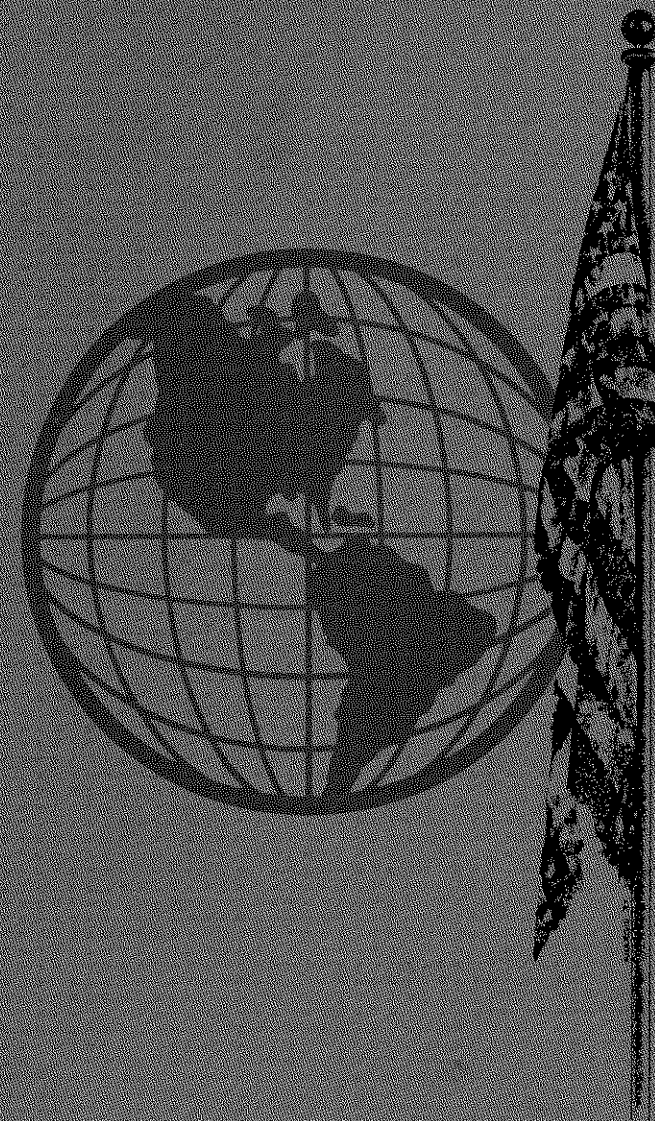


DUTY & DANGER

The American Foreign Service In Action

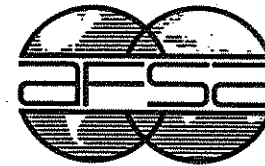


Published by the American Foreign Service Association

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The American Foreign Service Association, founded in 1924, is the professional association of the Foreign Service and the official representative of all Foreign Service employees in the Department of State and the Agency for International Development.

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FOREWORD

THESE STORIES highlight the dangers faced abroad by Foreign Service employees and their families. Only some of the stories are included; there are many others. Some will never be told, and others can't be told, but those that have been set down here illustrate the hazards of serving our country in a dangerous world. Much of our work is mundane, rather than exciting or adventurous. However, as representatives of our country in all parts of the world, we must at times deal with situations requiring personal bravery. We feel we handle these situations well and do not shrink from performing our duty in adverse circumstances. We hope those reading these pages will understand our pride in our service and in our devotion to duty even at personal risk.

PERRY SHANKLE
President
American Foreign Service Association

PREFACE

IN MY SEARCH for tales of courage in the Foreign Service, I heard many stories that were fascinating in their variety: defending persons attacked by mobs, rescuing Americans under fire, searching for survivors under tottering buildings after an earthquake, saving lives from drowning. We all know that Americans in certain countries, such as Colombia, are under constant threat from drug traffickers. We have all heard of the heroic efforts of couriers to safeguard their pouches, sometimes when wounded or dying. Security officers often face danger in the line of duty. However, in many cases it was not possible to get someone to write a publishable account of these incidents and situations, and often those involved were reluctant to write about themselves.

Nevertheless, the accounts we were able to put together are representative examples of the dangerous situations in which Foreign Service members and their families find themselves, and in which they acquit themselves honorably. I am grateful to the authors for their contributions, which will help those of us in the service understand better what it means to serve our country and will remind others of the sometimes difficult conditions of that service.

The Writers Group of the Association of American Foreign Service Women, chaired by Marlen Neumann, authored several stories. Without their assistance and that of the *Foreign Service Journal* staff, it would not have been possible to produce the booklet. I also appreciated the assistance of the Director General's staff which permitted me to review the files on Department awards for valor and heroism which record many courageous acts by Foreign Service personnel.

I emerged from this search for tales of courage with renewed respect for the bravery of Foreign Service members and their families.

—RICHARD S. THOMPSON
Coordinator for Professional Issues
American Foreign Service Association

UNDER FIRE IN GRENADA

RAPPELLING DOWN A ROPE from a U.S. army helicopter under automatic weapon and anti-aircraft fire was not in his job description, but for Larry Rossin during the Grenada invasion, it was all in a (long) day's work.

Rossin had visited Grenada several times as a political officer in Bridgetown in 1980-82, but when he was reassigned to Washington, first as staff aide in the Inter-American Affairs Bureau and then as the Peru desk officer, he thought he had left the eastern Caribbean behind him. His knowledge of the island and familiarity with many of its leading political figures, however, led to his involvement in the dramatic events that took place there in the fall of 1983.

On October 22 that year, he was asked to travel to Grenada as Ambassador Frank McNeil's aide on a 48-hour mission. However, instead of two days, it was to be more than three months before he returned to Washington.

At 1:30 a.m. on October 25, Rossin stood in a cold wind on a nearly-deserted airstrip in Barbados, waiting for the arrival of several U.S. air force C-5 transports. In addition to soldiers, on board would be helicopters, one of which was to ferry him, along with combat troops, to the governor general's residence in Grenada. Because trees would prevent the choppers from landing, Rossin and others on board would have to rappel into the front yard.

After the giant transports landed on the airstrip and the troops began assembling their gear and preparing for their mission, the commander gave Rossin a pair of soft leather gloves to help hold on to the ropes, a flotation vest, and earguards. Another officer showed him how to work his feet to break the fall on impact with the ground. The Foreign Service officer spent the next hour or so practicing as best he could.

By the time the two helicopters in the mission reached Grenada, the sun had come up and the battle had begun. After locating the governor general's house, which was difficult to identify from a helicopter hugging the precipitous terrain at more than 100-miles-per-hour while under groundfire from

AK-47s, one helicopter flew in close and dropped its complement of soldiers. The helicopter with Rossin aboard followed. As the second helicopter hovered and soldiers exited, it came under more intense groundfire. As soon as the soldiers had cleared, the pilot maneuvered to get out of harm's way while waiting to see how the battle below developed.

Immediately, however, the helicopter began taking anti-aircraft fire from Fort Frederick a mile away, and was hit several times. The helicopter, a UH-60 Blackhawk in its first combat test, turned its heavily armored belly toward the fire. Several shells hit the underside, but did not pierce the armor. With the aircraft tilting at an extreme angle, Rossin found himself looking down through an open door at Fort Rupert, on the opposite side of their original position. Suddenly, the fort was blanketed in smoke as tracer shells headed toward them. The side-door gunner called upon Rossin several times to secure items in the aircraft so that he could keep firing. Meanwhile, the helicopter continued taking hits from anti-aircraft guns and a 50-caliber machine gun, the hits limiting the craft's airspeed to 40 knots, making it a sitting duck in the crossfire between the two hostile positions. The co-pilot was wounded and lost consciousness and the aircraft sheared out of control toward the ocean. It came perilously close to crashing before the crew chief was able to reach over the still-unconscious co-pilot, grab the manual control for the rear flap, and pull it up.

The anti-aircraft fire continued and shrapnel splattered the aircraft. One of the crew members was hit in the leg and hand. Rossin's neck was grazed. Because of the severe damage to the helicopter, the plan to hover until the governor general's house was secured was dropped. Instead, the helicopter flew to the USS *Guam*, the only safe landing zone it could reach. It was still only 7:15 a.m.

The helicopter had taken 48 rounds, there was a hole about three inches square peeled back from the rear rotor shaft, and pieces of the body had been shot away. It was permanently out of commission. A smaller helicopter would have broken in pieces from the gunfire.

Rossin joined an ex-Bridgetown colleague from the U.S. Information Service, Ashley Wills, who was already aboard the ship, in providing expertise over the next several hours to the admiral-in-command and his staff, pointing out landmarks on

operational maps, helping to identify structures which were incorrectly labeled, and eventually contacting the governor general by radio. The next dawn, the Foreign Service officer was flown to Point Salines airport, where he established a civilian U.S. government presence on the island. When the governor general, who had been flown from his residence to the *Guam*, arrived in Point Salines later that morning, Rossin was there with the Caribbean Forces commander to greet him—and, as senior U.S. diplomat on the island, to discuss with them the political issues raised by the rescue mission.

Finally, at about 9 p.m. on October 26, Rossin was able to change his shirt (for one left behind by a Cuban, who had departed hurriedly the date before the invasion), have some C-rations for dinner, and get some sleep. It had been more than 50 hours since he had awakened in Bridgetown.

During the next couple of days, pending arrival of more senior diplomatic officials, Rossin dealt with Soviets, Cubans, Libyans, East Germans, North Koreans, and Bulgarians, making sure they were properly treated by U.S. military forces. He was in constant touch with the governor general, continued to report to the Department of State, coordinated with military forces, and generally represented U.S. interests on the island, while colleagues from the State Department and the Agency for International Development helped evacuate American medical students. Though a full interim State Department team was soon in place, Rossin remained in Grenada until January 1984. By that time the governor general had named a provisional government, and the people of Grenada were on their way back to democracy. Rossin's courage won him a State Department Award for Valor—but he never did get to rappel from a helicopter.

—LARRY ROSSIN

RESCUE IN HAITI

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER Jeffrey Lite set out on November 29, 1987, to observe the election scheduled for that day and be as helpful as he could to the nearly 200 foreign journalists covering the event. He did not anticipate that he would end up saving many of their lives.

Election day dawned bright and clear as do most days in Port-au-Prince, but this day wasn't to be like most days. By the time the sun set that evening, dozens of people had been killed, the election aborted, and U.S. aid to the Haitian government suspended.

Every night the week before the election, violence aimed at intimidating candidates, election officials, poll workers, and voters had increased in intensity. Gunfire, heard sporadically in the previous several weeks, had become commonplace; each night that week it seemed to be heavier and more frequent. It was especially heavy the night before the election.

Evidence of the violence was apparent to Lite as he drove through downtown Port-au-Prince shortly after the polls opened at 6 a.m.; some polling places had been firebombed during the night and were still smoldering, and scorched ballots were littering the streets and drifting in the tropical breeze. But evidence of the determination of the Haitian people and their desire to elect their leaders also was apparent, as thousands of citizens lined up at other polling places, many of them to vote for the first time in their lives. They believed that the violence was behind them. They were wrong; the worst was yet to come. Reports of scattered automatic-weapon fire filtered in over the next couple of hours, but still the election seemed to be proceeding. Suddenly, however, things started falling apart. After touring the streets when the polls first opened, Lite went to the Holiday Inn to assist the scores of foreign journalists who were using the hotel as a press center. He was there when two ABC-TV crew members arrived who had been shot and wounded at a school polling place a few blocks away.

Meanwhile, unknown at the time to people at the hotel, one foreign journalist had been killed and others were in grave

danger. Gunmen had attacked a crowd of Haitians at the school, spraying them with automatic-weapon fire and then entering the building to seek out and kill those who had escaped the initial onslaught. At least 16 persons were killed, and many others injured, before the gunmen moved on.

Hearing of the slaughter, many journalists had converged on the scene. The gunmen had then returned and begun firing at the reporters, photographers, and television crews who had gathered there. That's when a Dominican newspaper reporter was killed and the two ABC crewmen wounded. Others in the crew managed to get their injured companions back to the hotel, but dozens of other journalists fled the scene of the massacre on foot, dodging bullets by scrambling over walls and running down alleyways and across backyards, taking refuge where they could find it—in private homes, in schools, or on the ground behind bushes and walls. One, a photographer for the *New York Times*, found a phone and called the embassy for help.

The marine security guard on duty relayed the message to the embassy control center that was coordinating election day activities. Agency for International Development Deputy Director Linda Morse, in charge of the control center, contacted Lite by two-way radio and asked if he could do anything. He immediately hurried to his vehicle, a big blue USIS van code-named Bluebird, and accompanied by Yves Colon, a Voice of America editor, who volunteered to help navigate, took off in search of the stranded photographer.

Lite drove to the end of the dead-end street where the photographer was reported to have found shelter in a private home. Neighborhood residents looked out of their doors and windows; they knew why the Americans had come and pointed to the house where the photographer was hidden. The two officers left the van, found the house, and led the photographer back to the Bluebird, thinking that once they got him to safety their mission would be over. Moments later, however, another call for help came over the radio. They dropped off their passenger at his car, which was close to the Holiday Inn, and raced off to another section of the city to find four filmmakers, who had fled a bombed polling place and spent much of the night in hiding. They, too, had been taken in by a Haitian family. Before they could be dropped off at the Holiday Inn, a third call came about another group of journalists, still hiding

from gunmen after the incident at the school. Changing course, Lite found the half-dozen journalists sheltered in another school, and all piled into the crowded Bluebird for the drive through deserted streets back to the hotel.

Immediately on their arrival, the correspondent for *Time* rushed up to the van and said his son, a photographer, had been injured fleeing from the assault and was in hiding with several others. Lite, Colon, and the magazine correspondent went in search of them. When they arrived at the designated spot and sounded the horn two times as the son had specified, a half-dozen journalists emerged from hiding and ran, crouching low, toward the van. They jumped in, and Lite drove back to the hotel in the final rescue mission of the day.

By then, the Haitian government, citing the violence that had claimed at least 34 lives in Port-au-Prince, had canceled the elections. Shortly thereafter, the United States announced it was suspending all aid to the government of Haiti because it had broken its promise to guarantee free, open, and honest elections, in an atmosphere free of violence and intimidation. The public affairs officer later held a news conference to announce that decision to the foreign and Haitian press.

Haiti's first exercise in participatory democracy in more than three decades had ended in bloody failure. But nearly a score of Americans and other foreign journalists discerned at least one bright spot in the successful efforts of an American diplomat to save their lives at risk to his own.

—JEFFREY LITE

CONFLICT IN CHAD

IN FEBRUARY 1979, Anthony Dalsimer completed a two-week vacation in Cameroon and crossed the Chari River by ferry to return to his post in Ndjamena, Chad. An hour later, the ambassador set out for an administrative trip to West Africa and Deputy Chief of Mission Dalsimer was in charge. This was one of the last normal acts before a period of tension and violence that plunged Chad's capital city into months of war and occupation.

Within a day, it was obvious that tensions between the rival factions of southern President Malloum and northern Prime Minister Habre had risen to the danger point. Assembling the embassy's Emergency Action Committee, Dalsimer began to prepare for the worst. C-rations, jerry cans of water and fuel, and other necessities were stashed in housing compounds; generators were checked; the radio block-warden system was put on full alert; and embassy files were pared and destroyed. Things were barely in place when the storm broke.

Habre's vastly outnumbered praetorian guard of 300 desert warriors launched a midnight assault on the 3000 southerners who comprised the city's national army and gendarmerie contingents. The fighting raged for many days and nights. The chancery, which faced the presidential compound, could not be reached, although Richard Herkert, a communicator, kept communications open and refused to leave until his work was done and all classified documents had been sealed. It was decided to centralize operations at the residence of the absent ambassador, where a single sideband radio in a second-floor closet was to become the American community's only link to the outside world. The local staff showed great dedication and many continued to come to work, even though it meant crossing through battle lines.

The first problem was physical security for the Americans scattered throughout the city. Almost every family was caught in heavy fighting at one time or another. The radio network worked well, as wardens canvassed their sectors and reported to "control" regularly, or at least until their radio batteries failed.

People stayed low, and no official Americans were hurt, although an oil-company employee was tragically killed when a bullet pierced his shuttered kitchen window as he went to get a drink.

Nonetheless, many American families found themselves trapped behind enemy lines. In order to rescue them, Dalsimer repeatedly scrunched down in the ambassadorial half-armored car, looked through the spokes of the steering wheel, and drove to their houses. One group of Americans and local employees was pinned down in the embassy warehouse for more than 30 hours as fighting raged around Habre's headquarters at the other end of the block. As soon as a French neighbor radioed their predicament, Dalsimer and a volunteer took the back seat out of the car and carefully drove through checkpoints and machine-gun nests to the door of the warehouse. Scurrying out, one at a time, a dozen employees stacked themselves like cordwood in the rear of the car and were driven slowly back to the compound. That night a candlelight dinner for forty—spaghetti served on the floor—was prepared for all of those now in the compound.

To cross to the "safe" side of the city behind protective French lines meant first running the gauntlet between opposing northern and southern forces. During a short-lived truce it was arranged for all American dependents and non-essential employees to leave. They formed into a caravan to go to the Ndjamenia airport, where they were to get aboard a Department of State-chartered Cameroon Airlines jet and be flown to safety in Yaounde. Two hours later, as 100 women and children waited on the tarmac, the control tower reported the airplane was still holding at Maroua—20 minutes flying time away. When the communications center reported that the plane would not fly into a war zone, and the department was canceling the flight, security reassurances of the French base commander were relayed over the walkie-talkie. But despite these assurances, the plane did not come.

There was no way the potential evacuees could stay exposed at the airfield, but they had nowhere to go. Remembering that the Agency for International Development director's house and an adjacent abandoned restaurant known as L'Auberge were on the safe side of town, Dalsimer decided to use these buildings as an emergency safehaven. Loading everyone into the cars, he directed the long caravan to proceed through the French military base and past the office of the force commander before going

on to L'Auberge. The general services officer, Ron Mortenson, and his staff supervised setting up accommodations and feeding the evacuees, while Dalsimer hustled back to the office of the base commander.

Explaining the problem of the stranded 100 evacuees to the commander, he entreated French help. The commander answered, "We'll gladly take your people on our flights to Paris or Libreville on a space available basis." Dalsimer then explained a further problem: "The U.S. government has authorized only Yaounde or the continental United States as safehavens. Can you divert one of your planes to Yaounde, even closer than Libreville?" The commander replied, "I'm not sure. Neither my government, nor that of Cameroon has authorized such flights. But I'll try. Come back tomorrow at 9 a.m."

After a long night and not much sleep for anyone, Dalsimer returned to the base. "Any news?" The French commander replied, "I've heard neither from Paris nor Yaounde. I don't have authorization, but I'll give you a plane."

Ask any of the Americans who were in Ndjamenia what they think about the French military and, to this day, there won't be a second's hesitation. "They saved us."

While the packing up and moving out began, the American embassy in Yaounde was asked to buy from the local market all the fresh fruits and vegetables they could find. Our good neighbors, in the first of many kind deeds, filled up the French plane on its return with several tons of produce for the French soup kitchen in Ndjamenia—a gift from the American embassy.

The first round of fighting ended shortly after with the flight of the southerners back to their home region. Unfortunately, while the complex of problems shifted, it did not disappear. Other northern factions moved into the city, which was divided into three zones, Beirut style. Battle lines still had to be crossed to safeguard and pack up the belongings of the evacuees, and confrontations were frequent between American officials and heavily armed soldiers attempting to confiscate U.S. government property ranging from trucks to houses. Throughout this period, Mortenson and Dalsimer were continuously pressed into service to fend off armed bands encroaching on unoccupied American housing. So the situation remained during the charge's months at post, until his replacement arrived.

—ANTHONY DALSIMER

COURAGE IN IRAN

THE CLEAR-EYED, six-foot-two young man of athletic build who greeted me was a far cry from the image I remembered of the hostage being carried off the plane on a stretcher during the Iran crisis. During our talks, Richard Queen was immediately concerned that he not be depicted as a hero, which he emphatically denies ever having been. He believes that if any praise is given, it should be shared equally by all his fellow-hostages.

In spite of what he endured during his days of captivity, he shows no trace of bitterness, and he still finds his experiences in the Foreign Service enriching. His enthusiasm for the Service, for the pleasure he has in exploring and learning about different cultures, and for the satisfaction he gets in serving abroad have not diminished.

Queen's time of testing began with an ordinary assignment as vice consul to Teheran, in July 1979. On November 4, Iran militants took over the American embassy, demanding that the Shah be sent back from the United States to be tried. In the following months, more than 50 hostages from the embassy were blindfolded and continually moved from place to place; they endured diatribes, propaganda, and threats. However, in spite of the animosity toward the United States and its "decadent culture," the militants, especially those who claimed to be engineering students, frequently asked for visas to this country.

Perhaps one of the worst ordeals for Queen was when he and his fellow-hostage, Joe Hill, were incarcerated in a dungeon-like cellar nick-named the "Mushroom Inn." He remained four months in this place with his hands bound. He was not allowed to speak to his companion. "If you don't have courage to begin with, you learn to develop it," remarked Queen, in describing this ordeal.

Queen began feeling numbness in his left arm during his time in this dungeon. Secretly removing the bindings from his wrists at night, he hoped his condition would improve. But he worsened and as time went on experienced continuous nausea and was unable to eat. He was finally removed from the "Mushroom

Inn" and taken to the chancery, where he was told to organize the embassy library.

This pleasant interlude was brutally interrupted when the hostages were assembled and lined up against a wall, convinced that their time had come. They were told to hold their hands against the wall, but Queen's arm kept slipping, as he was unable to keep it up. The hostages heard the clicking of the guns' bolts; no one made a sound or begged for mercy. But instead of being shot, they were returned to their quarters, "Thankful," Queen said, "that we were still alive, feeling pride that we had not embarrassed our country or the State Department." At this time Joe Hall was told to return to the dungeon. When Queen insisted that he, too, go back with his companion, the captors relented and placed them instead in the embassy basement.

Many hostages displayed individual acts of bravery. For example, the feisty Sergeant Jimmy Lopez stood up verbally against the military in defense of the United States and painted a caricature of the Ayatollah on the wall with the Spanish words, "Long live the red, white and blue."

Queen's captors were finally convinced that his symptoms indicated a serious illness, and they took him to the hospital in Teheran. After being examined, he was told that he was free to go "by orders of Khomeini." Flown to Zurich and then Weisbaden, his illness was diagnosed as multiple sclerosis.

In spite of his joy at being free and back with his family, he felt guilty about being released before his fellow-hostages. Queen tried to be a link between the hostages and their families, bringing them comfort as well as information. He needed all the tact and diplomacy he could muster in those months, and found he had been through a comprehensive course in diplomacy that few institutions of higher learning could offer.

While Queen was languishing in the "Mushroom Inn" without any news from the outside world, he felt he and the other hostages had been forgotten by their country and its people. But in January 1980, when he joined the 52 hostages at Andrews Air Force Base, he experienced the welcome and love of an admiring nation.

—NANCY HORTON

CRISIS IN SUDAN

THE APRIL 1986 crisis in Sudan came after a long period of turmoil and civil war. The country had survived another famine. A 1985 uprising had brought hope of participatory government, and the transitional government was determined to return the country to democracy, as promised. But a month before elections the United States-Libya crisis erupted. The local embassy employees warned their American colleagues against going to political rallies alone at night. However, Foreign Service officers were expected to cover these and other political events as the April elections approached. The crisis for the embassy came to a head just as the Sudanese finished their two weeks of balloting.

When we learned that the United States had bombed Libya in response to the Berlin-nightclub attack, we knew we were in danger. That day a colleague on her first assignment had asked why the State Department did not evacuate us. She was told that the department had not yet received concrete evidence of a threat that would justify an evacuation. Unfortunately, that evidence came later that day in the form of an assassination attempt on an American Foreign Service employee.

The tale of our embassy's crisis is filled with unsung heroes. No Foreign Service personnel received any special recognition, but in fact, the crisis brought out the courage and commitment of all, Americans and local employees alike. For most of us, the first clues that something terrible had happened came crackling late at night over the two-way radios by which we communicated. But the news that a communicator had been shot on the way to the embassy to receive an emergency message, wounded seriously, and flown abroad almost immediately for treatment was passed to all in the morning.

The moment for evacuation had arrived. The ambassador and deputy chief of mission had to marshal the resources of the entire embassy while avoiding panic. The logistics entailed complicated administrative arrangements. Which tasks were essential? Who would leave? How? When? The embassy had to notify Americans both within and outside the embassy community, including

businesses and relief organizations in Khartoum and in outlying towns. Two officers and two local employees organized the consular phase of the operation, ensuring smooth processing at the centers set up on each of the two evacuation days. We needed to combine maximum efficiency at the centers with minimum anxiety for the evacuees.

Meanwhile, the administrative section was organizing vehicles, arranging flights, and preparing security for the two processions that would carry the evacuees to the processing points for the first flight. Security at the processing houses for the evacuees, about 200 the first night alone, also had to be arranged. Almost everyone pitched in to help.

The trauma of such a sudden departure is great. People had to decide what to take, not knowing when they might return. They needed to secure their homes and make sure that their domestic employees would be paid during their absence. Some people had pets requiring care. Families were torn apart, as some employees stayed and dependents left. Each of us felt the pain of separation. Sudan provides very little in the way of "comic relief," and life in the world's hottest capital city is not easy. We depended on ourselves and on each other to provide meaningful lives. We spent most of our spare time in our homes or in the homes of others. To see our friends leaving for the airport was difficult.

Amazingly, the two-stage evacuation proceeded smoothly, even though people scheduled to work at the evacuation sites were rushed out of their homes early in response to a perceived security threat. Most of us, although exhausted physically and emotionally, stayed up to watch our families and colleagues take off in the early hours of the morning. The evacuations entailed several days with little sleep. After that first night, we went from evacuation centers back to the embassy to arrange the second day. Some went without sleep to monitor the phones to the task force in Washington. The second phase of the evacuation also proceeded smoothly, although a group of American refugee workers from distant Kassala barely reached the airport in time for the flight.

The evacuations, dramatic as they were, reveal only a partial glimpse of an embassy under stress. Those left behind were faced with the ongoing danger, the easily-identifiable license plates, the circuitous routes to work, the confinement of the evenings,

the cancellation of recreation, and most of all, the continuation of the work for which we were in Sudan. The elections had taken place. A new democracy was taking shape. We could not stay in a cocoon. Food relief went on, although the Agency for International Development mission shrank to a mere shadow of its former self.

Then, we received news that another 30 people would have to leave. In the end, less than 20 percent of the embassy community, including only six women, was left to carry on. So few people and so much to be done, and all in an atmosphere of continuing danger. Fortunately, we had all made friends in the international community and among the Sudanese, who extended themselves to make our lives bearable. Our embassy leaders worked to keep up morale.

We worried about our wounded colleague and rejoiced that the quick embassy medical action had saved his life. He was alive, but seriously injured. We all knew that any of us could have been the victim.

What made all of this bearable? I believe it was the sense of vocation, of loyalty to our country and respect for our colleagues. The job was here to be done, and we were here to do it. For a first-tour officer, it was an unforgettable introduction to Foreign Service life, a privilege and high honor to serve under such circumstances and with such colleagues.

—LOIS A. AROIAN

A NIGHT RIDE IN GUINEA

AS I REMEMBERED, it was 11 p.m., the night of July 4, 1985. I had just returned from the ambassador's national day reception in a downtown Conakry hotel and tuned in to the local radio station. Suddenly, the program was interrupted by an announcement in French: "This is Colonel Diarra Traore. The Supreme Council of the Guinean Republic has assumed control of the government of Guinea. Everyone is advised to remain inside until further notice. I repeat, no one is allowed on the streets until further notice."

I knew the ambassador would expect the deputy chief of mission to get to the embassy as soon as possible. I also knew I could not get past the street blockades without an American flag on my car. Therefore, I made a quick decision to try to get across town to the ambassador's residence, and ride downtown to the embassy in his car.

The street lights had gone off, but the guards at the compound gave no indication that they knew what was going on. I quickly explained the radio announcement, backed my car out, and proceeded cautiously into the heavy, black silence outside my compound wall.

A police barricade suddenly loomed in the middle of the road. Several irate policemen surrounded the car, peered inside, and scolded me for being on the road. After presenting my diplomatic identification card, I pretended ignorance of the night's events. One policeman reached in the car to turn on the radio, chiding me for not keeping it on at all times. At the same time, others were explaining that the prime minister had overthrown the government. Everyone had been ordered off the streets, and I was in violation of those orders.

I then explained that it was my national day and I was going to my ambassador's house. The Guineans' innate politeness surfaced as smiles broke out and everyone reached out to shake my hand, shouting, "felicitations, felicitations."

They quickly returned, however, to the business at hand. One policeman jumped into the car and ordered me to drive around the corner to a police station. We entered the station, and my

heart sank as a chunky, bald Guinean, lolling on a bench near the doorway and muttering under his breath, cracked a whip at my feet. The policeman ignored him and took me to a table in the corner to be booked.

While I was filling out forms, a door in the back suddenly popped open to reveal a small room filled with people who all began to shout. A policeman slammed the door shut, ordering them to be quiet. My fears reached the anxiety level as I had visions of being incarcerated with them. It was with great will power that I smiled at my interrogator and calmly answered his questions.

Finally, I was taken back to my car and ordered to return home. I insisted, however, that now that I knew what was happening, it was imperative I join my ambassador. After a consultation, it was decided I could proceed but must be accompanied by a civilian, who had been watching the entire procedure.

After we set off, the civilian, a refined looking Guinean in his late 40s or early 50s, informed me that he was a journalist who was visiting his home country for the first time in 28 years. He said that he agreed to come with me because he needed a ride to the central telephone exchange to file a story. By the time we reached the ambassador's residence, he had successfully talked me past two more barricades, and my fears began to subside.

To my dismay, the ambassador had already left his house for the embassy. The journalist, however, was more than happy to accompany me on to the embassy, which was near the telephone exchange. As we reached the downtown area, he pulled out a camera, which he explained was loaded with infrared film, and proceeded to take pictures of the dark vacant streets and the next three barricades. At each barricade, after saying a few words in a native dialect, he was waved through quickly. At the embassy gates, my escort, who had pointedly not given me his name when I had introduced myself, slipped into a side street.

Only two of our officers had managed to get to the embassy. When they heard the news, they had not yet left the nearby hotel where our reception had been held. We at the embassy soon heard cannon shots as government troops tried to dislodge the coup perpetrators from the nearby radio station. The telephone lines were open, unlike the situation during the previous coup, and we settled in to a long night of monitoring the radio,

checking up on Americans, exchanging information with our diplomatic corps colleagues, and sending situation reports to Washington.

During a slight lull, I thought about the journalist. The 28 years he had been out of Guinea coincided with the span of Chief of State Sekou Toure's rule. It had been on Toure's death, in 1984, that the first coup had occurred. That fact, together with my escort's ability to cross barricades without difficulty, led me to the conclusion that he probably belonged to one of the exiled groups in opposition to Toure who were now trying to get in power. I found myself speculating: "If this coup attempt is successful, will he have a position of power?"

As it turned out, the attempted coup was put down after a day and night of bloodshed, rioting, and looting. I will probably never know the identity of the journalist who was instrumental in getting me to the embassy that dark and frightening night.

—KATHRYN CLARK-BOURNE

CHECKPOINT IN NICARAGUA

TWO FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS, Luis Moreno and T. J. Rose, waved to the Japanese ambassador's limousine as they proceeded unchallenged through the fourth checkpoint on the road to Esteli. The men were on assignment to cover President Daniel Ortega's speech, which was to be the highlight of the 1986 celebration for the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Sandinista front.

Despite their bullet-proof jeep, Moreno and Rose felt tense and vulnerable. Unlike the ambassadors en route, they knew that they were unwelcome and uninvited. All the diplomatic missions in Managua—all except that of the United States of America—had received official invitations that would serve as identification for the machine-gun-carrying guards along the monitored road. The rally was being held in an area where active hostilities between the Sandinistas and the contras meant the possibility of live and dangerous gunfire.

The speech was a highlight for what promised to be a large gathering; trucks of uniformed officers were assembling in Managua, busses were loaded with workers routed from their workplaces and homes. The unmarked jeep appeared more obvious than they wished in the traffic along the dusty and tortuous road, but it encountered no notice until the last checkpoint. There, several security officers blocked the road and ordered the jeep to pull over.

A nervous soldier thrust his automatic weapon through the opened door of the jeep into the two officers' faces, chambered a round, and demanded identification. Agitated at the realization that he had stopped two American embassy officials, he shouted for reinforcements and ordered the two men out of the jeep. They didn't move, but indicated that they would follow a secret-police vehicle to a nearby headquarters, where they would be interrogated by a guerrilla commander of the revolution, a decorated war hero who would command respect and obedience.

The two Foreign Service officers had kept in touch with the embassy with their mobile radio, but they were now out of communication range. However, not letting the officials at the

headquarters know this, they calmly locked the car doors and stated that they had radioed their location and the interrogation situation to the embassy in Managua. They reaffirmed their intention to attend the celebration and to return directly.

This obviously impressed the officials, because they were released and told where to park their jeep before continuing on foot for two miles to the rally site. In the sticky heat of July, they were enveloped by dust as a huge Russian helicopter passed overhead. The rally was a solemn and orderly procedure, with the usual anti-American diatribe. The two officials estimated the crowd to be about 5000—the official government reports added a 0 to make the number 50,000.

Returning, the men were relieved to find their jeep unmolested. They joined the surging traffic, heard less-than-friendly shouts from some of the military convoys, but no one impeded them.

As they entered the embassy late that afternoon, they heard the radio broadcast of the president's speech. "Too bad you didn't make the speech," their fellow employees sympathized, "but then, no one expected they'd let you through today."

"But we were there. You're listening to a rebroadcast," they protested. "We don't enjoy a machine gun in our faces, and we're glad we didn't get to ride in a Russian helicopter, but we did hear it all live. Mission accomplished."

—LUCILE KLONTZ

TRAGEDY IN NEPAL

THE MAJESTIC WILDERNESS of the high Himalayan peaks of Nepal are as perilous as they are beautiful. A major mission of the embassy in Kathmandu is to cope with the emergencies of American citizens who trek in the mountains in ever-increasing numbers each year.

In 1984, a young American hiked alone into one of the most rugged and remote areas. He was negotiating a precipitous slope, strewn with debris from a recent avalanche, when he slipped and plunged to the rocks far below. He was discovered by passing Nepalis, who made him as comfortable as possible in a nearby cave and then started the long trek to the nearest police post to seek help.

Consul Steve Blake was sitting at his desk in the late afternoon when the call from the Nepalese police came. It was a citizen-in-distress message, and despite stormy skies and impending darkness, Blake decided to attempt a rescue. He had close relations with the Nepalese army-helicopter pilots and persuaded them to take him to the area. They set off immediately from Kathmandu. However, high winds and darkness prevented them from landing at the accident site.

Undaunted, Blake led a second attempt at dawn the following morning. The rescue team was battered by heavy winds as it flew through a narrow gorge, just wide enough for the helicopter to pass. It almost crashed near the accident site, but was finally able to make a difficult landing on a small plateau.

Setting out on foot, Blake encountered a local policeman with the young man's pack. The policeman sadly informed him that the man had died, despite the care of local villagers, just after his tragic fall. He led him to the cave.

Nepalese pilots will not transport a dead body, nor will porters carry one, so Blake was unable to bring out the remains. But he arranged for a decent burial in the mountains under the traditional Himalayan cairn.

Returning to Kathmandu, the consul took on the sad task of informing the parents in the United States of their son's death. He then arranged for the desposition of the young man's

possessions in Kathmandu. For almost a year after, Blake patiently and professionally communicated with the parents to explain the circumstances of their son's death and assuage their grief. As do consuls throughout the world, Blake performed this difficult and painful task admirably, bringing credit to all who serve their fellow Americans abroad in time of need.

—JAMES CHEEK

ESCAPE IN LIBYA

ON THE MORNING of December 2, 1979, crowds surged around the embassy in Tripoli, Libya, shouting menacing slogans in support of Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-American policies. Within 15 minutes, there were 2000 people battering at the doors, clambering up to the second floor windows, shoving each other forward with violent hatred.

It had been only two weeks since similar angry crowds in Pakistan had attacked and burned the American embassy there. That had been followed by anti-American demonstrations in Kuwait, Manila, and Bangkok. All that must have been in the minds of the 21 people who were inside the embassy on that Sunday morning—12 American officers and staff, two wives, and seven Libyans.

Anne-Marie Gabor, an American secretary, remembers thinking that the Libyan soldiers guarding the embassy (Quadaffi did not allow Marines to guard the building) looked especially nervous that morning. The embassy staff had been called in the day before to shred classified documents, and they were prepared for the unexpected.

Gabor had walked the few blocks from her apartment to the embassy, entered the building, and had just started work when the news reached the embassy that 2000 Libyans were demonstrating nearby and heading for the building. Chanting outside grew louder and louder, even as John Dieffenderfer, the administrative officer, was informing Chargé William Eagleton, Jr. of the demonstration. The closed circuit television revealed a large group of people massed in front of the door. Suddenly, the employees heard a splintering sound as a battering ram penetrated the wooden main door.

For a moment, everyone stood still. Then Eagleton and Dieffenderfer took charge, dashing down the stairs to activate the alarm. The wailing siren signifying a terrorist attack resounded throughout the building as employees hurried down the stairs. There was no panic, because everyone knew what to do. A few days earlier Eagleton had led an evacuation drill, and employees now headed to a door leading to a secret passageway.

As staffers escaped the beleaguered building, Eagleton and Dieffenderfer were the last to leave. They were face-to-face with the militants, doing everything possible to hold them at bay.

Groping their way through the darkened passageway, the employees emerged into the bright light of a busy side street. The Americans attempted to mingle into the crowd until they could be picked up by embassy cars, as previously arranged. They had escaped from a building that was now surrounded by a chanting, hysterical mob. After picking up their passengers, the embassy drivers careened through the narrow streets of the city, past trucks of Libyan soldiers in battle fatigues carrying sub-machine guns. Gabor's car delivered her to the British residence, where she stayed until evening, returning to her apartment for the night.

When embassy officials later went back to the embassy to survey the damage, they found the building gutted by fire, and all the furniture thrown out the windows. The next day Gabor had one hour's notice to be ready to catch a flight out of the city to a safehaven in France. She remembers, "I was never so happy to set foot on an airplane."

Because of the dedication and courage of many in the embassy, especially Eagleton and Dieffenderfer, a potential hostage situation was safely averted, and Gabor and others were able to spend a joyous Christmas with their grateful families.

—ANNE-MARIE GABOR AND MARLEN E. NEUMANN

ATTACK IN HAITI

THE TERRORISM SEMINAR, required for all Foreign Service personnel assigned abroad, alerts participants to some of the dangers of living overseas, but it doesn't (and couldn't) prepare someone to confront a knife-wielding assailant in the fenced-in parking lot of a well-guarded U.S. government building.

It was mid-morning on May 11, 1987, when Debbie McGowan drove into the parking lot of the building in downtown Port-au-Prince where she worked part-time for the United States Information Service, editing a daily summary of radio and television news broadcasts. The building, known as the consulate, also housed the embassy's consular section. It was surrounded by a six-foot-tall spiked-iron fence and guarded by a private guard force, as well as Haitian police.

Outside, hundreds of visa applicants milled about and stood in long lines waiting to be admitted to the building, and passers-by and hangers-on also crowded the sidewalk. As McGowan was walking from her car to the building, a young Haitian leaped over the six-foot fence and ran toward her with a knife in his right hand. He grabbed her hair and began pulling her toward the gate, and when she resisted, he stabbed her with his knife, once, twice, a third time.

The embassy guard came running. By beating on the assailant with his nightstick, he made him loosen his grip, and McGowan was able to break free. Bleeding profusely, she was helped to the building's emergency side exit, where employees, suddenly aware of what was going on outside, and opened it for her.

The police soon arrived, and in the struggle with the assailant, wounded him in the leg. They took him to the hospital for treatment and then to jail. (He later explained that he had been trying to kidnap an employee to make the embassy force the Haitian minister of finance, whom he blamed for his having been fired from his job, to resign.)

McGowan, meanwhile, was beginning to go into shock from the loss of blood. A vice-consul, Beryl Bently-Anderson, who had been a registered nurse, administered first aid until the

embassy nurse arrived. McGowan was finally taken to a private hospital in a private vehicle. Emergency surgery staunched the bleeding and closed a deep wound. The next day she was evacuated to Miami to receive further treatment and to recuperate.

Recovery was slow and uncomfortable, but less than a month later, McGowan returned to Port-au-Prince—and two days later she was back at work editing the broadcast media summary, refusing to allow the incident to affect her life any more than it already had.

McGowan won the admiration of all those who knew of the courage with which she bore the shock and pain of the attack and of her determination to return to Haiti and to work in spite of it. Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams lauded her "calm reaction . . . which reassured and calmed others," and concluded that her "spirit and will to carry on serves us all as an inspiration and reminder of the devotion and dedication of our Foreign Service families."

—DEBBIE MCGOWAN

HOSPITALITY IN INDIA

COURAGE AND CARING are not limited to individual acts. The whole American community often responds in times of crisis. Sometimes even the simple act of hospitality takes courage. Such was the case in 1985, in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by a Sikh member of her bodyguard. The anger toward the Sikhs of New Delhi was violent, and hatred flared as Sikhs were killed, and their homes and businesses looted and burned.

It was in this atmosphere of violence that American families opened their hearts and homes to their frightened Sikh friends, hoping that the Sikhs would not be attacked in the homes of foreigners. Nonetheless, some Americans were confronted by angry crowds outside their gates and had to try to calm them, never knowing if the hatred toward their guests would turn into violence against the hosts.

Some families took in Sikh friends for a long period of time and had to cope with the responsibility of feeding their guests. Markets and shops were closed and food was difficult to find during this period. In one case an American Halloween jack-o-lantern was turned into pumpkin curry to feed family and friends. One family remembers trying to calm a group of 12 family members who were so frightened that they insisted on staying together in one room the whole time.

The caring and concern of many American families in New Delhi at this time showed that helpfulness and understanding are qualities to count on by American embassy families in India and all over the world.

—MARY THOMAS SARGENT AND
ALBERTA ESPIE

RESCUE IN IRAN

ON JANUARY 29, 1979, in the city of Isfahan, Iran, an American shot and wounded an Iranian in a hotel occupied by 500 Americans preparing for emergency evacuation from the revolution-wracked country. At this time, Isfahan was largely under the control of various revolutionary Komitehs.

When David McGaffey, chief officer of the consulate, was informed of the shooting, he immediately proceeded to the hotel, where he found a mob of 500 gathered outside, voicing the belief that the Iranian victim had died. Inside, however, American doctors from the evacuation clinic were treating the wounded Iranian; meanwhile, the assailant had locked himself in a room with his gun. The police were called, but they refused to send an officer to the scene. McGaffey then called military headquarters, and a single Iranian army sergeant arrived who, upon seeing the mob, stripped off his uniform, borrowed clothes from a hotel waiter, and slipped out the back door. The mob had now grown to 10,000 people, inflaming each other with increasingly lurid stories.

When they began to stack drums of kerosene around the walls of the hotel, it was clear that immediate action was needed. McGaffey called the Ayatollah Khademi, spiritual leader of Isfahan and titular leader of the revolutionary Komitehs, and requested asylum for the American. He then talked the man out of his room and confiscated his gun.

The Ayatollah's deputy arrived at the hotel wearing religious robes, along with five strong men. The consul, meanwhile, directed that the wounded Iranian be taken out of the hotel with fanfare, to diffuse the anger of the mob who thought he was dead. While the crowd was focusing on the wounded man, the Ayatollah's men and McGaffey formed a human chain around the American and, linking arms, physically forced their way through the mob. They successfully reached the Ayatollah's car, although the consul and several others were clubbed as they forced their way through the crowd. Then, as they got into the car, the human chain was forced open, and McGaffey was seized.

He instructed the others to leave with the American, and the car successfully escaped.

The mob finally had an American in their hands, and judging McGaffey the criminal, they attempted to revenge the wounded Iranian. The consul was shot (a scalp wound), stabbed (the knife lodged in his spine), his kneecap was crushed, and he received numerous cuts and blows. The angry throng attempted to hang him, but fortunately his necktie broke during the attempt.

Eventually, the consul was able to use his excellent Persian to gain a respite from the enraged mob. He accused those holding him of being Communists, and called on good Moslems to rescue him. He finally convinced a portion of the mob that rather than executing him, they should deliver him to the Ayatollah for Islamic justice. This they did, dragging him through the streets, with the crowd following.

The Ayatollah gave McGaffey refuge, treated his wounds, and kept him for 36 hours, until the throng dispersed. As soon as he could, McGaffey returned to duty at the consulate.

On February 26, after all the foreigners in Isfahan had successfully been evacuated, McGaffey closed the consulate, was driven to Teheran (under protection of the Ayatollah's guards) and soon was medically evacuated to Greece. He received the State Department Award for Heroism for his actions.

DUTY & DANGER

The American Foreign Service In Action



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