensus that the world community must act; that an authentically Afghan administrative/political entity should be

empowered simultaneously with application of military force to displace the Taliban and al-Qaida; and that providing humanitarian and developmental assistance was essential to stability.

The Bush administration's impatient decision to bypass creation of a baseline international consensus on Iraq is the fundamental difference in the administration's approach to the two challenges.

*Edmund McWilliams
Senior FSO, retired
Falls Church, Va.*

Get with the Program

I fail to understand Eugene Martin's outrage (Letters, November) at political columnist/pundit Mark Shields' reference, in a PBS interview, to a "limp-wristed State Department type" and at references to our diplomats as "effeminate."

Perhaps Mr. Martin has been retired too long to realize that such an attitude implies an unacceptable bias against the State Department's tireless and successful efforts to attract and recruit more women. Indeed, the entrance of those with "alternative lifestyles" into our foreign affairs agencies is not only welcomed but celebrated.

I would strongly suggest Mr. Martin get with the program before he gets slapped with a purse.

*Albert Krehbiel
FSO, retired
Fredericksburg, Va.*

A Just Election Result

We're disappointed that some of our colleagues cast aside the traditional Foreign Service code of neutrality this election year to campaign furiously against the re-election of President Bush. In post-election e-mails they have proposed a four-year period of mourning because their candidate, Senator John Kerry, lost to President Bush, who received an absolute majority while compiling a three-million-plus vote margin of victory.

Perhaps those colleagues, most of whom are based in the northeast corridor between Boston and Washington, should spend some time over the next four years in the 30 so-called "red" states, like Missouri and Nevada, in order to better understand the mood of the American electorate.

For starters, they should read the federal Defense of Marriage Act and the anti-gay marriage referendums that passed in 11 states, including liberal Oregon, which define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Next they could compare that information with recent *FSJ* articles that grapple with the State Department's concept of "eligible family members."

And then our embittered colleagues could take a closer look at Sen. Kerry, who is a decorated war hero to some, but a traitor to many others; a man who threw his ribbons over the White House fence 30 years ago but proudly displays his medals on his Senate office wall today. He opposed President Reagan's policy



of peace through strength — which won the Cold War — advocated a nuclear freeze, voted repeatedly against defense, intelligence and national security appropriations bills, opposed the first Persian Gulf War and voted against an \$87-billion appropriation to support our troops in Iraq after voting for that war. With that sorry record, how could we vote for him to become commander-in-chief in the war on terrorism?

Finally, our disgruntled colleagues need to understand why President Bush made inroads among minorities that have traditionally supported Democratic candidates. (He received twice as many black votes as he got four years ago and garnered over 40 percent of the Hispanic vote). Asked on CNN why he voted for the president, an Hispanic leader from New Mexico responded, “family values.”

Unless elitist, “progressive” Democrats reach out to Middle America, they are doomed to repeat the humiliating experience of this year’s presidential election.

Ray H. Burson
FSO (USIA), retired
Doniphan, Mo.

Guy W. Farmer
FSO (USIA), retired
Carson City, Nev.

Fond Memories of USIA

I want to express my appreciation for Beatrice Camp’s October Speaking Out column, “A Failure of Imagination.” I agree with her assessments of the effects of selling USIA down the river in an attempt to appease Senator Jesse Helms.

In my nearly 30 years with the Foreign Service, I dealt with the information program in Washington and served with USIA in Singapore, Manila, Bangkok, Cairo and Santiago. More could have been said by old codgers like me about

Theodore C. Streibert, who designed USIA as an action agency and who also found the bureaucratic geniuses Lionel Mosley and Ben Posner, who instituted policies which were unique for their time.

USIA was one of the first government agencies to institute computer-generated payrolls and direct deposits. It hired handicapped people and gave them jobs where their physical handicaps were assets. Its personnel policies produced a bumper crop of minority officers, which State raided to staff embassies in Africa.

James J. Halsema
USIA FSO, retired
Glenmoore, Pa.

A Place in the Sun

I enjoyed Jim Olsen’s article on “How to Steal from an International Agency” in the November *Foreign Service Journal*. Having worked in rural areas of Russia and Ukraine, I could relate to the use of donkeys to get the job done. Though I didn’t use donkeys myself, we were pretty resourceful in other ways.

After reading Olsen’s article I randomly decided to check out the Discovery Channel’s Web site, and guess what I found? More excellent uses for donkeys! Your readers might be interested in this link, which illustrates a true mix of innovation and resourcefulness: www.discoveryglobaled.org/projects/zimbabwe.html#donkey. Check out the donkey bookmobile in Zimbabwe, which is fitted with solar-powered electronic resources. Donkeys are a serious resource and deserve their place in the sun.

Susie Baker
Civil Service Foreign
Affairs Research
Analyst
Department of State
Takoma Park, Md.

Rethinking Immigration

In his October commentary, “Challenging Samuel Huntington,” John Dickson appears, like many Americans, to continue to see immigration as a disembodied aspect of our national life that has no relation to our changing society.

What was good for the country while we were still expanding coast to coast, or populating the factories of the industrial revolution, has no necessary congruence with what is good for the country of 294 million people with an information/technology economy. Similarly, what was good for the country when immigrants largely took care of themselves or went home, is not necessarily good for it when we have a vast array of services designed to help the poor out of poverty, to provide welfare and medical assistance to children and pregnant women, to help minorities succeed in business, etc.

The “restrictionist” movement early in the 20th century was a reaction to a period of mass immigration when it was undermining work opportunities for Americans and was producing racial and labor strife. Huntington and others believe we have returned to a situation when we again need a correction to our immigration policy. That was also the conclusion of the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform led by the late, incomparable Barbara Jordan.

If today’s immigration were strengthening America’s hallowed middle class rather than fueling the ranks of the poor and the rich, while the middle class shrinks, it might represent less of a concern. But it is not, and it is contributing to what many Americans see as unhealthy change, such as the spreading phenomenon of gated communities, pools of day workers hustling jobs on street corners, and inner-city youth who cannot find jobs.

LETTERS



Samuel Huntington has made clear that his concern is not with immigration per se, but rather aspects of today's immigration. His concerns are not just language (like Dickson, I highly value my Spanish-language ability) and allegiance. Immigration today is bringing in a massive wave of newcomers, legally and illegally, that has resulted in falling wages and unemployment for America's poorest workers.

Huntington is in good company when he worries about the impact of today's immigration on society. He echoes some of the concerns voiced by George Kennan in 1993 in *Around the Cragged Hill*. Kennan wrote, "It is obviously easier, for the short run, to draw cheap labor from adjacent pools of poverty ... than to find it among one's own people. And

to the millions of such prospective immigrants from poverty to prosperity, there is, rightly or wrongly, no place that looks more attractive than the United States. ... Subject to no restrictions, this pressure will find its termination only when the levels of overpopulation and poverty in the United States are equal to those of the countries from which these people are now so anxious to escape."

Dickson is right when he says that Huntington's concerns should not be dismissed out of hand. He is also correct, but naïve, when he cautions that Huntington should not be lightly labeled a racist. Anyone who has paid attention to the immigration debate in this country should know that hurling the R-word is a standard, knee-jerk tactic of the defenders of open-door immigration in an

effort to intimidate their opposition and stifle reasoned discussion of the issues. ■

John L. Martin
FSO, retired
Director of the Federation
for American
Immigration Reform
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CYBERNOTES

Undiplomatic Blogging

For diplomats, the world of blogging may be most useful in READ ONLY mode.

In November, Croatia recalled an official from its Washington embassy when he wrote Web diaries reportedly describing diplomatic life as boring and saying he saw no difference at all between the candidates in the U.S. election. According to the Croatian news agency Hina, Third Secretary Vibor Kalogjera, 25, was recalled on suspicion of violating state laws on foreign affairs and civil servants. Excerpts of the diaries were published in Zagreb by the daily *Jutarnji List* newspaper, Reuters reported. Foreign Ministry spokesmen confirmed the recall, but declined comment.

Blog is shorthand for Web log, an individual or group Web site containing chronological entries whose content can range from personal diaries to political, social or literary commentary, and might focus on one topic or cover a broad range of issues. Blogs have been steadily growing in number and influence on the media scene. Bloggers have been responsible for breaking news stories (*The Drudge Report* surfaced the Monica Lewinsky scandal), as well as for keeping the major media honest (they pointed to the apparent document fraud in October that hurried CBS anchorman Dan Rather's retirement).

Blogging was catapulted out of the realm of the tech nerd in 1999, when the Web site blogger.com offered free Web site-building software that could be used by anyone. The 9/11 disaster, when the demand for information and

quick communication took a quantum leap, was the next watershed for blogging. In January 2002, some 41,000 people created Web logs using Blogger. Today, the Google search engine features 74 directories for

blogs. The first in the list, *Blogwise*, lists 30,000 blogs by country and by subject and adds 80 new entries, on average, each month (www.blogwise.com).

Not surprisingly, perhaps, blogs

Site of the Month: FirstGov.gov

The award-winning official U.S. government Web portal celebrated its fourth birthday recently. Managed by the General Services Administration's Office of Citizen Services and Communications, *FirstGov.gov* is a part of USA Services, one of President Bush's e-government initiatives that is an integral part of the president's management agenda.

The Web site, in both English and Spanish, is the "front door" to online government information, services and transactions at the federal, state and local levels. With information accessible by organization, by audience (for instance, "For Seniors" groups links relevant to individuals over age 60), by topic and by task (for instance, "Get a passport application") from the home page, *FirstGov.gov* is extremely user-friendly: you can get what you need without knowing how the government is organized or the names of all the departments and bureaus.

There are many practical things one can do online through this site, for instance: apply for a government job, find government benefits, reserve a campsite at a national park, report an unsafe product, apply for Social Security, find a scholarship, get a driver's license, find out if there are any benefits to which you are entitled, and much more. In 2004, the site had more than 70 million visitors and over 200 million page views.

FirstGov.gov figures in *Forbes.com's* "Best of the Web," and in *Yahoo! Internet Life Magazine's* "50 Most Incredibly Useful Sites," and was rated #1 in "Overall Federal E-Government" by Brown University, among many other awards and citations. In 2003, *FirstGov.gov* won the prestigious "Innovations in American Government Award" from the Ash Institute of Harvard University, the Ford Foundation and the Council for Excellence in Government. This award is given to programs that are "outstanding examples of creative problem solving in the public sector."

FirstGov.gov got its start when Internet entrepreneur Eric Brewer, whose early research was funded by the Department of Defense, donated a powerful search engine to the federal government in June 2000. President Clinton instructed that the new global portal be launched in 90 days, and *FirstGov.gov* went online Sept. 22, 2000. GSA and 22 federal agencies funded the initiative in 2001 and 2002, and since then *FirstGov.gov* has received an annual appropriation.



CYBERNOTES

have sparked the same arguments as were advanced for and against the Web itself a number of years ago — or, for that matter, the invention of the printing press centuries ago. While freedom of the press is vastly expanded and “everyman” empowered, some worry that with no auditing, editing or fact-checking it will be harder than ever to find the truth.

No matter on which side of this debate one finds oneself, the blogging genie is out of the bottle, and is bound to grow in both scope and significance.

Traveler Security Moves Provoke Privacy Fears

The US-VISIT program to modernize border procedures and strengthen the immigration system, arguably one of the government’s biggest IT challenges to date, is moving ahead. But when it comes to new security measures for American travelers, efforts have met with strong resistance from privacy advocates.

Despite a one-year postponement (until October 2005) of the requirement that the 13 million foreign travelers from Visa Waiver Program countries include biometric identifiers in their passports, Customs and Border Protection officials began enforcing the requirement that these travelers present either machine-readable passports or nonimmigrant visas to enter the U.S. in October, albeit with a one-time exemption for those lacking documents. Starting in April, carriers who transport non-compliant travelers from 22 VWP countries will be fined.

And in November, the Depart-

ment of Homeland Security’s program to collect fingerprints and photos at U.S. borders began at Port Huron, Mich., Laredo, Texas, and Douglas, Ariz. It has been expanded to operate at the 50 busiest crossings by the end of 2004.

But in July, the Transportation Security Administration announced that its CAPPs II program to subject every airline passenger to a background check was being delayed indefinitely due to privacy concerns. While less contentious, the State Department’s planned e-passports have also come under fire.

Privacy advocates led by the American Civil Liberties Union point out that the new passports will be vulnerable to “skimming,” a kind of electronic snooping from several feet away by anyone with a radio frequency identification reader. Internal State Department documents, obtained by the ACLU under the Freedom of Information Act, show that Canada, Germany and Britain have raised the same concern.

“This is like putting an invisible bull’s-eye on Americans that can be seen only by the terrorists,” said Barry Steinhardt, director of the ACLU Technology and Liberty Program (<http://www.aclu.org/Privacy/PrivacyMain.cfm>). The ACLU wants State to take security precautions like encrypting the data. “We are certainly still working hard on the question of whether additional security measures should be taken,” Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Passport Services Frank E. Moss told the *New York Times*.

In October, four manufacturers

were given \$373,000 to design passports that would contain chips that stored all the printed data on the passport as well as digitized data on the traveler’s face. At an immigration checkpoint, an antenna could read a passport waved several inches away and a digital camera could look at the traveler’s face and compare it with the data from the passport chip.

The State Department hopes to begin issuing a limited number of e-passports early in 2005, initially to government employees.

New Salvos in Public Diplomacy Debate

A report by the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication, a Pentagon advisory panel, is the latest contribution to the debate over public diplomacy that has

Understand the need for greater scrutiny after 9/11. But it has given already cautious bureaucracies a new rule: ‘When in doubt, deny the application.’ Every visa officer today lives in fear that he will let in the next Mohamed Atta. As a result, he is probably keeping out the next Bill Gates.

— Fareed Zakaria,
www.washingtonpost.com,
Nov. 23, 2004.



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50 Years Ago...

'Right' or 'wrong,' we have felt obligated to put forward our views. We have respected the officer who, for reasons he has believed valid, would stick his neck out in presenting a particular minority view — especially when it's always so easy to be silent and safe.

— David Linebaugh, Letter to the Editor, *FSJ*, January 1955.



raged since 9/11. The report, which can be read in full at http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2004-09-Strategic_Communication.pdf, says that strategic communication, often called public diplomacy, "is in crisis, and it must be transformed with a strength of purpose that matches our commitment to diplomacy, defense, intelligence, law enforcement and homeland security." The report continues: "Policies will not succeed unless they are communicated to global and domestic audiences in ways that are credible and allow them to make informed, independent judgments."

At the heart of the report is a call for sweeping transformations in the nature and practice of public diplomacy. These include the creation of: a permanent strategic communication structure within the NSC; a Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications; and an independent, non-partisan Center for Strategic Communication. The report calls on the president to help bring about these changes and asks for an increased bi-partisan and public/private initiative to strengthen public diplomacy.

Completed in September and intended for internal consumption, the report was released to the public at the end of November. The defense-oriented panel's mandate was to develop strategy for global communications in the "war on terror," and its findings add a new dimension to

the debate. This report and other major reports and studies on public diplomacy and its future that were released during 2004 can be accessed at the *Public Diplomacy Web Site* (www.publicdiplomacy.org), a site maintained by the USIA Alumni Association. These documents include:

- *Public Diplomacy: How to Think About and Improve It*. Rand Corporation, 30 October 2004

- *What the World Thinks of America: 10-Nation Survey, September-October 2004*. 17 October 2004

- *Public Diplomacy by the Numbers: Transatlantic Trends Surveys in Europe and USA*. Updated 19 September 2004

- *Effective Advertising or Dangerous Delusions?* 29 August 2004

- *VOA Staff Petition to Congress*. Updated 8 August 2004

- *Public Diplomacy Is Not the Answer*. Barry Zorthian, 12 June 2004

- *The Need to Communicate: How to Improve U.S. Public Diplomacy with the Islamic World*. Brookings Institution, January 2004

- *House Appropriations Committee Hearings on Public Diplomacy Programs*. 14 February 2004

- *Making Public Diplomacy Effective*. Updated 7 February 2004

- *Regaining America's Voice Overseas: Heritage Foundation Conference on U.S. Public Diplomacy*. 13 January 2004 ■

— David Coddon,
 Editorial Intern



SPEAKING OUT

Toward A Points-Based Promotion System

BY KENNETH J. FAIRFAX

Under the present system, Foreign Service promotion boards at State and the other four foreign affairs agencies meet each year to weigh all of the accumulated evidence in each FS employee's personnel file, based upon general guidance in the form of promotion precepts. They then rank-order all employees for possible promotion.

In most instances, this system works well to reward the top performers and identify those in need of improvement. However, it leaves the majority of officers in the middle tiers uncertain of their prospects for future promotion. In addition, while the process is intended to be objective, in reality some of the most difficult decisions are made behind closed doors without explicit written guidance.

Switching to a cumulative, points-based promotion system could dramatically increase the transparency of the process, greatly increase the predictability of promotions, and significantly simplify the work of Foreign Service selection boards.

Under a points-based system, promotion panels would continue to meet annually. However, rather than considering each officer's entire personnel file, they would rank employees based only upon those documents added to the personnel file during the past year. In addition, rather than receiving promotions based directly on the annual rank-ordered list, each employee would receive a certain number of "promotion points" each year based upon his/her position in the overall ranking. Those points would be added

Switching to a cumulative, points-based promotion system could dramatically increase the transparency of the promotion process.



to the total each employee had accumulated since his/her last promotion. The department or agency would then award promotions according to each employee's total accumulated points until all the slots available for that cycle were used up. After each promotion, an employee's point total would be reset to zero pending the next year's review.

Moving to a point system would not fundamentally change the EER process. The evaluation forms, the review panels, the precepts and everything else that the department and AFSA have worked so hard to assemble would continue largely as they are today. But once the initial investment needed to compile initial point totals is completed, annual promotion boards would face a much easier task since they would review much less material for each officer. While the procedural changes involved in implementing a points-based system would be fairly

minor, the impact would be profound.

Increased Transparency

A point system would allow the department to bring much more transparency to the evaluation and promotion process. Even given the exhaustive work that goes into preparing and agreeing upon specific promotion precepts each year, many key questions remain unanswered under the current approach. Many of these are highly contentious.

For example, how long should a consistently average employee wait for promotion compared to a consistently excellent employee or to a consistently above-average employee? Then there's the perennial issue of how to evaluate officers who turn in slightly substandard, but still acceptable, performances year after year. How many of us know someone who, after a dozen or more years at grade, was finally promoted even though his/her performance (and EER) was as tepid as ever?

And how does a single bad EER affect future promotions? Under the present system, who — except board members themselves — can say how heavily a single poor evaluation from three or four years ago weighs against an employee's promotion chances this year? Lastly, how exactly do long-term language study and other training affect promotion odds? Does (or should) earning an outstanding final score in Russian at FSI be given the same weight as doing an outstanding job in Russia?

Under the present system, promo-



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tion boards must decide how to weigh all of the factors described above because the promotion precepts are silent on these difficult trade-offs. Boards may do so collectively or individually, and their internal guidelines can be explicit or vague. Whatever method is used, both the decision and the method used to reach it remain behind closed doors. This lack of transparency not only weakens confidence in the overall promotion process, but greatly reduces the consistency and reproducibility of results.

Using promotion points, the value of time-in-class versus performance would be instantly transparent, as would a host of other trade-offs. These factors would be transparent because they would be reflected in the “point curve” that would be used to translate each employee’s position on the annual ranking prepared by promotion boards into a specific number of promotion points. As with all grading systems, there is no reason why promotion points should be assigned in a strictly linear or proportional fashion based upon employees’ rankings. In fact, there are very good reasons for a non-linear approach. Whatever the shape of the curve, I believe that it should be negotiated by the department with AFSA.

To understand the way the point curve would work and how it would incorporate difficult time-in-class versus performance issues, let’s look at some examples. If a linear 100-point maximum curve is adopted, then employees judged to have turned in the very best performance would be awarded 100 points while the average would receive 50 points, and low-ranked employees (nearly) zero. Thus, under a linear system the very best employees could expect to accumulate points — and therefore reach promotion — exactly twice as fast as the average employee.

A moderately progressive (upward-sloping) curve could have a very dif-

The current system successfully identifies top performers and those in need of improvement. However, it leaves mid-ranked officers uncertain of their prospects.

ferent impact. For example, if employees ranked among the top 1 percent for the year received 250 points, employees ranked in the top 10 percent received 100 points and those ranked between the 40th and 60th percentile received 40 points, the department would be explicitly deciding to recognize and reward mainly employees who turn in absolutely outstanding performances.

Under either scenario, a consistently low-ranked employee would never be promoted while those employees who consistently gravitated toward the lower end of the scale would experience slow but predictable promotions.

Whatever the shape of the curve, the impact of one or more poor EERs would be transparent. Because points would be awarded annually, a single year’s bad performance would delay promotion only once; it would not in any way prejudice future promotion boards. Indeed, to better preserve the integrity of the system by ensuring that boards reach their decisions based on employees’ performance over the past year only, they should not know an employee’s previous

SPEAKING OUT



rankings or present point total when deciding upon this year's ranking. References to past point totals or time in class should be added to the list of inadmissible comments in order to ensure that promotion panels rank employees based solely on their performance and potential as documented in EERs and other official personnel records over the course of the year.

(Incidentally, another potentially beneficial change would be to remove the name, grade and title of rating and reviewing officers from the copy of the EER received by the committee. Boards should rank employees based on documented performance and potential, yet anecdotal reports from promotion panel members consistently indicate that evaluations written by senior officials are more likely to result in promotion than are those written by officers just one rank higher than the rated employee. Who is being rated, after all — the employee or the supervisor?)

Another way a point system would bring greatly increased transparency would be by translating valuable but vague policies into explicit transparent results. For example, while the department already has a policy that long-term training should not disadvantage officers with respect to promotion, what does that really mean? To answer that question under a point system, the department could adopt a policy under which students in long-term training are assigned a number of points equal to the statistical average of all employees. Better yet, the department could provide predictable rewards for outstanding performance while in training by awarding the top students (measured either by final language score and/or teacher evaluation) a higher than average number of points. Underperformers could be penalized in a similar manner. Whichever system the department adopts, the result would

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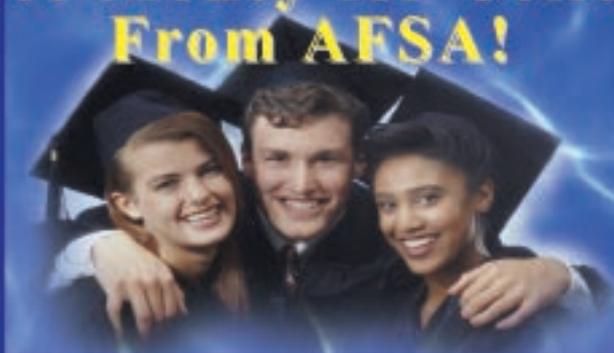
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be completely transparent, as officers would know, even before signing up for long-term training, exactly how that decision may affect their possible “point score” for the year.

Increased Predictability

Another positive impact of the promotion point system would be to make the promotion process more predictable. Every candidate would know his/her point total as well as the point total that marked the threshold for promotion in previous years. While point thresholds for promotion would vary somewhat depending on the number of promotion slots available, knowing point totals would nonetheless usher in a significant increase in employees’ ability to predict their own promotions.

The effects of annual differences in the way boards weigh certain factors would also be evened out under a points-based system, thereby increasing the consistency of the promotion process. What makes the current system seem so unpredictable to officers is that annual promotions are a “winner take all” process — either you are promoted or you are not. Close does not count. Thus, small differences in performance can translate into large differences in outcome. In contrast, with promotion points, small differences in performance will translate into small differences in the number of points earned that year. The fact that points are accumulated over time means that an officer who is almost promoted one year can (barring some catastrophic drop in performance) expect promotion the next year.

The fact that all employees would know both their total point score and their scores each year means they would receive quantitative, readily understandable performance feedback each year and be able to make appropriate career plans. This benefits employees and the department alike. Outstanding employees would

SPEAKING OUT



The department says that long-term training should not disadvantage officers with respect to promotion. But what does that mean in practice?

be rewarded every year as soon as they receive their point total, not just in those years when they reach a promotion threshold. Similarly, the much greater transparency and predictability would benefit consistently mid-ranked employees as they plan their careers. Lastly, an employee who consistently ranks at the low end of the scale could never claim that the department's decision to consider selection-out, or to allow him or her to "TIC out," came as a surprise, since the individual would have received written, quantitative feedback every year. In this way, the combination of transparency and predictability that a point system would create would go a long way toward helping the department or agency come to grips with the longstanding issue of how and when to select officers out.

The Senior Threshold

The senior threshold is fundamentally different from any other type of promotion and should therefore be considered differently. At every other level, the vast majority of Foreign Service employees can realistically expect to be promoted eventually. While a few are selected out, that is the exception rather than the rule. As



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SPEAKING OUT



a direct result, the real question facing most people is not if they will be promoted, but when.

The senior threshold is fundamentally different precisely because most officers will not make the jump. Being an FS-1 officer for the longest possible time does not presently — and should not — increase an employee's odds of making the jump to the Senior Foreign Service.

There are two ways to tackle this issue. The department could carry the concept of the "senior window" forward into a point-based promotion system by stating that point scores from a maximum of six promotion boards will be used to calculate the total score on which promotions are based. Just as employees now choose when to "open their windows," they could choose when to start including their annual point scores into their total. Because every officer would be considered the exact same number of times, the maximum total point scores would be identical.

A second option, of course, would be to retain the current promotion system for the senior threshold.

Good Management Means Making Tough Calls

The most common argument against adopting a point system is that the system could not be implemented fairly. This is based on the assumption that not everyone would agree on how key trade-offs, such as how to reward time-in-class versus outstanding performance, should be reflected in the point curve. There are two answers to this argument. First, it is true that it would be virtually impossible to explicitly define time-versus-performance trade-offs under the current promotion system. Precisely because entire folders with many years of performance data are considered, any matrix of trade-offs would be almost impossibly complex. But breaking the overall promotion

process down into a series of annual, independent evaluations, and moving to a points-based system, make it possible to explicitly define trade-offs.

The second answer to this argument is much more important because it touches upon the Foreign Service's overall approach to leadership and style of management. Even with the simplicity resulting from the switch to a points-based promotion system, reaching a publicly disclosed and agreed upon decision on the relative merits of time-in-class versus one-time performance or service in the field versus training would be very difficult. The fact remains, however, that these decisions are already being made each year. Indeed, it would be impossible to reach promotion decisions without doing so. The difference between the current system and a points-based system comes down to how these tough decisions are made. At present, the department avoids potential conflict by avoiding explicit, written guidance on what are probably the toughest decisions in the promotion process. The alternative to this strategy of avoidance is to confront the challenge head-on by explicitly defining the relative value of different types of performance via the point curve used in a points-based promotion process. This would undoubtedly be a difficult alternative to adopt, but the advantages in terms of transparency and predictability — and ultimately in the trust officers have in the process — would be overwhelming.

No personnel system is perfect, but I believe a points-based system has much to recommend it. ■

The author, an FSO since 1987, has served in Muscat, Pusan, Seoul, Moscow, Vancouver, Kiev and Washington, D.C. He is currently principal officer at Consulate General Krakow.



FS KNOW-HOW

When 24/7 Duty May Not Be: A Cautionary Tale

BY J. MICHAEL HANNON AND JAMES F. BROMLEY

Foreign Service employees on overseas assignments live with the ever-present possibility of terrifying, completely unforeseen events. These include everything from terrorism and coups d'état to automobile accidents. Even when the FSO did nothing wrong, auto collisions in foreign countries can generate lawsuits that dog him or her for years after leaving a post. Such events can test the bounds of the protections FSOs believe they are afforded by diplomatic immunity, by insurance, and indeed by their own employer, the United States of America. Many thousands of miles from American shores, one might be surprised by the harsh overlap of diplomacy and the law.

Take, for example, a U.S. consul general serving in eastern Russia. Like his Foreign Service colleagues around the world, he has consistently been told that he is always on duty, 24/7, and he frequently works late at night. While he is entitled to a government automobile with a driver, an Embassy Moscow directive urges him to use his own car to save the government money. So he converts his own, newly-purchased automobile to this business use after being assured he is covered by private insurance for the first 30 days. Well within that period, after a long day at the consulate, the FSO drives his car to a gym to work out. He does so in part to keep in shape for his periodic medical fitness examination to maintain his eligibility for worldwide service.

Every Foreign Service employee should be aware that the "24/7 rule" only defines the FSO's duty to the agency — not the agency's duty to the FSO.



It is October, when it gets dark early in Vladivostok, and it is raining lightly. Heading home from the gym to his government-paid and protected apartment, driving at a lawful speed in a country where pandemonium often rules the road, and not having consumed any alcohol or drugs, the FSO approaches an intersection where he is surprised by a black, virtually invisible car appearing from nowhere with its headlights off. The engineering and lighting of the intersection are controlled by the political forces of the existing regime, and not maintained according to the standards of a Highway and Transportation Authority. The FSO tries desperately to avoid an accident, but a small collision occurs. The darkened automobile glances off the fender of his car, propelled at high speed into a third vehicle coming from yet another direction. A second, major crash occurs, and someone in the black car is seriously injured.

A suit is brought against the FSO in Russia. Political forces besmirch his good name, accusing him of drug use, drunkenness, visiting a nightclub, laughing at the injury he caused, and all sorts of vicious untruths — including, incredibly, alleging that he was involved in neo-Nazi activities. The campaign is orchestrated to embarrass the United States, an expectation for which the FSO is trained. An attempt by the Russians to seek a waiver of the FSO's diplomatic immunity fails on technical grounds. He is transferred from Russia to another overseas assignment. In an effort to deal with the adverse publicity being heaped on the Department of State by the Russians, a half-hearted effort is made by the department to settle the matter on behalf of its FSO.

The very day the statute of limitations expires, suit is brought against the FSO in Pennsylvania, a place convenient only to the American attorney who has brought the action. The plaintiff is a young man, a citizen of Russia, who alleges that because of the automobile accident, he is paraplegic. The United States is named a co-defendant. When served with the lawsuit, the U.S. government deserts its consul general: it moves to dismiss the case, but only against itself, contending that the FSO is not protected in the United States by diplomatic immunity, that he acted outside the scope of his employment, and that, because the accident happened in a



foreign country, the U.S. government (but not also the consul general) is not liable. The court grants the motion.

A Last Resort

The FSO is left in the lurch. He must retain his own attorney at his own expense. Furthermore, even though he was assured by a consulate employee that he was covered by automobile liability insurance for the first 30 days after the import date of his private vehicle, he is told this is a mistake. Effectively, he had no insurance. Now he must defend himself and live with the possibility that, unless he can prove that he was not at fault, a very sizable judgment may be entered against him that would exhaust and overwhelm his person-

al assets and probably force him into bankruptcy.

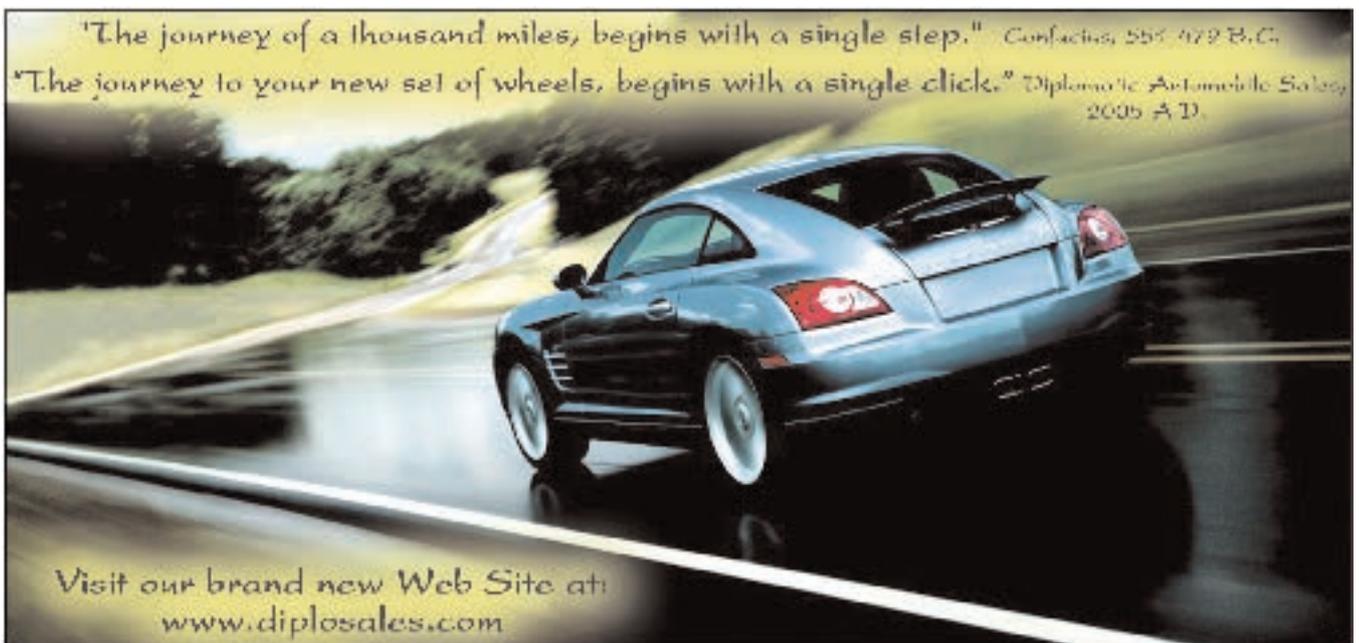
The last arrow in the FSO's quiver is the Certification Statute of the Federal Tort Claims Act, Title 28, United States Code, Section 2679(d). This statute is of great import to Foreign Service personnel, wherever they are stationed and whatever their duties. It provides that whenever a federal employee is sued for negligence, the attorney general of the United States may certify that the employee was acting within the scope of employment. If that certification is issued, and unless it is challenged and overturned by the court, the United States will then be substituted as the sole defendant in the proceeding. If the attorney general refuses to issue a certification, the employee may

petition the court to issue its own certification on the grounds that the employee acted within the scope of his or her employment. If the court so certifies, it may order that the United States be substituted as the defendant in the same manner, and to the same effect, as if the attorney general had originally issued a certification.

In the case we are discussing, the attorney general declines to issue a certification, based on a recommendation from the Department of State. When the FSO learns that this will be the government's position, he files a petition for certification with the court in California, whither the case has been transferred after a nightmarish and expensive merry-go-round of legal proceedings, which includes an

"The journey of a thousand miles, begins with a single step." Confucius, 551-479 B.C.

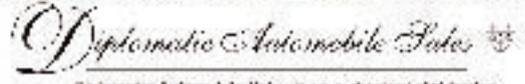
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appearance by the Russian young man in federal court in a wheelchair, attended by several handlers.

The government opposes this petition, contending that an FSO is not on duty 24/7, as the FSO has been taught. The Department of State takes the position that it is not responsible for protecting the FSO, because the officer was only “commuting” when the accident occurred. It is of no consequence to the Department of State that the FSO was driving his private vehicle only to save the department money, or that, as consul general, he was entitled to home-to-work transportation. The court accepts the position of the Department of State, forcing the FSO to appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Ironically, had the Department of State certified the FSO as acting within the scope of employment, the case would have been dismissed as to both the FSO and the United States. This is so because the United States has declined to waive its sovereign immunity as to lawsuits that arise in foreign countries. The Russian plaintiff would be left to seek compensation in the courts of his own country — perhaps against the driver of the black vehicle in which he was riding as a hitchhiker, or as a paying rider, at the time of the accident.

A Poor Rationale

Sadly, this is not some hypothetical case study in a legal tome. It is happening to Douglas Kent — and it could happen to other Foreign Service employees.

It simply makes no sense for the United States to send its citizens into harm’s way and not afford them complete protection from the foreseeable vicissitudes of Foreign Service work. Yet the Department

AFSA to File Amicus Brief on Behalf of Douglas Kent

A FSA has been working with Mr. Kent and his attorneys in connection with his efforts to have the U.S. government certify that his automobile accident in Vladivostok occurred in the “scope of his employment.” Given the importance of this issue to all of the members of the Foreign Service who could find themselves in similar situations, AFSA filed a declaration with the federal district court in California in May 2004 on Mr. Kent’s behalf.

In that declaration, we advised the court that State Department-published policy provides that Foreign Service employees are considered to be on duty 24 hours a day. 3 FAM 4376 states: ‘Because of the uniqueness of the Foreign Service, employees are considered to be on duty 24 hours a day and must observe especially high standards of conduct during and after working hours and when on leave or travel status.’ Department of State officials have, in my presence, stated on numerous occasions that given the nature of the representative function, Foreign Service employees are on duty 24 hours a day and that the employees are aware of that obligation. This concept is continuously reinforced during the orientation program for entry-level Foreign Service officers.

We also advised the court that we have represented numerous clients who have been proposed for disciplinary action for incidents that occurred outside normal workplace activities, such as traveling on vacation to where the department had issued a travel warning or going out late at night in a dangerous area in a foreign country. In support of discipline, the State Department argued that the Foreign Service employee was at post “to further the interest of the United States government, not pursue his own pleasures.” The lower court stated: “According to the Foreign Affairs Manual and Ms. Papp’s declaration, Foreign Service employees stationed abroad may be subject to discipline for their conduct outside the work place, although Ms. Papp stops well short of declaring that employees have been disciplined for the type of conduct involved in the present case.” The lower court got it wrong. In fact, Foreign Service employees have been severely disciplined for automobile accidents occurring in their own automobiles, after hours.

On Oct. 6, 2004, the AFSA Governing Board voted unanimously to apply to file an amicus curiae (friend of the court) brief on behalf of AFSA member Douglas Kent in his appeal of the lower court’s decision regarding the scope of his employment. The board also voted to provide \$5,000 to his legal defense fund. Given AFSA’s limited resources, the board rarely provides financial support to individual cases. However, in this case, the board felt that the issue was of sufficient importance to our members as a whole.

— Sharon Papp
AFSA General Counsel



of State, like other foreign affairs agencies, applies our own country's concept of the "commuting rule" to Mr. Kent's circumstances on the darkened streets of Vladivostok. That is, in the United States it is generally understood that an employer is responsible for an employee's misconduct only if the lawsuit arises from the employee's service to his employer while actually at work. This principle is generally not extended to the employee's commuting to and fro, considered a personal endeavor.

The irony is that conceding the principle of 24/7 duty (the "scope of employment") would protect both the United States government and the FSO from a lawsuit in the United States, limiting the injured party to resort to compensation

under the laws of his own country. Had the consulate properly placed Mr. Kent's local insurance, that policy would have been available to a claimant. Yet even in that circumstance, unless the 24/7 rule is recognized, the claimant might be approached by an attorney suggesting a lawsuit in the United States, hoping to benefit from the largesse of a jury in this country.

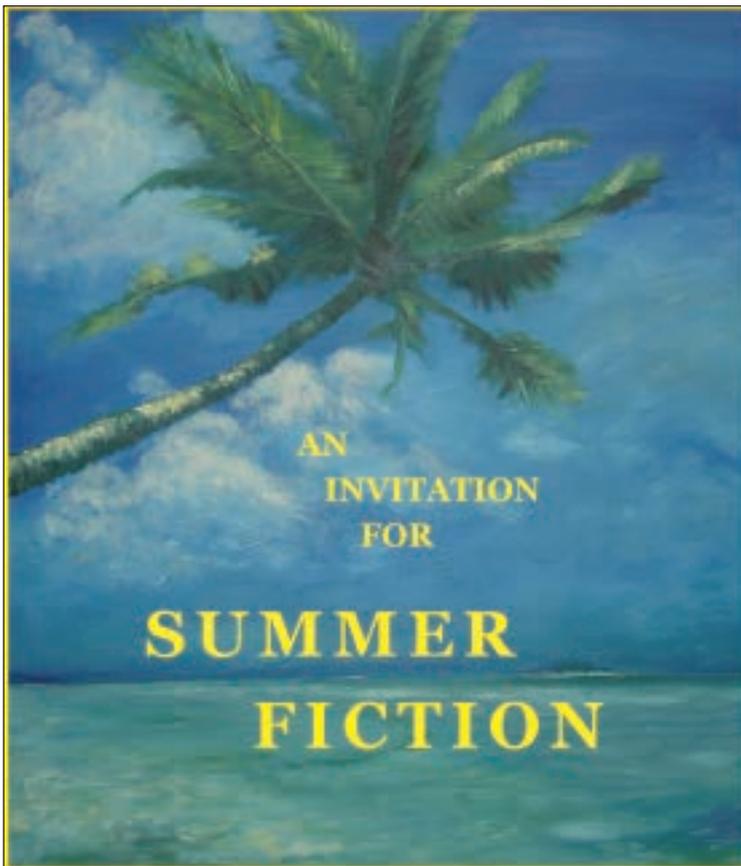
Given the logic of applying the principle of 24/7 duty to our situation, one might be tempted to see budgetary motivations for the department's insistence on applying the "commuter rule" in this case. Perhaps the department believes the rule shields it from having to pay overtime to Foreign Service specialists and untenured officers working overseas. Or perhaps the U.S. gov-

ernment fears that application of the 24/7 rule might subject it to claims for workers' compensation by employees for injuries incurred in an accident occurring overseas, or might entitle FSOs to disability and death benefits in such cases.

If any of those rationales do apply, they are poor excuses indeed for not protecting Douglas Kent and other FS personnel. Instead:

- Given that the Department of State has presented the FSO to the foreign country as a diplomat entitled to the broadest diplomatic immunity, should not the department concede that scope of employment should be co-extensive with diplomatic immunity?

- Should Congress make more clear than do existing statutes that the scope of employment of FSOs



The Foreign Service Journal is seeking works of fiction of up to 3,000 words for its summer fiction issue. Story lines or characters involving the Foreign Service are preferred, but not required. The top stories, selected by the Journal's Editorial Board, will be published in the July/August issue; some of them will also be simultaneously posted on the Journal's Web site. The writer of each selected story will receive an honorarium of \$250, payable upon publication.

All stories must be previously unpublished. Limit one entry per author. Please send via e-mail including your contact information and a short bio. Submissions preferred copied into the body of the e-mail or as a Word attachment.

Please send submissions (or questions) to Mikkela Thompson at thompsonm@afsa.org

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includes risks to which their overseas employment in any manner exposes them, even though activities such as traveling to and from work or stopping on the way home at a gymnasium would not so clearly be related to employment were the FSOs employed in the United States?

- Should the State Department's policies concerning availability of automobile liability insurance be reviewed and strengthened to be certain that whenever an FSO, in response to a department rule, order, suggestion or encouragement, uses a private automobile in place of an automobile owned and provided by the government, that insurance is, to an absolute certainty, immediately available from the FSO's first use of the car?

- Are there reasons to inquire

concerning the existence of influences and obstacles, such as inadequate funding and the like, that hinder fair and unbiased consideration of FSOs' requests that they be certified to have been acting within the scope of their employment? For example, in Mr. Kent's case the Department of State might well choose not to protect Mr. Kent in order to protect itself from the diplomatic fallout of being associated with an allegedly drunken and crass American, no matter how unfair and distorted those allegations.

These and other matters that might occur to readers after they have pondered the factual scenario this article details are offered as examples of problems that persist and that ought to be addressed to help meet

the goal of more fully securing to FSOs the promise of productive careers inherent to the position of "Foreign Service officer." At a minimum, whatever the outcome of the pending case, every Foreign Service employee should be aware that the "24/7 rule" only defines the FSO's duty to the agency — not the agency's duty to the FSO. ■

J. Michael Hannon and James F. Bromley are with the Washington, D.C., law firm of Thompson, O'Donnell, which is representing FSO Douglas Kent in his case Aleksandr Kashin v. Douglas Kent, on appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco. The firm has represented Foreign Service employees and their families for over 50 years.



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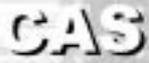
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LIFE AND DEATH IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE



WHEN YOU LIVE WHERE DEATH
COMES EASILY, SOMETIMES YOU
LOSE NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO.

BY THOMAS H. ARMBRUSTER

If, like me, you enjoy the descriptions of exotic places, strange spices and unusual encounters often found on these pages, then I wish you better luck next month. Oh, I do have memories of mist on the Rio Bravo, cactus in bloom in the desert, and roadrunners, owls and javelinas brightening up a walk through the Mexican brush. But this isn't about those memories. This is about life and death on the U.S.-Mexican border.

I once was talking to a U.N. colleague and said, "sometimes we saved people, sometimes we ..." He finished the sentence I was finding hard to finish myself. "Sometimes you lose people." As a refugee coordinator in several war

*Be attentive to details,
but protect your mind.*

zones, he knew. Fifteen border death cases came readily to my mind and it would not take much effort to think of more. My Mexican counterpart in Texas had many times more because of the deaths in the desert of Mexican migrants.

Many of you, especially those in Iraq and Afghanistan, will come home with memories of life-and-death situations. Perhaps the following memories, some painful to me, will help you.

Sometimes you lose. I first learned that in an exercise with the Marines at Camp Lejeune. As “Ambassador Armbruster,” I was faced with telling the Marine snipers when to fire. The “embassy” was surrounded by protesters. Some young people with backpacks came to the gate claiming to be Americans. With no ID, they were not immediately let in and were soon forced on their knees by the crowd. Snipers held their fire as no guns were visible in the crowd. Then, from behind someone shot the young men.

The next day two youngsters again came to the embassy. This time they were let in and ran toward the building before detonating the explosives in their backpacks. They were terrorists. When you live where death comes easily, sometimes you lose no matter what you do. Today’s right answer is tomorrow’s wrong answer. Don’t be too hard on yourself when the odds are 50/50 and you choose badly.

Tom Armbruster entered the Foreign Service in 1988. Now Deputy Chief of Mission in Dushanbe, he has served in Helsinki, Havana, Moscow, Nuevo Laredo, the Naval War College, and Washington, D.C. He has had two previous articles published in the Journal: one on kayaking from Finland to Estonia, and the other on the challenges of scientific research in Greenland. He has also written for Chesapeake Bay and Above and Beyond, a Canadian in-flight publication.

What’s the worst case? That’s a good question to ask yourself. In one real-life situation the authorities told us an American had been at the bus stop for hours. That sounded strange, so I urged the officer to talk to her and get her across the border any way he could. He came back saying she had had a falling-out with her family in Texas, and wanted to stay in Mexico. She figured the bus stop was the best place to meet someone and make arrangements. OK. What’s the worst case? She finally gets bored and calls us and we take her back across the border. Or, she has an asthma attack and dies. You can guess which of those possibilities transpired. Afterward, I realized I had not let my imagination take the case to the furthest extreme. I should have. Always imagine the worst case and work from there.

Let it go. The case of the 19-year-old girl who was kidnapped, tortured and murdered hit everyone who worked on it hard. She was obviously bright and came from a good family — and happened to have her life intersect briefly with that of a drug dealer. He was being kidnapped by a rival gang. She was kidnapped because she was there. I worked with the mother for many months afterward, but then, as all do, the tour ended and I moved far away.

There is a temptation to call anyway. See how she’s doing. Try to be helpful. But you can’t be helpful from an ocean away. New, good officers take your place and continue to press the case with the authorities. Let it go. You can keep the image of the girl in mind every time you work on drug issues anywhere in the world. Thus you honor the memory of an innocent person killed, just by doing your job the best you can in your next post.

Families and the media. The Bureau of Consular Affairs has classes and experts who provide invaluable insights and guidance to new consular officers on work-

ing with families. The bottom line is always be polite, always listen, and always be professional. Surprisingly, even in the worst situations, people will respond in kind. But if you lose a family's trust, you will never get it back. The same goes for the media. They are quite willing to let you play the role of bad bureaucrat, hiding information, dragging your feet, and being unhelpful to the family. Don't let them. Be the family's best advocate and a trustworthy source to the media if you can talk about the case. Also, families also need positive identification. Any doubt will linger. Tattoos, birthmarks, clothing and other details are valuable tools and can put a loved one's mind at rest. Be attentive, but ...

Protect your mind. Death is not pretty. You may need to identify the body, accompany the family, or be on hand for an exhumation. You'll remember it all. Although you may be quite involved, try to keep your memories as snapshots and not home movies.

Watch out for burnout. Although we heard a house with dead Americans in it was booby-trapped, the American Citizens Services FSN disregarded my instructions and was in the first group of officials to enter the house. He stayed there throughout the night as the two Americans were exhumed; then he and I went to the morgue and later met with the family. Both of us went home wanting to burn our clothing because of the stench. Solid, knowledgeable and unwavering, he was there when we needed him. The danger is making that person in your mission the go-to person every time. Rotate your people in high-stress posts so they don't burn out.

The Privacy Act. Our super-experienced consular officer always convinced American prisoners to sign waivers and was then able to get in touch with their family members. Maybe he told the Americans that in his experience, no matter how embarrassing it might be to have been arrested or have had an accident, families generally come through in an emergency. And they do. In the one case that we didn't get the waiver, the man was later beaten to death in prison and did not even leave his real name. By the time his family finally found us, the body had to be exhumed from a pauper's grave.

***You honor the memory
of an innocent person
killed by doing the best
you can for those you meet
in your next post.***

Do the right thing. It sounds stranger than fiction, but one American couple, in a drug-and-alcohol-induced haze, was indeed trying to sell their infant. Mexican authorities could not get anyone to testify, although we found many eyewitnesses. The infant was clearly in danger. We picked her up from the Mexican child protection service and were headed to the border.

Just as we were at Mexican Customs, I'm told, the parents were being released from jail. By all rights, once they were free, they would have to be reunited with the girl. Somehow, we didn't get the call that they were free from jail until we were across the border. Darn cell phones just don't work on the border sometimes. We placed the girl in the protective custody of the state of Texas. The parents would have to convince a judge that they were fit. I don't believe they ever did.

Recall the lives you save through diplomacy. Hostage situations, repatriation of remains, the essential tip in a missing person case ... most of the problems we face overseas are resolved, or not, by the host government. The relationship with the prosecutor that you cultivate on the tennis court, the key contact in the prison that allows you unrestricted access because of mutual respect, the city official whose daughter's wedding you took the time to attend — all of those things pay off. These contacts may make the difference between life and death; and even in death cases they make things smoother. Our consular agent was able to repatriate the remains of four servicemen killed in an accident almost immediately because of her excellent contacts on both sides of the border.

In general, Foreign Service officers are really not that tough. We feel pain just turning down a visa applicant. But unlike our dealings with congressional and staff delegations, who normally just pose the risk of a bruised ego or two, duty officers and American Citizen Services officers often do face life-and-death situations. In those situations, use the skills that brought you into the Foreign Service and remember Winston Churchill's advice — "Never, never, never give up." ■

THE GOOD OLD DAYS



I DESPITE ALL THE PRESSURE AND UNPAID OVERTIME REQUIRED TO HANDLE THE CRUSH OF VISA APPLICANTS, A RETIRED CONSULAR OFFICER HAS FOND MEMORIES OF HIS CAREER.

By Frederick D. Purdy

It may sound silly now, but I am coming to realize that 22 of the years between 1956 and 1986 — the period that constituted my career in the Foreign Service as a consular officer — were really the “good old days.” I didn’t think of them as so good then, but compared to what the life of a consular officer must be nowadays, they seem to me to be absolutely golden.

Many of us then thought of what we were doing as something of benefit to our country. We saw tourist visas as a way to enable others to get to know the country we were proud of — and help the U.S. economy in the

process. Student visas gave young people a chance to improve themselves and learn the methods that made our country the best and most advanced in the world — and then take those lessons back to help their own nations. Temporary work visas for Filipino and other Third World nurses improved the care of patients in badly understaffed hospitals back home. And immigrant visas reunited family members of American citizens and also brought individuals possessing exceptional skills to our shores.

Often, doing that work meant plenty of pressure, extra hours and hurried lunches so we could handle the crush of applicants despite inadequate staffing. It often meant being more patient than we normally would have been with applicants who had waited a long time, sometimes with young children and elderly parents. But most of my memories of those times are still warm.

Playing God

Being a consular officer in the “good old days” often meant using your imagination to devise new techniques to cope with the impossible workload. We took pride in this ability to innovate, to “make do,” even if praise from the bosses and formal awards were few and far between. We were accustomed to being treated as inferiors by many hot-dog political and economic officers, to say nothing of ambassadors and DCMs, who seldom had much concept of what we were doing. Once, at a nice dinner given by a colleague, our DCM came to slum with the vice consuls and asked us how it was to play God “down there.” My reply that, if he really wanted to find out, he was welcome to come downstairs and play God while I went up to clip newspapers, did not please him, nor help my annual employee evaluation review.

We worked hard to surpass former issuance levels and set some admirable records along the way. And in the process, we were often issuing multiple-entry,

Frederick Purdy, an FSO from 1956 to 1986, served in Ciudad Juarez, Kingston, Ponta Delgada, Brasilia (twice), Santiago, Manila, Seville and Washington, D.C. After retirement, he went on TDY assignments to Santiago, Buenos Aires, Lima, Bogota and Addis Ababa. Now living in Chile, he is the author of The Gringo's Guide to Chilean Wine (fifth edition, 2003).

indefinite-validity visas so that the eligible applicant didn't have to return and we didn't have to duplicate our efforts. Now that is impossible, for reasons said to be connected with security and efficiency. It was often difficult then, too, because we could not issue any better visas than the host country did. In one important country, I continually tussled with the local head of consular affairs, but could not get our ambassador to weigh in at a higher level, even though he had been a high-level consular official himself, and it would have benefited our own tourists more than the few locals who went to the U.S.

The growing “efficiency” restrictions on visa activity today bother me more than the security ones. Most of us were happy that our NIVs, in addition to being mostly multiple-indefinite, were also free, thus encouraging tourism to the U.S. Now it is 180 degrees the reverse, with a charge of \$100 for each application. In other words, people who want to come to our country, for whatever reason, have to pay \$100, whether they get the visa or not. It must not be much fun for consular officers, not only to tell the applicant that he can't go, but also to steal \$100 from his pocket. And even for those who do get the visas, they have \$100 less to spend to help the U.S. economy.

In several of my reincarnations in the Foreign Service, I was involved in disputes between the programmatic sections and the administrative managers. The latter usually won, and I was almost always on the losing, program side. I am glad that I was already retired when the business of charging a big fee, supposedly to enhance cost-efficiency, went into effect, although I was a witness to the practice, when the fee was a lot lower, in five TDY assignments.

Why cannot the decision on so-called cost-efficiency permit taking into consideration other issues of importance to our country besides money? Our national reputation for fairness and the state of our economy are also important, but are difficult to put a price on. Our visa fees, for example, simply make the cost of foreign travel for Americans more expensive, because other countries merely retaliated and charge our citizens \$100 or whatever, too. And, although tourism to the U.S is diminishing, our nationals' travels abroad — although affected by the intentionally weak dollar — are still an important cost to us. Recently, a consular officer in our embassy here told

*Being a consular officer often meant using your
imagination to devise new techniques to cope with
the impossible workload.*

the press that we charged the \$100 because Chile did. Unfortunately, this is not true — the locals did not charge until we began to do so.

Shutting the World Out

The damage our restrictive visa policies do to our once-important tourism industry should be obvious. According to an article in the *New York Times* recently, from October 2000 to September 2001, 6.3 million people applied to travel from developing nations (this includes any nations that do not have a reciprocal waiver agreement with us, thus, for example, all of Latin America) to the United States for business, pleasure or medical treatment. That number dropped to 3.7 million for the next fiscal year (FY 2003). Applications for student visas fell by almost 100,000 over the same two-year period. Universities that depend upon much of their revenue for fees from foreign students must be hurting! At the same time that the volume of applications is falling, refusal rates are rising.

But probably even greater is the damage these policies do to our international image. Some of my old friends back home, in Pennsylvania and the Washington area, don't care about that image, but living outside the United States more than half of my 76 years has changed my attitude toward the rest of the world. I naively, and to some of my friends unpatriotically, think the rest of the world is important to us, not only in pragmatic terms but for its own sake, too.

And I fear that the current government policy, of bashing countries who are "not with us," so thus "against us," of bad-mouthing the Islam of 1.3 billion people, and of crusading against evil, but only very selectively, is isolating us from the reality of the rest of the world. I think we need more foreign tourists and international students to see for themselves that we are still not as bad as we seem to others — and to go

back home and tell that to friends and relatives. I also think we need to be broader in our war against evil everywhere, not just in Afghanistan (if we really care about it any more) and Iraq. Whether we want to admit it or not, there is plenty of evil in Sudan and Burma and China, and even in our allies like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Even though, as the world's most powerful shock-and-awe-provider, we don't have enough troops to occupy and save all the downtrodden people of those places, we ought to at least show some guts in denouncing the evil there and not just in the remaining axes of evil, Iran and North Korea.

Well, I have gotten away from my theme of the "good old days" of my 30 years in the Foreign Service, but it should be obvious that I am happy now that I can speak my mind and don't have to be a "good soldier," like some of our current admired leaders. I was briefly a good soldier — and also a good sailor — but I couldn't take it permanently.

Another big part of the "good old days" was simply living in those countries my friends back home have learned to hate. I remember the embassy nurse standing up in a pre-PTA meeting in Brasilia and saying "I didn't bring my kids all the way down here to have them go to school with Brazilians!" I simply got up and left because I had lost the power to communicate with her (or was it the other way around?). And I thought of seeing my 14-year-old, blond-haired daughter (now trilingual), at a recent American School open house, walking across the playing field with her two best friends, dark-skinned little girls from India and Trinidad and Tobago, and how proud I was, hoping she would be a symbol of our future.

The great Welsh travel-writer Jan Morris once wrote that "the past is a foreign country." At least most of the good old days of my past seem to have been spent there — and I thank the Foreign Service for sending me out to experience that. ■



Retired FSO Jack and Trudy Collins keep the memory of their daughter, Suzanne Marie Collins, alive with an AFSA scholarship they established after Suzanne's murder at age 19. Due to its mention in the bestseller, *Journey Into Darkness*, the Suzanne Marie Collins Perpetual Scholarship consistently receives regular donations making it one of AFSA's most popular funds.

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Suzanne, just out of Boot Camp, proudly wears her Marine uniform, August 1984.



Suzanne and her brother, Stephen, on their way to school in Athens, October 1972.

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IN THE SHADOW OF CRUCIAL TALKS IN MOSCOW BETWEEN CYRUS VANCE AND ANDREI GROMYKO, QUIET DIPLOMACY RESOLVED THE FIRST KOREAN AIRLINES INCIDENT.

BY KENNETH N. SKOUG JR.

On April 21, 1978, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was in the second day of strategic arms control negotiations in Moscow with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko when an event in the extreme north of the Soviet Union introduced an unexpected and unwelcome issue into bilateral relations.

In the pre-dawn hours that day a Korean Airlines Boeing-707 jet airliner bound from Paris to Seoul via Anchorage, Alaska, with 113 persons aboard suffered a drastic malfunction of its directional gyro, and wandered more than 1,000 miles off-course over the Arctic Ocean and the Barents Sea southward into Soviet air space above the Kola Peninsula,

one of the most militarily sensitive regions of the USSR. There a Russian MiG aircraft fired on the airliner, killing two passengers, and forced its pilot to make a near-miraculous emergency landing by first light on the edge of a frozen lake south of Murmansk.

Vance was on his second trip to the USSR. The first, shortly after the Carter administration assumed office in 1977, had provoked a spectacular public display of contempt from Gromyko for having introduced a new focus on human rights into the Soviet context. There followed a year of frigid bilateral relations, which continued into 1978 with expulsions of commercial officers from both embassies and the announcement in mid-April that the most senior Soviet official at the United Nations had defected. Vance arrived determined not to allow the frosty bilateral climate to interfere with his negotiating objectives for strategic arms control.

Seeking Assurances

When Soviet authorities notified the American embassy of the downed airliner (the USSR and the Republic of Korea had no diplomatic relations), the survivors were being held in the town of Kem, close to the site of the forced landing and nearly 400 miles north of Leningrad. Their rescue depended on joint efforts by the embassy, the consulate general in Leningrad and Pan American World Airways.

As economic/commercial counselor, I immediately sought (and received) the foreign ministry's telephonic assurance that Soviet authorities would not hinder evacuation of passengers — and crew. My stress on the latter was due to my vivid recollection of the disappearance of a South Korean visiting Prague in 1967 when I was serving there. Years later I learned that he had been turned over to the North Koreans to die a cruel death in captivity.

With Ambassador Malcolm Toon fully occupied with Vance, Deputy Chief of Mission Jack Matlock and I called late that day on a Mr. Kapitsa, chief of the first division of the foreign ministry, to press for swift repatriation of all

concerned. Kapitsa neither confirmed nor denied the telephonic assurance I had received, and the Soviet official who had given it took no part in subsequent discussions, but the Soviet news agency TASS seemed to confirm the assurances by reporting: "The passengers and crew of the plane were taken to the nearest populated locality and arrangements are being made for their despatch from the USSR." A supporting approach was made by the department to the Soviet embassy in Washington.

Late on April 22, the third and final day of the Vance-Gromyko dialogue, there was a disturbing rumor that Soviet authorities might nevertheless detain the captain of the aircraft, Kim Chang Kyu, whose brilliant landing doubtlessly had saved many lives. A foreign ministry official told us only that he had not been informed of any intent to detain anyone. Secretary Vance's special adviser, Marshall Shulman, was kept informed of developments, but Vance did not raise the issue with Gromyko. In the United States the press reported that "second-line" officials were handling the airline issue.

David Weisz, a young embassy officer with recent consular experience, put in an unbroken 48 hours (April 21-22) successfully coordinating recovery of the survivors by the airline with assistance from Consulate General Leningrad. Preparations were complicated by the absence from the USSR of the senior Pan American representative in Moscow. (PanAm officials in Berlin had no experience with far northern coordinates in a region chock-full of air and naval bases, including submarine pens.) Belatedly, a Pan American aircraft flew with a full crew from West Berlin to Leningrad (where it arrived at 8 p.m. to pick up George Rueckert from our consulate general and three Japanese officials). It continued to Murmansk, whither most survivors had been moved.

An Ominous Development

Once in Murmansk, Rueckert learned that pilot Kim Chang Kyu and navigator Lee Kun Shik were not with the passengers and other crew members. They were still being detained in Kem, undergoing relentless, exhausting interrogation to establish why the plane had entered Soviet airspace and refused supposed instructions to land. Rueckert strongly protested their detention, and a heated discussion followed in which the Japanese officials joined (one of the dead had been a restaurateur, whose placement in a casket did not meet Japanese requirements for

Kenneth N. Skoug Jr. retired from the Foreign Service in 1990 with the rank of minister-counselor. He served as economic-commercial counselor in Moscow from 1976 to 1979. He is the author of The United States and Cuba Under Reagan and Shultz: A Foreign Service Officer Reports (Praeger, 1996) and Czechoslovakia's Lost Fight for Freedom (Praeger, 1999).

burial). There was a delay of four hours, while the PanAm aircraft kept one engine running so that it could take off for Helsinki. Its fuel supply was thus running low. Another complication was the serious condition of two wounded persons, whose prompt evacuation was necessary. Ultimately, the aircraft departed without the two Korean airmen.

Early Sunday morning, April 23, VOA reported that the Russians had detained the pair and, in light of the two fatalities (both killed by Soviet gunfire), had established an “investigating committee” to look into the matter. As Vance was to depart that morning, I asked Shulmann urgently if the secretary would raise this ominous development with Gromyko. The answer was no. Vance was focused on arms control and did not intend to introduce an “extraneous” issue. Indeed, in his departure statement Vance expressed lavish praise for Gromyko. The joint communique spoke of progress toward an agreement on the limitation of offensive strategic weapons. Presidential spokesman Hodding Carter stated that the secretary felt he had met his objective.

But what to do for the two Koreans, who might be spending years in prison if the Russian “investigation” established that espionage had been involved instead of instrument malfunction? Aware that Vance would not raise the issue at Vnukovo Airport, I took Mr. Sinitsyn of the foreign ministry aside there to “confide” that Vance would not mention it. I left Sinitsyn with the impression — correct or not — that Vance, who had a strong background in civil aviation, was following the matter with great concern. His silence should not be misinterpreted. Sinitsyn claimed to know nothing of the detention of the two Koreans, and to be unaware of any assurances given that they would be released. But presumably he at least reported to his superiors that Vance’s silence did not signify lack of keen interest in early release of the Koreans.

On April 24, Matlock and I called again on Kapitsa in the foreign ministry to discuss the subject. He argued that a Soviet non-paper had mentioned only passengers, and recalled that he had given no assurances about the crew. Kapitsa, however, seemed to imply that the investigation might be “short.”

This had a positive ring. Perhaps our protests — along with world attention to the matter — were having some effect. Later on April 24, I was granted a lengthy business facilitation meeting with a senior Soviet foreign trade official that the Russians heretofore had stubbornly resisted.

It seemed possible that Vance’s visit might have opened doors for us, at least temporarily, even though he had not raised either issue. With that in mind, the embassy on April 25 cabled the department that we felt that a formal diplomatic note on the case, which State wished us to deliver, might complicate a matter about to be resolved.

Triumph for Quiet Diplomacy

On April 29, pilot Kim and navigator Lee were released by Soviet authorities to the consulate general in Leningrad after they had pleaded guilty to violation of Soviet air space (true) and knowingly disobeying a Soviet order to land (false because the Korean aircraft, despite strenuous efforts using all civilian frequencies, had never been able to communicate with the Soviet jet fighter). They were also obliged to apply to the presidium of the Supreme Soviet for “pardon.” Of course, no one asked the Russians to apologize for having killed two persons on board the aircraft and for having placed the lives of the other 111 in extreme jeopardy.

The timing was propitious for the two Koreans, who left the USSR via Copenhagen. Soon after their repatriation, the FBI arrested three Soviet officials on espionage charges in the United States, and the Russians retaliated with the arrest of an American businessman on trumped-up charges of violation of Soviet currency laws. In a period when Soviet authorities were not loath to use strong-arm methods on dissenters — the trials of two prominent Jewish dissidents were already under preparation — and when U.S.-Soviet relations continued to be tense, the two airmen were fortunate to avoid trial and prison. More sinister, although conjectural, one could assume that North Korean representatives in Moscow were making their wishes known, and would have been delighted to take delivery of the airmen at some future time.

Kim and Lee, unlike their unfortunate countryman kidnapped in Prague 11 years before, were going home. It was a small triumph for quiet diplomacy. Or, perhaps, “second-line” diplomacy.

Later a Korean Airlines spokesman said the airline would henceforth acquire DC-10 aircraft for use on polar routes, as they are better equipped to stay on course. Unfortunately, this tragedy did not preclude a far greater one on Sept. 1, 1983, when a Soviet aircraft destroyed a misdirected Korean airliner off Sakhalin with the loss of all 269 persons on board. ■

UNPACKING MY BOOKS



T

AN FSO SORTS THROUGH
HIS BAGGAGE, LITERALLY
AND FIGURATIVELY.

BY ALEXIS LUDWIG

he movers are gone and the new house, not yet a home, is like Humpty-Dumpty waiting to be put back together again. My God, where do we begin?! An inveterate practitioner of procrastination, I (for one) turn to a ritual that I always look forward to: the unpacking of my books from boxes.

I've been doing it every two or three years since well before I joined the Foreign Service more than a decade ago. Each time, I seem to get sidetracked from my orderly plan, picking up one book and then another, leafing randomly through certain half-forgotten pages, sometimes with a surge of recognition or a twinge of nostalgia at the sudden

F O C U S

A small shelf-full of deepening nostalgia.

memory of another time and circumstance and place. As Charles Wright wrote in his poem “Southern Cross” (I took a writing course from Wright at the University of California in 1981, and have the slim volume of that same name in my hand now), “How sweet is the past, no matter how wrong, or how sad/How sweet is yesterday’s noise.”

Spread out on the floor as some already are, others still shut tight inside boxes, these books have regained a kind of potential; they are vulnerable, in their happy disorder, to rediscovery, if only of a fleeting kind. Like the uneven layered circles in the trunk of a tree, they etch the outlines of my life in a casual design, and sketch a kind of autobiography — the contents of which are scattered inside their pages, or hidden in the plain sight of their covers. Each time I go through this ritual I wonder which thoughts since lost, which possible futures in the past, will sneak up on me suddenly and take me back over again.

Youth, as Milan Kundera wrote, is a lyrical age. But what age comes after? And do you lose the capacity for longing? Or is it only buried under the different layers of coming to terms with “reality” that mark one’s slow (in my case) evolution to adulthood? I read mostly poetry and fiction during those years, and one of my ambitions was to attain a consciousness of the planet hurtling through the cosmos. As I sift through a disorderly stack for my dog-eared copy of the *Collected Walt Whitman*, I stumble instead across Charles Simic’s *Selected Poems: 1963-1983*, and turn to “Help Wanted” — a piece that comically depicts the Gumby-like mental flexibility of the desperate job-seeker (I was a lousy one more than once): “They

Alexis Ludwig was a free-lance writer in San Francisco before he joined the Foreign Service in January 1994. He is currently serving in La Paz.

ask for a knife/I come running/They need a lamb/
I introduce myself as the lamb.”

Incidentally, every time I hear the word “reality” Nabokov’s description of it as “one of the few words that mean nothing without quotes” comes to mind. I first read Nabokov’s startlingly rich and vibrant work (*Lolita*, *Pale Fire*...) while living in Japan in the late 1980s, a time (ironically) that marked the end of my own lyrical age and, by way of a wobbly transition, the beginning of a brief dry era of social science.

I have mostly happy memories of the transition, though, which is (in some sense) embodied in one of the best books I’ve read about Japan: Kurt Singer’s *Mirror, Sword, and Jewel*. I recall in particular Singer’s perception of Japan as a civilization that has overcome the tragedy of modern life and achieved “integration.” By contrast, here in Latin America where I live now, that tragedy — or “the wide disparity between the beauty and greatness of ... works of art, systems of law, metaphysical constructions ... and the ... shapelessness and jejuneness of ordinary human existence” — is at times painfully conspicuous. Singer’s perception may not be as pertinent to the Japan of today, but it’s something to think about all the same.

As for my life in the Foreign Service, it, too, has found a place on my bookshelves, resembling (to continue the earlier metaphor) the fresh circles on the outer edges of the tree trunk: A selection of works about Guatemala and by Guatemalan writers, some interesting additions to my already substantial collection of books on Japan, a handful of books on Indonesia, and a modest grouping about (mostly the politics and history of) Malaysia. These are complemented by the dozen or so volumes that reflect my foray into Islam and the Middle East (works by V.S. Naipal, Edward Said, Thomas Friedman ...) spurred by the Southeast Asia experience. A small shelf-full of deepening nostalgia ...

F O C U S

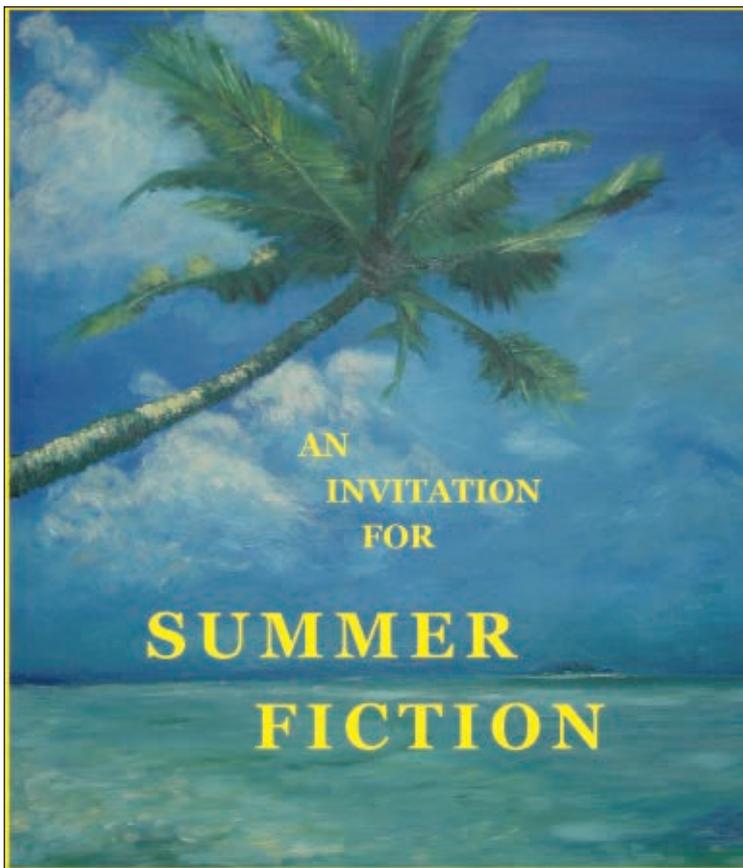
Oddly, my two years in Washington enjoy a more prominent place among my books than one might expect, perhaps because as a native Californian I felt “abroad, at home” there, and keenly aware of its unique offerings. Take David McCullough’s volume of essays, *Brave Companions*, a book I bought in 1999 after a friend from San Francisco sent me a copy of the wonderful piece in it titled: “Washington on the Potomac.” That essay alone is enough to remind one that the nation’s capital has gotten a bad rap. It certainly reinforced my own fledgling view that Washington, the geographical and historical place, has been confused with Washington, the legendary seat of government bureaucracy and power and corruption, and that the cloud of (mostly undeserved) negative association has extended to where it manifestly doesn’t belong.

I have few regrets about the paths chosen, even

***My life in the
Foreign Service
has also found a place
on my bookshelves.***

when the inevitable wonderings about what might have been dominate my waking reveries. At these moments I think of a passage in one of William James’ essays in his book *Human Immortality and Other Essays on Popular Philosophy*, which I always seek out at some point during the ritual. In it, James recounts what happens when former possibilities cease to exist as a consequence of a key decision at a fork in the path of life. “Little by little,” he writes, “the habits, the knowledges, which once lay so near, cease to be reckoned even among possibilities ... and the old alternative ego, once so vivid, fades into something less substantial than a dream.”

In more ways than one, this Foreign Service life enables one to keep the dream alive, including every two or three years when I unpack my books from their boxes. ■



The *Foreign Service Journal* is seeking works of fiction of up to 3,000 words for its summer fiction issue. Story lines or characters involving the Foreign Service are preferred, but not required. The top stories, selected by the *Journal's* Editorial Board, will be published in the July/August issue; some of them will also be simultaneously posted on the *Journal's* Web site. The writer of each selected story will receive an honorarium of \$250, payable upon publication.

All stories must be previously unpublished. Limit one entry per author. Please send via e-mail including your contact information and a short bio. Submissions preferred copied into the body of the e-mail or as a Word attachment.

Please send submissions (or questions) to Mikkela Thompson at thompsonm@afsa.org

Deadline is April 1. No fooling.

INSIDE A PROMOTION PANEL

WHAT DO SELECTION BOARDS LOOK FOR IN DECIDING WHOM TO PROMOTE?
HERE IS A “TOP TEN” LIST OF TIPS TO MAXIMIZE ONE’S CHANCES OF CAREER ADVANCEMENT.

BY JOHN NALAND

After 18 years in the Foreign Service, I had the opportunity last summer to sit on a selection board for the first time. I learned a great deal while reading over 1,000 efficiency reports on nearly 200 mid-level FSO generalists. Below are the lessons I took away from that experience. Although they represent the views of just one person serving on one board for one competition group, I think that other Foreign Service members might benefit from these insights from inside a promotion board.

The Basics

The purpose of selection boards is to identify Foreign Service members whose skills, experience and qualities establish them as being ready to perform at the next higher level. Those skills, experience and qualities are spelled out in the procedural precepts and core precepts that are negotiated between State’s management and AFSA.

Having participated in those negotiations from 1999 to 2003 as AFSA vice president for State and then AFSA president, I know that careful attention is placed on using the precepts as a mechanism to shape the Foreign Service of tomorrow. In other words, the precepts instruct selection boards to recommend for promotion only those employees who exhibit the skills, experience and qualities that the department and AFSA have identified as being needed to meet the demands of America’s 21st-century diplomacy.

John Naland, an FSO since 1986, has served in Bogota, San Jose, Nicaragua and numerous Washington assignments. From 1999 to 2001, he was AFSA’s State vice president, and served as AFSA president from 2001 to 2003. He is currently principal officer in Matamoros.

The mechanics of how the boards go about their work were well described in the May 2004 *Foreign Service Journal* article “Preparing for Promotion Panel Season” by David Jones and Stephen Smith (available online at <http://www.afsa.org/fsj/2004.cfm>). The article does contain one editorial glitch that was noted in a subsequent issue: the typical board spends 20 minutes (not two) reading each employee’s performance file.

A Caveat

Before I list tips that may be of use to employees interested in rapid promotions, let me express one note of caution. While promotions are important (providing a vote of confidence in one’s performance, the opportunity for greater responsibilities, and more pay), they are not everything. Arguably, the goal of a Foreign Service career is to enjoy and make the most of the journey, not to take an unbroken series of overwhelming assignments in an effort to claw up the ladder to some high-level job that may or may not ever materialize. Employees who focus only on getting the next promotion risk falling into the trap of “always becoming, never being.” They risk getting to the end of their Foreign Service journey without having enjoyed a rewarding personal life (for example, family, friends and hobbies).

Ten Tips

What, then, do selection boards look for in deciding whom to promote? The precepts list many things, but below are what I see as being the top considerations. While many of these “tips” may seem obvious, I think it is useful to remind ourselves of them. The quotes in each section are taken from the precepts, which can be read on the State Department Intranet at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/pe/regulation.html>.

• **Credit = Performance Times Difficulty:** “Creditable performance under unusually difficult or dangerous circumstances is particularly relevant” for promotion consideration. Translation: Just like judges for Olympic gymnastics or diving, promotion board members look not only at how well a job was done but also how intrinsically difficult the job was to do. As a result, employees serving effectively in highly demanding jobs and/or in difficult locations generally will be promoted more quickly than employees serving effectively in jobs that are perceived as being less difficult.

• **Potential:** “Promotion is recognition that a member has demonstrated the capability of performing the duties and responsibilities required at a higher level.” Translation: Promotions are not rewards for prior service, but are instead extrapolations from that service. For example, notwithstanding the above first tip, employees who take tough jobs but fail to perform well in them are unlikely to be promoted ahead of their peers.

• **Decision Criteria:** “The Core Precepts provide the guidelines by which Selection Boards determine ... promotability.” Translation: In reading evaluation reports, boards consider performance in the 29 specific skills listed in the core precepts (also called the “Decision Criteria for Tenure and Promotion in the Foreign Service”). Each skill is listed in three levels of accomplishment (junior, mid-level and senior). Boards judge whether the employee is performing below, at or above the level of accomplishment appropriate to the employee’s current grade.

• **Overseas Service:** “A significant portion of the career must be spent in assignments abroad ... [and] boards are instructed to consider ... demonstrated competence in service abroad when reviewing members for

***Promotions are not
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that service.***

promotion.” Translation: Foreign Service members who have not served abroad in many years are limiting their promotion potential. While the State Department tries to accommodate employees in difficult medical or family situations (especially employees who have such difficulties later in their careers after many overseas assignments), it is a fact of life that the Foreign Service needs members who are ready, willing and able to serve abroad.

• **Fair-Share Service:** “Boards are encouraged to weigh positively credible performance at hardship and danger pay posts ... including ... Iraq and Afghanistan.” Translation: All Foreign Service members need to do their fair share of hardship assignments. Those who do so generally will be promoted more quickly than employees who do not — assuming that they performed well. One should note, however, that taking an assignment to a hardship and danger-pay post does not guarantee a promotion. (Full disclosure: In chronological order, my overseas assignments have been at 35, 0, 15 and 5-percent differential posts.)

• **Leadership and Management Skills:** “An employee’s leadership and management skills should be given particular importance when s/he is being considered for promotion.” Translation: Selection boards are not

to promote brilliant policy wonks who abuse their staffs, supervisors who discourage dissenting views, or employees who fail to lock their safes at night.

• **Training and Skill Development:** “Boards should attach special value to an employee’s demonstrated commitment to upgrading their professional skills through training.” Translation: Boards give positive credit to those who use FSI and other training to improve their performance and/or raise the level of their unit’s performance. To do so, boards review employee profiles (formerly PARs) and read long-term training evaluations to see what training employees have had.

• **Foreign-Language Proficiency:** “Boards are instructed to duly consider foreign language excellence which enhances the member’s contribution to the mission.” Translation: Boards review employee profiles and read language-training evaluations to see what proficiencies employees have. They give credit to those who use their foreign-language skills to advance their bureau or mission performance plan goals.

• **Functional Proficiency:** “Boards are instructed not to penalize employees for taking *periodic* assignments out-of-cone or out of specialized skill group” (emphasis added). Translation: Boards may “penalize” employees who take numerous assignments out of their cone or specialty after tenuring if those assignments do not appear to be serving any well-thought-out career development purpose. This is especially true for those boards charged with reviewing employees by functional cones or specialty.

• **Broad-Gauged Officers:** “The department’s goal in creating the multifunctional skill code is to ... expand the pool of broad-gauged officers prepared to assume senior leadership positions.” Although the State De-

partment and AFSA recently agreed to abolish the multifunctional skill code, the preference for broad-gauged officers will be a key feature of the classwide competition that will replace multifunctionality for mid-level FSO generalists beginning in summer 2005.

What Not to Do

In addition to deciding which employees to recommend for promotion, boards must also identify employees for low-ranking. The precepts identify numerous things that may be grounds for that designation. They include: failure to carry out assigned tasks, low productivity or work poorly done, an inability to work effectively and cooperatively with others, and a pattern of failure to safeguard properly classified material and information. In practice, low rankings may also result from a significant, but otherwise non-fatal, shortcoming that

is cited in more than one efficiency report over the most recent five years.

While boards may not low-rank employees for the following reasons, they do constitute grounds for mid-ranking (i.e., not recommending the employee for promotion): a small but noteworthy performance flaw, an unproductive assignment pattern, or the lack of an important skill. Many mid-rankings simply result from an employee's failure to keep up with his/her higher-performing colleagues who are busy following all or most of the 10 tips listed above.

Tips for Raters

Selection boards may only evaluate employees based on the documents contained in their official performance folder. Such items include efficiency reports, long-term training reports and award nominations. Obviously, the drafting of those documents is a critical supervisory respon-

sibility. Here are a few tips for raters and reviewers:

- **Specifics:** As the employee evaluation form itself makes clear, raters and reviewers need to provide specific examples of performance. Without concrete examples, praise of an employee's performance will ring hollow.

- **Context:** Boards not only need to know what the employee did, but also why it was important to the accomplishment of U.S. policy goals. But don't go overboard. Reports should be about the employee's performance, not a mini-briefing paper on the bureau, mission or host country.

- **Hyperbole:** It will be news to no one that many evaluation reports suffer from "grade inflation." But raters and reviewers need to exercise caution. Boards read hundreds of reports and often see reports from several years on the same position and/or on multiple employees in the same sec-

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GAYS AND LESBIANS
IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AGENCIES

tion. If different reports credit several employees with the same single-handed accomplishment, boards may discount them all.

• **Writing Style:** Raters and reviewers must keep in mind that they are writing for boards comprised of one public member and probably several Foreign Service members who have never served in that bureau or post. Therefore, it is essential for drafters to spell out all acronyms. In addition, drafters should avoid producing a full page of unbroken text. A little white space after or between paragraphs makes it much easier for boards to read the document and thus focus on its content.

Final Comments

I will conclude by answering the three most frequently asked questions that I have gotten from colleagues about my service last summer on a selection board:

Promotion panels are looking for employees who exhibit the skills, experience and qualities needed to meet the demands of America's 21st-century diplomacy.

Q: Was it easy to read through the inflated verbiage in order to decide who merited promotion, mid-ranking and low-ranking?

A: Yes. Most reports provided the needed specific examples of perfor-

mance and placed them in the context of their impact on mission accomplishment. Weighing that information against the job description and work requirements statements, it was not difficult to judge who was ahead of, in the middle of, or falling behind their peers.

Q: Were some employees disadvantaged by poorly drafted reports?

A: Rarely. I did not see many poorly drafted reports. When I did, there were always three to six other reports from other years by which to evaluate the employee.

Q: Was the promotion process fair?

A: Yes. I saw no hint of favoritism or discrimination during board deliberations. Although many efficiency reports were inflated and a few were poorly written, I still found it possible to decide who met the standards of their class and demonstrated the potential to serve at the next higher level. ■

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GERTRUDE BELL AND IRAQ: DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN

THE EXTRAORDINARY ENGLISHWOMAN WHO PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN
THE BIRTH OF MODERN IRAQ CONFRONTED MANY OF THE SAME ISSUES THE
U.S. AND THE NEW IRAQI GOVERNMENT FACE TODAY.

By BARBARA FURST

Though she is remembered today mainly by Middle East scholars and travel writers, there has recently been a modest revival of interest in Gertrude Bell (1868-1926) because of the key role she played in the creation of modern Iraq in the early 1920s. She was involved not only in putting King Faisal, son of the Hashemite Sharif of Mecca, on the throne in Baghdad, but helped draw the new country's borders and mobilized its tribes and religious groups to support the new nation-state.

Gertrude Bell traveled all over the Middle East and lived for years in Mesopotamia (as Iraq was then known), where she arguably knew more about what was happening on the ground among the local tribes than anyone else at that time. She was always in the thick of things, before and after the birth of Iraq in 1921, with innumerable contacts and confidants — both among local people and the British administrators, who feuded with each other and with London almost as much as the Iraqis themselves.

Above all, starting in her 20s and continuing until her

Barbara Furst worked at the U.S. embassy in New Delhi as a secretary from 1957 to 1959. She later completed a degree in cultural anthropology at American University and a diploma in social anthropology at Oxford University. She married a Foreign Service officer, with whom she lived in Pakistan in the late 1960s. There she did field work in a Punjabi village in an attempt to discern the social and economic factors that affect fertility. Later she worked as a contractor in health programs in developing countries for USAID. More recently, she has written travel articles for the Boston Globe and other New England newspapers.

death nearly 40 years later, she always found time to write — letters, diaries, travel accounts, intelligence reports, scholarly articles and books (when in England), as well as major policy papers for the British government. One of Bell's policy papers, for instance, pled the cause of Mesopotamia during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.

A scholar, writer, linguist, Arabist, mountain climber, archaeologist, photographer, explorer and founder of the Iraqi National Museum, Bell was, to use the old cliché, larger than life. The recent paperback edition of a biography by Janet Wallach, *Desert Queen* (Anchor Books, 1999), which is being reissued in 2005, as well as the publication of Bell's *Arabian Diaries, 1913-14* (Syracuse University Press, 2001) and a new edition of her *The Desert and the Sown* (Cooper Square Publishers, 2001) have generated renewed interest in this remarkable woman.

But by far the most fascinating window on her extraordinary life, because of the lively style and sense of déjà vu one gets, are Bell's own letters, edited and published after Bell's death in 1927 by her stepmother (*The Letters of Gertrude Bell*, selected and edited by Lady Bell, D.B.E., London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1927).

This Week's Headline

To read her copious letters from Baghdad during the 1920s is like scanning this week's headlines: many of the issues she confronted are the same ones the U.S. administrators and the new Iraqi government are dealing with today.

For example, in a 1922 letter to her father, Bell describes Iraqi skirmishes with the Saudis on the southern border, and the difficulty of negotiating a border treaty after the Saudis had conquered a large swath of north-central Arabia. Faisal had sent a camel corps to defend

the border, and the “Akhwan” or Muslim Brotherhood, as the Wahabis called themselves, fired on them from an airplane. Bell goes on to say, “Ibn Saud may, of course, repudiate the action of his followers; that’s the best that can happen, for otherwise we’re practically at war with them.” If one substitutes “al-Qaida” for “Akhwan,” we are in familiar territory: the House of Saud claims to repudiate terrorism among the extremists within its borders, but has been slow to do anything about it.

In the early 1920s, after the British-held plebiscite and a general agreement among the leaders of the various factions in what was then known as Mesopotamia to unite and become a nation, a friend of Bell’s, a tribal sheik, said that all the pillars were standing for the formation of a new state and now what they needed was a roof. Shortly after that, Faisal, the protege of Bell and T. E. Lawrence (better known as Lawrence of Arabia), was imported from Mecca to become the “roof.” In early 2004, David Ignatius wrote in the *Washington Post* about the offer of Prince Hassan of Jordan, the great nephew of Faisal, to mediate among Iraqi religious factions to bring them together and become a “provisional head of state.”

Bell describes and photographs a grand gathering in 1921 at Falluja of Sunni tribal leaders on camels greeting Faisal, and Faisal’s swearing allegiance to them, saying their enemies are his enemies and vowing solidarity. He is “a great Sunni among Sunnis,” Bell wrote to her father. And now Falluja, as a center for Sunni insurgency, is in the headlines again.

In her letters Bell reports that the people of Kirkuk in the north are ready to give allegiance to Faisal, but those in Basra have come to her to plead with her government for a sep-

***Bell’s copious letters
from Baghdad during
the 1920s read like this
week’s headlines.***

arate southern province within a federation. Her response: I am your friend, but I am also a servant of the British government, and London says no to anything less than a unitary government.

One can almost picture her wraith hovering over the Iraqi government today — slender, red-haired, chain-smoking, high-energy — muttering to herself something like “what goes around comes around” or “so what else is new?”

A Life of Paradoxes

Born in 1868 into a well-to-do Midlands iron manufacturing family, Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell was probably expected to lead a quiet life and eventually become a wife and mother, a traditional helpmeet. But like other British women travelers such as Mary Kingsley, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and, later, Freya Stark, once she got a taste of freedom — to use Bell’s phrase, “wild travel” — there was no turning back.

Bell’s life was full of paradoxes. She won a “first” in modern history at Oxford in 1890 after just two years’ study, rather than the prescribed three. Even more remarkable, she accomplished this long before women could actually take degrees from Oxford. (Women could sit for the exams and get rated for them, but could not take a degree until early in the 20th centu-

ry.) High-spirited and independent, she challenged one of her examiners, saying she did not agree with his theory. As Wallach puts it, she was a young woman with “attitude.”

Having failed to find a husband who could match her intelligence and taste for adventure in the three years allotted a Victorian young lady after her debut in society, Gertrude turned to travel. In 1892, she went to Persia, a place she had always longed to see. She was accompanied by her aunt, Mary Lascelles, whose husband was the British envoy to Shah Nasiraddin. In Tehran, Bell fell in love with a British diplomat, Henry Cadogan. The sun, the horseback rides into the surrounding rugged landscape with the young Cadogan, reading the Persian poet Hafiz (also known as Hafez) to each other, the freedom, the romance were the beginnings of her passion for the East. In spite of her strong spirit, when her parents did not approve of the match, she gave him up. She remained single; and though in middle age she developed two strong romantic attachments to men — both of them married — she apparently remained chaste.

In her 20s she traveled around the world with family members and to archaeological sites in the Mediterranean. Finally, in late 1899, she was allowed to go on her own to Jerusalem, and began studying Arabic. From there she set off on horseback for a trek through hostile country to Petra — with a clandestine side trip into the hills of southwest Syria, the territory of the fierce Jabel Druze, against the wishes of the Turkish authorities. She wrote home, “Here I am a person” — a phrase that would be repeated time and again in her correspondence.

A couple of years later she made a months-long trek across Syria that resulted in her classic *The Desert*



Top: Gertrude Bell on horseback in Lebanon, 1900. Center: Bell flanked by Winston Churchill (left) and T.E. Lawrence (right) at the Pyramids during the Cairo Conference in 1921. Bottom: Bell at a picnic with Faisal (right foreground) in 1921, near Ctesiphon, Iraq. Photographs courtesy University of Newcastle.



and the Sown, published in 1907 but still a standard guide for anyone visiting Syria and especially its desert ruins and the so-called “dead cities” in the northwestern part of the country. In that account, Bell records hiring the muleteers and a cook, purchasing provisions at various stops along the way, and setting up and breaking camp. She photographed and wrote down her impressions of local people, and surveyed, measured and photographed ancient ruins, later making some of them subjects for scholarly papers.

She describes the climb on a cold wet evening up the steep pass to Crac des Chevalier, the spectacular Crusader castle in western Syria with its view all the way to the Mediterranean, and then climbing still farther within the castle itself up the long, winding passage on horseback. The Turkish resident and his wives took her in, fed her and provided a room for the night — a large, stone-vaulted room that later became a very good tourist restaurant.

Between forays into the Middle East, she climbed the Alps and was described by a professional Swiss mountaineer as a woman without fear, who didn't lose her nerve even under the most perilous conditions. Despite her independence and fearlessness, her letters home to her adored and adoring father Hugh and stepmother Florence Bell show a strong and childlike need for their approval all her life.

A Small World

Perhaps most paradoxical — and ironic — of all, she, a woman, was a key political player in a male-dominated world, a lone female moving among powerful men and developing her own power. Even more remarkable, she achieved this stature in the Middle East.

Whereas almost all women there were (and most remain) truly oppressed, Bell manipulated, cajoled and badgered local sheiks and religious leaders for her own — and Britain's — ends. She was held in great esteem and referred to as the "khatun," a highly regarded and powerful woman. Wallach quotes David Hogarth, who worked in the office of intelligence in Cairo during the First World War, as saying that T. E. Lawrence's "revolt in the desert" would not have been possible without the intelligence provided by Bell.

At the same time, a woman of privilege and very traditional, she was against women's suffrage. Most women didn't have the required intelligence or experience to vote, she believed. In particular, she was the scourge of the Foreign Office wives, whom she perceived as empty-headed. Of the British wives

***Bell manipulated,
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and Britain's — ends.***

in Baghdad, she lamented in another letter: "A collection of more tiresome women I never encountered. ... I know I'm regrettably inelastic, but I simply can't bear that sort. ... These idle women here have nothing to do all day long. ... [They] take no sort of interest in what's going on, know no Arabic and see no Arabs.

They create an exclusive (though it's also a very second-rate) English society quite cut off from the life of the town. I now understand why British government has come to grief in India, where our women do just the same thing."

One becomes aware very quickly of the small world in which Bell moved. Through her family's connections she gained entry to the Foreign Office and the Indian Civil Service — to a large extent starting when her father passed on her letters from the field to influential people in London. The same names crop up constantly. She first met T. E. Lawrence in 1909 when she was crossing northern Syria on her first trek into Mesopotamia, and he was a 19-year-old Oxford student excavating the ruins at Carchimesh. Later in Iraq she would work with St. John Philby, not always smoothly.

The Indian Civil Service was also

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responsible for Mesopotamia, and Bell first met Sir Percy Cox, who was to become High Commissioner for Mesopotamia after the First World War, on a visit to India in 1902. By the time Cox arrived in Baghdad after the Turkish defeat in 1917, she had been in and out of the region many times, and he soon realized how invaluable her experience and local connections would be in carrying out the British mandate that would result from the Paris Peace Treaty.

She seemed to be everywhere — in the British intelligence office in Cairo before her four-month journey by camel caravan into north-central Arabia in 1914; at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, where she met Prince Faisal of Mecca, the leader of the Arabian revolt against the Turks during the war. Faisal, with whom the British government (through Lawrence), had made a

*She was the scourge of
the Foreign Office wives,
whom she perceived as
empty-headed.*

bargain, was promised a crown, though not the one he ultimately got. And in early 1921 she was at the Cairo Conference led by Winston Churchill, then colonial secretary, where it was decided that Iraq was to be self-governing because it was too expensive to support as a protectorate. There, resplendent in furs and a big hat, she posed with Cox, Lawrence, the Churchills and other dignitaries while seated on camels

lined up before the Sphinx at the pyramids.

The Ultimate in “Wild Travel”

For some of us, perhaps, most fascinating are her own descriptions of the “wild travel” that added zest to her life. Her *Arabian Diaries*, written in 1913-14 for Dick Doughty-Wylie (with whom she was hopelessly in love), contains some of her most lyrical descriptions of living in the desert. One morning she woke as the sun rose, and wrote that it was like being “inside an opal.” And she describes in some detail the four months she traveled with her own camel caravan from Jerusalem south, and then east through Arabia, traversing territory claimed by both the Shammar tribe and their blood enemies, the Saudis. She was by then formally charged by the British government with gathering informa-

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tion about conditions there, though they promised her no protection while she traveled.

At Hayil in 1914 she was held hostage by the local sheik inside his mud fortress — or rather, as he was away, by his tough old grandmother. This family, the Rashids, head of the Shammar, were particularly self-destructive, killing each other off until the young sheik was the only one left to lead the clan. In addition to sounding them out, Bell needed the Rashids to honor a letter of credit so she could provision her caravan, and was held up for several days for reasons she did not really know. She was finally given some bags of gold and sent on her way.

And always she spent time with the local people, in the desert sitting cross-legged on the ground in their tents, in their homes and coffee houses in town and city. She pleased them with her colloquial Arabic and knowl-

*And always she spent
time with the local
people, in the desert
sitting cross-legged on
the ground in their tents,
in their homes and coffee
houses in town and city.*

edge of their history, drank countless tiny cups of thick black coffee, exchanged gifts, ate with her fingers the roasted lamb served on huge trays piled with rice, and chain-smoked cigarettes while they sucked water pipes.

During her earlier Syria trip, she even participated in preparations for a tribal raid involving gunfire, chanting and dancing around a bonfire.

She often described the cold, damp desert winter in her little sleeping tent, and the usefulness of her fur coat. She was always writing for dresses to be sent from London, but admitted to her stepmother early on that she had arranged to have split skirts made locally so she could ride her horse astride (though camels did not require it). Far from roughing it, she traveled with a table and bed linens, china and crystal, all strapped onto a camel or mule, as well as a folding canvas bathtub — which, on occasions when she camped near a well, rather than an oasis, came in handy to water the camels.

Baghdad At Last

When she finally settled down in Baghdad in 1917, having followed

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the victorious British army into the city where she would remain until her death less than 10 years later, she became the right-hand “man” for the High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, and was named Oriental Secretary, her first paid position with the British government. She was given a house and an office, and had virtual *carte blanche* to deal with the local political, tribal, ethnic and religious leaders to promote the interests of the British government. And since she believed that the British mandate was the best thing that could have happened to Mesopotamia, especially after what she perceived as the misrule of the Turks, she had no problem trying to persuade her clients that what was good for Britain was good for them. Many of them, but not all, agreed.

In a 1920 letter home, she described her method of collecting information. She and a male colleague were invited by a leading fig-

In another letter
 she refers with disdain to
 the English newspapers
 that expected [High
 Commissioner Percy]
 Cox to bring about a
 stable, modern state
 instantly.

ure in Baghdad to meet merchants and caravan drivers in a coffee house. “I do them a good turn whenever I can and they respond by coming in to

see me whenever they return from Syria or Arabia and telling me what they’ve heard and seen. The tea party was delightful. The walls of the diwan are mellow with decades of tobacco smoke, the furniture, benches around the room and one table for us at the upper end. ... We talked Arab politics with great gusto for an hour and a half. ... I do like them so much. They are to me an endless romance. They come and go through the wilderness as if it were a high road, and they all, most politely, treat me as a colleague, because I, too, have been in Arcadia. When they talk of tribes or sheiks or watering places, I don’t need to ask who and where they are. I know; and as they talk I see again the wide Arabian horizon.”

Ever the realist, in another letter she refers with disdain to the English newspapers that expected Cox to bring about a stable, modern state instantly. “He has only to say

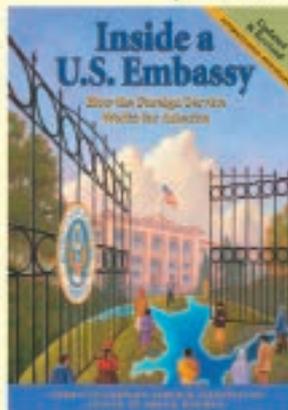
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'Hey, presto' for an Arab government to leap on to the stage, with another Athene springing from the forehead of Zeus. You may say if you like that Sir Percy will play the role of Zeus, but his Athene will find the stage encumbered by such trifles as the Shiah [sic] problem, the tribal problem and other matters, over which even a goddess might easily stumble." And in another letter, "One of the papers says, quite rightly, that we had promised an Arab government with British advisers, and had set up a British government with Arab advisers. That's a perfectly fair statement. ..."

In a retrospective summary of conditions in Iraq at independence — inserted among Gertrude's letters by her stepmother, for their posthumous publication — Percy Cox noted among other things that "the most thorny problem on the Euphrates at that time (early 1920s) was not so

***By August 1921
Gertrude could write
triumphantly that it had
been a difficult week but
"we have got our king"
— in no small part
because of her efforts.***

much the tribes as the holy cities of Islam, Karbala and Najaf." The sheiks of these towns, given small monthly allowances and sent home with orders to maintain law and order, "were found to be abusing their positions and making hay while the sun shone;

while, worse still, the existence of a brisk trade in supplies to the enemy, both on the Iraq front and in Syria, was brought to light."

Despite such difficulties, by August 1921 Gertrude could write triumphantly that it had been a difficult week but "we have got our king" — in no small part because of her efforts. In addition to the political maneuvering to bring about the new country and drawing its borders, she took on the traditional female tasks of finding King Faisal a house, decorating it, and preparing it for his arrival in Baghdad. She advised him about his coronation clothes, and those of his son, and designed a flag, and helped plan the ceremony itself.

Bell stayed on as general guide, confidante, and friend of the king who, Wallach writes, became a bit restive under her constant watchful eye. She really felt she belonged nowhere else, despite medical



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advice that she escape the dreaded heat of Baghdad summers. She wrote to her father in 1922 that it is “shocking how the East has wound itself around my heart till I don’t know which is me and which is it. ... I’m more a citizen of Bagdad [sic] than many a Bagdadi born, and I’ll wager that no Bagdadi cares more, or half so much, for the beauty of the river or the palm gardens, or clings more closely to the rights of citizenship which I have acquired.”

Final Years

Within a year or two after the coronation, she realized she needed something else to do and began to plan and build “her” museum, the Iraqi National Museum which she would then help stock from the accumulated artifacts from such fabled sites as Babylon, Nineveh and Ur. In a droll passage, Wallach describes Bell visiting Ur, where the

*Sackville-West writes,
“I watched them both —
the Arab prince and
the Englishwoman who
were trying to build up
a new Mesopotamia
between them.”*

British archaeologist Leonard Woolley was at work, and bribing the local digging team. Bell offered them bakshish (gifts) to produce treasures, which slowly emerged from pockets and other hiding places and which she then packed off back to Baghdad for

her museum.

The writer Vita Sackville-West stayed with Bell in Baghdad in 1926 just a few months before Bell’s death. En route to visit her diplomat husband Harold Nicolson in Tehran, Sackville-West describes in her book *Passenger to Tehran*, published the same year, arriving inside Bell’s walled garden ill and exhausted after a journey by land and sea from India. She found Bell’s pony hitched in a corner, a couple of dogs, a tame partridge, and the servants’ small children among the shrubs and flowers. Taken in hand by Bell before she dashed off to her office, and between making phone calls and chatting about who was coming to lunch, Sackville-West was provided breakfast and a bath in what she describes as a tin saucer.

Responding to her request for a saluki dog, Bell made a phone call before she left. A short time later Sackville-West was confronted with

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several local men, each with a dirty and flea-ridden animal — one of the dogs was selected when Bell returned for lunch carrying a handful of flowers for the luncheon table. The other dogs were sent away, and orders given to de-flea and shampoo the one remaining.

Bell later took her to tea with the king, and Sackville-West writes, "I watched them both — the Arab prince and the Englishwoman who were trying to build up a new Mesopotamia between them. 'You see,' she had said to me, 'we feel here that we are trying to do something worthwhile, something creative and constructive.' [A]nd despite her deference to his royalty, there could be very little doubt as to which of the two was the real genius of Iraq."

A few months later, on July 11, 1926, Bell went to her bedroom after dinner. She asked her maid to wake her at six the next morning, then took

***"The Kingdom of Iraq
has been placed on its
feet, ... its future
prosperity and progress
rest with the Iraqis
themselves."***

— Percy Cox

an overdose of sleeping pills and never woke up. She was three days short of her 58th birthday. She was buried the next day — before a huge crowd that gathered along the cortege route to pay their last respects — in the British cemetery of the city she loved.

Coda

Political strife in Iraq did not settle down after the coronation. In 1923 Shia divines in the south began to stir up trouble and were shipped off to Persia. The areas east of Erbil, Kifri and Kirkuk were causing headaches for the administrators in Baghdad. The Kurds in the north were kicking up trouble. And, finally, the Turks were ejected along the northern border later that year. But the reign of the Hashemites lasted until 1958, when Faisal's grandson and family were assassinated.

Today, almost 80 years later, Cox's words, written shortly after Bell's death and bound into a volume of her letters, come back to haunt us: "The Kingdom of Iraq has been placed on its feet, and its frontiers defined; its future prosperity and progress rest with the Iraqis themselves." ■

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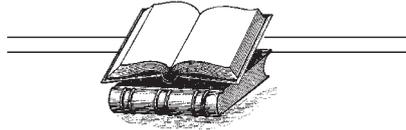
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BOOKS

Forging a New Foreign Policy

Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet

James Mann, Viking/Penguin, 2004, \$17.65, hardcover, 372 pages.

REVIEWED BY DAVID CASAVIS

In the halcyon years between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 9/11 attacks, the looming question at State was: What now? What grand construct should displace the Cold War policy of containment?

In response, President George H. W. Bush declared a "New World Order" of liberal democracies, and there was no shortage of candidates for alliances and partnerships. For a while it even seemed that both major political parties were on the same page, until around 2000.

Enter the Vulcans, a band of six foreign policy thinkers and practitioners who named themselves after the Greek god of fire and metalworking. Although several of them had held high-level positions in previous Republican administrations, and some have been collaborating in and out of government for over 35 years, it was George W. Bush's election that put them in the position to implement their radically different approach to statecraft.

Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet is perhaps best described as a group biography profiling six of the most prominent Vulcans: Colin Powell, Richard

Armitage, Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney.

Journalist James Mann shows us a youthful Major Colin Powell walking into a Quonset hut in Da Nang to take his GRE, paving the way for him to earn an MBA at The George Washington University — early evidence of the lifelong devotion to the value of professional education and training that he would bring with him to Foggy Bottom in 2001. We watch his steady rise through the ranks of the Army to the position of chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under the Clinton administration, where an atmosphere of endless unstructured meetings enrages and disgusts him. The reader who recalls Powell's oft-used term "a skunk at the picnic" will find out where it came from in these pages.

We are introduced to an equally youthful Armitage returning from Vietnam with a genuine concern for Southeast Asia. "I was tired of being on the pointy edge of the spear, and I wanted to see who was chucking the spear," he says. Mann's account helps us understand why Powell and his Deputy Secretary of State have been such a close-knit team.

The Vulcans' foreign policy vision is founded on the principle that the United States should be unafraid to wield unchallengeable military strength. That power is coupled with confidence in America's virtue and its natural role as world leader. Mann quotes National Security Adviser — now Secretary of State-Designate — Rice as saying, "People

may oppose you, but when they realize you can hurt them, they'll join your side."

He also offers a tantalizing insight into the Secretary-designate. While she has taken care to avoid alienating conservatives, she has avoided being swept up into factional disputes between Republicans. She helps the president to straddle policy divides while advocating a dramatic break with ideas of the past.

As we have seen during the past four years, Europe — at least "Old Europe," as Defense Secretary Rumsfeld puts it — is no longer at the center of U.S. strategic thinking. Nor do the Vulcans regard international organizations, or even the alliances of the New World Order, as necessary. Mann quotes Paul Wolfowitz's view that allies should be treated as ducklings that would inevitably get in line behind their American mother.

Rise of the Vulcans explains the reasoning behind our occupation of Iraq and the direction of American foreign policy for at least the next four years — and possibly far longer. According to the Vulcans, nearly every political thinker at State today is obsolete. Indeed, after 9/11, when Pakistan's ambassador tried to explain the background of his country's relationship with the Taliban, Dick Armitage cut him short. "History begins today," he said.

Whatever one thinks of that viewpoint, and the assumptions that support it, this book makes for compelling reading, backed by painstaking detail. Here are the behind-the-scenes struggles and the building



blocks of foreign policy forged by the Vulcans. The future has arrived.

David Casavis, a frequent contributor to the Journal, works for the Department of Homeland Security.

A True “Insider” Account

The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace

Dennis Ross, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004, \$35, hardcover, 840 pages.

REVIEWED BY DAVID T. JONES

The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace is Dennis Ross’s view of Middle East events between 1988-2000. Ross, the U.S. envoy to the Middle East and the Secretary’s Special Middle East Coordinator, cannot claim to be “present at the creation”—in the end, nothing was created. But he was decidedly present, and his voice is unique as creator, implementer and observer of U.S. policy throughout that 12-year period.

Today, more than four years after the Camp David peace effort in July 2000 and the outbreak of the intifada that September, peace in the Middle East looks as distant as a manned landing on Mars: technically conceivable but with so many obstacles in its path that the effort appears futile even to begin. Yet, throughout much of the 12-year process that Ross describes, political leadership throughout the region and the United States believed that a lasting, mutually agreed peace was not only conceivable but likely. Now, at a moment when Sisyphus seems to lie crushed be-

neath the boulder at the bottom of the mountain, reading Ross’s extended review of the bidding is vital for those who would contemplate another rock-pushing expedition.

Ross adroitly avoids the major pitfalls of politico-historical writing. *Missing Peace* is not a once-over-lightly memoir high on impression but light on substantive fact (the writings of certain former Secretaries of State come to mind). While it is engaging for the casual reader, it offers plenty of fact and commentary for the Middle East specialist. (It includes a 20-page epilogue updating developments to the present.)

He also avoids the infallibility myth; he is not always the hero of his own work, but admits to error both of commission and omission. Likewise, he is bluntly critical of senior U.S. policy-makers, including President Clinton, on occasion. Moreover, he directly confronts the hard-to-raise question of whether his Jewish faith was a complicating distraction to all Middle East actors, and although he concludes that such was not the case, he deserves credit for raising the point.

Ultimately, what may be the most interesting portion of the Ross account is the story of the final 18 months of the Clinton administration’s efforts in the region, particularly his unprecedented insider account of the 14 days at Camp David in July 2000 between Israelis and Palestinians. As he notes, the media described those efforts as a failure, but the negotiating teams thought breakthroughs were still possible. Accordingly, the United States continued to devote unprecedented amounts of its scarcest resource—the time of its executive leadership—but to no avail.

While Ross liberally attributes errors and shortcomings to Israelis, he

saves the greatest onus for Arafat and his essential inability to seize the moment and make the compromises that only he had the psychological authority among Palestinians to make. Admittedly, in the end, only the Palestinians could decide whether a good agreement was good enough. But their rejection has come at considerable cost. Nevertheless, despite his generous distribution of blame, Ross flatly rejects the concept of “imposing” peace; such a fiat would simply be an exercise allowing the parties to avoid responsibility for the hard compromises necessary for permanent agreement.

There are indeed problems that belong in the “too hard” box. *Missing Peace* demonstrates that all parties to a dispute can make genuine compromises, go further than ever in seeking agreement, and still fail. And the lesson from failure isn’t always that one should try harder next time.

David T. Jones, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer and frequent contributor to the Journal, recently spent two years studying the Middle East peace process as part of the State Department’s Office of the Historian.

Poetry and Mayhem

Shiraz in the Age of Hafez: The Glory of a Medieval Persian City

John Limbert, University of Washington Press, 2004, \$22.50, paperback, 192 pages (including six photos).

REVIEWED BY FRANK CRAWFORD

Shiraz in the Age of Hafez: The Glory of a Medieval Persian City lives up to the promise both of its title and its subject. Ambassador John

BOOKS



Limbert, who served in Iran both as a Peace Corps Volunteer and an FSO in the 1970s (and was one of the diplomats held hostage there from 1979 to 1981), has evoked the life and history, both bloody and sublime, of Shiraz during the lifetime of the great Persian poet Hafez (ca. 1320-1389). Shiraz has been from time to time the capital of Iran, or at least the capital of several minor dynasties. It has survived as a lovely city, beloved of many Iranians, not least as the native city of Hafez, but also that of Sa'adi, another great Persian poet.

The people of Shiraz were lucky in that their city, located in southwest Iran, was far enough south to escape the direct onslaught of Mongol invaders in the 13th and 14th cen-

turies. Though subject to Mongol suzerainty, the wily Shirazis were sufficiently removed from the center of Mongol power in the north to enable them to pursue their endless quarrels, triumphs, and defeats more or less unfettered by Mongol meddling.

One of the more colorful rulers was Jamal al-Din Shah Sheikh Abu Eshaq, who commanded the city-state from 1343 to 1357. He appears to have been afflicted with what would today be called bipolar disorder. According to Hafez and the chroniclers the author relies on, Abu Eshaq was noted for his "intelligence, bravery, chivalry and generosity" and was devoted to art, literature and religious scholarship. At the same time, he foolishly provoked conflict with

neighboring magnates and sank repeatedly into depression and debauchery. He was succeeded by Amir Mohammad Mozaffer, strict in religion and confiscatory in practice, known as "The Inspector." Hafez wrote of him: "Drink not wine to the strains of the harp, for the inspector is awake."

Such personalities typify the dichotomy in the life of Shiraz in the 14th century. These quarrelsome people finally got their comeuppance when the conqueror Timur, having occupied Shiraz for the second time, arrested all the remaining princes and the city's artists, scholars and craftsmen. The princes he murdered and the others, clearly useful people, he sent on to his capital, Samarqand.

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How is it that a city of 60,000, beset by mayhem and vice, can be described as glorious? Limbert squares that circle nicely with a description of Shiraz as a bundle of contradictions: a violent, unstable place full of drunkards and “bloodthirsty hypocrites” but also a “tower of saints” where holy men prayed, fasted and nourished the poor, and an “abode of knowledge” where scholars studied Islam and where the arts, especially poetry, were generously encouraged.

It is the wonderful treasury of Persian poetry that means most to the modern reader. It is astounding that Hafez and others could produce a body of such ironic, skeptical, astringent and truthful work in the midst of such a chaotic century. The disparities

of the society and the longevity of a few stabilizing families no doubt generated a sort of tolerance and a seen-it-all attitude that made the achievement possible.

This book is based on extensive research in Persian sources. It is not what one would call an “easy read,” and, as the author points out, the Persian names and titles are as daunting as a Russian novel, if not more so. (He has helpfully provided a guide to Persian nomenclature.) Nevertheless, the effort pays off and the exposure to Persian poetry is a double dividend. The texts are in Persian with English translations. One memorable example comes from Sa’adi, Hafez’s compatriot, and serves as the author’s modest disclaimer of infallibility:

“If they take Jesus’ ass to Mecca,
When it returns it is still an ass.”

This book is dedicated to Terence O’Donnell. For those of us fortunate enough to have lived in Iran in the 1950s and 1960s and to have enjoyed Terry’s generous personality and his subtle understanding of Iran, as evidenced in his fine books, *Garden of the Brave in War* and *Seven Shades of Memory*, it was a delightful bonus to encounter his name again. ■

Franklin J. Crawford is a retired Foreign Service officer who served in Hong Kong, Turkey, Iran, Sri Lanka and Washington, D.C. As consul in Isfahan from 1957 to 1960, he was fortunate to have Shiraz in his consular district.

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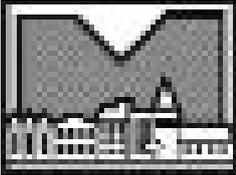
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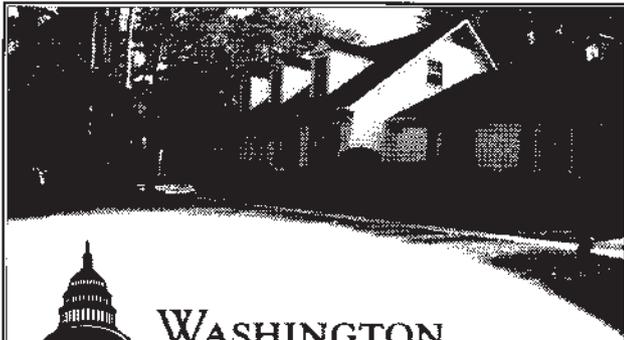
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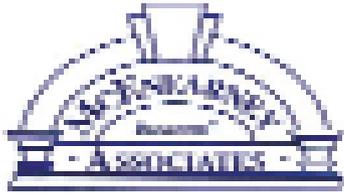


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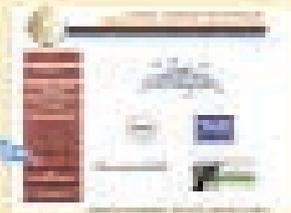
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REFLECTIONS

They Grow Up So Fast...

BY LULWA BORDCOSH

The subject was the difference between a verb and an adverb. As I stood in front of the classroom, writing examples on the blackboard, I was hit in the back of the head with a paper airplane. I turned to find two of my students wrestling on the ground, while the others were running around. To lose control over a classroom is not unusual for a new teacher. But this was not your ordinary classroom, and these were not your ordinary 8-year-olds.

I would set out a box of crayons and ask them to draw a picture. Instead of the typical house with a sun in the corner, they would draw a tank firing at a house. When asked to sing a song, it would not be “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” but a song about the orange groves in old Palestine. When I asked them to talk about their relatives, I would not hear about the trip to Disneyland with grandma and grandpa. Instead, I would hear how their grandparents were massacred in 1982. These children were different. They lived their entire lives in Shatila, the Palestinian refugee camp outside Beirut. They have known nothing but violence, destruction and conflict.

One day I walked to class with Mohammad. We passed the Shatila

Lulwa Bordcosh, a former intern at the Journal, currently attends the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she will earn her B.A. in global/international studies and professional writing in June 2005. The stamp is courtesy of the AAFSW Bookfair “Stamp Corner.”

*I felt ashamed that
America, with all its
wealth and power,
does so little for the
children of Shatila.*



Massacre memorial, countless Palestinian flags and nationalist murals. As I tried to maneuver around the puddles of sewage and bundles of trash, I realized that this is this boy’s life; these are the images he sees every day. As refugees, with no passports, with no nationality and because of the stigma associated with being Palestinian, these children will probably grow up to become vegetable vendors or taxi drivers. I was upset to realize that Mohammad, who dreams of becoming a doctor, will have his potential wasted. I asked him what he would be if he did not become a doctor. With a big smile he shrugged his shoulders and responded cheerfully, “a taxi driver.”

Before class, I would hand out treats to the children and listen to them talk. One day, with juice boxes in hand and straws drawn at each other, I found two of my students arguing over British foreign policy.

“I would never want to go to Britain,” 8-year-old Jihad said. “The British are colonizers. They not only colonized our land, but they colonized Egypt and Iraq too.”

With a mouth full of cookie crumbs Mohammad replied, “No, Jihad, there is a difference between the past Britain and the new Britain. The past Britain were colonizers, but the new Britain, you see, they are not. You can’t call it all one thing.”

I was amazed how aware these children were not only of their own political situation, but that of the rest of the world. They would ask me why Americans love Israel and hate them. One day, 6-year-old Mira asked, “Aren’t we as cute as the Israeli children?” I realized Mira and her friends will most likely spend their entire lives in the refugee camp, seeing their children and grandchildren struggle with the same issues of violence, poverty and discrimination.

These Palestinian children made me realize that an innocent childhood is not universal. My experience at the refugee camp this past summer made me both proud and ashamed. I was proud that I was lucky enough to grow up in America, in a free and politically stable country, where I had a care-free childhood with Crayola coloring books and Care Bear cartoons. As a child, I had no idea what Reaganomics was, why curtains were made of iron, or why wars were cold.

Perhaps if we did more to ensure every child around the world had a childhood of innocence, a new generation of peaceful youth would arise for whom war is not a reality, but something to read about in a history book. ■

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Time is running out to send in your nominations for AFSA's 2005 Constructive Dissent and Exemplary Performance Awards. We need your help to carry on our proud tradition of recognizing and rewarding Foreign Service employees who are willing to challenge the system from within and take a stand for what they believe. AFSA is the only organization representing federal employees to actively encourage and publicly honor those who are the "risk-takers" and "shin-kickers" in our midst. As AFSA President John Limbert was

quoted in an Associated Press article on last year's awards ceremony, "We honor dissent and we honor our colleagues' right to dissent."

Information on submitting a nomination was detailed in the December 2004 *AFSA News* and is also posted on the AFSA Web site at www.afsa.org/awards, along with a nomination form. Send questions to Barbara Berger, Coordinator for Professional Issues, at berger@afsa.org.

Please take the time to send in your nomination now. **The deadline is Feb. 25.** □

FOCUS ON GRIEVANCES

USAID Refuses to Comply with FSGB Decisions

In two recent grievance cases, USAID has refused to implement the decisions of the Foreign Service Grievance Board. AFSA is urging that USAID take immediate action to implement both decisions.

The Foreign Service Grievance System exists to provide a measure of justice and

due process to Foreign Service employees: that's why Congress mandated it in the Foreign Service Act of 1980. The rules of the game and the law are clear: a Grievance Board decision is binding on the parties unless or until a judicial appeal overturns it, and both parties — agencies

Continued on page 6



Foreign Affairs Council Gives Secretary Powell High Marks

See page 4 for full story



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IRAQ SERVICE AND PROMOTIONS

When Appreciation Crosses the Line

AFSA reacted strongly against the message sent worldwide by the department repeating a congratulatory statement from Ambassador John Negroponte to employees of Embassy Baghdad on their high rate of promotions. AFSA has no objection to an ambassador expressing pride in the accomplishments of those who have served or are serving at his mission. What AFSA does object to is implying or stating that those who serve in a particular post will be rewarded with promotions.

The bluntly-worded AFSANET sent out by AFSA State Vice President Louise Crane on the topic generated a strong response from the field: over 200 responses, all but a few of them supporting the AFSA position. The responses came in from Foreign Service employees from all ranks, including officers who have served in Baghdad and have since been promoted. As AFSA President John Limbert explains, any implication that service in Iraq gives employees a leg up on promo-

Continued on page 7

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



Don't Miss the AFSA Scholarship Application Deadline

The deadline for AFSA Scholarship applications is Feb. 6, for all Foreign Service employees whose children want to apply for free money for college. High school seniors can apply for the one-time-only academic or art merit awards. We also offer need-based financial aid scholarships for undergraduate college study. Awards range from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Go to www.afsa.org/scholar/index.cfm for all the details, or contact Lori Dec at dec@afsa.org or 1 (800) 704-2372, ext. 504.



Tilting at Windmills: A USAA Update

Bearing 302 proxies from AFSA members, AFSA Governing Board member Ted Wilkinson represented AFSA at the annual USAA meeting in Chicago on Nov. 13. Not surprisingly, 302 votes did not change any outcome — key votes were adopted with majorities of about 100,000 — but the fact that so many AFSA members took the trouble to send proxies helped ensure that our voice was heard. In particular, General Counsel Steven Bennett, despite being responsible for the organization and conduct of the annual meeting, gave an hour to go over AFSA's case with Wilkinson.

Bennett repeated arguments that we have heard often before: that USAA is trying to limit its membership clearly so as to keep a defined "niche" in the market, and had reached a policy decision that as of 2002, new applications from FAS, FCS and USAID Foreign Service employees would not be accepted, and Foreign Service personnel "within the four corners of the State Department" who apply would qualify as "associate members." (see p. 8). Wilkinson emphasized that the clearest criterion for limiting future USAA membership would be to include only personnel under the Foreign Service Act, which would overturn the arbitrary exclusion of FAS, FCS and USAID.

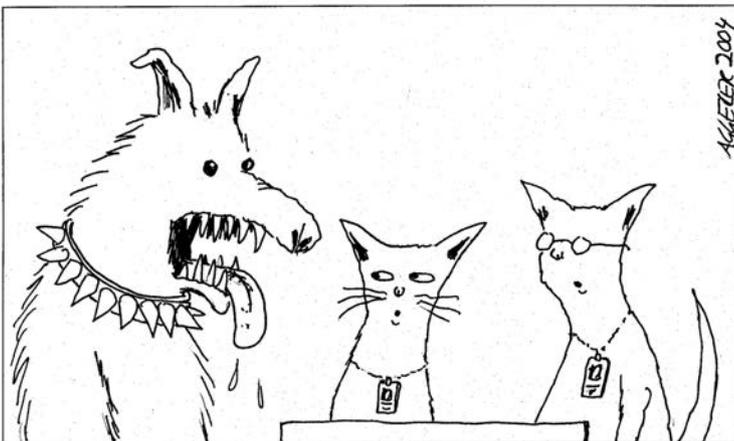
Bennett undertook to review the issue once more and get back to us early next year, although he made no promises about the outcome of the review. Wilkinson also had a chance to talk with several USAA Board members, who expressed interest in the issue, promised to talk to Bennett about the review, and were surprised that any insurance company would be turning away valuable clients.

Stay tuned . . .

Briefs • Continued on page 7

Life in the Foreign Service

■ BY BRIAN AGGELER, FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER



"To make the change to new management as smooth as possible, you'll need to work closely with Shep here from the transition team."

How to Contact Us:

AFSA HEADQUARTERS:
(202) 338-4045; Fax: (202) 338-6820
STATE DEPARTMENT AFSA OFFICE:
(202) 647-8160; Fax: (202) 647-0265
USAID AFSA OFFICE:
(202) 712-1941; Fax: (202) 216-3710
FCS AFSA OFFICE:
(202) 482-9088; Fax: (202) 482-9087

AFSA WEB SITE: www.afsa.org
AFSA E-MAIL: afsa@afsa.org
AFSA NEWS: afsanews@afsa.org
FSJ: journal@afsa.org
PRESIDENT: limbert@afsa.org
STATE VP: cranek@state.gov
RETIREE VP: jones@afsa.org
USAID VP: warter@usaid.gov
FCS VP: charles.ford@mail.doc.gov
FAS VP: Laura.Scandurra@usda.gov

AFSA News
Editor Shawn Dorman: dorman@afsa.org
(202) 338-4045 x 503; Fax: (202) 338-8244
On the Web: www.afsa.org/news

Staff:
Executive Director Susan Reardon: reardon@afsa.org
Business Department
Controller Kalpna Simal: simal@afsa.org
Accounting Assistant Steven Tipton: tipton@afsa.org
Labor Management
General Counsel Sharon Papp: papps@state.gov
Labor Management Attorney Zlatana Badrich: badrichz@state.gov
Labor Management Specialist James Yorke: yorkej@state.gov
USAID Senior Labor Management Advisor Douglas Broome: dbroome@usaid.gov
USAID Office Manager Asger Sigfusson: asigfusson@usaid.gov
Grievance Attorneys Neera Parikh: parikhna@state.gov
Joe Slotnick: slotnick@state.gov
Office Manager Christine Warren: warrenc@state.gov
Law Clerk Marques Peterson: petersonmo@state.gov
Member Services
Director Janet Hedrick: hedrick@afsa.org
Representative Cory Nishi: nishi@afsa.org
Web site & Database Associate Meijing Shan: shan@afsa.org
Administrative Assistant Ana Lopez: lopez@afsa.org
Outreach Programs
Retiree Liaison Bonnie Brown: brown@afsa.org
Director of Communications Thomas Switzer: switzer@afsa.org
Congressional Affairs Director Ken Nakamura: nakamura@afsa.org
Corporate Relations/Executive Assistant Austin Tracy: tracy@afsa.org
Scholarship Director Lori Dec: dec@afsa.org
Professional Issues Coordinator Barbara Berger: berger@afsa.org

Governing Board:

PRESIDENT: John W. Limbert
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Filling the Gaps

A longstanding practice at the State Department has been to account for any period of leave without pay with a “gap memo” in an employee’s official performance file. Since there are several reasons why you might be missing an Employee Evaluation Report in your OPF, the gap memo has always been deliberately non-informative. Whether you

The inclusion of military evaluations is entirely optional.

were sick, had an EER removed as a result of a grievance, took LWOP to finish your master’s degree, or were called up to fight for your country, the gap memo merely stated that no EER was available for the period in question.

The gap memo obviously did military reservists a great disservice, quite apart from the fact that the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act explicitly states that a federal employee may not be disadvantaged in his or her career by an absence from the normal place of work while called to active duty in the reserves. This is particularly important today with so many people being called up to serve in harm’s way.

As a result of concern expressed to management by AFSA, Human Resources has now agreed that the gap memo for military reservists will state that the individual was absent on active military duty. Furthermore, those who request it may have their military evaluations included in their OPFs. The inclusion of military evaluations is entirely optional, because we understand that not everyone will want, or in some cases, be able to have their military evaluations included in their OPFs. If you do, make sure to send copies to HR/PE. If you have any questions about this issue, please contact James Yorke by e-mail: yorkej@state.gov. □

How are FS Women at State Faring?

There are some perennial concerns among members of the Foreign Service. One is the status of women in the Service. It’s a subject of interest to me, because when I joined, women were required to resign upon marriage. That rule was struck down by a court in 1972. I often brag that I was the first Foreign Service career woman to give “legitimate” birth while on active duty, having married shortly after the rule was voided. I also became the first female FS employee to receive training in a two-year language — Japanese. So, when an AFSA member wrote to me stating that “recent promotions show that only a quarter of those promoted into and within the Senior Service are women,” I was intrigued and decided to check the facts.



Well, the statement is true. However, it’s meaningless. The more relevant question is: are women being promoted into and within the Senior Foreign Service at the same rate as men? And the answer is yes, almost always, for the past three years. Here are some illustrative statistics:

| PROMOTIONS OVER THE THRESHOLD, FROM FS-01 TO FE-0C | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Year | Total # at Grade | Total # Promoted | FS-1s, M | FS-1s, F | FS-1 (M) Promoted | FS-1 (F) Promoted |
| 2002 | 1,120 | 92 | 810 (72%) | 310 (28%) | 67 (73%) | 25 (27%) |
| 2003 | 1,135 | 87 | 813 (72%) | 322 (28%) | 64 (74%) | 23 (26%) |
| 2004 | 1,172 | 95 | 833 (71%) | 339 (29%) | 70 (74%) | 25 (26%) |

| PROMOTIONS WITHIN THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, FROM FE-0C TO FE-MC | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Year | Total # FE-OC | Total # Promoted | FE-OCs, M | FE-OCs, F | FE-OC (M) Promoted | FE-OC (F) Promoted |
| 2002 | 460 | 55 | 332 (72%) | 128 (28%) | 45 (82%) | 10 (18%) |
| 2003 | 456 | 51 | 319 (70%) | 137 (30%) | 29 (57%) | 22 (43%) |
| 2004 | 468 | 49 | 336 (72%) | 132 (28%) | 37 (76%) | 12 (24%) |

Generally, if women make up 25 percent of the class, they receive 25 percent of the promotions. With the exception of the 2002 and 2003 OC category, women are receiving a commensurate share of the promotions. Although women were underrepresented in the MC promotion category in 2002, they were overrepresented in 2003. Economists might call this a “market” correction.

The same member asserted that women do not get the same “cushy” posts as men when they are nominated for chief of mission positions, so I checked.

Of the 148 ambassadors listed, we found that 99 are members of the career Foreign Service. (While consistent with the historical average, AFSA’s historical and current position is that a much higher percentage of chiefs of mission should come from the career service.) Of the 99 ambassadors who are career FS, only 23 are female. One of them is from the Foreign Agricultural Service, so that leaves 22 percent who are State Department women. Assuming that chiefs of mission are drawn from the ranks of OCs and MCs, as of Aug. 31, 2004, there were 853 at the OC and MC levels, of whom 222 (or 26 percent) were women. So, women are underrepresented in the ranks of chiefs of missions drawn from the career service at State.

AFSA did not try to make any subjective evaluation of the relative importance of the countries in which we have female ambassadors. The 23 career female COMs are assigned to: Albania, Angola, Burma, Republic of the Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Laos, Lesotho, Madagascar, Micronesia, Moldova, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Niger, Pakistan, Panama, Suriname, Syria and Turkmenistan. The reader can draw his or her own conclusions as to whether or not women are relegated to the less cushy posts. □

The Importance of Being Honest



It is difficult to write the typical January column, full of new hope and optimism for FCS, in a November when the multiple frustrations and false hopes of 2004 are still fresh, and cynicism abounds. This New Year's wish for leadership and professional competence, combined with a new sense of mission, is a sincere one. It is also attainable, given the talent of our new management team and a revamped and expanded Office of Foreign Service Human Resources that should be fully operational early in 2005. But it will be necessary to overcome the incompetence and drift that has stalled progress on a shared agenda to date.

Let's start with the basics: personnel and payroll. It is hard to engage on other issues when weekly and monthly meetings fail to solve simple things like determining base-pay levels or answering fundamental personnel policy questions. I can't tell you how depressing it is to see so much valuable time wasted trying to obtain answers to key questions

that have an important financial or career impact. These are often answers that should be findable on the Intranet Web site and require no staff time at all.

This year's Senior Selection Board was charged with making recommendations for adjusting the pay of individual members of the Senior Foreign Service, yet despite repeat-

There is integrity in the system: what is lacking are transparency and openness and enough training and information.

ed attempts, they could find no approved guidance from the Commerce Department as to how they should make those decisions. We likely will spend most of the first half of 2005 arguing over pay levels and how to adjust them. There has to be a better way!

In the realm of recruitment, performance management and selection boards, I see nothing to create a sense of hope. In an era of flat-lined budgets, significant retirement of a whole generation of officers, rising costs overseas and ever-increasing security concerns, I have found no strategic vision for the way forward in recruiting, assignments or allocation of overseas staff. There is still no genuine career development but rather a mechanistic process to fill the slots, which is, at least, more transparent than it used to be.

We were successful in putting in place a new performance management system, yet widespread misunderstanding and mistrust remain among members as to how the process works, as well as strong suspicion that it is manipulated by a few insiders who take care of their own. I can tell you that this cynicism is misplaced, as I have watched the selection board process closely, having served both on boards and in management. There is integrity in the system: what is lacking are transparency and openness and enough training and information, as well as an honest discussion of whether officers should rate and judge fellow officers in an agency this small.

We have known most of this for a long time, so we can only hope that 2005 becomes the year of action. In the end, we need the leadership and the vision that will allow us to renew ourselves, fix longstanding structural problems and rise above the cynicism and drift that are only serving to hold us back. □

ASSESSING SECRETARY POWELL'S STATE DEPARTMENT

Foreign Affairs Council Gives Powell High Marks

BY DAVID CODDEN

At an AFSA-sponsored press conference on Nov. 22, the Foreign Affairs Council, an umbrella group of 10 organizations — including AFSA, the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide — discussed its new report: "Secretary Colin Powell's State Department: An Independent Assessment."

The FAC is concerned with "process-management of U.S. policy and the people involved therein." In this domain, Secretary Powell received high marks. Ambassador Thomas Boyatt, FAC's founder and president, praised Powell's "extraordinary performance," noting that under Powell's leadership 30 percent of the personnel and resources lost during the budget-cutting of the 1990s have been recovered.

The report looks at the achievements made by Secretary Powell and his management team, and calls Powell "an exemplary CEO." The report cites achievements in two crucial areas: strengthening the leadership culture at State and remedying management flaws. Employee morale, which had been dangerously low, is now robust, and the old tensions between the Foreign Service and the Civil Service have subsided, under the mantra "one mission, one team." Moreover, staffing has improved under the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative, and IT has finally caught up with the 21st century. State's hardware is now on a four-year replacement cycle, and it is beta-testing the State Messaging and Archival Retrieval Tool (SMART), which will replace the antiquated telegram system. The report also credits Powell with improving State Department relations with Congress, "critical for obtaining resources for his management objectives;"

reshaping consular operations to deal with the post-9/11 environment; and revitalizing public diplomacy.

The FAC does not comment on foreign policy. Its focus is on the managerial aspects of the State Department, which serves as a reminder that the Secretary of State, in addition to representing U.S. interests abroad, is also the CEO of an organization, in charge of its day-to-day management. Boyatt calls Secretary Powell the “best leader and manager” he’s encountered in his long career in the Foreign Service. The challenge now, he says, is institutionalizing the changes Powell has made, so that they are in place regardless of who is Secretary of State.

While citing many accomplishments during Powell’s tenure, the report also looks forward at areas that are still vulnerable.

While citing many accomplishments during Powell’s tenure, the report also looks forward at areas that, while improved, are still vulnerable, and need continuing attention, including: maintaining a partnership with Congress, which Powell was particularly effective at doing; integrating public diplomacy into the policy process and expanding public affairs efforts; and continuing to improve diplomatic readiness as needs grow.

The event and the report received wide media coverage, including a story in *Government Executive*. Agence France-Presse reporter Matthew Lee wrote that, “Outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell won high praise on Monday from a team of foreign policy experts for overseeing a radical improvement in working conditions and morale at what they said had been a ‘broken’ State Department.” Stephen Barr highlighted the report, and Amb. Boyatt’s comments, in his Nov. 28 Federal Diary in the *Washington Post*.

AFSA recommends that members read the full FAC report. A link to the report can be found on the AFSA home page at www.afsa.org. □

V.P. VOICE: RETIREE ■ BY GEORGE F. JONES

In the Alphabet Soup

Last fall, AFSA Congressional Liaison Ken Nakamura gave the AFSA Governing Board a chart showing the status of legislation in Congress that was of interest to AFSA and the Foreign Service. On one side was a list of bills “still in play,” those that could possibly be passed before the end of the 108th Congress. The other side was headed, “Snowball’s chance in ...” Under that heading, I regret to say, were all the items of interest to retirees: health premium conversion to pre-tax status, the guarantee that health benefits will be maintained equal to those of active duty personnel, the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision. AFSA will ensure that all of these issues are on the agenda of the new Congress taking office in January, and will work hard for them. However, all of them cost the government money, and as concern grows on both sides of the aisle over the ballooning deficit, it’s hard to be optimistic.

Because I know that they are of interest to many retirees, I want to say a word about the WEP and the GPO. The Windfall Elimination Provision reduces the Social Security benefit for government annuitants by as much as

60 percent, based on the individual annuitant’s work record. The WEP applies to anyone born on or after Jan. 1, 1924, who was not eligible to retire (regardless of when they actually retired) prior to Jan. 1, 1986. According to the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, with whom AFSA works closely on retiree issues in Congress, about 635,000 former federal employees are affected by the WEP, and the number is growing by 60,000 every year. WEP was enacted in 1983 as part of legislation designed to shore up the financing of Social Security. As all of our retirees know, concern over how to fund Social Security remains a major issue today.

The Government Pension Offset prevents retirees from receiving both an annuity based on the old retirement system (FSRDS) and a Social Security benefit based on a spouse’s work record. If two-thirds of the retiree’s annuity exceeds the Social Security benefit, the benefit is not payable. It does not apply to annuities (or portions of annuities) based on the new “FERS” retirement system, nor to anyone who was eligible to retire (regardless of whether they did retire) before Dec. 1, 1982.

Bills to repeal or modify these reductions in Social Security benefits have been introduced in Congress numerous times over the past 10 years, but none have made it out of committee. Although bills that would totally repeal both measures were before the last Congress and will undoubtedly be before the new one, efforts in recent years have concentrated on legislation to limit the reduction in benefits. If your representative is a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, and especially if he or she is on the Social Security Subcommittee of Ways and Means, let him or her know your views and explain how you personally are affected by these provisions. This is by far the most effective action you can take.

We would also welcome a contribution to AFSA’s Legislative Action Fund, which supports our efforts on the Hill on these and many other issues affecting both the active-duty and retired Foreign Service. □



As all of our retirees know, concern over how to fund Social Security remains a major issue today.

as well as employees — have the right to appeal to federal court if they do not like the decision. But what happens when an agency refuses to either implement a Grievance Board ruling or go to court? That is never supposed to happen, but USAID has now done it twice. Only once before in the history of the Grievance Board has an agency refused to implement its decision. Both the federal district court and the federal appeals court then ruled sharply against the agency's refusal and in favor of the board and the grievant.

In one of the ongoing USAID cases, the Grievance Board ordered the reinstatement of an untenured employee after he had been improperly "selected out." USAID sought reconsideration from the Grievance Board, and the board reconfirmed and amplified its original decision. USAID still refused to reinstate the employee, contending that its interpretation of the law trumped that of the Grievance Board. For that to become valid, the proper procedure for USAID to follow would have been to appeal the decision in court, but USAID refused to do that. Instead, USAID did nothing and waited to see what AFSA and the grievant would do. Eventually, as the time allowed for appealing the original decision was about to run out, the grievant had to ask the court to order USAID to do what the Grievance Board already told it to do: reinstate him. As of Dec. 1, the court had not yet ruled.

In the second case, the Grievance Board again ordered USAID to reinstate an untenured employee who had also been improperly "selected out." Reinstating her immediately or get a stay from a federal court, the Grievance Board ordered: "[USAID] remains obligated to reinstate grievant immediately, as no stay has been issued by the District Court." Simple, clear, straightforward. But again considering its own judgment superior to the Grievance Board's, USAID has refused to take either action. And it has not, as of Dec. 1, appealed the case to court. In both cases AFSA successfully represented the

employee before the Grievance Board.

AFSA President John Limbert wrote a letter to the chairman of the Foreign Service Grievance Board, Edward Reidy,

"I am alarmed at the U.S. Agency for International Development's disregard for the authority of the Foreign Service Grievance Board.

Let me call this action what it is: stonewalling ... "

—John Limbert

noting that the agency is ignoring the board's decisions and asking the board to act quickly to assert its authority:

"I am alarmed at the U.S. Agency for International Development's disregard for the authority of the Foreign Service Grievance Board. USAID's refusal to abide by the Grievance Board's final decisions and orders undermines the integrity of the Grievance System and is of great concern to AFSA. Let me call this action what it is: stonewalling of the Grievance Board by USAID. ...

"Pursuant to the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (FSA), Congress greatly strengthened the institution of the Grievance Board and expanded its role. The Board, the agencies, AFSA, and Foreign Service employees have all come to understand and accept a set of operating rules and modalities. In short, everyone has accepted the rules of the game. Certain landmark court decisions and an amendment to the FSA have clearly defined the authority of the Grievance Board with respect to the agencies. Central to the functioning of the Grievance System is the agencies' obligation either to act on the Board's decisions and orders or to appeal to court. ...

"The agencies' actions represent institutional defiance and overt rejection of the Board's authority. USAID has apparently decided to challenge the Grievance System and the role of the Grievance

Board. As far as we can tell, USAID officials have ignored the Board in these two cases because of their view that the Grievance Board has no enforcement authority. In short, these officials seem to believe they face no risk by their behavior." (The full text of the letter is at www.afsa.org/LettertoFSGriev.cfm)

The Nov. 9 response from Chairman Reidy noted that the matter "has been, and continues to be, one of grave concern to the Foreign Service Grievance Board. ... Be assured that this most significant matter is among the issues that the Board has, even today, under consideration and study. No final consensus on the resolution of this troublesome circumstance has yet been reached." The phrase "grave concern" is a strong one that is seldom used in Grievance Board writings.

It is not a question of whether an agency should be able to get rid of poor performers. AFSA does not object to that. The Grievance Board found that, substantively and procedurally, USAID's selection out of these two employees was fatally flawed. USAID had argued its position vigorously but lost on the merits. This is an extraordinarily rare finding. Almost all untenured employees lose their Grievance Board appeals against selection out and denial of tenure.

It is not only the fate of these two employees that is at stake, but the integrity of the entire grievance system. AFSA argued and won both of these grievance cases for the USAID employees, and AFSA will continue to push for implementation of the Grievance Board decision in both cases. □

New Banking Option

Citibank has announced the creation of a specialized unit devoted exclusively "to designing and implementing personal banking solutions for international corporations and organizations such as the U.S. State Department." Find out more at www.citibank.com/pboe. □

tions cheapens those very promotions.

Following are excerpts from the Nov. 15 AFSANET (the full text is at www.afsa.org/StateVP):

“This week, the department sent out an ALDAC, which, because this is a family newspaper, AFSA will describe as ‘unfortunate.’ State 239051 contains a message from John D. Negroponte, the U.S. ambassador in Baghdad. Ambassador Negroponte notes that the Secretary had earlier written (State 207935) that he expected that the promotion lists would reflect strong consideration given to service in places like Iraq. Amb. Negroponte now notes that over 50 employees who either served or are serving in Iraq were promoted, including seven who crossed the senior threshold.

“Had AFSA been asked, we would not have cleared this cable. Earlier, AFSA remonstrated in private with management over those sentiments uttered by the Secretary when he wrote in State 207935: ‘I am fully confident that service at our posts in Iraq will be recognized in both the promotion and assignments process.’ Now we are raising our objections publicly.

“The earlier cable and this one imply that service in Iraq gives one a substantial boost up the promotion ladder. They categorically state that service in Iraq will reward you with your bid preference. These cables are advertising, overselling Iraq service and making promises that cannot be kept, in the hope members will be enticed into bidding on positions in Iraq because of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

“The problem with this advertising is that it corrupts the Foreign Service. It devalues the substantive work you do elsewhere. It demeans the service and sacrifice of our members in places like Haiti, where families have suffered through two authorized/ordered departures in less than a year. ...

“AFSA has not only heard from those serving under rigorous conditions, but also from one of those with Iraq service

who was promoted this year. He wrote that Amb. Negroponte’s cable implies that it was going to Baghdad that earned them the promotions, that there is a relationship between serving in Iraq and getting promoted. Meanwhile, one CDO sent Amb. Negroponte’s cable out to all his clients with this note: ‘For those of you bidding or hearing from people who wish to serve at your posts, be advised that preference is given to those who have served as outlined (in the cable).’ Sounds like management has already made this an SOP. Well, AFSA looks forward to the next negotiations, but we have not waited to lodge our strenuous protest with management on behalf of our members.

“Now, here is where AFSA stands on this issue. Promotions must be based on your performance, not your assignment. ... There are many reasons why members of the Foreign Service are not in Baghdad. ... As for hardship service, we all signed on as worldwide available and over half our overseas posts are classified at the 15-percent hardship level and higher. Hardship service is part and parcel of being in the Foreign Service which is why AFSA supports rigorous ‘fair share.’ As for promotions, the precepts are clear: we recognize service under difficult and dangerous conditions. No more and no less.

“Finally, if you want to bid on a position in Iraq, fair enough. But please do so with your eyes open and do not be deceived by false advertising. To quote from the message to AFSA from the member who was promoted. ‘We need the best people in places like Iraq, Afghanistan and the other hot spots because that’s where the most critical work is — not because of easy promotions.’”

Supporting the VP’s statement, AFSA President John Limbert said in his own message to members:

“... As someone who did two TDYs in Iraq during the past 18 months, I find the implicit message of the cable (State 239051) — that service in Iraq will give you a boost for promotion and assign-

ment — disappointing. I never met anyone serving in Iraq who had been tempted by such false promises. We serve in Iraq for many reasons, including career advancement, but the department should not be presenting such assignments as something that will lead to promotions and desired assignments. *All* of our colleagues who received promotions did so on the basis of outstanding performance, often under difficult and dangerous conditions, not as part of any ‘deal’ or quid pro quo. To suggest or hint otherwise is false advertising.” □

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

Continued from page 2

Support the LAF

As we head into the 109th Congress, please consider making a contribution to AFSA’s Legislative Action Fund. AFSA is the only organization actively seeking to protect and improve Foreign Service benefits. Please mail your contribution to AFSA Legislative Action Fund, PO Box 98026, Washington, DC 20090-8026. (Make checks payable to AFSA Legislative Action Fund.) Please help AFSA push Foreign Service priorities on the Hill by giving generously to the LAF.

Served in Afghanistan?

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, at the request of the U.S. Institute for Peace, is interviewing personnel who have served in Afghanistan on Provincial Reconstruction Teams, or who otherwise have experience with the teams. The goal of the current project is to glean lessons learned from U.S. government personnel (civilian and military) and others, such as foreign officials and NGO representatives.

If you would consider being interviewed, or if you know someone who would be a good candidate for an interview, please contact ADST Executive Director Jack Zetkolic at (703) 302-6991 or jzetkolic@adst.org.

Continued on page 8

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS



Continued from page 7

USAA Membership Clarification

AFSA recently made a call to USAA to clarify the category of membership that USAA bestows upon new members who are U.S. Foreign Service employees. The USAA Board of Directors decided on Oct. 27, 2002, that U.S. Foreign Service personnel did not meet its eligibility requirements for full membership.

All Foreign Service employees who sign up for USAA are now issued policies through the USAA Casualty Insurance Company. The CIC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of USAA, with policyholders rather than members. Therefore, CIC policyholders are considered "associate members."

Unlike regular USAA members, associate members do not own any part of USAA, do not receive dividends, do

not qualify for the Subscriber Savings Account and cannot attend or vote on issues at USAA's annual membership meetings. However, CIC policyholders are eligible for all USAA financial products and are serviced by the same staff as USAA members.

In addition to Foreign Service personnel, the CIC is made up of former dependents of USAA members, military enlisted personnel, and prior USAA employees. If you would like more information regarding your status as a USAA member and the company's eligibility requirements, please call USAA Member Relations at 1 (800) 633-0942. Remember to have your USAA member number or Social Security number handy.

2005 AFSA Dues Rates

AFSA membership dues have been raised according to the AFSA bylaws by 2.7 percent across all membership categories. This increase reflects the 3rd-quarter Consumer Price Index published on Oct. 19, 2004, by the Department of Labor, and used by the Social Security Administration to calculate the 2005 Cost of Living Adjustment increases.

The new dues rates will take effect on Jan. 1, 2005. Members paying dues via payroll deduction and annuity deduction will see a small, automatic increase in the amount deducted from their paychecks and annuities. Members who pay annually will be billed the new rate on their regularly scheduled renewal date. Membership dues account for approximately 75 percent of AFSA's total income. This revenue provides the association with a stable and predictable income source, which allows AFSA to continue offering excellent member services and benefits.

The lists below indicate the new dues rates for 2005.

Active

| CATEGORY | NEW ANNUAL | NEW BIWEEKLY |
|------------|------------|--------------|
| FS 7, 8, 9 | \$75.20 | \$2.90 |
| FS 6, 5, 4 | \$142.20 | \$5.45 |
| FS 1, 2, 3 | \$248.50 | \$9.55 |
| SFS | \$321.40 | \$12.35 |

Retiree

| CATEGORY | NEW ANNUAL | NEW MONTHLY |
|----------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Annuity under \$25,000 | \$57.90 | \$4.85 |
| Annuity of \$25,000-50,000 | \$86.70 | \$7.20 |
| Annuity of \$50,000-75,000 | \$115.85 | \$9.65 |
| Annuity over \$75,000 | \$145.00 | \$12.05 |
| Retiree Spouse | \$50.00 | \$4.15 |
| Retiree Associate | \$54.55 | NA |

Associate

| ASSOCIATE | NEW ANNUAL | |
|-----------|------------|---------|
| | | \$89.15 |

MEMO OF THE MONTH:

From a Snowy Eastern European Post

To: All Embassy Employees
From: ADM

Embassy employees are expected to attempt to show up for work, even in inclement weather. If driving your personal vehicles is impractical, public transportation should be used. Should public transportation be irregular or unavailable, walking to work should be considered if practical.

Employees should contact their supervisors if they will be late for work due to the weather; a liberal leave policy will be in effect if there are significant disruptions to public transportation.

Employees must submit leave slips for all late arrivals and early departures from work due to weather conditions. Please remember that all leave must be approved in advance.

NOTE: According to our sources, this memo, fondly referred to at the post as the "march or die" memo, was issued after a major snowstorm resulted in absences from work. The issuing officer lived across the street from the embassy.

Q&A

Residential Furniture at Post

BY DONNA HERRIOTT

Team Leader, A/LM/AQM/ IT Commerce

Editor's Note: Due to popular demand, and based on postings on the Livelines discussion group, Donna Herriott from the Acquisitions Management Office offers information on the residential furniture management system and upcoming "recompete" of the contract. She has kindly offered to answer further questions by e-mail: herriottdj@state.gov. Livelines is sponsored by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, and serves as a forum for members of the Foreign Service community to ask questions and share advice and experiences relating to Foreign Service life. Sign up at www.aafsw.org.

Q: What office is in charge of the residential furniture contract and how is the contract awarded?

A: The residential furniture contract is awarded by the General Services Administration. The State Department's Office of Acquisitions Management (A/LM/AQM) is responsible for the residential furniture contract. A/LM/AQM places orders against the contract to fill post requirements. The current contract with Drexel runs through Sept. 30, 2005. A/LM/AQM, along with the Office of Interior Furnishings in the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and many of the regional post management officers, has been working with GSA to structure the recompete of the new contract. Earlier this year, A/LM/AQM surveyed PMOs from each regional bureau, the Family Liaison Office and International Cooperative Administrative Support Services, to assist us in selecting updated lines and styles to be solicited under the contract recompete

program. We were fortunate to obtain data from the survey on opinions about the current available furniture lines, and have used that information in composing the technical requirements for the recompete contract.

Q: What criteria are used to select furniture, lamps and carpeting for posts?

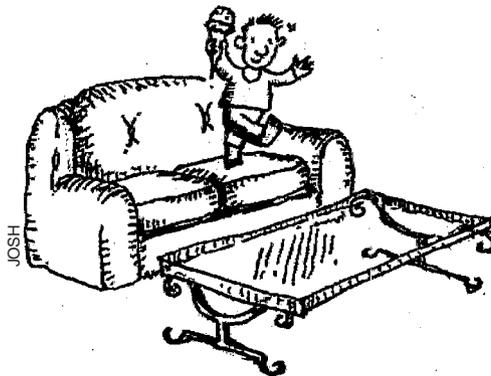
A: The criteria for selection of residential furniture lines under the recompete contract are based on comments received from a broad survey, feedback received from general services officers attending the Foreign Service Institute's GSO course and comments received from GSOs via cable and/or e-mail. All furniture made available under the contract meets all U.S. safety standards. Individual posts are responsible for making the actual selection of residential furniture off the contract for their respective post.

Q: How are companies (like Drexel) awarded contracts?

A: After all the technical requirements have been determined, a competitive solicitation is issued by GSA. Interested contractors submit proposals and bid samples for evaluation by a technical team comprised of State Department and GSA staff. The proposals and samples are evaluated against pre-determined criteria as defined in the solicitation. The award is made to the contractor that best meets the criteria.

Q: Where can I send my suggestions on furnishing (style, color, construction)?

A: Suggestions/comments can be sent to me at herriottdj@state.gov. I will be sure to share them with the technical team working on the recompete contract.



Q: What can we do about pieces of furniture that are not child-friendly, such as glass-top tables and breakable lamps?

A: The current residential furniture contract offers a variety of tables through the different lines without glass tops as well as a variety of lamps.

Q: Will we ever get less outdated styles of furniture and more appealing chair and sofa upholstery?

A: The new contract will offer four lines of updated furniture. A/LM/AQM has worked with Drexel to add new items to the current contract for replacement of discontinued designer items. The new items will be in the FY 2005 pricing/catalog listed under designer items and are a nice alternative to the current contemporary line (i.e., no white finishes). The new contract will offer five fabric selections instead of the current four, as well as updated color and pattern selections of upholstery.

Q: I don't want to pay to repair a piece of furniture that should be disposed of due to age. What are the rules on this?

A: The lifespan of the furniture is governed by factors at each individual post. Some of the factors that dictate the life span are: 1) conditions at post, such as humidity, tropical climates, hot and dry climates, local air pollution and terrain; 2) rotation cycle of staff; and 3) accompanied vs. non-accompanied posts, household pets, etc.

Q: Who decides when a piece of furniture is at the end of its lifespan?

A: What happens at the end of the life span of the residential furniture at any given post is usually determined in accordance with individual post policy. If the post determines that the furniture was damaged prematurely (i.e. not due to normal wear and tear), it may require the employee to pay for restoration. Conversely, if the post plans to replace some or all of the furniture upon departure of the employee, the employee may not be required to clean or refurbish the furniture. My suggestion is that when you check into post quarters, you should discuss these particulars with the GSO and/or the management officer. □

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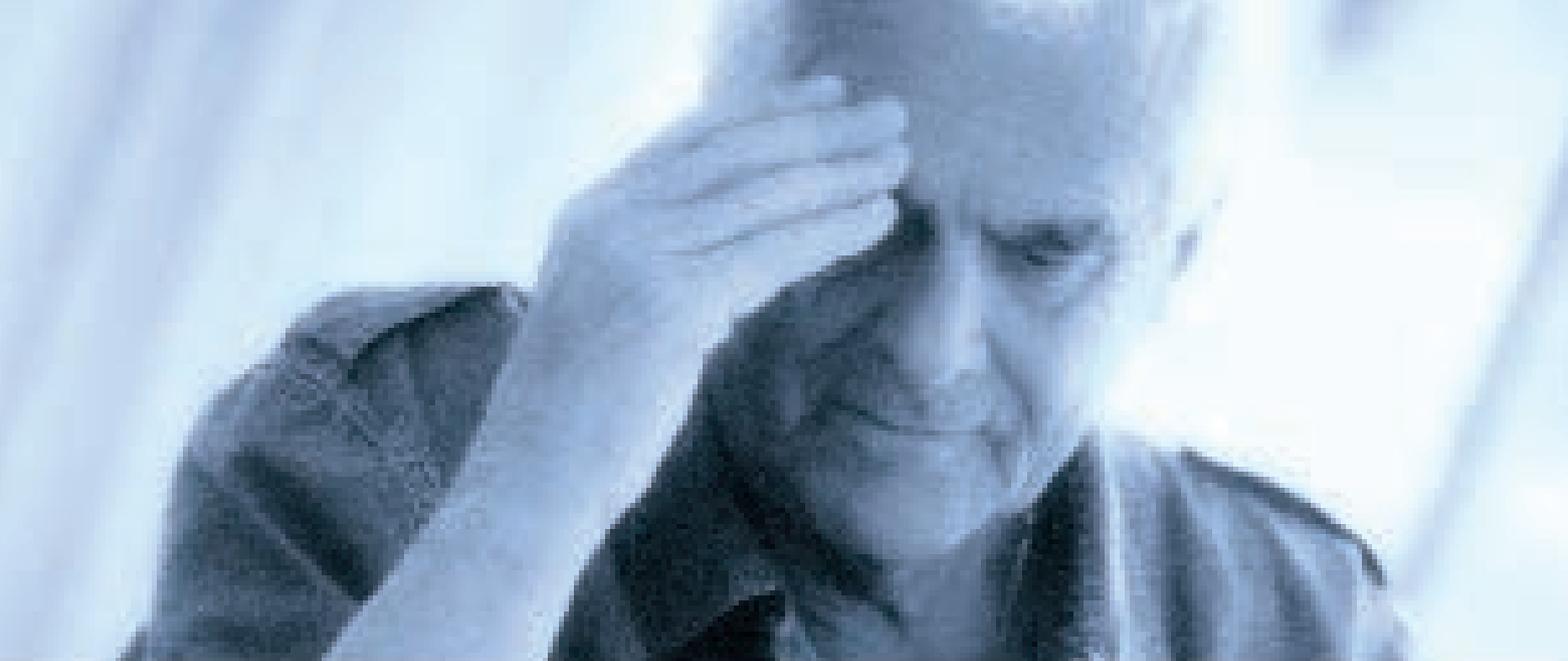


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About the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP)

The government is not providing the insurance.
The government is not subsidizing the premiums.
The government is not guaranteeing the benefits.

FLTCIP is a group program. After September 30, 2006, the premium and benefits may change.

Insurance does not fit all. An AFSA Representative can help you make it fit your budget for you.

AFSA Plans offer an indemnity option, partnership benefits, limited pay option, reduction of Federal estate tax, premium tax and discount plans for family care costs. FLTCIP does not.

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