

Professional Staff

James D. Standish, Executive Director

David Dettoni, Deputy Director for Outreach

Carmelita Hines, Director of Administration

Dwight Bashir, Senior Policy Analyst

Elizabeth K. Cassidy, International Legal Specialist

Catherine Cosman, Senior Policy Analyst

Deborah DuCre, Receptionist

Scott Flipse, Senior Policy Analyst

Kody Kness, Assistant Director for Government Affairs

Bridget Kustin, South Asia Researcher

Tiffany Lynch, Researcher

Jacqueline Mitchell, Executive Assistant

Stephen R. Snow, Senior Policy Analyst

Dwight Bashir, Senior Policy Analyst

Dwight N. Bashir joined the Commission in February 2002. He has previously served as a consultant to the United Nations and has worked with various non-governmental organizations focusing on human rights, religious freedom, and international conflict resolution, with a regional concentration in the Middle East. Mr. Bashir is a specialist in ethnic and religious conflict and preventive diplomacy. He has traveled widely in Europe, the Middle East, and West Africa and has lectured and published on a wide array of topics in international affairs, including peace and security, human rights, religious extremism, and U.S. foreign policy. He has been interviewed in various television, radio, and print media, including Arab and Middle Eastern media outlets. Mr. Bashir holds a B.A. in Political Science and International Relations from the University of Richmond and a M.S. and Ph.D. from the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University.

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Elizabeth K. Cassidy, International Legal Specialist

Elizabeth K. Cassidy joined the Commission in July 2007. Previously, she was Assistant Executive Director of UN Watch, a non-governmental organization in Geneva, Switzerland, where she monitored and analyzed United Nations affairs, with a particular focus on the U.N.'s Geneva-based human rights bodies. Before UN Watch, Ms. Cassidy taught courses in constitutional law, comparative law, and international human rights law at Princeton University, Seton Hall University School of Law and the University of Namibia and worked as a legal consultant to several human rights NGOs in Windhoek, Namibia. She also has practiced law in the Washington, D.C. office of Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld and worked as a judicial clerk to the Hon. Richard Nygaard of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and the Hon. William Bassler of the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey. Ms. Cassidy holds a B.A. in international politics from Wesleyan University, a J.D. from American University's Washington College of Law, and a LL.M. in comparative constitutional law from the University of Stellenbosch.

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Catherine Cosman, Senior Policy Analyst

Catherine Cosman joined the staff of the Commission as Senior Policy Analyst in November 2003. Her areas of responsibility include the countries of the former Soviet Union, East and Central Europe and Western Europe. She served on the staff of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe as senior analyst on Soviet dissent (1976-1989). Cosman was also a commentator on Soviet society for a nationally syndicated U.S. radio program. She then joined Human Rights Watch (1989-1992) where she wrote several studies on ethnic conflicts in Central Asia and the Caucasus and the human rights in the then-USSR. Working with emerging independent labor unions for the Free Trade Union Institute (1992-1996), she focussed on Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. She lived in Estonia where she was the Senior Expert of the OSCE Mission, working on the integration of the Russian minority into Estonian society (1996-1998.) She managed the Central Asian and Caucasus grants program at the National Endowment for Democracy, before joining the Communications Division at RFE/RL in 1999 where she edited "Media Matters" and "(Un)Civil Societies." She has lived, worked and studied in Berlin, Germany; Moscow, then-USSR; and Prague, Czech Republic. She received a BA in History from Grinnell College and a MA and an ABD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Brown University. She also has studied at the Free University of Berlin and the All-Union Institute of Cinematography in Moscow.

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David Dettoni, Deputy Director for Outreach

David Dettoni joined the Commission in February of 2003, after four years as a senior legislative assistant for Representative Frank R. Wolf, whom he advised on policy issues related to human rights, foreign affairs, religious freedom, and international terrorism. Mr. Dettoni was Rep. Wolf's staff liaison to the Foreign Operations appropriations subcommittee and assisted with pertinent issues relating to the Commerce, Justice, State, Judiciary appropriations subcommittee. He was also the primary staff person for Rep. Wolf to the Helsinki Commission, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, and the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. Prior to that, Mr. Dettoni was the assistant director of a faith-based undergraduate and graduate program at Stanford University, where he launched the first Veritas Forum and led outreach and special service projects in Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Israel, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela. He has also worked at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Mr. Dettoni holds a B.A. in philosophy from Westmont College and a Master's degree in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary.

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Scott Flipse, Senior Policy Analyst

Scott Flipse joined the Commission in April of 2003. Before coming to the Commission he was Associate Director and Adjunct Professor of History for the University of Notre Dame's Washington Semester. Mr. Flipse is a specialist in American foreign policy, particularly toward Southeast and East Asia. He brings to the Commission a wealth of unique professional and educational experience. He served as a legislative assistant and committee staffer for Congressman Frank R. Wolf, specializing in human rights, religious freedom, and foreign operation's appropriations. After working on the Hill, he helped start an inner-city jobs and mentoring program in Los Angeles and later worked in Hollywood as a writer. Mr. Flipse has a B.A. in government from Calvin College, an M.A. in Social Ethics and Religion from the University of Southern California and Fuller Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Notre Dame.

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Carmelita Hines, Director of Administration

Carmelita Hines (formally Carmelita Pratt) joined the Commission in April 2003 after serving as an administrator for the DC Public Charter School Board. In addition to her current appointment, she has served with four other Commissions: The Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, Commission on Manufactured Housing, Commission on the Cost of Higher Education, and Commission on the Advancement of Federal Law Enforcement. Mrs. Hines earned her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio.

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Kody Kness, Assistant Director for Government Affairs

Prior to joining the Commission in 2007, Mr. Kness was a policy analyst in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives' Legislative Office for Research Liaison. Mr. Kness has also worked in New York City for the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers and the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations. Mr. Kness has written on the identity of practitioners of Falun Gong and has presented his research at conferences of the Association of Asian Studies and at Columbia University. Mr. Kness holds an Honors Bachelor's degree from Arizona State University in Religious Studies with a certificate in East Asian Studies, and has done graduate coursework in policy analysis at Pennsylvania State University. Mr. Kness has also studied at Renmin University of China (People's University of China) in Beijing and at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Mr. Kness speaks Mandarin Chinese.

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Bridget Kustin, South Asia Researcher

Bridget Kustin joined the Commission in 2007. As a 2005-06 Fulbright Islamic Civilization Award recipient and 2005-06 Fulbright research scholar to Bangladesh, Bridget's study into U.S.-funded initiatives to increase the participation of imams in community development included a survey of 400 imams regarding their perceptions of Islam, the U.S., and local power politics. She has presented her research at conferences and workshops in Bangladesh, India, Tunisia, and throughout the United States. Bridget studied Hindi in Jaipur, India through the School for International Training, and studied Bengali at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and for an academic year in Kolkata, India as a 2006-07 Fellow with the American Institute of Indian Studies. Bridget received her Bachelor's degree in English summa cum laude from Whitman College.

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Tiffany Lynch, Researcher

Tiffany Lynch is a researcher at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, where her work focuses on refugee and asylum issues, and religious freedom in Latin America, the Balkans, and Africa. She has been with the Commission since February 2006. Tiffany came to the Commission after receiving a Master's degree in Anthropology and Development from the London School of Economics and Political Science. She has worked at the Stanhope Centre for Communication Policy and Research researching freedom of the press issues in East Africa and spent two and a half years at the National Endowment for Democracy where she managed the International Movement of Parliamentarians for

Democracy, a World Movement for Democracy network of parliamentarians dedicated to the promotion of democracy and the protection of democratic parliamentarians. Tiffany received a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Political Science and minor in French from the University of Indiana.

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Stephen R. Snow, Senior Policy Analyst

Steve Snow joined the Commission in April of 2001, after twenty-seven years as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State. His overseas experience as an American diplomat, usually as a political officer, was mainly in the Islamic world, with postings in Turkey, Kuwait, Egypt, and Bangladesh. Other overseas assignments were to New Zealand and Barbados. His domestic assignments (in State's Bureaus of Intelligence and Research, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs) dealt with a number of countries in the Near East, Africa, and Asia. Mr. Snow has a B.A. in International Studies from Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee and an M.A. in Political Science from the University of Michigan. He studied Turkish on National Defense Foreign Language Fellowships at Columbia University and at Michigan and Arabic at the Foreign Service Institute in Tunis, Tunisia. His current responsibilities include Bangladesh, Eritrea, and Sudan. He also provides back-up support as needed on countries throughout South Asia, the Near East, and North Africa.

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James D. Standish, Executive Director

James D. Standish joined the Commission as Executive Director in August 2008. Mr. Standish has extensive experience working on human rights issues, and particularly religious freedom. He has lived ten years in Asia, four years in Europe, and eight years in Australia, and has traveled widely throughout the world. Mr. Standish is widely published, has discussed religious freedom issues on nationally broadcast television and radio, and has testified on religious freedom matters before the United States House of Representatives. Mr. Standish received his undergraduate degree from Newbold College in England, a M.B.A. from the University of Virginia and a J.D., cum laude, from Georgetown University. He is a member of the Bar of Virginia State and the District of Columbia, and has been admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court and the Fourth Circuit.

