Academy Review

November 2026



Ebola Press Briefing

On June 5, 2026, the Academy hosted several journalists for a press briefing to discuss the ongoing Ebola outbreak in Uganda and its implications for American global health leadership and national security.

The panel, organized by Media Committee co-chairs Yael Lempert and Michael Ratney, featured Academy members Deborah Malac, Susan Reichle, Eric Stromayer, and Daniele Nyirandutiye, moderated by Michael Ratney. Journalists from NBC, the Guardian, STAT, the New York Times, POLITICO, Devex, the Bush Institute, CNN, the Washington Post, NPR, Associated Press, Der Spiegel, Bloomberg, and ABC attended.

Academy Efforts on Capitol Hill

This summer, the Academy continued working to positively influence congressional efforts to rewrite the Foreign Service Act of 1980, advocating for the proposals from the *Blueprints for a More Modern Diplomatic Service on the Hill*.

Most efforts focused on H.R. 9086, the Foreign Service Modernization Act. The Academy got a chance to provide substantive comments on several versions of the bill. The final bill includes several provisions that directly advance the Academy's positions, as well as key proposals from the Blueprints.

If passed, the bill would authorize a three-year Diplomatic Reserve Corps (DRC) pilot project, beginning with 250 members in the first year and adding up to 250 additional members annually. The pilot project has some flaws and will be difficult to execute without the legal underpinning of a larger bill establishing the DRC, but it is a major step forward. It is also one of the items championed in a press release by HFAC Chairman Brian Mast (R-FL), which shows solid bipartisan support for the idea.

The bill also advances improvements in diplomatic training by mandating leadership training before leadership assignments and protecting external frameworks. The Academy recognizes that, to be meaningful, these provisions will require additional positions and funds. However, they do move the needle in the right direction.

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Academy Annual Meeting

The Academy hosted its Annual Meeting on May 29, 2026. President Ronald Neumann, Chairman Thomas Shannon, and Vice Chairman Alonzo Fulgham provided updates and answered questions on the future of the Academy. AFSA President John Dinkelman delivered the keynote address. Thank you to everyone who attended to discuss the Academy's future. The 2027 Annual Meeting will take place in early Summer 2027; please check your inbox for a Save the Date.



Academy on Capitol Hill *continued from page 1*

The bill also contains other important provisions for professional diplomacy. One combines the newly created Assistant Secretary for HR position with that of the Director General (DG) of the Foreign Service, who must be a current or former Foreign Service officer. This provision ameliorates the danger that the new Assistant Secretary post could be used to undercut the statutory position of the DG. The other provision, championed by Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-NY), would ensure the State Department's continued commitment to the Pickering, Rangel, Payne, and Veterans Innovation Partnership Fellowships, so that these programs can continue to bring talented new diplomats into the Department. Finally, the bill does not touch the place of a union, language on non-discrimination, and extensive parts of the Act dealing with grievance settlement.



On June 9, the full House passed H.R. 9086 out of Committee by a bipartisan vote of 38-2. Then, on September 16, it came to the House floor for a vote. During the debate, Rep. Mike Lawler (R-NY), who managed the majority's time, noted the importance of the Diplomatic Reserve Corps in his remarks, and Rep. Gabe Amo (D-RI), who managed the minority's time, thanked outside stakeholders, including the Academy. The bill passed the House by a voice vote and was then sent to the Senate, where it was read twice and referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC).

Now that it is in the Senate, H.R. 9086 is unlikely to get the floor time to pass as a standalone bill. However, its passage by the full House will enhance the bill's chances of being added to the FY27 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in the Senate-House conference after the November election.

The full Diplomatic Reserve Corps bill (H.R. 8167), introduced earlier this year by Rep. Dina Titus and co-sponsored by Reps. Michael Baumgartner (R-WA), Joe Wilson (R-SC), and Debbie Wasserman-Schultz (D-FL), is also not likely to advance in either chamber this year. In the Senate, there is some interest from Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Brian Schatz (D-HI), but it would still need a Republican co-sponsor to be introduced.

While the Academy continues to reach out to different Senate offices regarding the full DRC bill, it is also working with the SFRC Minority staff regarding the language on a report requirement for the State Department to flesh out specific staffing and hiring needs for the future DRC. The goal is to include this report requirement in the final conference bill that would be added to the FY27 NDAA. Regardless of the outcome of the latter effort, the Academy will continue to push for the full DRC bill in the 2027 Congress.

Future of Foreign Assistance and Congress

On September 9, 2026, the Academy convened 20 foreign assistance professionals and congressional experts for a conversation on "The Future of Foreign Assistance and Congress." Academy members Chris Milligan and Susan Reichle spearheaded the effort, and Aid on the Hill, Aid Transition Alliance, DevelopMetrics, Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN), and the USAID Alumni Association were also represented. The meeting aimed to help concerned organizations create a more formal structure for coordinating efforts to advance U.S. development and humanitarian assistance goals in Congress. As foreign assistance promises to be central to the work of SFRC and HFAC in 2027, the Academy will continue to act as a convener for this group.

Welcome New Members

This year, the Academy welcomed its second-largest class ever – 45 new members. Thank you to 84 AAD members who participated in the nomination process, and to the 273 members who voted! The 2026 New Member Class once again includes a very accomplished group:

- 53.33% women, marking this as the first women-majority class!
- US agencies: Department of State, USAID, Department of Defense, National Security Council, Department of Commerce, Office of the Vice President, US Marine Corps, Peace Corps, US House of Representatives.
- NGOs and Think Tanks: The Carter Center, EUCORD, Charlottesville Committee on Foreign Relations, DAOC Bacon House Foundation, Royal United Services Institute, Atlantic Council, Middle East Institute, Arab Gulf States Institute, CARE International.
- Int'l Agencies: The United Nations, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).
- University Affiliations: UNC Chapel Hill, Georgetown, Yale

The Academy's leadership and staff will officially welcome the new members at the New Members Lunch on February 16, 2027.

Media Advisory Council

Academy members Yael Lampert, Michael Ratney, and John Feeley are working on the creation of a new body, the Media Advisory Council. A formal proposal will be presented to the board. This council aims to maintain and aggressively expand the Academy's convening power as an authoritative, professional voice supporting responsible statecraft and American Diplomacy. The group will proactively reach out to journalists across platforms, specifically targeting those whose work speaks to constituencies that matter to the future of American diplomacy, including Hill staffers and Members, lobbyists, administration actors, and presidential campaigns forming in 2027 and 2028. The council also hopes to reach corporate professional associations whose members work overseas and depend on American government services.

Academy Action Group Update

The Action Group, established in 2025, continues to grow, and all members are welcome to join. The Group launches new initiatives to highlight the importance of diplomacy and respond to changes in the Administration. Activities to date include drafting or contributing to forceful Academy statements, holding roundtables with journalists on State's capacity challenges, joining four corners AAD briefings with Hill staff, providing input to expand the AAD Commercial Diplomacy team, and commenting on proposed legislation. The Action Group is preparing three funding proposals: a Report Card on US diplomatic capacity, the Foreign Service Futures Program to match recently retired members with DIR-partner universities to maintain institutional links and rebuild enthusiasm for careers in the FS, and the Diplomat Lounge program at select universities.

In Memoriam

Since June 2026, the Academy has lost several great friends and colleagues. We thank them for their friendship and service.



Walter Cutler
Nov. 22, 1931 - Jul. 2, 2026



Nicholas Platt
Mar. 10, 1936 - Jul. 23, 2026



Nancy Ely-Raphel
Feb. 4, 1937 - Aug. 8, 2026



Timothy Carney
Jul. 12, 1944 - Aug. 10, 2026



Joan M. Clark
Mar. 28, 1922 - Oct. 11, 2026

OUTREACH PROGRAMS











University Outreach Programs

The Academy has continued to implement its recurring outreach programs at several colleges and universities.

On September 11-17, 2026, the Academy welcomed University of California, Riverside public policy students for the weeklong **Robert Heath Global Policy Scholars Program**. The program featured presentations from eleven experts: Graeme Bannerman, Allan Mustard, Tibor Nagy, Susan Burk, Alonzo Fulgham, Catherine Novelli, Jo Ellen Powell, Aaron Williams, Maria Reissaus, Susan Ziadeh, and Kurt Volker. This program has been generously endowed by UC Riverside alumnus and former FSO Robert Heath, who, together with another donor, put aside enough funds for seven more years of such visits.

On September 28, 2026, the Academy's annual Joseph J. Sisco Memorial Forum traveled to College Station, Texas, for a program at Texas A&M University. The event, titled **"Smart Power: Diplomacy in a Transnational, Transactional, and Techno World,"** featured AAD members David Satterfield, Geoffrey Pyatt, Rena Bitter, and Ronald Neumann. Beyond the main public event, the speakers also joined students and faculty from several TAMU classes throughout the day.

On October 21, 2026, the Academy visited Ann Arbor, Michigan, for the University of Michigan Ambassador's Forum. This year's program, **"Diplomacy and the Indian Subcontinent,"** focused on U.S. security, economic, and strategic interests in South Asia. The event featured AAD members Robert Blake, Gerald Feierstein, Robin Raphel, and Ronald Neumann and included a public discussion, meetings with undergraduate students, and class visits at two local high schools.

On October 26-27, 2026, AAD members Ronald Neumann, James F. Jeffrey, Anthony Rock, and Marcia Bernicatt traveled to the University of Nebraska-Omaha and Lincoln. They partnered with Burlington Capital (Omaha) and the Willard Scott Family Foundation (Lincoln) for the Nebraska Ambassadors Forum. This year's theme, **"Older than the Nation: The Changing Nature of American Diplomacy,"** explored American diplomatic history and how diplomats have adapted to emerging global challenges.

High School Outreach Programs

In addition to the university outreach programs, the Academy has continued to reach out to high school students. The Academy is committed to its mission of strengthening U.S. diplomacy by facilitating conversations with our esteemed members.

On September 25, 2026, AAD members John Feeley, Karen Sasahara, Tracey Ann Jacobson, and John Herbst welcomed a cohort of high school students from the **International Leadership of Texas** public charter schools for an afternoon of conversations. Each session included a presentation and a Q&A, covering topics such as the war in Ukraine, Central America, and the Middle East.

On November 2, 2026, the Academy inaugurated a day-long program at the **Moses Brown School** in Providence, Rhode Island. The opportunity came about through AAD members and Moses Brown alumnus Brian Nichols. Following a student-led panel, Ronald Neumann visited classrooms and spoke with countless students about the importance of American diplomacy. The event also included a luncheon with student leaders from Model United Nations, Mock Trial, and the Quaker Student Life Committee.







Upcoming Outreach Programs

Nov. 16, 2026	The General & The Ambassador Program at Hamilton College featuring Luis Arreaga
Nov. 20, 2026	2026 AAD Monticello Conference “American Diplomacy 250” featuring John Bass, Glenn Gerstell, Deborah McCarthy, Ronald Neumann, and Joan Polaschik
Dec. 2, 2026	“Who Gets Help and When? An Expert Panel on Disaster Diplomacy” featuring Peter Bodde, Chris Milligan, and Ricardo Zuniga
Feb. 8, 2027	Georgia Southern University Ambassadors Forum featuring Molly Williamson, Maureen Cormack, and Ronald Neumann
Mar. 17. 2027	Sisco Memorial Forum at the University of Minnesota featuring Rena Bitter, June Carter Perry, Michael McKinley and Ronald Neumann

INTERN PROJECTS

Every semester, AAD welcomes interns to its team. In addition to assisting the Academy with its day-to-day operations, our interns have the opportunity to create their own independent projects. Below are the recent outstanding projects completed by some of our interns. A sincere word of gratitude to all Academy members who have and continue to work closely with Academy interns on their projects.

FROM USAID TO U.S. AID: DO THE CAPITAL LETTERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Summer 2026 intern Anna Liston, a student at the University of Maryland, wrote an article, published on our website, examining the history and impacts of USAID. From the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to the DOGE's cancellation of USAID-managed foreign aid programs and the transfer of the remaining programs to the Department of State. The article includes interviews with AAD members Deborah Malac, Chris Milligan, Liliana Ayalde, Susan Reichle, Daniel Rosenblum, and Tibor Nagy.



CAN WE KEEP UP? A PODCAST SERIES ON HOW U.S. DIPLOMACY CAN COUNTERACT CHINA'S RISE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Summer 2026 intern Amanda Lisi, a recent graduate from George Washington University, produced a three-part podcast series detailing China's rising influence in Latin America and its relevance to U.S. policy. **"Can We Keep Up?"** features Academy members Liliana Ayalde on Brazil, Luis Moreno on Jamaica, and James Story on Venezuela.



Academy Social Media Presence

Through the second half of 2026, the Academy, in collaboration with partner organizations, has continued its exponential online growth. The Academy has also started two new series on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. **Ask a Diplomat**, featuring Academy members answering follower questions, and the **Article Round Up**, featuring member articles and interviews, have contributed immensely to our growth. Our total views in 2026 as of the end of Q3 are 545,000 on LinkedIn, 752,000 on Instagram, 219,000 on Facebook, and 108,000 on TikTok. A sincere thank you to all Academy members who continue to create and share our materials.

A reminder of the Academy's updated article policy: the Academy distributes all pieces written by members to Academy members by email once a day. The Academy will continue to spotlight op-eds, articles, and interviews done with mainstream media on its social media platforms. If you are interested in learning more about the Academy's public presence or growing your own, please contact the Public Affairs Coordinator, Josh Davis at jdavis@academyofdiplomacy.org

STAFF UPDATE

Academy Staff



Maria Reissaus
Executive Director



Morgan Kogan
Program & Finance Assistant



Josh Davis
Public Affairs Coordinator

Fall 2026 Intern Team



Campbell Clark



Celeste Pallares



Julia Reven

Summer 2026 Intern Team



Amanda Lisi



Anna Liston



William O'Reilly

Until this summer, the Graduate Fellow position, previously held by Josh Davis, has been a part-time appointment. However, given the Academy's growing social media footprint and expanding programs, Josh has become a full-time Public Affairs Coordinator.

The Academy also continues its year-round intern program, which welcomes 2-3 interns from universities nationwide each semester. In the summer of 2026, our interns were Amanda Lisi from George Washington University, Anna Liston from the University of Maryland, and William O'Reilly from Virginia Tech. This fall, our interns are Campbell Clark from Washington University in St. Louis, Celeste Pallares from the University of California, Berkeley, and Julia Reven from American University. We are grateful for their enthusiasm and contributions to the Academy!

Our internship program often serves as a springboard into diplomacy for young people, and many go on to accomplish exciting new things after leaving the Academy. Maria Ryan, a Fall 2025 intern, completed an internship in Indonesia this past summer with the Department of State, and Fall 2026 intern Julia Reven left early to take a position as an economist at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. We are incredibly proud of them and all of our internship alumni!

American Diplomat Podcast

The American Diplomat Podcast has a new co-host! Academy member Dan Rosenblum has taken over as Peter Romero transitions to a new role at Arizona State University's new program, the Diplomat Lounge. The **American Diplomat Podcast** continues to highlight stories from professional diplomats, including several Academy members. Overall, this year the podcast recorded 69 new episodes and reached 148,000 new unique downloads. The most recent nine episodes feature Dan Rosenblum as the new co-host. Be sure to follow the **American Diplomat Podcast** wherever you get your podcasts!



Founders' Society

The Academy would like to recognize the 53 members who went above and beyond in helping us achieve the goal of long-term sustainability by contributing or pledging $10,000 or more to the Academy's fundraising campaigns:

Madeleine Albright (in memory)
John Allen
Hushang Ansary
Robert Blake
Barbara Bodine
Thomas Boyatt
Kate Canavan
Timothy Carney (in memory)
Charles E. Cobb
Paula Dobriansky
Shaun Donnelly
Nancy Ely-Raphel (in memory)
Henrietta Fore
Alonzo L. Fulgham
Harold Geisel
Robert Gelbard
Edward Gnehm
Marc Grossman
John Hamre
William Harrop (in memory)
Stuart Holliday
Robert E. Hunter (in memory)
Jon Huntsman
Kay Bailey Hutchison
Janice Jacobs
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Robert Kimmitt
Steven Mann
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Anne Patterson
Thomas R. Pickering
Francis Ricciardone
Rozanne Ridgway
Charles Rivkin
Peter Romero
Edward Rowell (in memory)
George Shultz (in memory)
Carol Sisco
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Clyde Taylor
Francis X. Taylor
Michael Van Dusen
David Welch
Frank Wisner (in memory)
John Wolf
Robert Zoellick

Donors & Program Partners

The Academy would like to extend a sincere thank you to our donors, supporters, and program partners, without whom we would not be able to host the programs and do the work we do today.

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