

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL



Testimony of Ambassador (R) Thomas D. Boyatt
President, Foreign Affairs Council

*Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the
Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia
Chairman Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI)
Hearing on:
"Building a Stronger American Diplomatic Presence to
Meet the Challenges of a Post-9-11 World"
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Mr. Chairman, Senator Voinovich, distinguished Senators. Thank you very much for the opportunity appear before this subcommittee to address one of the most serious challenges facing the government, namely building a stronger American diplomatic presence to meet the challenges of today. In a deeper sense, I would like to express to you the sincere gratitude of all of us who care about the management of the Foreign Service and State Department for focusing the attention of the Senate and the American people on the reality that management of the institutions that make and carry-out foreign policy is just as important as the policies themselves.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) has just completed and published its third biennial assessment of the stewardship of the Secretary of State as a leader and manager. We have sent copies of this report to all Members of both Houses and to the staffs of relevant committees including -

importantly – this Committee. I respectfully request that our Report be included in and made part of the record of these proceedings. I have a brief statement following which I would be happy to answer any questions.

The FAC is a nonpartisan umbrella group of the Chief Executive Officers of 11 organizations concerned about the processes of diplomacy, the people of the Foreign Service and State Department, and the quality of their leadership. We do not address foreign policy issues. The members of our constituent organizations include the vast majority of serving officers, large numbers of retired officers, virtually all former Ambassadors whether from the career service or appointed from private life, as well as representatives from the business sector, from public members of our promotion boards and from foreign service families. The members of the FAC itself total several hundred years of Foreign Service experience and our overall membership represents several millennia of such experience.

Our bottom line finding is that the Foreign Service and State Department currently today have a personnel shortage of 1100 positions/people. This dire condition did not happen overnight. It has evolved over two decades during Republican and Democratic administrations alike. The shortage began when Secretary Baker decided to staff the dozen new countries created when the Soviet Union imploded in 1989-91 from existing personnel and financial resources. During the eight years of the Clinton Administration, the United States entered a quasi isolationist period of concentration on domestic issues (“It’s the economy stupid”). The State Department and Foreign Service were reduced about 30% in personnel and support as part of the “peace dividend.” During 2000-2004 Secretary Powell’s Diplomatic Readiness Initiative (DRI) gained over 1000 new positions/personnel and associated increases in support financing bringing the Service almost back to 1990 levels. Then, in the last two years the DRI increases have been vacuumed up by the requirements of Iraq, Afghanistan and other “difficult to fill” posts. We are right back to the low point of 1999-2000.

There are three important reasons why we need at least 1100 additional officer positions now. The first is that at any given moment at least some 200 positions are unfilled – mostly overseas. When our 6300 officers are spread over all the positions in Washington and some 265 posts overseas even a shortage of one or two officers at most posts overseas represents a 20-40% personnel deficit in those countries. The result is that officers at posts are seriously over-worked and, inevitably, some important objectives are not achieved. At current levels there are simply not enough Foreign Service Officers to accomplish what needs to be done – particularly overseas.

The second reason that significant increases in personnel are vital is that the current situation does not permit adequate training, particularly in hard languages. The GAO report highlights the reality that State is not meeting existing foreign language requirements (in fact, GAO for over 30 years has reported the continuing shortage of language skills). Add to this deficit what will be needed in hard language and other functional training to achieve the goals of Secretary Rice's "Transformational Diplomacy" and we calculate that 900 training slots are needed right now.

The FAC strongly supports Secretary Rice's Transformational Diplomacy initiative designed to "create a more secure, democratic and prosperous world." To implement this initiative three new management requirements have been created: (1) repositioning personnel from the European epicenter of the Cold War to dispersed and linguistically/culturally difficult areas that are home to emerging powers and new problems; (2) shifting the professional focus from reporting to managing programs and building institutions; and (3) most importantly expanding training especially in hard languages and "transformational tradecraft." Unless the 900 position deficit in training slots to sustain what the military calls the "training float" is corrected, the Foreign Service will not be able to train transformational diplomats and transformational diplomacy will not succeed.

Finally, without the dramatic increases in Foreign Service personnel the Foreign Affairs Council has recommended, the "militarization of foreign policy" described by many commentators will continue. The United States is engaged in an existential struggle against Islamic fundamentalism and a plethora of new issues arising from globalization. We are confronting these challenges with institutions designed for the Cold War and with a 20% deficit in the Foreign Service Officer Corps. Whenever a new requirement appears, e.g., reconstruction and stabilization, the job goes to the institution with the people and resources, namely, the military. That is why we have military teams (from the Special Operations Command no less) in many countries performing public diplomacy functions and Commanders in conflict zones performing development diplomacy under the CERF (Commanders Economic Reconstruction Funds) program involving hundreds of millions of dollars. This trend should be reversed but that will only happen if we have enough diplomatic personnel to do the jobs.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to close by pointing out that others have ratified the FAC's judgements regarding critical shortages of personnel in the Foreign Service and State Department. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has done a report on the Embassy of the Future calling for an

increase in the Foreign Service Officer Corps of 1650 positions. Secretary Rice's Advisory Council on Transformational Diplomacy reportedly will call for a doubling of the diplomatic cadres over the next ten years. We all agree that there is a very serious problem out there and are delighted and grateful that the Senate of the United States is seized with the challenges. I would be happy to answer any questions you and your colleagues might have.