

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
American Foreign Service Association Series

JOHN K. NALAND

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Interview Date: May 5, 2022
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INTERVIEW

Q: Good morning. It's May 12, 2022. I am Robin Matthewman. And as part of our ADST-AFSA [American Foreign Service Association] oral history project, today I am interviewing John K. Naland. So, John, welcome. Let's start with your background and your career in the Foreign Service and otherwise before you started with AFSA.

NALAND: Well, I am happy to be giving this oral history because AFSA plays such a vital role in the Foreign Service, so it is important to capture that for the historical record.

To summarize my life before AFSA: I was born in Wichita, Kansas, on March 25, 1957, in a middle-class family. Both my parents worked for Boeing -- my mom was a secretary, and my dad was a technical writer. I was their first-born and soon came a younger sister. My parents divorced when I was about six years old. In 1966, my mom, sister, aunt, grandmother, and I moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, which was quite a cultural change from Kansas. My mom worked at Boeing's plant in eastern New Orleans where they manufactured the Saturn V rocket boosters for the Apollo program.

New Orleans was not known for its great public schools, but I took a test and got into the magnet high school Benjamin Franklin which remains today one of the nation's top rated public high schools. I was an average student academically but was very active in student government, including serving as president of the Greater New Orleans Association of Student Councils and chairing the Orleans Parish Public School Superintendent's Student Advisory Council. I also got active in the Republican Party in 1972, campaigning for local and national candidates. This was back when almost all Louisianians were Democrats in the legacy of Huey Long. So, the Republicans were the good government party in Louisiana.

After I graduated from high school in 1975, I was still interested in going into local politics, so I stayed in town and went to Tulane University. There, I joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps because I wanted to serve my country and figured that serving in

the Army also would be a good credential in politics. I also kept active in Republican politics. At age 19, was elected as an alternate delegate for Governor Ronald Reagan to the 1976 Republican National Convention in Kansas City. Four years later, I was again an alternate delegate for Reagan at the 1980 convention in Detroit. During that era, I ran unsuccessfully for a seat on the Orleans Parish School Board.

After earning degrees in history and anthropology at Tulane, I went into the Army serving in West Germany from 1981 to 1984 in the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment -- a unit whose history dates to 1833 and has earned more battle honors than any battalion-sized unit in the Army. It was a tough three years. 1/1 Cav was a hard charging unit, and we spent about half of each year away from our garrison near Nuremberg either maneuvering on the German countryside (often in winter), at the tank gunnery range, or manning our Border Camp responsible for surveillance of 114 kilometers of the West German-Czechoslovakian border. First I served as an Armored Cavalry platoon leader, including a stint commanding the Border Camp. Later, I became the squadron Adjutant -- which is a combination of administrative officer and principal aide to the commanding officer. Although I was on the promotion list for captain in 1984, I decided not to make a career in the Army and I returned to New Orleans. After then deciding not to continue in local politics, I took the FBI test, the CIA test, and the Foreign Service test.

Q: You were covering all your bases.

NALAND: Yes. Somehow I got into the State Department Foreign Service in the Administrative Cone on my first try. I joined the 32nd A-100 orientation class in March 1986, with a lot of great people, including Marie "Masha" Yovanovitch (who will come up again later in this interview). After consular and Spanish training at the Foreign Service Institute in Rosslyn, Virginia, my first tour was in Bogotá, Colombia where I spent six months each in the Non-Immigrant Visa, Immigrant Visa, and American Citizens Services sections (1986-88). At the time, Bogotá was one of only two danger pay posts in the world (Beirut, Lebanon was the other). But I was single and had military experience, so I was up for the challenge. After arrival, I was asked to be the AFSA post representative and agreed. I guess I was following in the union activist steps of my hero Ronald Reagan who had been a union leader as the head of the Screen Actors Guild.

After Bogotá, I asked to be the Assistant General Services Officer in San José, Costa Rica (1988-90). In life, you should be careful what you ask for because you might get it. San José was my least favorite tour. I discovered that a Senior Foreign Service officer in the administrative section was misappropriating government equipment and services. I blew the whistle on that, and it erupted into a major multi-year drama that eventually involved Inspector General Sherman Funk and Director General Edward Perkins who both assisted

me. I also went to AFSA which helped me file a grievance that was eventually successful.

Coming out of San José, I bid on Washington jobs. I was fortunate that William “Bill” Burns -- who later rose to higher acclaim -- selected me to be the staff assistant in the Secretary’s Policy Planning Staff. He was the deputy director and Dennis Ross was the director under Secretary James Baker. It was a fascinating time (1990-91).

Q: That was a pretty important office then.

NALAND: It was a very influential office. This was when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, during German reunification, movement in the Middle East peace process, and other events. From there, I went to the State Department Operations Center (1991-92). I then served as a watch stander in White House Situation Room (1992-93). I was in the Sit Room during the last six months of President George H.W. Bush and the first six months of President William Clinton. It was a fascinating time. After that, even though I was an administrative cone officer, I talked my way into FSI’s nine-month long economics course. My goal was to convert to the economic cone which I eventually did. I also met my future wife Barbara Reioux there. She was the civil service program assistant in that section, and earlier had been a Foreign Service secretary. After that, I worked for a year in the Bureau of International Organization Affairs (1994-95). We married and went to Managua, Nicaragua, where I worked in the economic section promoting trade and investment during that short period between dictatorships.

Q: What year was that?

NALAND: We were there 1995 to 1998. Our first child Lucy was born in 1996. After Managua, I got a nine-month long detail assignment via State’s Corporate Exchange Program working in Latin American marketing in the Caterpillar Corporation in Peoria, Illinois (1998-99). It was fascinating working in the private sector. Peoria is where our second daughter Alice was born in 1999.

As I was finishing up in Peoria, I decided I wanted to get very involved in AFSA. I contacted outgoing AFSA President Dan Geisler who put me in contact with Marshall Adair who was putting together a slate of candidates to run in the 1999 AFSA election. He added me to his slate as State VP and we won. Because the State VP position had become vacant, the outgoing Governing Board appointed me as State VP in June 1999 a month before my regular two-year term began. That term was from July 1999 to July 2001 with Marshall Adair as AFSA President and, for most of the period, Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State.

Q: Did Marshall have some particular goals?

NALAND: Well, I mostly recall that we were reacting to a lot of things. Controversies came up and we went forth to do battle to defend the Foreign Service. But first, one thing that I am very proud of is that I emulated former AFSA President F. Allen “Tex” Harris (1993-97) who sent out weekly messages updating members on what AFSA was doing on their behalf. In those days prior to AFSA net emails, updates were sent via Department of State ALDAC (all diplomatic and consular posts) telegrams. So, I did that as State VP. I used some of my almost-weekly messages to apply public pressure on State Department management by, for example, saying that AFSA had proposed XYZ and was waiting for State’s response. Anyway, I put a lot of time into writing those updates. No subsequent AFSA leaders have done likewise. I do not know if AFSA was more successful or more appreciated by members due to my updates, but it seemed to me to be an important thing to do.

By the way, having been both State VP and AFSA President, I can say that found State VP to be more personally rewarding due to its customer service aspect where you work one-on-one with people on their problem and, at the end of the day, often see positive outcomes – much like during my time assisting the public as a vice consul and assisting colleagues as Assistant GSO.

Anyway, the first big thing that came up during my 25 months as State VP was the Lima, Peru, Deputy Chief of Mission controversy. The background is that, while the U.S. President with Senate consent can send anyone out to be Ambassador regardless of their qualifications or lack of qualifications, other embassy positions are supposed to be filled by the Foreign Service. During the Reagan administration, Secretary of State George Schultz wanted to avoid pressure to assign White House or Congressional staffers to non-ambassadorial overseas positions, so he put a provision in the Foreign Affairs Manual saying that Foreign Service positions had to be filled by Foreign Service members, unless there was no one available in the Foreign Service to fill them (which did happen on rare occasions over the years).

So, there was this provision in the State Department’s FAM saying that State must assign Foreign Service members unless no one in the Foreign Service bids on it. But State decided to send a civil service employee out to be DCM in Lima. Unfortunately, AFSA found out only after the appointment had been made and the person was preparing to fly to post. But we raised a ruckus. The reason was that the Foreign Service is an up-or-out system. And I am a perfect example since I was required to retire from the Foreign Service at age 58 because I did not get promoted even though I was then getting ready to

pay to put two daughters through college.

Q: Right.

NALAND: Anyway, in our up-or-out system getting a job like deputy chief of mission is critical to getting promoted. Twelve senior Foreign Service officers bid the Lima DCM job. All spoke Spanish and were in the appropriate rank. But Ambassador John Hamilton wanted a civil service employee with whom he had worked. State management went along with that, disregarding the FAM requirement.

So, AFSA raised a ruckus. We polled our members and thousands responded with 97 percent agreeing that the position should go to a Foreign Service member. Thus, we filed a grievance. By the time the case got to the Foreign Service Grievance Board the civil service employee had already transferred to Lima. AFSA's attorneys were not confident that we would win, but we did. The grievance board ruled that the Department had violated its own regulations when it made that assignment.

In the whole process, State did not comport itself well. One of the pieces of evidence that State provided to support its case was a Department Notice on how DCMs are assigned. But AFSA discovered that State had just rewritten that notice. The ink was still wet on it. I found the previous version which did not support State's position at all. I assume that the grievance board did not appreciate that attempt by State to mislead them. Also, I understand that the civil service employee submitted a statement to the grievance board saying something to the effect that "If you curtail my assignment so my family and I have to return to Washington, that will be just jerking us around." Of course, we in the Foreign Service get jerked around all the time, having to move our families on short notice. So, I doubt that the retired Foreign Service members of the grievance board were persuaded by that. Anyway, AFSA won the case. But for the first time in a quarter century, the Secretary of State used a national security waiver to override the grievance board. While Madeleine Albright overrode the grievance board order to immediately bring this person home, she did curtail the appointment by one year. Thus, the civil service employee was out there for two instead of three years.

This was a huge controversy which all Foreign Service members were really keyed in on. And a disappointing part of it was that there were a dozen or so senior Foreign Service officers who strongly disagreed with AFSA and the grievance board. Many had been ambassadors or served in other senior positions. They had climbed to the top of the career ladder, and I guess saw nothing wrong with pulling the ladder up behind them by denying a younger officer that key position. A bunch of them quit AFSA saying "Oh, this civil service employee is very talented, and it's only one position." But as I said, 97 percent of

the Foreign Service members who responded supported AFSA. So that was a whole lot of work with intense discussions with State management. The two sides sent out dueling ALDACs and so forth. But, while there have been a couple echoes of this type of situation over the last 20 years, the bottom line is State has never done that since. They can still send out anyone who can “fog a mirror” to be ambassador, but overseas Foreign Service positions are for the Foreign Service.

Next was another tough issue, but it turned out all for the good. It related to unmarried domestic partners (same sex or opposite sex) accompanying Foreign Service members overseas. Now, today, after gay marriage has become legal and history has moved on, it may be hard for younger people to understand what this was all about. But this was not long after the era in which Diplomatic Security would suspend security clearances if someone was gay on the theory that they could be blackmailed by hostile governments. So, in this era, if you had an unmarried partner, you often could not go to post together. A group called GLIFAA (Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies) came to me as AFSA State VP and said, “We’re pushing for these 12 limited accommodations.” Looking back now over 20 years later, the proposed accommodations look really limited. For example, one was in cases where a Foreign Service member had an unmarried domestic partner who wanted to accompany them to post was for the U.S. embassy to tell the host country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs something along the lines of “this person is not on State Department travel orders because they are not an authorized dependent but it is okay with us if they live in embassy housing, so if you have any type of visa that would allow them to stay with their Foreign Service partner, then please issue it.”

This type of accommodations today seems minor but back then it took significant effort to get the AFSA Governing Board to support it. I polled State Department Foreign Service members who overwhelmingly – but not unanimously – supported this. There was significant debate on the Governing Board with some older members not in favor. But in the end we did go forward to State management on behalf of the Foreign Service, whom we represent. Eventually, State agreed and issued an ALDAC in Secretary Albright’s name approving these accommodations. Interestingly, State issued the ALDAC on December 26, 2000 -- the day after Christmas -- which is a good time to announce something controversial, hoping that the news media, Congress, and public will be busy with other things and not take note. But that message was a major milestone in what we would now call LGBTQ+ history in the Foreign Service. Much of the credit goes to GLIFAA, but AFSA’s support was vital.

Q: But they still weren't paying for people to come to posts and they didn't get all the services—

NALAND: That came years later. So, this was in retrospect—

Q: Baby steps.

NALAND: Yes, but still a major advance. It was then late December 2000 with Secretary Albright heading out the door and Colin Powell having been nominated to be the next Secretary. In early January 2001, AFSA President Marshall Adair and I met with Secretary Designate Powell in the transition offices in Main State. Powell, of course, was the most amazing guy -- the most at ease with himself and confident person I think I have ever met. So, Marshall and I met with them armed with a list of “asks” -- things we wanted him to do for the Foreign Service. One that I raised was: “please do not reverse Secretary Albright’s limited accommodations for domestic partners.” To which Powell responded words to the effect of, “I know that State and the Foreign Service are different from the military. So, I’m not going to reverse this policy. But I don’t want to read about it on the front page of the *Washington Post*.” To which I responded, “Deal! You have a deal.” Thus, AFSA kept quiet, and he did not reverse the policy.

So, the Lima DCM case and accommodations for domestic partners stand out in my memory as highlights of my time as AFSA State VP. But the AFSA Labor-Management office that I oversaw accomplished much else -- helping hundreds of Foreign Service members with grievances, pay disputes, and things like that.

Q: At this point, you had decided to run for AFSA president?

NALAND: Yes. I enjoyed the State VP job and the president's position looked interesting. So, I ran for president putting together an all-star slate of candidates including former AFSA Presidents Tom Boyatt, Bill Harrop, Tex Harris, and Ted Wilkinson. I was elected and began my first two years as AFSA president (July 2001 to July 2003). Louise Crane was the State VP, proving to be a very strong advocate for our State Department Foreign Service members.

By then, Colin Powell was Secretary. AFSA had an interesting relationship with him. Obviously, he was a great American who made important management changes at State. For example, getting Congress to fund over 1,000 new Foreign Service positions. That seemed like a game-changer that would boost staffing worldwide, but of course all the positions ended up in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yet, AFSA had major disagreements with him related to the differing roles of the Foreign Service versus civil service. The State Department has long struggled with what to do with its civil service employees who are trapped in an archaic government-wide personnel system. For example, unlike the Foreign Service, civil service employees have

a hard time moving to different positions during their careers. But since State is powerless to lift up the civil service, it seemed to me State sought to pull down the Foreign Service to make the civil service feel better.

For example, there is a facility at Main State that for decades was named the Foreign Service Lounge. That name may sound odd, but it was a tradition. It was the last stop for Foreign Service members transferring overseas and the first stop when returning. Before you shipped out to some difficult or dangerous post, you went there to sign out in a large register book and listed your next post. A few years later, if you survived that overseas assignment, you came back and signed that same book listing your next position. So, there was a lot of tradition and memory associated with the name Foreign Service Lounge. But Secretary's Powell's team decided to change it to the innocuous sounding Employee Services Center because maybe one percent of people using the facility were civil service employees going out on overseas excursion tours.

At the same time, the State Department stopped using the term "Foreign Service" in press releases and messages to Congress which instead referenced "foreign affairs officers" when in fact the employees being cited were Foreign Service officers.

Powell's team also renamed the nearly half-century old Foreign Service Day to Foreign Affairs Day. In my mind that made some sense because you do want to honor the State Department's 10,000 civil service employees, but the change seemed to AFSA just one more case of dropping Foreign Service branding. In one of my meetings with Secretary Powell, he boasted of having "fixed" the name of Foreign Service Day – to which I responded, "You didn't fix it, you changed it."

So, we objected to these changes. Secretary Powell was not appreciative because he wanted to drive a culture change and saw this as part of that. I realized that we would not change his mind when I mentioned to Under Secretary for Management Grant Green the recent controversy in which the U.S. Army chief-of-staff ruffled many feathers by announcing that he would allow all soldiers to wear berets, something previously reserved just for the elite Rangers and Special Forces. I told Green that, "Honoring the Foreign Service as an elite organization is just like allowing only the Rangers and Special Forces to wear berets." Green responded, "Well, Powell agrees with giving all soldiers berets." So, I knew that we were at a dead end on that issue.

Undersecretary Green, who I admired for being a straight shooter, at one point told me "You risk getting on Powell's shit list." But, overall, AFSA supported Secretary Powell and what he was trying to accomplish. One of his landmark initiatives was to require leadership and management training after each mid-level Foreign Service promotion.

After he made that decision, the Director General's office came to AFSA saying, "Okay, we want to do this by phasing in the requirement over the next decade." I responded for AFSA saying, "No, let's phase it in more as quickly, otherwise people will just put off complying for as long as they can." Another time during that period citing large staffing gaps in mid-level Foreign Service positions the Director General's office came to AFSA saying, "This year, we want to administratively promote every FS-04 instead of having them compete for promotion." To which I replied, "No, even if the selection board promotes 96 percent of them, that will properly hold back 4 percent who are not ready for greater responsibilities – whose promotion would be a disservice to them and to those who they would then supervise."

These are examples of AFSA's unique role in looking out for the long-term wellbeing of the Foreign Service. This contrasts with State Department management officials – especially political appointees who are there for just a few years -- who often focus on addressing short term problems without considering the long-term consequences.

Also, while AFSA as a union is responsible for looking out for our members, we sometimes apply "tough love" as we also look at issues from our perspective as the Foreign Service professional association. For example, at one point the Bureau of Consular Affairs had a huge backlog of passport applications and almost every member of Congress was complaining on behalf of their constituents. State decided they needed "all hands on deck" to issue passports. So, they shanghaied several A-100 orientation classes telling them that, instead of going straight to post, they would instead stay in D.C. for six more weeks to adjudicate passport applications. A delegation of these new FSOs came to AFSA saying, "We want to get to post, and we already have our enroute vacations planned." I explained that the needs of the Service must prevail and undiplomatically added that, "If this is the worst thing that ever happens to you in your Foreign Service career, you will be lucky."

Q: Let me pause here. You started as president in July 2001. And then, in September 2001, our world changed, right?

NALAND: Right, 9/11/2001. Back in those days, AFSA every year took a delegation of Foreign Service retirees to Capitol Hill to lobby – much like the American Legion and other organizations do – and we called it Day on the Hill. On that day -- which by the way was one of the most beautiful weather days in D.C. in memory – around 80 Foreign Service retirees met me at AFSA headquarters, and we took charter buses to Capitol Hill. We took retirees because active-duty Foreign Service members may not lobby Congress (except for the AFSA President and constituency Vice Presidents who are categorized as union leaders). We had two dozen meetings with Representatives, Senators, or their

senior staffers all lined up with retirees from various states planning on meeting with their representatives. We first gathered in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing room in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. Soon after we arrived, Senate staff came in and said, "America is under attack." A few in our delegation had already gone to their appointments. For example, former AFSA President Tom Boyatt was meeting with Congressman Frank Wolf (R-VA). But we all got booted out of the Congressional buildings because the fourth hijacked airplane that ended up crashing in Pennsylvania was headed towards D.C. presumably to strike the Capitol dome or the White House.

As we exited the building onto the street, we could see smoke rising on the horizon from the Pentagon. I was with an older retiree. I hailed what appeared to be the last available cab in D.C. – cell phones did not work because the network was overwhelmed – and we got as far as the Tidal Basin when total traffic gridlock set in. I left the retiree in the cab so he could eventually make it back to his hotel and I walked the mile or so to AFSA headquarters, which, of course, is across the street from Main State. I kind of set up a command post there for the rest of the morning and early afternoon, making sure that everyone got back to their hotels while watching TV news reporting. Finally, in the late afternoon, I walked to the almost deserted Metro and took it to Arlington where I lived.

Obviously, that was a pivotal day that changed U.S history and Foreign Service history. From then on, the Foreign Service was “all hands on deck” in terms of focus and effort. First in Afghanistan, then Iraq, and then Afghanistan again. Soon, some in Congress and the media focused on the fact that the hijackers entered the U.S. on visas issued by U.S. embassies. As Congress was moving to create what is now the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), over 100 Republican Congressmen pushed to move much of the Bureau of Consular Affairs to DHS. That, of course, would have been a disaster since applying to visa interviews a law-enforcement mentality by interviewers who probably speak only English would undoubtedly greatly reduce the number of foreign visitors, students, and businesspeople coming to the U.S.

Secretary Powell was opposing it and his staff told AFSA they could use any help that we could give. Thus, I went up to the Hill and gave several briefings to staff explaining that Foreign Service members speak foreign languages and understand foreign cultures and that we could tighten up procedures without devastating U.S trade, tourism, and higher education by denying most visa applications as DHS might do. Secretary Powell led the charge, but with AFSA giving background information on why this would really be a terrible idea, Congress voted down the move.

Q: A couple years later, I heard Consular Affairs Assistant Secretary Maura Harty talking about how she handled it and she decided to create a number of standards to

tighten up the system so everybody would be comfortable with it. And she felt that by the time they were able to do that they were able to show that they were much better suited.

NALAND: Right. There was a big push by Secretary Powell and his team including Consular Affairs to tighten up the visa adjudication system.

Turning to other issues during my first AFSA presidency, a key one was the issue of overseas pay. The details are a bit complex, but it boils down to the fact that Foreign Service members serving overseas were taking a cut in pay when they left the U.S.. The reason was because all domestic federal employees get a base pay plus something called locality pay. So, if you're working in D.C. in the Foreign Service or civil service, today you get a base pay plus an extra 31 percent in locality pay. But there is no locality pay overseas. At one point, Foreign Service members were taking a 14 percent pay cut when serving abroad. So yes, if you went to a danger pay post then your 35 percent danger pay made up for that. But at many posts, you were literally taking a cut in total pay for the privilege of going overseas. So, I started the push for this in 2001 by convincing the *Washington Post* government gossip columnist Al Kamen to report that Foreign Service members were not happy about taking this pay cut that CIA officers and FBI agents did not take when assigned abroad due to their different pay rules. Anyway, this started what turned out to be an eight-year long lobbying effort for what is called overseas comparability pay, which at the very end of my second AFSA presidency in 2009, we finally teed up to get through Congress. So that was an important initiative.

Another pocket-book issue that we lobbied for related to the capital gains on the sale of a principal residence if its value had appreciated. Congress had just passed a law saying that no capital gains tax was due if you had lived in the house for the previous five years. Well, of course, the Foreign Service often cannot meet that requirement because we rotate in and out of the U.S. while serving our nation. So, AFSA's outstanding lobbyist Ken Nakamura got to work on the issue. Since the uniformed military was equally impacted, Ken contacted the Military Officers Association of America – an advocacy organization for our military – whose representatives (two retired Lieutenant Colonels) joined Ken and me in meetings with Hill staff.

This effort was especially difficult because the committees of jurisdiction were not the ones with which AFSA had long standing relationships. So, Ken and I took cabs up the Capital Hill multiple times a week meeting with the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee who do not have the Foreign Service on their radar screens. And of course, we were seeking a tax break which Congress is always hesitant to give. Anyway, we succeeded. Congress enacted a special 5-in-15-year rule for the Foreign Service and military; no doubt mainly because Congress wanted to be seen

helping the military. But the fact was that AFSA led that lobbying campaign. Since then, hundreds of AFSA members have each saved tens of thousands of dollars in taxes when they sold their primary residence after an extended period of overseas service.

It is important to note that AFSA can do things like this because we are a union. We do not have to ask permission from State. And since State almost never lobbies for employee-friendly legislation like this, it would not get done if AFSA did not do it.

Q: That's great. And I think that partnering with military folks, you're right, probably helped.

NALAND: Absolutely.

Q: And then you created two different advocacy organizations, right?

NALAND: Well, Tom Boyatt led the effort to create two organizations. The first was having AFSA create a Political Action Committee (PAC) to make campaign contributions to members of Congress. My initial reaction was that it was a terrible idea because AFSA needs to keep out of politics. But Tom Boyatt made the case that a PAC would aid our lobbying efforts and that by requiring that our donations were equally split between the two political parties we would maintain our non-partisan stance. The AFSA Governing Board approved the initiative. And AFSA PAC indeed turned out to be invaluable. Members of Congress, for better or worse, need to raise money to be reelected. Thus, by being able to donate to their reelection effort, you get face time with them. I remember going to one Member of Congress' elegant home in Old Town Alexandria for a small reception. I got there early and had about 20 minutes one-on-one with her drinking wine and talking about AFSA's issues. So, AFSA PAC opens doors to allow us to make our case. I just wish that AFSA members contributed more to the PAC so it could do more. PACs may give up to \$5,000 per candidate per election cycle, but AFSA PAC can usually only afford \$2,000 and sometimes lacks money to support some of the candidates it would like to.

The second new organization that Ambassador Boyatt created was the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC). This was another brilliant idea by him. His vision was to create an umbrella organization bringing together a dozen sister organizations including AFSA, the American Academy of Diplomacy (which is the association of retired career ambassadors), the Council of American Ambassadors (the association of former political appointee ambassadors), the Association of Black American Ambassadors, the Foreign Service Youth Foundation, and other groups. All are Foreign Service related. His idea was to pull together these groups to amplify our voices so that when we met with the

Deputy Secretary of State or Under Secretary for Management they see all these groups united when we ask them to adopt some management policy or initiative.

During its first ten or so years of existence, the FAC issued and publicized “report cards” on the Secretary of State as the leader and manager of the platform on which diplomacy and development are conducted. I wrote the first report card on Colin Powell which lauded his initial efforts but said we need more modernization of information technology, we need more people in the Foreign Service, and so on. The FAC still exists today some 22 years after its creation. Just a month ago, the FAC – of which I am currently a member as President of the Foreign Service Youth Foundation – led by Tom Boyatt met with the Under Secretary for Management. So, the FAC is an important way to amplify AFSA's voice.

Q: And the Foreign Affairs Council, does it focus on management issues, or policy too?

NALAND: Just like AFSA, the FAC does not opine as to whether the U.S. should have pulled out of Afghanistan in 2021 or whatever. It only weighs in on management issues such as the need for increased funding for diplomacy and development.

Q: Another wonderful institution connected to AFSA is the Foreign Service Journal, which is a monthly magazine.

NALAND: It's now published ten times a year. You raise it because of the controversy with it when I was AFSA president. The issue was that the *Foreign Service Journal* in recent years had been serving less as the voice of Foreign Service and more toward being a mini-*Foreign Affairs* magazine focused on international revelations. There was also a widening gap between the cost of producing it and its advertising revenue. So, I forced the *Journal* to poll its readers. This was before the era of Internet polling, so they put a questionnaire in every magazine for people to fill out and mail in. I was ready to live with the results, whatever they were, but it turned out to show that members wanted at least 51 percent of the content to be about the Foreign Service, not about the future of Brazil or something like that. Thus, the AFSA Governing Board, which usually defers to the *Journal* editorial staff and Editorial Board to run the magazine, passed a policy requiring that at least 51 percent of the content -- on average, over time -- must focus on in-house Foreign Service issues. The editor then left on his own volition, and we hired a new editor. I think this was an important issue. The *Journal* needs to be the voice of the Foreign Service because almost no other publication can write with the same authority and insight about issues impacting life and work in the Foreign Service.

Finally, the last major issue from my first AFSA presidency was the AFSA Memorial Plaques located in the C Street Lobby of Main State. Unless you have been on an AFSA Governing Board, you cannot imagine how emotional people can get about who does and who does not qualify to go on the plaque. Often, when a Foreign Service member dies overseas, regardless of the circumstances, everyone who knew them wants their name on the plaque. But AFSA, starting when it created the plaque in 1933, decided we cannot put every person who happened to die overseas on the plaque (including, for example, due to heart attack) and that doing so would detract from the focus that should be on colleagues killed by terrorists and so on. Over the decades, different AFSA Governing Boards have made changes to the criteria. For several decades, they were very strict focusing mostly on those murdered abroad. When I became AFSA president there were numerous nominations of colleagues, including J. Kirby Simon, who had died overseas under circumstances distinctive to Foreign Service, but had not been killed by a terrorist or whatever, so therefore were not honored on the plaque. I convinced the Governing Board to return the plaque criteria back to its original 1933 version which allowed, for example, the inscription of deaths during official travel overseas. As a result, in the next few years we added 29 previously overlooked names to the plaque.

Q: And then you decided to move on and do some other things after the AFSA presidency, which is a full-time job, right?

NALAND: Right. Absolutely a full-time job with salary and benefits being paid by the State Department as authorized by law for federal union officials. So, after four years in AFSA and still an FS-2, I figured that I need to go back into the regular Foreign Service. From AFSA, I was assigned as Principal Officer in Matamoros, Mexico, on the border across from Brownsville, Texas (2003-6). It was a fascinating place and important things happened that I will need to describe elsewhere. While there, I attended the U.S Army War College via the distance program and got a master's degree in strategic studies. Because I had just been promoted to FS-01 and I was near the top of the list as I was to depart Matamoros, the Department offered me senior training. Thus, I spent a year as a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council of the U.S. (2006-7) -- an influential think tank in D.C. -- writing studies and organizing a conference.

While there, I started sitting in as an observer on AFSA Governing Board meetings -- which any member can do. I saw a lot of tension between AFSA President J. Anthony Holmes and some others. As Ambassador Holmes planned to run for re-election in 2007, I was encouraged by numerous colleagues to run again for AFSA president -- kind of like Grover Cleveland who came back to the U.S. presidency after a gap. So, I put together an all-star slate of candidates including former AFSA President Tex Harris and five retired ambassadors. We won. I began a second two-year term as AFSA president (2007-9) with

Steven Kashkett as AFSA State Vice President. George W. Bush was U.S. President and Condoleezza Rice was Secretary of State.

Q: Now, I remember this period relatively well. We had invaded Iraq a few years before, but we had these one-year postings there and in Afghanistan, even before 2007, they were having some trouble keeping that pace up of these one-year assignments.

NALAND: Absolutely. Since State VP Steve Kashkett is an Arabic-speaker and a strong advocate for the Foreign Service, I delegated a lot of the warzone staffing issues to him. When President George W. Bush decided to invade Iraq in 2003, almost every single person in the Foreign Service thought that was a strategic blunder. Today, nearly 20 years later, I think that most historians agree. But it was the Foreign Service's job to try to make this thing work. And it was tough because the Foreign Service has never had a 15 percent training float like the military does so that we can raid to quickly fill hundreds of positions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, people outside the State Department – including influential people like Secretary of Defense Robert Gates – just did not understand how small the Foreign Service is and thus criticized the Foreign Service as it proved very difficult to find people to fill these positions. State offered danger pay and hardship allowance and changed the promotion precepts to favor warzone service, but they were still having difficulty staffing these positions. So, on October 31, 2007 – Halloween -- Director General Harry Thomas held that infamous town hall at Main State and—

Q: It did not go well.

NALAND: The room was very tense. I happened to sit next to a civil service employee, who in no way would ever have been ordered to go to Iraq, but she still seemed terrified because Secretary Rice and Director General Thomas were talking about sending people involuntarily to Iraq.

Q: Directed—

NALAND: Directed assignments. Of course, the Secretary of State has that authority. But we in AFSA believed very strongly that if you just give people a little more time and a few more encouragements that State would get the volunteers needed. And we thought that, by threatening direct assignments, State was both insulting the Foreign Service and inviting criticism of the Foreign Service by outsiders. The session did not go well. Director General Thomas evidenced a “my way or the highway” kind of demeanor which did not reassure attendees. When it came my turn to ask a question, it was influenced by my knowledge that over 40 Foreign Service members had been killed in Vietnam,

Cambodia, and Laos during that war and my fear that history would repeat itself in Iraq. So, I noted that space was running out on the AFSA plaque (as it turned out, we added 10 names to the plaque from Iraq and Afghanistan between 2004 and 2013). A senior Foreign Service officer stood up and opined that a directed assignment to Iraq would be a death sentence.

Little did we know that an Associated Press reporter was in attendance. The session was reported very negatively in the media. We then had retired generals and conservative media saying that the Foreign Service was afraid to take these positions. Of course, eventually, we did fill all the positions with volunteers including me. But at the time, it did not play well publicly. It really emphasizes the need to make the Foreign Service bigger so that when major staffing needs arise we will have people who can go out there and do these things. So that in summary was the Iraq staffing controversy.

Thinking of other things during my second AFSA presidency, we did a complete renovation of the AFSA headquarters building. One of the best decisions AFSA ever made was to buy that building in the 1960s. But nearly 50 years later, it really needed renovating. So, we borrowed something like a million dollars from the AFSA Scholarship fund and paid it back over a number of years at the market interest rate.

We also lobbied Congress for additional Foreign Service staffing. Posts worldwide had given up positions to be moved to Iraq – called “the Iraq tax.” In 2008, I testified before a Senate appropriations subcommittee about the need to increase hiring to refill those positions. Also testifying was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Human Resources. I knew her well, so I asked her beforehand if she planned to ask for more staffing. She said, “We need more people, but I must articulate Administration policy which is not asking for increases.” This is another example of the importance of AFSA as an independent voice for the Foreign Service. Eventually, Congress did approve a major increase in staffing with funding kicking in right as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was taking office in January 2009.

Finally, as I was about to leave AFSA, we finally secured Congressional agreement to implement overseas comparability pay. Ian Houston was the AFSA lobbyist at the time and worked very hard on this. It also helped that former AFSA lobbyist Ken Nakamura was then working at the Congressional Research Service and wrote a very clear briefing paper explaining the overseas pay issue. Implementing legislation passed a few months after I left office giving overseas Foreign Service members a 15 percent pay boost. Eventually, Congress approved and funded overseas comparability pay equaling two-thirds of the Washington, D.C. locality pay rate, which is where it still is today. That is a little above the lowest locally paid rate outside of D.C., so it is better than it

could have been. If Congress had never passed it and the pay gap had continued to grow, Foreign Service members eventually would have avoided overseas postings due to the financial disincentive.

As my term as AFSA president was nearing the end, I decided to volunteer to serve in Iraq. Having been involved in the infamous Iraq town hall and with State still struggling to fill 27 Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq plus the world's largest embassy and with Foreign Service staffing also surging into Afghanistan at the time, I figured that I needed to volunteer. State asked me where I wanted to go, and I said that I would rather go to a field PRT instead of sitting in the embassy." They then asked, "Which one?" and I said, "You decide." My thought was that, if I chose and then got killed there, then it's my fault. But if they chose and I got killed, then it is State's fault. So anyway, they sent me to Basra, Iraq, to stand up an American PRT to replace the British who were pulling out. I left the AFSA presidency a month early in mid-June 2009 to take up that position. Obviously, my family did not accompany me.

An interesting side story relates to the media's penchant for running heart-tugging stories about military members leaving their families to go to war zones or coming back to be reunited with them. So, when CNN said they wanted to profile a Foreign Service member deploying to Iraq, I jumped at the opportunity. One morning a CNN camera crew came to our house in Arlington, Virginia, just before I flew out. Before they arrived, I got our two elementary school daughters to eat some cereal so they would not be hungry when CNN was filming them. But when CNN arrived they said, "We want to film the family having breakfast together." So, our little girls without complaint ate breakfast a second time to be filmed by CNN. The report played on TV the same day several times and then went away. But I still thought it was good that they highlighted the sacrifice that Foreign Service families make. So, I did a year in Iraq, survived, came back, and got another detail assignment.

Q: Oh, no.

NALAND: As Executive Director of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training which of course is conducting this interview today. After a year there, I was recruited by the Director General's office to head up their Office of Retirement which had a checkered history of not providing great services, although it had improved a little under previous directors. I ended up staying there four years (2011-15) because my family did not want to go overseas again, and I figured that I was not going to be promoted into the Senior Foreign Service even had I taken some higher-profile job. When my time-in-class limit was reached in 2015, I retired from the Foreign Service after 29 and a half years. Because I need to continue earning money to put our daughters through college, from 2015 to

2021 I was a part-time Re-Employed Annuitant in the retirement training section of the Foreign Service Institute. In 2015, I also became (and still am) the unpaid president of the Foreign Service Youth Foundation, which is a nonprofit organization helping Foreign Service kids. On the other end of the age spectrum, I also became (and still am) the leader of the Foreign Affairs Retirees of Northern Virginia, which meets for lunch and a guest speaker five times a year. Finally, in 2017, I ran for and was elected as AFSA Retiree Vice President.

Q: You just couldn't stay away.

NALAND: Because I had become a subject matter expert on Foreign Service retirement issues during my years in the Office of Retirement and at FSI, I thought that I had much to offer in the role of Retiree VP. Plus, given my previous AFSA experience, I thought that I could be a good resource to the Governing Board during a challenging time. So, I was elected to that position in 2017 and was re-elected in 2019 and 2021.

Q: But the first time you did it, we were already in the President Trump administration, right?

NALAND: Right. My two-year term began in mid-July 2017. Six months earlier, Trump had become President and Rex Tillerson was Secretary of State. Barbara Stephenson was the AFSA President in her second tour.

Q: Exactly.

NALAND: It was an extraordinarily challenging time for AFSA. You had Rex Tillerson undertaking a failed reorganization that wrecked the State Department. He froze hiring and sought to cut 2,000 positions. He decapitated the senior Foreign Service by freezing promotions and telling senior FSOs including the Undersecretary for Management and the Director General to clear out their desks. These were not things that AFSA could sue the Department to stop, but Barbara Stephenson did a fabulous job in speaking out publicly. For example, AFSA obtained authoritative details on how many career ambassadors and other senior officers had been told to retire and Ambassador Stephenson fed that information to the media. Thus, when Secretary Tillerson gave false statistics that minimized the cuts, media outlets such as *Politico* and *The Hill* magazine could report the true numbers showing the damage. After Trump fired Tillerson in March 2018, his replacement Mike Pompeo reversed many of Tillerson's most damaging actions. But later Pompeo undermined his own department in other ways as I will mention later.

Then you had President Trump in the White House sending a budget request to Congress calling for cuts in funding for State and USAID of around 31 percent. Certainly, that was an overreach that generated push back in Congress, but Ambassador Stephenson did a great job of working to build a bipartisan coalition on Capitol Hill to defend the budgets. I knew we were in good shape when I saw a video clip of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) stopped randomly in the hallway of Capitol Hill and asked about cutting the State Department budget. He gave an eloquent impromptu defense of the value of funding for diplomacy and development. Ambassador Stephenson helped to generate such support by working to focus Congress on how the proposed cuts would impact core diplomatic staffing and capabilities.

So, AFSA's public facing efforts led by Ambassador Stephenson were having a great positive impact with full support by the AFSA Governing Board. But, behind the scenes, we had significant in-house disagreements. Ambassador Stephenson was a strong leader who had a clear idea of what she wanted to do and, in my view, wanted to do it without second-guessing by others. But the whole idea of having a Governing Board is to bring a diversity of views into decision making. The AFSA president is typically a State Department senior Foreign Service officer from the political cone. But the Governing Board includes other cones, specialists, younger officers, racial and gender diversity, plus representatives of U.S. Agency for International Development, the Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, and U.S. Agency for Global Media. Given the value of leveraging this diversity in decision making, the Governing Board pushed back by voting to recreate the AFSA Executive Committee which had existed for many decades, but Ambassador Stephenson had abolished it because it was not required in the AFSA bylaws. With this change, the Executive Committee -- which included the president, secretary, treasurer, and constituency vice presidents -- was able to contribute to decision making and ensure that key issues got elevated to the full Governing Board. To make this permanent, AFSA Secretary Tom Boyatt led a bylaws review that produced proposed amendments that were overwhelmingly approved by the full AFSA membership guaranteeing that AFSA presidents cannot just do what they think is best without consulting the Executive Committee and Governing Board.

Also, behind the scenes and not visible to most AFSA members there were terminations or resignations of three longtime AFSA staff members that caused a lot of controversy and several really impacted me. One was because I was (and still am) the chair of AFSA's Scholarship Committee when AFSA's longtime staffer who ran the scholarship program resigned under circumstances that were never clear to me. Initially, Ambassador Stephenson decided not to replace her. Seeing that void, I took the lead on running the scholarship competition in 2018 which involved several hundred hours of work by me. At about the same time, the AFSA staff member who assisted retirees was let go. Given my

expertise in retirement issues, I volunteered to fill that void for over half a year until a new person was hired. Finally, the longtime staffer who sold advertising in the *Foreign Service Journal* was also let go in 2018 under circumstances that were never clear to me. Ambassador Stephenson did not hire a replacement. As a result, advertising revenue plummeted – down by over \$200,000 (nearly 50 percent) in 2019 -- and took several years to recover after a replacement was hired after Eric Rubin took over as AFSA president. So, this staff turmoil occupied a lot of my time – at least 20 hours per week.

Q: But you weren't paid then, right? Because you're no longer in the Foreign Service.

NALAND: That is correct. The Retiree VP position is unpaid and when I write articles for the *Foreign Service Journal*, which I have done a half-dozen times in the last several years, I do not get paid like outside authors. Other things that I worked on starting in this first term included using my retirement benefits knowledge to write mini-briefers for AFSA's bi-monthly Retirement Newsletter which is emailed to all AFSA members. Having now contributed mini-essays six times a year for five years, we recently collected about 30 of those briefers into a new Frequently Asked Questions section on the AFSA website. I also used my knowledge to help AFSA's staff counselor for retirees answer member inquiries.

Something else I helped work on was the Special Needs Education Allowance. While that is mainly an AFSA State VP issue, because of my membership on the Foreign Affairs Council as President of the Foreign Service Youth Foundation, the FAC delegated me to raise that issue in meetings with Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan in 2017 to 2019. Although he worked for Secretary Tillerson, Deputy Secretary Sullivan was someone who, if you took an issue to him, he would do as much as he could to resolve it.

Q: What was the issue on that? I remember, many years before, I used the allowance for some help for my son, when I was overseas, in Honduras.

NALAND: What happened was State for many years had a good and generous program. But then there was a staffing change in the Office of Medical Services and the doctor who came in to oversee the program dramatically scaled back the assistance. Many Foreign Service members with a special needs child were up in arms. Some reported being told that "Maybe you should not be in the Foreign Service if your kid needs all that help." So, we took the issue to Deputy Secretary John Sullivan, and he apparently put pressure on the Director General's office to fix the thing. Eventually, that doctor was reassigned, and State published a new Foreign Affairs Manual section which clearly explained the assistance that State should provide so one doctor in MED could not just say no. So, that had a big impact. Of course, a lot of advocacy work was done by an

ad-hoc group for families with special needs kids and AFSA's Labor-Management staff, but I do think that my talks with the Deputy Secretary led him to tell his staff that, "You really need to fix this." So, I was proud about that.

One final thing I remember from my first tour as Retiree VP -- and again this relates to an initiative by Tom Boyatt -- is my role in nominating Foreign Service retirees to serve on the Foreign Service Grievance Board. The Foreign Service Act of 1980 gives AFSA co-authority with the foreign affairs agencies to nominate people to be on the Foreign Service Grievance Board. The Secretary of State then makes the final decision, but only from a joint slate that AFSA and the foreign affairs agencies agreed to. Tom Boyatt when he was on the Governing Board around 2015 thought that AFSA had not really put enough emphasis on this to place the best possible people on that important board which makes decisions on cases brought to it by AFSA. So, he convinced the Governing Board to get more involved in the vetting process with most of the work falling to the Retiree VP since the candidates had to be retirees. So, I have spent a good deal of time on that during each annual appointment cycle. AFSA always gets many distinguished volunteers and, of course, State and sometimes other foreign affairs agencies have separate candidates. So, we spend time interviewing people and then negotiating with State to select a consensus slate to be presented to the Secretary of State.

So, those are the highlights of my first tour as Retiree VP.

Q: And then the second tour was a different president?

NALAND: Yes, the AFSA bylaws allow service in a position for four consecutive terms, so I ran for reelection and won, taking office in July 2019. Eric Rubin came in as AFSA President and Mike Pompeo was still Secretary of State.

Again, I worked on retiree issues by helping to answer member questions and writing items for the Retirement Newsletter. I still chaired the Scholarship Committee and worked on grievance board appointments. But Mike Pompeo was the Secretary now and things in many ways were more difficult than under Tillerson.

First, of course, were the events involving U.S. diplomacy towards Ukraine that led to the first Trump impeachment in fall and winter 2019. I got involved in AFSA's efforts because key witness Marie "Masha" Yovanovitch and I were A-100 classmates, so I had known her since the day she entered the Foreign Service. I volunteered to serve on AFSA's Legal Defense Fund (LDF) Committee which AFSA Secretary Ken Kero-Mentz chaired. The LDF had been mostly dormant for years with only about \$20,000 in the bank. But now we suddenly had a dozen AFSA members facing \$750-an-hour lawyer

bills which would have bankrupted them. So, AFSA rallied in their defense. By mid-2020, the LDF had raised nearly \$750,000 from about 2,650 donors and had covered over \$485,000 in member legal costs.

I am sure we could have raised far more money had it been necessary. AFSA actively solicited donations only from current and retired Foreign Service members who eventually made up over 90 percent of donors. Had we appealed to the public via the national media, I am sure that many regular Americans would have contributed. In fact, one wealthy American contacted us interested in making a million-dollar donation. After much discussion, we decided that it would not look good if large donors dominated LDF funding, so we set a \$100,000 limit on donations. In the end, we did receive two \$100,000 donations from wealthy Americans.

For me the highlight of this controversy was when I accompanied Masha Yovanovitch to her six-hour testimony on Capitol Hill before the impeachment committee on November 15, 2019. As she explained the book she wrote after retiring, she selected me both because we are longtime friends and because, as a former AFSA president, my sitting behind her showed that AFSA and the Foreign Service “had her back.” So that was a fascinating day, and I was glad that AFSA could raise that money to help our colleagues.

Q: And the colleagues were needing to have the legal representation because it's just-

NALAND: Normally, when federal employees get called to testify in court relating to their official duties, a Department of Justice attorney goes with them. When they get called before a Congressional committee investigating something related to their official duties, a government attorney from their agency goes with them. But in both cases, the attorneys are representing the government, not the employee. Thus, they may not look out for the employee’s best interest and could potentially report private information back to their superiors in the administration.

In any event, in the case of the Trump impeachment, the House of Representatives prohibited participation in the proceedings by Trump administration attorneys. So, AFSA members who were subpoenaed to testify had to have other legal counsel. But because advising members at high-profile Congressional hearings is outside the experience of AFSA’s attorneys, AFSA advised our members to retain private counsel. AFSA’s attorneys then reached out to local attorneys to develop a list of those who agreed to represent AFSA members on a pro bono basis or at a reduced rate.

Because even reduced rate representation can run into the tens of thousands of dollars per month, AFSA’s attorneys got confirmation from State Department ethics attorneys that

AFSA members could have their attorney fees reimbursed by the AFSA Legal Defense Fund without running afoul of ethics rules which prohibit federal employees from accepting gifts. Because AFSA is a union, the federal ethics rules allowed AFSA to arrange for outside attorneys to represent its members. In effect, those private attorneys are providing services to AFSA not to the employee. Thus, LDF assistance to members was viewed as a benefit of AFSA membership, not a prohibited gift to the employee.

Finally, to ensure that money disbursed from the LDF did not originate from sources prohibited by federal ethics rules, AFSA amended the LDF's standard operating procedures to prohibit anonymous donations and to only accept donations from U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and U.S.-headquartered organizations. As required by law, all donations of \$5,000 or more were reported on AFSA's annual LM-2 reports which are posted on the U.S. Department of Labor website.

Having spent that day with Masha Yovanovitch's attorneys from the Robbins Russell law firm, I can attest that they were worth every penny. Not only were they graduates of top law schools, but some had previously worked for the Department of Justice or had been Hill staffers. So, this was not their "first time at the rodeo" which allowed them to provide outstanding advice and representation in that high-pressure setting.

Q: It was a turbulent time.

NALAND: Yes, and the Ukraine controversy was only the start. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began. Like other organizations, AFSA had to pivot. We went to online Governing Board meetings, we went to online events. Like other organizations, we found that online work had advantages and disadvantages. Having an event online instead of just in front of an audience at AFSA headquarters means that people from around the world can participate. For example, as a retirement expert, I recently presented an online webinar for active-duty AFSA members on mid-career retirement planning that attracted nearly 500 viewers. But the downside was that holding Governing Board and AFSA committee meetings online did not allow for the same interactions, side-conversations, and so on, as in-person meetings do.

Also, by the time the 2019-21 Governing Board was in place, Secretary Pompeo was following President Trump's lead in depreciating the role of career professionals. For example, in my role in coordinating for AFSA the Foreign Service Grievance Board nomination process, in fall 2020 it became clear that Secretary Pompeo had decided to ignore his statutory responsibility to appoint grievance board members. The Foreign Service Act assigns that responsibility to the Secretary of State, but the drafters never anticipated that the Secretary would refuse to make appointments. Since grievance board

members serve two-year terms with half the board appointed one year and the other half the next year, that meant that after October 1, 2020, half the positions became vacant, and the grievance board went to half staffing. That was just an astounding dereliction of duty on Pompeo's part which neither he nor his staff ever explained. Had Trump been re-elected, and Pompeo remained as Secretary, the grievance board presumably would have totally ceased to function after October 1, 2021. The half-staffed grievance board not only delayed justice for employees who had filed grievances, but it also harmed government efficiency since grievance board decisions are sometimes the final step before a poorly performing Foreign Service member gets separated from the Service. Secretary of State Antony Blinken made those appointments shortly after taking office in January 2021.

Another big issue that worried AFSA was the Executive Orders issued by President Trump in 2018 attacking federal unions and his 2020 Executive Order creating broad exceptions of the requirement to use merit-based procedures in filling career federal positions. While those Executive Orders applied only to the civil service and were immediately tied up in court challenges, AFSA knew that it would only take a stroke of the president's pen to apply them to the Foreign Service. Had the Executive Orders been implemented it is conceivable, for example, that active-duty employees serving as AFSA president and agency AFSA vice presidents might have to go on leave without pay to fill those positions with AFSA stepping in to replace their salary. One of President Biden's first acts was to cancel those Executive Orders.

Going back to COVID, one controversy arose with the AFSA Memorial Plaques in the C Street lobby. Sadly, two State Department Foreign Service members died in the U.S. from COVID contracted overseas early in the pandemic before vaccines. There was an upswell of pressure from several dozen colleagues urging AFSA to inscribe their names on the AFSA plaque. The issue came to the AFSA Awards and Plaque Committee of which I was (and still am) a member. Having dealt with many plaque cases during my previous tours on the Governing Board, I explained to the other committee members that the plaque criteria going back to 1933 restrict inscriptions to deaths in conditions distinctive to overseas service. So yes, if you die of a tropical disease contracted outside the U.S, then you go on the plaque. But if you die of worldwide diseases such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, or during great influenza 1919-1920, then you do not go on the plaque. Since COVID has killed over a million Americans, deaths from it clearly did not qualify to go on the plaque.

But my experience over the years is that there are always some Governing Board members tempted to ignore the longstanding plaque criteria in the face of outside pressure. It does not help that most Governing Board members serve for just two years

and arrive with no knowledge of the plaque's history or criteria. So, the Awards and Plaques Committee and later the Governing Board discussed it at some length. I wrote a letter that I got eleven former AFSA presidents to sign urging that COVID deaths not be inscribed on the AFSA plaque. In the end, the Governing Board decided to establish a special plaque for honoring the tens of thousands of State Department employees, including Foreign Service nationals, who remained on the frontlines during those days before vaccines. The plaque will also honor the two Foreign Service members who died of COVID contracted overseas. The State Department agreed to allow us to place the plaque in the C Street lobby and it is scheduled to be unveiled in May 2023.

A final project during my 2019-21 service as Retiree VP was that I proposed and then led an historic expansion of the AFSA plaque. In the preceding years, some intrepid Foreign Service officers had, on their own time, conducted Internet and archival research of the names of early diplomats and consular officers who died overseas going back to the late 1700s but whose cases were unknown when AFSA created the plaque in 1933. As a result, with my advocacy, the Governing Board approved 67 historical names to go on the plaque. Because there was no more room on the existing plaques, the Governing Board approved a \$50,000 project proposed by me to add additional six granite tablets in the C Street lobby. The State Department approved it, and they were unveiled in May 2021. Now, if we do not have more mass casualty events like embassy bombing, there should be enough space for 50 more years of inscriptions -- as long future Governing Boards do not succumb to the pressure of adding people who just happened to be overseas when they died of causes that could have occurred in the U.S..

Those are the highlights of my second tour as Retiree VP. Now I am in my third tour which started in July 2021 and lasts to July 2023.

Q: At this point, President Biden had been in place for several months.

NALAND: Yes, in January 2021 Biden became President and Antony Blinken became Secretary of State. The 2021-23 Governing Board that took office in July 2021 includes Eric Rubin returning for a second term as AFSA President.

With Biden in the White House and Blinken at State, "the beatings stopped" as we say compared to the Trump years. But, so far, the Biden administration has been underwhelming. Trump purposefully did not appoint ambassadors and other senior officials. Biden, for whatever reason, has also been very slow to make nominations. For example, Pompeo fired the State Department Inspector General who was then investigating him. But after well over a year in office, Biden has still not nominated a replacement. Moreover, even after Biden nominates someone, the Senate has been slow

to confirm them. Delays in confirming the Under Secretary for Management and the new Director General left things adrift for a year. Of course, State has also been preoccupied with things including the disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan and the war in Ukraine, but world events should not get in the way of management improvements.

Of concern to me as a longtime AFSA officer is that the Biden Administration, while talking boldly about improving relations with federal unions, has so far failed to keep AFSA informed about key changes impacting the Foreign Service. They failed to brief AFSA on their decision to drop the 90+ year old Foreign Service officer test as something that most FSO applicants had to pass. As I record this interview, State is keeping AFSA in the dark about potential changes to the longtime policy of having to be worldwide available the day you are appointed to the Foreign Service.

As I near the halfway point of my third term as Retiree VP, I continue serving our retired members. I am still on the Awards and Plaques Committee and still chair the Scholarship Committee. I continue coordinating Foreign Service Grievance Board nominations for AFSA. A year ago, I proposed that AFSA establish a Centennial Celebration Committee since 2024 marks the hundredth anniversary of the creation of the modern Foreign Service by the passage of the Rogers Act in 1924 and of when AFSA itself was founded combining previously separate consular and diplomatic groups. I chair that committee which has already submitted a nomination to the U.S. Postal Service to issue a stamp in 2024 commemorating the Foreign Service. To also reach audiences outside the beltway to educate them about the Foreign Service, I secured the agreement of the Ronald Reagan Library and Museum to host an exhibit and will soon be reaching out to other presidential libraries around the country. Finally, I am a member of the Governance Committee which is currently drafting bylaws amendments to present to the AFSA membership next year for a vote. So, I think that is all I think of.

Q: Thank you, John. You have been involved with AFSA in Washington for 22 years. So, any reflections on how the organization has changed over time?

NALAND: Well, AFSA is still the powerful voice of the Foreign Service. That is its legal status as the Foreign Service union, but that standing is reinforced by the fact that some 80 to 85 percent of active-duty Foreign Service members voluntarily join AFSA -- I know of no civil service union with half that level of participation. Also, thanks to work over the past two decades by Tom Boyatt and others to build up a large financial reserve, AFSA now has over \$4 million in its operating reserve – what Tom Boyatt calls its “war fund” – should AFSA come under strong outside attacks requiring us to defend ourselves and/or our members in federal court, on Capitol Hill, or in the court of public opinion.

So, AFSA remains in a strong position to advance the interests of the Foreign Service. But it is up to future AFSA Governing Boards to keep up the fight against outside pressure to dilute the unique features of the Foreign Service career. In the executive branch, there is a continuum of conditions of service with the uniformed military on one end and the civil service on the other end. The Foreign Service somewhere in the middle. If we want to retain, for example, our more generous retirement benefits compared to the civil service, then our conditions of service – for example, a rigorous entry exam and commitment to worldwide availability -- need to stay closer on that continuum to the military than to the civil service.

Q: Okay, and before we end our interview, is there anything you want to say about the Foreign Service or your life with it?

NALAND: Yes, it was a fascinating career. Mine ended at the FS-01 level, but I think I made substantial contributions even without rising to the Senior Foreign Service. Then, as I was retiring in 2015, I was asked to co-author a third edition of the Georgetown University Press book “*Career Diplomacy: Life and Work in the U.S. Foreign Service*.” I did so and four years later they asked Harry Kopp and me to produce a fourth edition which came out in 2021. I hope that many Americans – especially those considering a career in the Foreign Service – find that book to be useful.

Q: You know that we've known each other since 1989. But on behalf of all of us, active and retired, I do want to thank you for everything that you've done. And with that, I think that we'll end this interview.

NALAND: Thank you so much.

End of Interview