

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TRANSFORMATIONAL DIPLOMACY:

FINAL REPORT OF THE WORKFORCE AND TRAINING WORKING GROUP

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INTRODUCTION

The United States has the finest diplomatic corps in the world, but it is under severe strain. The Department of State's mission has grown dramatically, from Iraq and the global war on terrorism to new mandates for reconstruction and stabilization. The world we live in has clearly changed. State is doing its best to adapt.

Over the past year, the Workforce and Training Working Group has reviewed critical issues related to the Department's ability to recruit, train and retain the world-class diplomatic corps required to meet the foreign policy and national security challenges of the 21st Century. We have concluded that major increases in personnel, sufficient to allow for a 15% position base for training and personnel readiness requirements, are critical to the Department's future success. We applaud the Department's work in shaping interagency training and cooperation in national security, as envisioned by the President, however we recognize that additional resources will be needed to fulfill the promise. We have also taken a hard look at the new examination process for Foreign Service generalists and believe the innovative, "on-line" exam and "whole person" review will continue to attract our nation's very best while streamlining what has been a lengthy process. We commend the Department for creating a Chief Diversity Officer and offer it as a best practice for the remainder of the U.S. Government.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- State needs a major increase in personnel to fulfill its current mission.
- We recommend that at least 1030 new positions be established in FY08 to help State meet current needs.
 - o At least 550 positions are needed for training
 - o 380 positions are needed to cover existing staffing gaps, and
 - o 100 positions are needed for the White House's National Security Professional initiative.

THE COMPELLING CASE FOR INCREASED PERSONNEL AT STATE

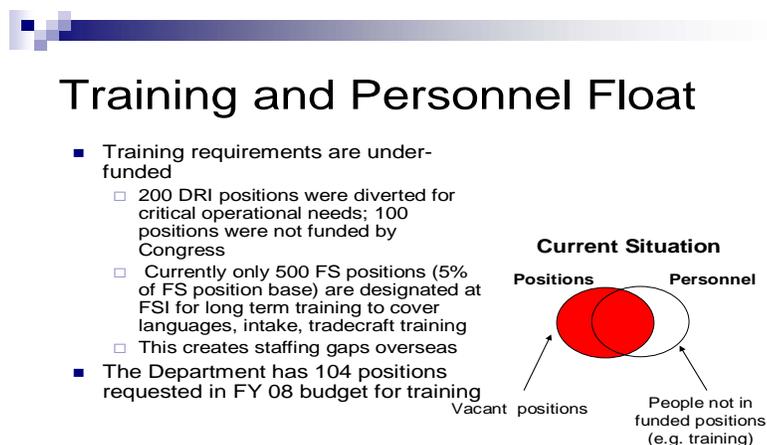
Secretary Rice has aggressively repositioned nearly 300 diplomats to countries such as China, India and Brazil, where they are better able to protect and advance U.S. interests directly with the people and governments of countries in transition. But, if we are to make a difference, 300 will not be enough. It is, however, all that the Department can afford without jeopardizing its wider global mission and protection of the nation's interests.

We continue to believe that the Department of State's FY08 budget request for 254 new positions and an additional \$125 million is critical to its future operational readiness, despite recent indications that Congress may not agree. After considerable study, we believe that this request is simply a first step, a down payment. We firmly believe that the Department will need significant new resources in the years just ahead.

We are convinced that long-term, neither diplomacy nor war can be conducted effectively on the cheap. While it is true that by the end of 2004 State had made significant progress towards eliminating the sizeable staffing shortfalls that had begun in the 1990s, there were already cracks. Of the 1,158 positions requested under the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative (DRI) between 2002 and 2004, 100 positions were not funded by Congress in the last year of the DRI, and another 200 positions were diverted to Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, in FY 2005, 2006 and 2007, Congressional funding held the Department’s hiring to attrition with the exception of consular and diplomatic security. There are indications that the same may happen again in 2008. Despite several “no-growth” years, the demands on the Department have continued to grow.

The lack of support for additional training has hit particularly hard, coming as it did just when the demand for proficiency in critical needs languages skyrocketed. Since 2001, the need for increased fluency in a number of super-hard languages, e.g., Arabic, Farsi, Chinese, and Korean, has increased significantly. But training takes time: two years or more are necessary to earn professional proficiency in a super-hard language; and even more time is needed to gain the proficiency required to respond to a hostile press. For every job that requires Arabic, for example, the Department requires not one position, but three: one to do the job and one in each of the two years of required training. Unfortunately, as noted in **Figure 1**, the Department’s staffing realities do not reflect that urgent need. The more employees that the Department moves to areas critical to America’s future, from the Arabic-speaking world to China, the more resources it needs to ensure that our diplomats are adequately trained. We have learned that critical foreign language training is one of the first casualties when budgets are tight.

Figure 1: Training and Personnel Float



5

The Department of State is, of course, actively recruiting those who already possess these critical language skills. The pool of fully qualified applicants, however, is limited. Realistically, the Department must train for many of the more unusual skill sets it needs.

Congress, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and others have repeatedly criticized the Department for sending diplomats to their jobs overseas without the requisite language skills. In today’s world, where America’s diplomats must engage equally on the village street and in the television studio to get our story to skeptical foreign audiences, we can all agree that our diplomats must be highly proficient (refer to **Figure 2**).

Figure 2: The Case for Increased Language Training

The Case for Increased Language Training

- Enhancing language skills is a core requirement of transformational diplomacy.
 - Interacting with a hostile foreign press, persuading skeptical foreign audiences, or gaining sensitive information from foreign sources requires highly proficient employees.
 - Increasingly, the Department's mission requires super-hard languages, such as Arabic and Chinese. It generally takes two years of full-time language training to reach professional proficiency in superhard languages.
 - To ensure uninterrupted language capabilities at a 1-year Arabic post requires three officers; 1 at post, 1 in the first year of training, 1 in the second year of training

Critical Needs Languages
✓ Arabic
✓ Chinese (Cantonese or Standard Mandarin),
✓ Indic Languages (Urdu, Hindi, Nepali, Bengali, Punjabi)
✓ Iranian Languages (Farsi/Persian, Dari, Tajiki, Pashto)
✓ Korean
✓ Russian
✓ Turkic Languages (Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkish, Uzbek)

4

Put bluntly, at the present time, the Department of State is faced with a Hobsian choice: train, and leave a job unfilled during the period of training or send the diplomat to post with less than the required training. The bottom line is that Department needs at least 550 additional training positions beyond the 500 currently in its training complement. Additionally, due to the significant rotational demands of high-intensity shorter-than-normal tours, non-reimbursed details to other government agencies (including the NSC), the Department requires an additional 380 positions to cover staffing gaps overseas. IT also needs to increase its FS position base 15% above the number of operational jobs if it is to eliminate overseas staffing gaps, meet the language, leadership and professional training needs of its employees, and, more importantly, meet its mandate. Unfortunately, the current number stands at 5%. In stark contrast, the military sets aside 10 to 15% for its similar needs. While the Department is to be commended for its innovative on-line training programs, it should expand the initiative to serve State's world-wide workforce.

The nation's diplomats are the nation's first line of defense. Experience has shown that defusing or resolving potential crises is much less costly and far more effective than dealing with the aftermath and fallout. Diplomacy and foreign assistance are far less costly than military operations. When successful, they can – and do – save lives as well as money. We simply can not afford to continue to try to do diplomacy “on the cheap.” The results are too costly.

INCREASED INTERAGENCY TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

The lack of resources at the Department of State is affecting not just diplomatic operations but the nation's ability to fight terrorism and respond effectively to crises and complex contingencies. Whether in Iraq or Afghanistan, or in the aftermath of natural or manmade disasters in the Indian Ocean or Lebanon, the Department's diplomats work side-by-side with our military and the wider interagency community. The Department recognizes that improved interagency cooperation is critical to U.S. Government (USG) success and continues to seek additional opportunities, including the expansion of existing memorandums of agreements, for exchanges and/or details with the Department of Defense (DOD) and other civilian agencies.

In fact, the Department is playing a key role in developing the implementation plan for the National Strategy which was signed by the President in July 2007. The National Strategy will implement Executive Order 13434, mandating the development of a cadre of government-wide national security professionals, trained and prepared to work together effectively to protect the national interest – whether domestically or abroad. It is also playing a key role in the development of a National Security Professional Education/Training Consortium to help address these same concerns. The interagency strategy calls for greater coordination of curriculum among the training and education entities at the Foreign Service Institute, the National Defense University, and the Homeland Security and National Intelligence universities.

Both strategies call for agencies in the national security arena to dedicate more resources to interagency details to develop officers who have experience working together and understand the critical roles of each agency. This additional training, and positions for interagency details, takes resources that the Department does not have. In addition to increased funding for training, the Department needs at least 100 additional positions to develop a cadre of employees to help ensure smooth – and effective – interagency cooperation.

The Department is also leading an interagency effort to develop a coordinated USG civilian response to reconstruction and stabilization demands, wherever and whenever the need arises. Though still waiting full funding and authorization, it is preparing to create Active and Standby Response Corps within the USG and to standup a Civilian Reserve Corps that will provide reconstruction and stabilization skills not found within the federal government. That effort, as well as the wider needs of the Department’s mandate for stabilization and reconstruction, was the work of another advisory group but is a critical component driving State’s staffing needs.

RECRUITING AND HIRING THE BEST

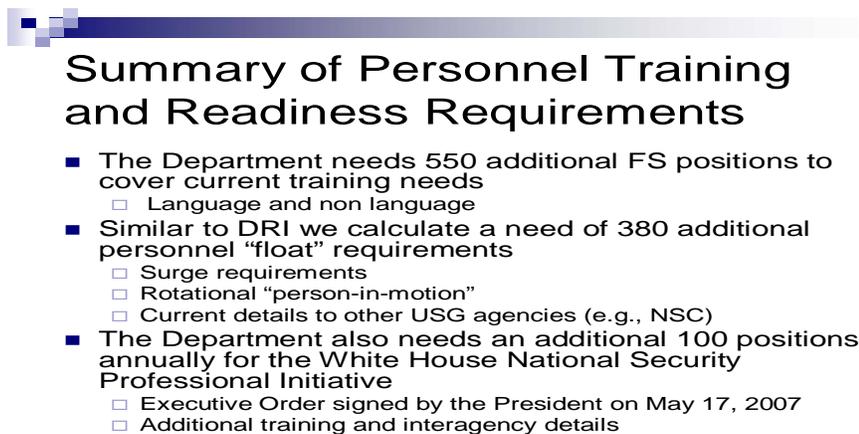
The Workforce and Training Working Group was impressed with the work done to streamline the Foreign Service generalist intake process. The new process will not only be more accessible and timely, but also offer a broader picture of the candidate through its “whole candidate” approach. Candidates register to begin the process by filling out an online application form that gathers basic personal data, including education and employment history. They also choose their career track when they register. The second part of the online registration is the Personal Narrative consisting of six questions, each linked to one of the six competencies that measure success in the Foreign Service: leadership skills, interpersonal skills, communications skills, intellectual skills, and substantive knowledge. The streamlined yet rigorous written exam, the next step in the process, will be available online several times each year, in lieu of only once annually. In another innovation, the files of those who pass the written test, including the essay, will be considered by a new Qualifications Evaluation Panel. The panel will evaluate test results in addition to the information submitted online and invite a limited number of candidates to the final assessment. The final assessment is an in-person interview. The Department’s highly regarded oral assessment is considered a best practice. We anticipate that the changes will enhance the Department’s ability to compete for the best and the brightest and to attract competitive candidates widely from America’s diverse population, including those with the experience and language skills the Department seeks.

The committee applauds the Secretary for the establishment of the position of Chief Diversity Officer for the Department of State, the first cabinet-level agency to do so. With the increasing complexity and range of issues related to representing our nation's interests around the world, the Department of State must be viewed as an employer of choice by the most talented of our nation. The committee views the establishment of this position as a best practice and commends it to the administration for replication in other government agencies.

CONCLUSION

In sum, our diplomats, under Secretary Rice's leadership, are actively advancing and protecting the nation's interests in today's new global environment. They deserve the resources needed to get the job done right. As noted in **Figure 3** and summarized in **Table 1**, minimal requirements are 1030 new fully funded positions for increased training, personnel readiness and surge requirements, not including additional positions for reconstruction and stabilization. Our nation deserves, indeed requires, a highly skilled, highly trained diplomatic cadre if we are able to meet the increasingly complex and demanding challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century.

Figure 3: Summary of Personnel Training and Readiness Requirements



6