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October 20, 2026

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The Academy's 2026 Dillon Book Award Winners Announced

Washington, D.C. – The American Academy of Diplomacy is pleased to announce that the winner of the 2026 Douglas Dillon Book Award for a Book of Distinction on the Practice of American Diplomacy is *Kennedy's Coup: A White House Plot, a Saigon Murder, and America's Descent into Vietnam* by Jack Cheevers, published by Simon & Schuster. The committee is granting a Special Citation to *Into the Wood Chipper: A Whistleblower's Account of How the Trump Administration Shredded USAID* by Nicholas Enrich, published by Simon & Schuster.

In *Kennedy's Coup*, Jack Cheevers eloquently tells a well-known story of events that led to the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem and America's subsequent war in Vietnam. While the book pays proper homage to military events and strategy, its exhaustive, nuanced look at diplomacy makes it unique. The leaks, the interagency squabbling, the ambassador's role, and the subjugation of diplomacy to military and intelligence players reveal diplomacy's complexities and occasional failures. Drawing on exceptionally well-sourced research, Cheevers artfully weaves the sprawling cast of American and Vietnamese characters into a broader analysis of struggles inside Washington over who made American foreign policy, and whether President Kennedy remained in control of the decisions made in his name. The cautionary tale about the difficulties of conducting diplomacy without a consensus on a unified strategy or sufficient control over the consequences remains relevant even today.

Nicholas Enrich's firsthand account of USAID's dismantling offers needed insight into one of the most consequential upheavals in recent American foreign assistance and the vast gap it left in America's broader diplomatic toolkit. A career official who became Assistant Administrator for Global Health after senior leaders were removed, Enrich had a front-row seat as the Administration dismantled USAID programs long regarded among its most successful. He chronicles the process's speed and confusion, his efforts to save what he could, and the limited attention the remaining programs received once they moved to the State Department.

The Academy has celebrated distinguished writing about US diplomatic efforts and achievements with its annual Douglas Dillon Book Award since 1995. The Academy will formally present the 2026 Dillon Book Award at its Annual Awards luncheon and ceremony on November 12, 2026.

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Strengthening American Diplomacy

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