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THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DIPLOMACY
STRENGTHENING AMERICAN DIPLOMACY

Forging a 21st-Century Diplomatic Service for the United States through Professional Education and Training

Forward by former NSC Head LTG Brent Scowcroft

Abridged Report

February 2011

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Jeremy Curtin served as lead drafter for this report under the auspices of the Center on Communication Leadership and Policy, University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

Foreword

by Brent Scowcroft

I warmly welcome this timely and action-oriented report by the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Stimson Center. At a time when US foreign policy interests face an unparalleled set of political, economic, strategic, and cultural challenges, this report puts into stark relief the urgent need to prepare and sustain a corps of American diplomatic professionals that is intellectually and operationally ready to lead in the new environment. Its publication is especially timely, as foreign affairs experts across the political spectrum call for a realignment of our national security structure, accompanied by a reallocation of resources to support adequately all three components of US international engagement — diplomacy, development, and defense.

The report emphasizes that on-the-job training alone is no longer a sufficient method, if it ever was, to develop a US diplomatic service that is second to none. In addition to mastering practical skills and tradecraft, our foreign affairs professionals must be fully capable of operating in a multitude of strategic, analytical, and programmatic environments. Their effectiveness, like that of their military counterparts, should rest on a systematic regime of education, training, and professional preparation — one that is linked to their career advancement.

In recommending that “every Foreign Service Officer ... should complete a year of advanced study ... as a requirement for promotion to the Senior Foreign Service,” the report recognizes that the international affairs landscape of the 21st century will be characterized by rapid change, emerging challenges, and new sets of issues. If the US is to maintain its leadership, the enhanced education and training of our diplomats and development experts will require an adequate and consistent resource flow. For decades, that flow has been a trickle as compared to the resources devoted to our military, even though the military acknowledges that most international challenges do not have a military solution. Even as the Foreign Service Institute has geared up to prepare US diplomats to serve in difficult new environments, personnel and budgetary shortages have made it difficult to release diplomats from operational demands so that they can receive necessary training in new skills and foreign languages. This has to change — and quickly.

A thorough recalibration of the instruments of American international engagement is overdue. Secretary of Defense Gates defined the problem neatly when he noted in 2007 that “during the 1990s, with the complicity of both the Congress and the White House, key instruments of America’s national power ... were allowed to wither or were abandoned.” This AAD/ Stimson Center report lays out a road map for restoring and enhancing the future viability of the diplomatic instrument of national power. I commend its recommendations for prompt action by decision-makers in the Executive Branch and on Capitol Hill.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent Scowcroft". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "B" and a stylized "S" at the end.

Lt. General Brent Scowcroft (USAF, ret.)

Dear Reader

Diplomatic education and training must be expanded to safeguard US interests. Over the past decade, the Department of State and the civilian agencies of the US government were under-funded and under-manned, and failed to play their part in US engagement overseas. The US military not only fought wars but also struggled to take on traditional diplomatic responsibilities. Both the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State acknowledge the acute need to address the imbalance caused by the failure to fund diplomacy. Diplomats and other civilians must lead and support diverse programs and activities overseas for the United States to utilize its power and influence effectively in a world of diverse and demanding threats to, and opportunities for, American interests.

A previous study, *A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness* (2008), documented the numbers of personnel needed by State and USAID. Filling that need remains half done. Progress must be sustained. Personnel recruited must be trained as well. The present study addresses the training and professional education needed by Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) to meet the changing requirements of the US government in the conduct of its foreign and national security policies.

In the 21st century, the relatively small US-citizen workforce of the Foreign Service must cover duties ranging from the traditional promotion of foreign and economic policies, treaty negotiation, crisis prevention and management, and protection of American citizens to a growing roster of responsibilities on counterterrorism, counternarcotics, border security, migration and refugees, climate and science cooperation, and post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction. This study considers ways and means to ensure that the right people with the right skills and education are available for the complex requirements of the new century.

The American Academy of Diplomacy and the Cox Foundation initiated this study, and enlisted the Stimson Center to provide support to the research, and a platform for a series of meetings of the project's Advisory Board, led by Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering. Those meetings enabled the project team of Robert Beecroft, Jeremy Curtin, Jonathan Larkin, and Harry Kopp to solicit the valuable input of former and current State Department officials

deeply knowledgeable about personnel, training, and professional education. We are grateful to all those who shared their wisdom and supported the goals and purpose of this study. The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) helped with the funding, as did the Delevan Foundation and the Academy itself.

It is our hope that those responsible for the training and education policies for the State Department and USAID will use this study to ensure adequate resources to carry them out. We have worked closely with currently serving officers in key positions, and while they are not responsible for the views of this independent study, our expectation is that the ideas generated here may be integrated into action plans. These ideas also are largely compatible with the training-related recommendations of the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), which was released in December 2010, after this study was largely completed. We see strong compatibility between the judgments of this report and the QDDR, broadly captured by the theme of “Training Our People for 21st-Century Missions,” and including many specific ideas, such as strengthening the role of the Chief of Mission to better oversee the diversity of staff at embassies, improving the diplomacy-development interaction at all levels, and generating new training modules for conflict, crisis, and instability requirements.

Sincerely,



Ambassador Ronald Neumann
President, American Academy of Diplomacy



Thomas R. Pickering
Advisory Group Chairman



Ellen Laipson
President and CEO, The Stimson Center



Robert M. Beecroft
Project Chairman

Executive Summary

We must use what has been called "smart power": the full range of tools at our disposal — diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural — picking the right tool, or combination of tools, for each situation. With "smart power," diplomacy will be the vanguard of foreign policy.¹

Since at least 2001, America's "smart power" equation has been out of balance. Increasingly, under-investment in diplomacy and development has led to our military taking on responsibilities traditionally met by diplomats and development experts. Driven by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the need to respond to the global threat of terrorism, resources and influence have flowed, abundantly and too often uncritically, to the Defense Department, which has pointed to the limitation of bullets in addressing the challenges in this region. This imbalance has two root causes. The first is the lack of broad understanding about the value and requirements of diplomacy and development at this point in history. The second is the lack of resources allocated to the State Department and other foreign affairs agencies. The inconsistent and uncoordinated response of those agencies to rapidly changing international priorities and demands has also played a contributing role.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates captured the problem succinctly in his remarks at Kansas State University in 2007:

Funding for non-military foreign-affairs programs has increased since 2001, but it remains disproportionately small relative to what we spend on the military, and to the importance of such capabilities. Consider that this year's budget for the Department of Defense — not counting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan — is nearly half a trillion dollars. The total foreign affairs budget request for the State Department is \$36 billion.... What is clear to me is that there is a need for a dramatic increase in spending on the civilian instruments of national security — diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign assistance, civic action, and economic reconstruction and development.²

¹ Hillary Rodham Clinton, Nomination hearing to be Secretary of State, statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC, January 13, 2009.

² Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Kansas State University, November 26, 2007.

There is little question that under-investment in diplomacy over the last decade or so has left our Foreign Service overstretched and under prepared.³

A 2008 report by the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Stimson Center, *A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future* (FAB), recommended a way forward, based on an increase of 3,500 positions for State by 2014.⁴ Over the past few years, the State Department and USAID have begun to rebuild through the increased hiring under the Diplomacy 3.0 initiative at State and the Development Leadership Initiative at USAID. These initiatives are intended to increase the size of the Foreign Service alone by 25% at State and 100% at USAID by 2014. If fully implemented — not a given in these strained budget times — these initiatives would finally allow State to fill longstanding vacancies and USAID to reduce its reliance on contractors and rebuild its own expertise.

A surge in new numbers, however, will not be enough. Crucially, more resources will be required to start providing a now admirably diverse diplomatic service a common professional formation, with ongoing education and training responsive to a rapidly changing geo-strategic environment, one in which Western values and post-World War II institutions must compete with challenging new forces. If America intends to be known for the quality and effectiveness of its diplomacy, we must sustain traditional skills and develop more broadly new capabilities demanded in an increasingly complex international environment.

Professional education and training are essential to raise the overall level of performance of our Foreign Service. This need is made even more acute by the shifting dynamics of international relations, characterized by geo-strategic change, rapidly evolving technology, and the urgency of leadership within a foreign affairs community vastly more varied than was the case even 10 years ago. For America's diplomats, the principal responsibility must be to manage change and

3 Government Accountability Office, "Additional Steps Needed to Address Continuing Staffing and Experience Gaps at Hardship Posts, GAO-09-874," September 2009; Government Accountability Office, Department of State - "Comprehensive Plan Needed to Address Persistent Foreign Language Shortfalls, GAO-09-955," September 2009.; *A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness*, the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Stimson Center, Washington, October 2008.

4 Although there is overlap between the FAB's recommendations and Diplomacy 3.0's actual hiring, a direct comparison is difficult because they present their numbers differently. The FAB recommended 3,500 new positions for State, including 1,099 for what it termed "core diplomacy"; 1,287 for training, 487 for public diplomacy; 562 for reconstruction and stabilization; and 50 for security assistance. These roughly 3,500 positions did not include the management, security, and technical support staff that would also have to be increased to support the increase in officers for political, economic, consular, and public diplomacy.

minimize instability and conflict and, when conflict has occurred, to take a leading role in post-conflict stabilization. The very nature of the Foreign Service, with frequent transfers, reassignments, new duties, and bodies of knowledge to master every few years, further raises the importance of a firm commitment to early and ongoing professional education and training for those already active and those being selected into diplomatic service for the coming decades.

Formal training has grown in importance as traditional means of acquiring the knowledge, skills, and know-how of the diplomatic profession — especially on-the-job training and guidance from more senior officers — have lost much of their effectiveness. Hiring shortfalls over the past 20 years have created gaps in the mid-level ranks, resulting in a shortage of the very officers who should be providing practical advice and hands-on training to the rising generation of new officers. Available quality mentoring resources continue to be outstripped by growth in the lower ranks of the Service.

Education and training for 21st-century diplomatic service must be part of a *coherent pattern of professional development* to ensure that from entry level through mid-level ranks Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) have a clear understanding of the calling as protectors of national interests through negotiation whenever possible and in post-conflict stabilization, when required. Our officers must be prepared both for specific assignments and increasingly senior coordination, oversight responsibilities, and leadership. Like military officers and corporate leaders, FSOs, especially at the senior level, require the ability to think beyond the moment and tactical needs — to act strategically, to plan and execute complex operations and policy initiatives, and to lead effectively in a vastly more varied foreign affairs environment than existed even a decade ago. The professional development of FSOs should include, in addition to sustained practical training, a comprehensive and well-articulated curriculum to be accomplished over time, with the goal of producing greater intellectual and operational breadth and a wider command of the great issues of the day affecting US national security and global interests.

Recognition of the need for robust professional education and training is a first step. To act on this recognition requires the necessary financial and human resources. Establishing the necessary professional development process for the Foreign Service will take sustained commitment — from the State Department, from various administrations, and from Congress — to a 15%

training float that cannot be eaten away again. Even with full commitment and support, some steps will take time, both to recruit more FSOs and highly qualified mentors and educators and to allow our next generation of diplomats to gain knowledge and experience as they rise through the ranks. The Department has undertaken important steps already. More remains to be done.

The three initial recommendations that follow address the resources and decisions essential to progress. They are equally essential to the many detailed training recommendations of the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR). The three “big picture” recommendations are followed by important, specific reforms and changes critical to the professional education and training of the nation’s diplomats.

While this report focuses on the Department of State, all the foreign affairs agencies — United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Foreign Commercial Service (FCS), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), and International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) — confront similar professional education and training problems; therefore, our recommendations should be reviewed, adjusted, and adopted by all the foreign affairs agencies.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: Redress the under-investment in diplomacy and the consequent imbalance between defense, on one side, and diplomacy and development, on the other, by fully funding Diplomacy 3.0.

RECOMMENDATION 2: To provide and sustain an explicit 15% level of personnel above that required for regular assignment to create positions for training (training float).

RECOMMENDATION 3: Make a long-term commitment to investing in the professional education and training needed to build a 21st-century diplomatic service of the United States able to meet the complex challenges and competition we face in the coming decades.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Strengthen and expand the Department of State’s professional development process to ensure that all FSOs receive the training needed for immediate assignments and the combination of training, professional education, and assignments needed for foreign policy leadership positions in the future.

4.1: To the maximum extent possible, require that FSOs, before they begin assignments to specific positions, complete courses currently recommended as preparation for those positions.

4.2: As staff resources become available, give education and training priority over other staffing requirements, eliminating waivers, save in the most exceptional circumstances.

4.3: Synchronize the timing of increases in required training with the inflow of new staff, funding for teaching positions, facilities required for expansion, and travel to allow education and training to take place in fact as well as in theory.

4.4: Strengthen the Office of Career Development and Assignments in State's Bureau of Human Resources (HR/CDA) with a cadre of Civil Service Human Resources Professionals for continuity and institutional memory purposes, supplementing the field experience of the FSO Career Development Officers. Such Human Resources Professionals would also assist workforce planning by helping to coordinate assignment patterns with long-term strategic plans.

Resources: Although the Department does not have exact planning models for short-term training and "persons in motion," it calculates that Diplomacy 3.0 would provide staffing necessary to fill vacancies and account for "persons in motion" between assignments, thus freeing FSOs for the short-term training foreseen as necessary in this recommendation. Establishing a cadre of Human Resources Professionals in HR/CDA would require seven to 10 additional GS employees, ranging from GS-11 to GS-14, at a total annual cost of between \$1.33 million and \$1.90 million.⁵

RECOMMENDATION 5: As a response to the problems that the mid-level gap has caused for mentoring, establish a temporary corps of roving counselors, drawn extensively from among recently retired officers with appropriate skills, who can remain abroad for periods of several weeks or months to provide counseling, advice, and career guidance focused on supervision and section/resource management.

⁵ The State Department calculates the average cost of a domestic Civil Service position at \$190,000.

5.1: Require that all officers going into positions where they will oversee new employees take a short course, perhaps through distance learning, on supervising and mentoring new employees.

5.2: Require officers going into positions where they will supervise Locally Employed Staff (foreign nationals) to take a course on supervising employees in other cultures.

RECOMMENDATION 6: All FSOs are exposed to on-the-job training over the course of their careers. To maximize its value, the Department should contract a study that will examine best practices in the field to determine how on-the-job training can be most effectively conducted.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Every FSO at the FS-01 or FS-02 level should complete a year of advanced study related to his or her career track as a requirement for promotion to the Senior Foreign Service.

Resources: Considering the average rate of promotion into the FS-02 rank and through FS-02 and FS-01, we calculate that this recommendation would require a permanent increase of 161 FSOs, with the increase phased in over 13 years. In addition, to accommodate officers at the FS-02 rank when the requirement took effect, an additional 145 FSOs would need to be hired at the beginning of the program and maintained for 10 years. When fully established, the program would provide advanced study to about 285 FSOs a year, including in that number the 125 currently in long-term training.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Before a new Chief of Mission (COM) begins pre-assignment consultations in the Department, the relevant bureau and country directorate personnel should be fully prepared to assist him or her proactively in quickly and accurately identifying the major policy issues relevant to the COM's new responsibilities and to arrange for appropriately targeted consultations.

8.1: To assist desk officers and others responsible for preparing new COMs for their posts, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) should develop a short course, possibly through distance learning, focused on proactive techniques for identifying key policy issues and arranging for relevant appointments.

8.2: FSI should develop a brief familiarization course for new non-career State Department officials, whether serving in Washington or

overseas. The course should focus on the structure and procedures of the Department, the interagency process, and Washington power relationships. For those going to embassies or other missions overseas, personnel-related responsibilities and the role of the Country Team should be included. (Non-career COMs should be required to take the course before proceeding to the regular COM course, unless prior experience or the absolute needs of the Service make a waiver advisable).

Diplomacy 3.0

Projected Foreign Service Employment (End of Fiscal Year)⁶

	FY08 (base)	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	5 Year Increase
Total Foreign Service	11,772	12,642	13,383	13,813	14,223	14,633	2,681
New Hires		1,355	1,370	830	810	810	
Attrition		398	400	400	400	400	
Net Gain		957	970	430	410	410	3,177
Net FSO		567	646	322	310	310	2,155
Net Specialist		390	324	108	100	100	1,022
% Increase (Cumulative)		7%	14%	17%	21%	24%	24%

⁶ These figures are from the 2010 Personnel Strategy Report, tables three and 14, prepared by the Department of State's Office of Resource Management and Organizational Analysis. These figures are periodically reviewed and revised. FSO/Specialist splits are notional and based on recent hiring ratios. Of the new FSO hires in FY09, 60% went to fill vacant positions, 26% to training, and 14% to new positions. In FY10, 34% went to fill vacancies caused by additional personnel in training with 66% going to new positions.

Future Requirements for Diplomatic Professional Development, Education, and Training

We must learn from our experiences as we define the civilian mission and give our people the training, tools, and structures they need.⁷

Much has been said in recent years about the “militarization of US foreign policy.” Recent and current efforts at the Department of State have been made to build the capabilities essential to rebalance the respective roles of diplomacy, development, and defense. They are a starting point, but more is required. The professional development of America’s diplomats requires a clear and deliberate strategy, one that integrates assignments and training throughout a career, develops and rewards core skills and knowledge, and incorporates new intellectual and functional skill sets into a body of diplomatic knowledge that is as fundamental to the practice of American diplomacy as its military counterpart is to the practice of defense and security.

Three basic questions require answers:

1. What is the body of knowledge that American diplomats need?
2. Can the body of knowledge be learned on the job?
3. What needs to be done to ensure that US diplomats are fully qualified to protect and advance America’s interests in a rapidly changing world?

1. What is the body of knowledge that American diplomats need?

The body of knowledge grows throughout a career. Learning never stops.

- **Early Career (FS-06 to FS-04, two tours⁸):** There are two components to the foundational skills of the Foreign Service — the value added that US diplomatic professionals bring to the policy table. The first is area expertise, i.e., a profound knowledge of the political, economic, and social realities of other countries, societies, and groups. The second is a solid

⁷ QDDR, p. xiii.

⁸ See Appendix D: “Foreign Service Primer.”

command of foreign languages, a necessary skill if one is to develop true area expertise. Essential supporting skills include leadership, contact work, policy analysis, management, public diplomacy, and the ability to engage effectively with non-traditional publics and individuals. Finally, all diplomats need to know, from the very outset of their careers, how to protect American citizens abroad and America's borders, including through proper visa procedures.

- **Mid-Level (FS-03 to FS-01, five to eight tours):** As they move through the mid-level ranks, Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) reinforce their skills and expertise through assignments to embassies abroad, missions to international organizations, and positions in Washington. By the time they reach FS-01, they should have added significantly to their basic body of knowledge, so that they are able to draw on well-developed skills and related experience in multiple areas: negotiation; policy formulation; pre-crisis preventive action; crisis management; post-conflict and reconstruction and stabilization operations; program development, implementation, and evaluation; operating in the interagency environment; managing staffs and budgets; and mentoring junior officers.⁹ Strong strategic thinking and planning abilities are essential underpinnings.

Some FSOs, consistent with their career tracks and assignments, will also develop advanced knowledge in specialized substantive areas, including democracy and human rights, science and technology, complex economic and trade issues, refugees and humanitarian relief, counterterrorism and counter-narcotics, or arms control and nonproliferation. Not all FSOs will be expected to master these subjects to the same degree, but all should have some understanding of them. The mix of issues of greatest urgency and importance to the US will change over the course of an officer's career. Officers will have to adjust their priorities and refocus accordingly.¹⁰

- **Senior Level (Counselor, Minister-Counselor, Career Minister):** An officer who reaches the Senior Foreign Service is expected to have amassed the breadth and depth of substantive knowledge, policy

⁹ *Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future*, p. 19. More and more FSOs are serving in hardship posts of one kind or another where effective civilian-military coordination is essential. Cf. Dobbins.

¹⁰ See, for example, QDDR p. 42: "In a world in which economic and political issues are ever more interconnected, State's Political Officers—in addition to its Economic Officers—must understand the economic dimensions of political challenges and the political dimensions of economic ones. To build our Political Officers' fluency in economics and finance, we will mandate training in geo-economics for political cone Foreign Service personnel."

expertise, operational skills, and management ability that are required at the highest levels of profession. However, the experience of senior officers varies significantly, as does their aptitude and readiness for service in specific senior positions. Some Senior Foreign Service Officers will have had little experience managing large, high-profile organizations. Those assigned abroad as Chief or Deputy Chief of Mission (COM) may lack an operational understanding of the relationships among agencies under COM authority at the post to which they are assigned and an understanding of how these connect to interagency dynamics in Washington. They may lack experience in program management and accountability issues and processes, skills that are especially relevant at posts where USAID is present. Those assigned in Washington as Assistant or Deputy Assistant Secretary in a geographic or functional bureau will require acute policy sense, exceptional stamina, mastery of the bureaucratic and interagency environment, and finely honed interpersonal skills — skills not necessarily developed in assignments overseas.

The need for exceptionally high levels of knowledge, skills, and management ability applies equally to non-career officials filling senior positions. Even the most experienced non-career appointee may lack detailed understanding of the State Department and the interagency process.

2. Can the body of knowledge be learned on the job?

Only imperfectly and inconsistently and not at a level and with the quality that is required and expected of the world's leading power.

Issues related to future professional education and training of America's diplomats are part of a broader debate about the place of diplomacy in the national security structure of the 21st century. Whether termed "transformational diplomacy" or "smart power," the professional requirements of diplomacy have changed since the end of the Cold War and especially since September 11, 2001. Adapting to change has become a professional necessity for FSOs throughout their careers. New skills are needed, and traditional skills must be applied in new ways. New bodies of knowledge — of emerging cultures, of global issues, of unfamiliar bureaucratic environments — have to be learned. As we have seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, trying to acquire

the necessary skills and knowledge in the middle of operations in the field can be inefficient, ineffective, and at times life threatening.¹¹

On-the-job training is an essential part of professional development. The accumulation of experience in Foreign Service work and life shapes an officer's temperament and judgment and builds a vital, sustaining network of relationships with US colleagues and foreign counterparts. But as noted earlier, the mentoring that was a central part of learning on the job has frayed. The ratio of experienced officers to those with less than 10 years' experience has shifted profoundly toward the latter. There are no longer enough senior mentors for the increased intake of new officers, and the mid-level gap will produce faster promotions with less time to gain experience. At the same time, the body of knowledge that a senior officer must master keeps growing and changing. Operational assignments alone cannot prepare a mid-level officer for senior responsibilities. A formal, sustained continuum of education and training is overdue.

FSI has done much to assist with new training and new ways of delivering courses. Now these changes must be regularized and institutionalized. Because the pace of diplomatic activity is relentless and the working life of FSOs is regularly driven by the demands of daily tasks, professional training must be protected and integrated into requirements for promotion and more senior assignments, or it will be pushed aside. As officers rise to senior ranks, they must be given opportunities to develop their thinking on a more strategic level beyond the tactical pressures of the moment.

It is worth noting that the diplomatic services of other major powers, including the UK, China, India, and Brazil, impose educational and targeted training requirements on their officers for advancement through the ranks. Chinese diplomats, for example, must take a leadership and management training course, along with courses on international relations, economics and finance, international history, Chinese history, protocol, and consular affairs for promotion to Second Secretary. While mandatory, these courses are completed while the officers continue with their normal duties.

The hiring surge of the Diplomacy 3.0 initiative is providing the Department with a strong foundation in additional staffing for necessary education and training. It is essential that Congress continue the funding to complete Diplomacy 3.0

¹¹ *US Uplift in Afghanistan is Progressing but Some Key Issues Merit Further Examination as Implementation Continues*, Office of the Special Investigator for Afghanistan Reconstruction, October 26, 2010.

and create the required training/education float of about 15%. Over time, further increases in staffing would be required to fully meet the training and educational needs identified in this report, particularly for the mid-level year of advanced education.

3. What needs to be done to ensure that US diplomats are fully qualified to protect and advance America's interests in a rapidly changing world?

Policies need to be put in place that link professional development to assignments and promotions.

The State Department's Bureau of Human Resources, in consultation with the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), developed the Career Development Program (CDP). The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) has introduced a vast array of courses on general and specific topics, from supervision to computer security, with nearly 2,000 courses available for distance learning. Yet several factors make these voluntary approaches inadequate. Bureaus are under pressure to staff their positions, officers are under pressure to take critical assignments and fill vacant slots, and there is a perception among some FSOs that selection boards regularly reward operational work over education and training.¹² In times of personnel scarcity, assignments to training are often the first cut and the last reinstated. When training is "mandatory," the obligation is generally enforced, but training requirements in general often are waived. A large expansion of mandatory training or more long-term education is not feasible without more staff, and a change in culture away from resistance to training is not likely without more mandates and a change in the behavior of selection boards.

Without the ability to link assignments to career development for the long-term needs of the Foreign Service, assignments will continue to be determined on short-term and individual preferences. In sum, recent improvements in professional development are significant and necessary, but they are not sufficient to ensure that FSOs acquire the body of knowledge they will need to master at each stage of their careers.

¹² While there is evidence that there is a competitive disadvantage for officers who are eligible and considered for promotion while undertaking long term training, the competitive advantage of long-term training is paid back downstream in one's career one to two years or further out after the training is completed.

Recommendations:

Securing the Necessary Resources

Implementation of this study's specific reforms and changes will not be possible without sustained commitment and resources from Congress.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Redress the under-investment in diplomacy and the consequent imbalance between defense, on one side, and diplomacy and development, on the other, by fully funding Diplomacy 3.0.

RECOMMENDATION 2: To provide and sustain an explicit 15% level of personnel above that required for regular assignment to create positions for training (training float).

RECOMMENDATION 3: Make a long-term commitment to investing in the professional education and training needed to build a 21st-century diplomatic service of the United States able to meet the complex challenges and competition we face in the coming decades.

Systematic Professional Development

American diplomacy cannot be fully effective in the multidimensional environment of the 21st century without a comprehensive professional development strategy for its diplomats. Such a strategy will integrate assignments with a robust, mandatory training curriculum throughout a Foreign Service career, promoting officers who demonstrate mastery of the skills of their profession.¹³

The CDP recognized that assignments and training need to be integrated in order to prepare officers for their assignments and build careers on a coherent and evolving base of knowledge and experience. As the first officers to work in the CDP approach the senior threshold, the Department should urgently evaluate the CDP and refine it. The CDP should retain a core set of requirements in leadership, management, and language skills for all officers, while adding mandatory courses tailored to officers in particular functions and positions. Much of what now are “recommendations” must become firmer requirements. To accomplish this will require not only increases in positions for training envisioned under Diplomacy 3.0 but also some increases in teaching positions, facilities, and funding for travel.

¹³ Advisory Committee on Transformational Diplomacy: “Final Report of the State Department in 2025 Working Group,” January 2008, p. 33.

Additionally, the Secretary and her senior deputies will have to affirm the importance of training and support training discipline in the face of pressure for exemptions driven by operational needs. Without support from the top, the Service will not have the authority to impose the required discipline.

Currently, the Office of Career Development and Assignments in the Bureau of Human Resources (HR/CDA) is staffed primarily by FSOs, including about 50 FSOs who serve as Career Development Officers (CDOs). They bring essential experience and insight from field operations, but they are reassigned every two or three years, have little time to follow their clients' careers, and lack professional training in career guidance and workforce planning. A program of professional development needs informed professionals to undergird it. HR/CDA needs to be reinforced by the addition of a small cadre of full-time Civil Service HR Specialists who can provide to their FSO supervisors continuity and in-depth guidance on the rules and regulations that apply to assignments, promotions, and related personnel matters.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Strengthen and expand the Department of State's professional development process to ensure that all FSOs receive the training needed for immediate assignments and the combination of training, professional education, and assignments needed for foreign policy leadership positions in the future.

- 4.1:** To the maximum extent possible, require that FSOs, before they begin assignments to specific positions, complete courses currently recommended as preparation for those positions.
- 4.2:** As staff resources become available, give education and training priority over other staffing requirements, eliminating waivers save in the most exceptional circumstances.
- 4.3:** Synchronize the timing of increases in required training with the inflow of new staff, funding for teaching positions, facilities required for expansion, and travel to allow education and training to take place in fact as well as in theory.
- 4.4:** Strengthen the Office of Career Development and Assignments in State's Bureau of Human Resources (HR/CDA) with a cadre of Civil Service Human Resources professionals for continuity and institutional

memory purposes, supplementing the field experience of the FSO Career Development Officers. Such human resources professionals would also assist workforce planning by helping to coordinate assignment patterns with long-term strategic plans.

Resources: Although the Department does not have exact planning models for short-term training and "persons in motion," it calculates that Diplomacy 3.0 would provide staffing necessary to fill vacancies and account for "persons in motion" between assignments, thus freeing FSOs for the short-term training foreseen as necessary in this recommendation. Establishing a cadre of human resources professionals in HR/CDA would require seven to ten additional Civil Service, GS, employees, ranging from GS-11 to GS-14, at a total annual cost of between \$1.33 million and \$1.90 million.

Dealing with the Mid-Level Gap

Before severe shortages developed in the 1990s, officers regularly received informal mentoring from their supervisors and other more senior officers. Over the years, the informal, non-bureaucratic process of mentoring has played a key role in enhancing the sense of unity and common purpose across the ranks of the service. However, for some years to come, there will not be enough experienced high-level officers to maintain traditional levels of mentoring. The deficit is already evident in terms of the deficit in knowledge and supervisory skills at the mid-level, as well as in the gap in sufficient numbers of mid-level officers.

The mid-career gap has specific implications for professional education and training. To deal with the need to more rapidly institute mid-level skills, we recommend the establishment of a corps of roving mentors and career counselors using serving officers, supplemented by recently retired FSOs. Such officers would travel to posts and hold regional career guidance sessions, providing advice to officers facing new situations for which they lack background, particularly in the areas of supervision and management of personnel and resources. By remaining in the field for extended periods, such roving counselors would be able to provide more detailed training. Their presence would alleviate the problem caused by short staffing that now prevents posts from releasing officers for exactly the supervisory and management training that is most critical.

The mid-level gap is expected to persist for five to seven years, until increases in hiring reach the middle grades. We recommend several interlinked steps to address the problem. Some, which go beyond the training focus of this report, include:

- Limited career extensions, to keep qualified officers for a few additional years when their time in service would otherwise force retirement.
- Use of recently retired officers to return to duty to fill many of the mid-career needs (this will require legislation to allow for longer periods than is now permitted).
- Accelerated promotions within the service.
- Selective use of Civil Service personnel (currently being introduced).
- Flexibility in allowing Civil Service conversions to Foreign Service for those who have already served the required number of Foreign Service excursion tours.
- The use of limited non-career hires¹⁴ for specific needs, particularly in crisis and stabilization missions.

Anecdotal but widespread accounts, by both entry-level officers working in the Department and more experienced officers working with them, raise several common themes deriving from the extensive use of new officers for substantive-level positions. Basic skills are lacking in drafting, understanding interagency processes (including what and how to coordinate them), control officer skills, and the purpose and process of clearances. These shortfalls are exacerbated by the mid-level gap. With entry-level officers being sent to a greatly increased number of supervisory positions, there is significant evidence that their supervisors do not understand the degree to which their new charges lack the necessary background. All supervisors, especially new supervisors, must be aware of the need to mentor and train new officers assigned to demanding positions before they have gained experience in basic operational procedures and practices. Supervisors need to be prepared to build on the basic knowledge of the Department, including the human resources system and the intricacies of the annual efficiency report process.

RECOMMENDATION 5: As a response to the problems that the mid-level gap has caused for mentoring, establish a temporary corps of roving counselors, drawn extensively from among recently retired officers with appropriate skills, who can remain abroad for periods of several weeks or months to provide

¹⁴ The term “limited non-career” means limited, by current law, to five years, and not eligible for conversion to the career service.

counseling, advice, and career guidance focused on supervision and section/resource management.

5.1: Require that all officers going into positions where they will oversee new employees take a short course, perhaps through distance learning, on supervising and mentoring new employees.

5.2: Require officers going into positions where they will supervise Locally Employed Staff (foreign nationals) to take a course on supervising employees in other cultures.

Mid-Level Training on the Job

Historically, FSOs have had relatively few opportunities for professional education and training, partly because of a persistent lack in financial and personnel resources at State. Many others, both inside and outside the Service, believed that FSOs already had all the education and training they needed to be effective diplomats. By default, on-the-job training became the primary focus of professional development in the Foreign Service. While on-the-job training has lost some of its effectiveness in recent years, as we have noted above, informal mentoring and guidance from senior officers are likely to remain a valuable part of most FSO's professional development.

The continuing relevance of on-the-job training being connected to high-quality mentoring derives from two considerations. One is that, given the broad variety of tasks FSO's perform, a major expansion in training and education as recommended by this report cannot be expected to cover all that needs to be learned by a successful officer. Secondly, as in any profession, there is a need for those with years in the service to pass on their experience in multiple ways, small and large. Yet while the Service has and will continue to require mentoring as a central part of forming succeeding generations of diplomats, there has rarely been any systematic effort to teach mentoring itself; to study what techniques work best, to examine whether and how generational changes (the so called generation X or generation Y) make some mentoring approaches more or less successful, and to profit from the experience of those recognized to be superior mentors. Accordingly, we believe that the Department should make a more systematic effort to develop guidelines and best practices for the use of those charged with on-the-job training.

RECOMMENDATION 6: All FSOs are exposed to on-the-job training over the course of their careers. To maximize its value, the Department should contract a study that will examine best practices in the field to determine how on-the-job training can be most effectively conducted.

Mid-Level Training and Education

As they rise to more senior ranks, FSOs need to acquire and refine the ability to think strategically beyond the requirements of specific assignments, to reflect on the broad policy issues of the day and the directions of their profession, and to develop their intellectual capabilities free from the frenetic pace of daily work. Training for specific positions is not sufficient preparation for this larger role. As our military colleagues phrase it, “we train for certainty, but we educate for uncertainty.”¹⁵ Periods away from the demands of a frenetic daily schedule enable FSOs to address issues that are vitally important, but not necessarily urgent, to refresh their intellectual capital and to prepare to respond to the broad gamut of challenges the United States faces in international affairs.

We see great value in a mandated year of study for all mid-level FSOs preparing for the senior ranks, similar to the Army’s assignment of its majors to a year of study at the Command and General Staff College. Such a year would reinforce a common sense of mission and core skills, although specific needs will vary depending on an officer’s experience, likely future assignments, and areas of specialization. A Management Officer may well require advanced education different from that of a Political Officer, and an Economic Officer would likely have different choices from those made by a Public Diplomacy Officer. The QDDR points out, however, that all would benefit from advanced training that focuses on strategic issues and analysis, leadership skills, program management, and relevant substantive knowledge, including development issues.¹⁶

Because of the importance of civil-military coordination, professional education at the National Defense University and other Defense Department schools will have particular value for many officers. In other cases, high-level strategic planning and the budget may be a better focus. In all cases, exposure to interagency processes and the “whole of government” approach for foreign policy will be important. It is our view that these opportunities for advanced

15 BG Volney J. Warner, USA, and Lt Col James H. Willbanks, USA (ret) “Preparing Field Grade Officers for Today and Tomorrow,” *Military Review*, Jan – Feb 2006, pp. 104 – 111.

16 QDDR, pp. 173 – 175.

education should come at the FS-02 and FS-01 levels, after officers have gained experience of working in particular career tracks, and have a sense of their own individual interests and aptitudes.¹⁷

At present, about 125 mid-level officers (mainly FS-01s and FS-02s) each year take advantage of current long-term education programs. About 85 mid-level officers each year are assigned to a full year of study at the National Defense University or another educational institution attached to the Department of Defense. Another 40 officers are assigned to study at civilian universities and institutions.

Even if funds were available and even if the infrastructure were in place, it would be several years at best before the Department could hire and promote to the middle grades sufficient numbers of officers to support the comprehensive program we believe proper, without stripping operational positions of their personnel. We propose, therefore, a cascade or stair-step approach, building on existing programs and allowing mid-level education and training to expand as resources permit.

If all FSOs promoted to FS-02 after a given date are required to complete a year of advanced study as a condition of promotion to the Senior Foreign Service, a gradual increase in the number of FSOs assigned to advanced study will be necessary — from about 125 to 285 per year. If the same requirement were also imposed on officers who are currently FS-02s, additional positions will be needed temporarily to accommodate them. (We do not recommend placing this requirement on current FS-01s, many of whom are already competing for promotion to the Senior Foreign Service.)

RECOMMENDATION 7: Every FSO at the FS-01 or FS-02 level should complete a year of advanced study related to his or her career track as a requirement for promotion to the Senior Foreign Service.

¹⁷ For some officers, detached service with another agency or with the Congress can provide an opportunity to refocus, acquire, or reinforce substantive and functional skills, expand relationships, and improve one's understanding of interagency operations. The experiences of FSOs who have spent a year or two on the National Security Council staff, in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, with the US Trade Representative's office, at the Office of Management and Budget, at USAID, with the Voice of America, on the staff of a member of Congress or a congressional committee, or in the private sector, have been almost uniformly positive. About 175 FSOs now have such opportunities. We believe they should be greatly expanded as part of a program of mid-level learning. Many of them are personnel exchanges that are essentially cost-free. While we recognize the added value of detached service, and we believe that as many FSOs as possible should have that opportunity, detached service does not eliminate the need for advanced professional education and training separate from operational assignments.

Resources: Considering the average rate of promotion into the FS-02 rank and through FS-02 and FS-01, we calculate that this recommendation would require a permanent increase of 161 FSOs, with the increase phased in over 13 years. In addition, to accommodate officers at the FS-02 rank when the requirement took effect, an additional 145 FSOs would need to be hired at the beginning of the program and maintained for 10 years. When fully established, the program would provide advanced study to about 285 FSOs a year, including in that number the 125 currently in long-term training.

“Running an embassy is more complicated than ever. We will give our Chiefs of Mission the tools they need to oversee the work of all US government agencies working in their host country... We will enhance their training...”
— Secretary Clinton¹⁸

The Senior Level and Chiefs of Mission (COM)

The experience of senior officers, even the best, varies significantly from case to case, as does his or her background in the country or organization to which he or she may be assigned as a COM. Every country or organization has its own share of specific policy issues. US government agencies at post under COM authority may have particular perspectives that a COM needs to understand as he or she prepares to go to post. Knowledge of program management, and accountability issues and processes, is essential where there is a USAID presence. International organizations have their own mandates, cultures, and practices that a senior officer must understand in advance in order to lead successfully. In Washington, managing a large geographic or functional bureau brings its own set of leadership challenges, including acute policy sense, exceptional stamina, mastery of the bureaucratic and interagency environment, and effective interpersonal skills.

COMs preparing to depart for post rarely have much time for consultations. Some COMs, though broadly experienced, skilled, and accomplished, will still be new to their countries of assignment and will need to identify quickly and accurately during consultations the issues that require attention. Broad

¹⁸ Remarks at Town Hall Meeting on the release of the first *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*, “Leading through Civilian Power,” Washington, December 15, 2010. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/12/152934.htm>

anecdotal evidence from many former COMs is, while bureaus and Country Directorate Officers are willing in principle to do their utmost to prepare a new COM, supporting officers (e.g. at the desk level) frequently fail to understand their key role in identifying the full range of policy, personnel, bureaucratic, and fiscal issues that a new COM needs to master during initial consultations. As a result, COMs on their way to the field frequently spend too much of a short period of consultation identifying those issues for themselves. A tightly focused training course for country directorate and desk officers would support them in their efforts to identify the principal issues of concern to departing COMs and arrange for appropriate consultations. Such a course should require a day or two, and could be accomplished via distance learning.

The need for superior knowledge, skills, and management ability applies equally to non-career officials filling senior positions, whether at US embassies or international missions abroad or in the State Department in Washington. However, non-career officials have additional needs: to become familiar with the structure of the Department, to gain quickly some sense of Washington power relationships and to become acquainted with the operation of the interagency processes that bear on the policy and management issues they will face. They would also benefit from a brief but focused introduction to internal mission dynamics and common pitfalls in the field. The investment of a new non-career appointee's time in a short, well-structured course or detailed briefing, designed by FSI, would be rapidly repaid in gains in efficiency and operational effectiveness on the job. Strong support by senior Department leaders would be essential.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Before a new COM begins pre-assignment consultations in the Department, the relevant bureau and country directorate personnel should be fully prepared to assist him or her proactively in quickly and accurately identifying the major policy issues relevant to the COM's new responsibilities and to arrange for appropriately targeted consultations.

8.1: To assist desk officers and others responsible for preparing new COMs for their posts, FSI should develop a short course, possibly through distance learning, focused on proactive techniques for identifying key policy issues and arranging for relevant appointments.

8.2: FSI should develop a brief familiarization course for new non-career State Department officials, whether serving in Washington or

overseas. The course should focus on the structure and procedures of the Department, the interagency process, and Washington power relationships. For those going to embassies or other missions overseas, personnel-related responsibilities and the role of the Country Team should be included. (Non-career COMs should be required to take the course before proceeding to the regular COM course, unless prior experience or the absolute needs of the Service make a waiver advisable).

The Senior Seminar

The Department of State's Senior Seminar (1958 – 2004) provided a limited number of carefully selected Senior Foreign Service, Senior Executive Service and military officers with a year-long professional development opportunity of the highest caliber. The Seminar was particularly noteworthy for its interagency nature, bringing together future leaders of agencies from across the national security apparatus. Although a number of factors led to its demise, linked primarily to competing State Department and other-agency priorities and resources, the Senior Seminar left behind a distinguished legacy and addressed needs that remain as pressing as ever:

- To educate senior national security officials across the government, broaden their horizons and expand their thinking about the strategic, political, economic, and cultural influences, domestic and international, that affect our nation's security and shape our policies.
- To deepen, in fundamental and profound ways, its members' understanding of US national security and the role of the Department of State as the lead foreign affairs agency of the US government;
- To organize discussions with thought leaders in and outside government, promote individual research and writing, and provide its members an opportunity for reflection and creative thinking;
- To enhance members' executive skills in areas that include senior leadership, public speaking, and congressional relations.

We encourage the Department to consider ways to revive the spirit, goals, and objectives of the Senior Seminar, including through internal and interagency discussions, culminating in cooperative professional education opportunities that respond to the above objectives.

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