

May 15, 1980

A PROPOSAL TO ENHANCE THE  
FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE'S CONTRIBUTION TO  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN SERVICE PEOPLE

A Problem

Over many years the pressures of trying to fill too many line-jobs with too few Foreign Service personnel have seriously weakened and distorted the Service's investment in the continuing training and advanced education of its personnel. The leadership of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), despairing of getting our best officers into long-term training, has atomized much of its professional curriculum into short, one- or two-week courses of limited educational depth, in the hope that officers during a tour in Washington can secure their organization's permission to take at least this much time off for training. We seem to be able to spare virtually no communicators and too few secretaries for language and area studies. Many family members simply can not spare, before departing for an overseas post, the minimum 20 weeks required for FSI's standard language courses.

In the general Foreign Service culture of values, rewards and satisfaction, training has come to serve no clear role beyond preparation for the next assignment. We have come increasingly to accept the notions that one learns all one needs to know in country and on the job, that the "feel" and intuition developed by Foreign Service reporters can not be enhanced by any theory or analytical concepts, that no training or advanced education is really relevant to the unique Foreign Service tasks, that training has no priority in the system and brings no rewards. Our personnel frequently judge the value of training solely in terms of what it does for the next assignment and promotion, rather than what it contributes to professional development over a career. Our staff members

are left to conclude that the system does not believe that language and area knowledge are necessary to their productive life and work overseas. And family members are still left to fit their language and area study into schedules and courses designed for others' requirements.

There are serious weaknesses in the current role of training in the development of Foreign Service people which, unless addressed, threaten to leave the level of professionalism in the Foreign Service behind our requirements.

- A system so completely dependent upon on-the-job learning is resistant to change and too isolated from advances and changes occurring in the many professional fields involved in Foreign Service work. Our overall investment in professional training for officers (a few months over a 20-year career) leaves us vulnerable to falling behind the level of competence in our key professional fields represented by the best people in private institutions and other government services.
- FSI's potpourri of short, professional courses is simply not being delivered to our people who need continuing professional training and advanced education. Ninety percent of our senior political officers have never had any in-Service training in their craft other than language and area orientation. Most Foreign Service officers have never had any management training. Most of our personnel go to their posts without any course in the culture, politics and economics of the area concerned.  
(Although courses intended for all these needs are offered at FSI.)

- For staff personnel the delivery problem is even more serious (e.g. only 3 communicators had a full language course last year).
- By providing training on such a partial basis we are missing an opportunity to use our training to help develop the full potential of all our personnel.

Within a clarified overall concept of development over a career, training can clearly contribute more to enhancing the professionalism and readiness for overseas service of Foreign Service people.

#### A Proposal

With regard to Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) two critical reforms are required in our training program.

First, we must fit all our training for FSO's into a full, recognized and accepted concept of a career development ladder. We should concentrate our training at a few critical rungs in the career ladder and assure that this training is provided to virtually all officers, discontinuing courses that do not serve a clear function within this concept. The approach of fitting in a little training here and there, when and if there is time between assignments, has failed and should not be the basis for the future relation of training to the assignment process.

Second, we need to upgrade the quality of our professional courses to the standard of top, graduate education, with successful completion accredited toward advanced degrees under an arrangement between FSI and a consortia of graduate schools in international affairs, political science, economics, area studies, and administration.

Both these elements of the proposal as they relate to FSOs are elaborated below:

#### A. Training in the Career Development Concept

For training to fulfill its potential role in the professional

and FSI need a common roadmap of the expected development of Foreign Service officer careers and where and how training promotes successful passage. Without this, the function of specific training will not be clear, officers will not necessarily be assigned to it at the right time, and our training, whatever its quality, will not contribute systematically to a professional, effective Foreign Service.

In current reconsideration of career development a reasonably clear concept of career progression is emerging. Entering career candidates will virtually all start in a consular job overseas, followed by a second tour normally in a different geographic area, and involving some work in the person's field of primary specialization—economic, political, consular or administrative work. About this time a decision is made to grant tenure as an FSO or to separate the candidate from the Service. At the FSO-5 level the officer begins the long, critical (to him or her and the Service) mid-career phase in which the officer is expected to 1) develop substantial competence in his or her specialization, 2) acquire experience in policy development, 3) gain some supervisory and/or resources management experience. At least one "out-of-cone" assignment or detail to another agency would be needed to complete this broadening in most cases. At the FSO-3 level candidates for the Senior Foreign Service will be gauged by how well they actually performed in these mid-level jobs. Successful candidates will enter a Senior Foreign Service at which most jobs involve significant management content.

This outline will be refined much further in the course of continuing work, but the outline itself is adequate to define the strategic points for in-depth training and the differing educational nature of the experience at each point.

First, at the very beginning of the career candidate period, we should give candidates most of the job skills, how-to training we can usefully provide, since about four years later they will be retained or separated in part on the basis of whether they can absorb and apply such skills—and our objective has to be that all who can are indeed retained.

Second, at early mid-level we need a different kind of professional education to develop the substantive depth of our people while beginning the process of broadening them into another secondary field and preparing for eventual supervisory responsibility.

Third, at the threshold of the Senior Foreign Service, supposedly successful supervisors need some help in honing the skills of broader program management (only secondarily a function of training as opposed to experience) and at the FSO-3 or O-2 level a less-structured kind of intellectual experience, out of the government, to help enhance the dimensions of creativity not regularly stimulated in the narrow, bureaucratic environment.

The proposal suggests concentrating the bulk of professional training for all FSOs at these three strategic points in their career. We would drop many of our present short professional courses that do not serve a clear need in terms of the objectives for each of these training "rungs" in the career development ladder.

This part of the proposal is summarized schematically in the following chart and developed further below.

# TRAINING IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN SERVICE PERSONNEL

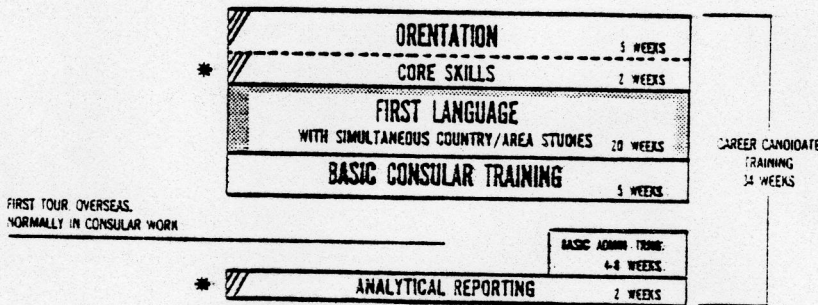
## CAREER PROGRESS

## TRAINING

## TRAINING BY OBJECTIVES

ENTERS AT FSR 8 OR 7  
CAREER CANDIDATE

### JUNIOR

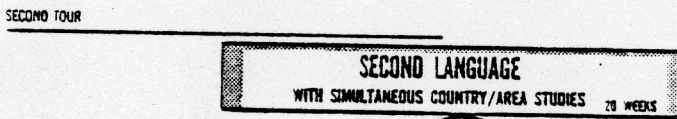


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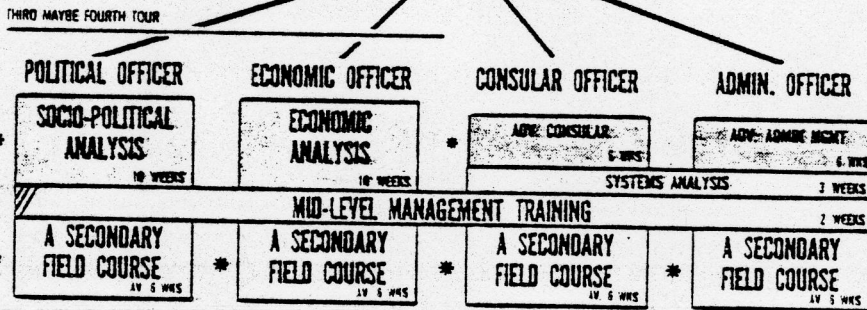
- BASIC SKILLS NEEDED BY ALL OUR FSDS TO DO THEIR JOBS BETTER
- LANGUAGE & COUNTRY/AREA TRAINING TO ASSURE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
- ADVANCED EDUCATION & TRAINING TO DEEPEN OUR FUNCTIONALISTS THRU MID-CAREER
- TRAINING IN A SECOND FIELD TO PREPARE FOR MULTI-FUNCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS
- SENIOR DEVELOPMENT

\* NEW COURSES

TENURED  
PROMOTION TO FSO 6



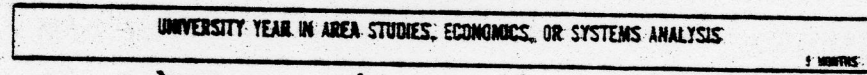
PROMOTION TO FSO 5



MID-LEVEL COURSE AV. 13 WEEKS

MID-LEVEL EDUCATION/TRAINING

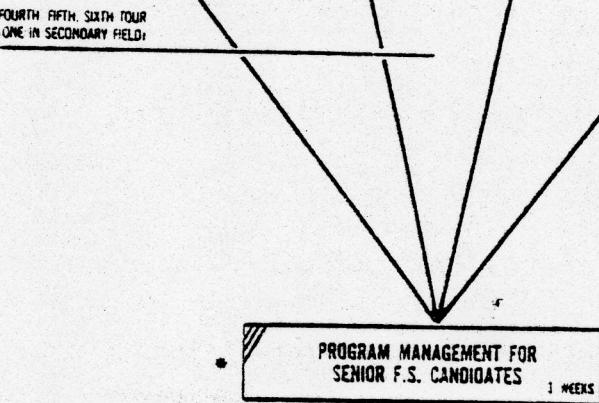
### MID



### SELECTION OF SECONDARY FIELD COURSES

- SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS
- POLITICAL ECONOMY
- DEPARTMENT AND POST OPERATIONS
- FUNCTIONAL ISSUES IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

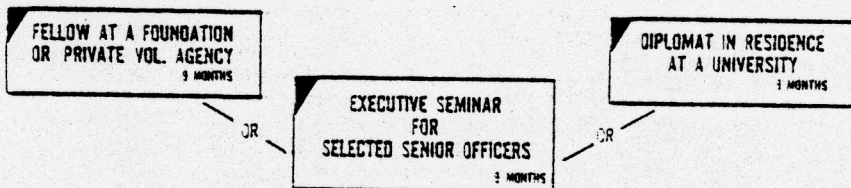
PROMOTION TO FSO 3



ENTER SENIOR FS  
AT FSO 2

SIXTH TOUR  
AND BEFORE

### SENIOR



Point 1 - Beginning Career Candidacy

At an average age of 29, the entering career candidate is several years out of graduate school and already adjusted to another job—teacher, lawyer, whatever. On entering the Foreign Service, therefore, a good deal of skills training is needed before the career candidate can be expected to perform fully enough in the first two tours, normally overseas, to provide a basis for the decision to grant tenure or separate. Given the age of entering career candidates and the rapid decline on entering the Foreign Service culture in receptivity to basic skills or "how-to" training, this type of training has to be concentrated in the very early part of the career. The present practice offers to entering career candidates an orientation course (5 weeks), a foreign language (20 weeks) to those who need it (about 75%), two-weeks of area studies for those going overseas (about all) as well as basic consular training (5 weeks) and administrative training to those going to administrative jobs. To this, we would add two weeks of leveling training in core skills—Foreign Service writing, speaking, personal work organization and first-level supervisory skills—the deficient areas most often cited by commissioning and tenure boards. In addition, before a career candidate first does economic or political work (normally in the second assignment) we would add a two-week course in analytical reporting. (The Foreign Service must be one of the few organizations that sends people to a job as complex as analytical reporting with no specific training.)

The core skills course would also be available for Foreign Service staff personnel going on excursion tours and could be taken by them in tandem with the basic consular or administrative operations courses.

Point 2 - The Early Mid-Level

At the early mid-level (FSO-5), an officer is entering the longest and most productive phase of his or her career, in which one is expected 1) to develop great depth in a primary field--economic, political, consular or administrative--and, 2) to take one or more assignments in another field as necessary to gain policy development supervisory or management experience. Most of our officers now get no advanced professional education or training for these roles other than that they brought with them into the Foreign Service. This needs to change if we are to maintain high standards of professionalism and give our officers the opportunity to acquire all the skills and experience needed to rise to the Senior Foreign Service.

A proposed new mid-level program (for FSO-5's) is designed to address these requirements for effectiveness in mid-career by means of a five-month program, in three course modules, that would 1) deepen our specialists knowledge of his or her primary field with a demanding dose of graduate-level, analytically intense education, 2) broaden them with a similar, but more training-oriented, course in a second field and 3) provide training in mid-level management. The function of the first course in particular will not be job skills so much as expanding people's minds so that the analytical reporter confronts a given set of current events with a new set of questions and analytical constructs to help assess what these events mean in the full depth of a society, and the consular or administrative officer confronts a given set of job problems with greater personal command of systems analysis and resource management. In other words the objective is more to develop people than to tell them how to do their job. After reviewing the current curriculum and the failures (e.g. the threshold



course) and successes (e.g. the 26-week economic course) of previous efforts at mid-level training, one comes to the conclusion that this type of professional education is the most fruitful approach to developing better analytical reporters, consular and administrative officers and potential managers. The secondary field and management courses will both carry forward this, basically professional educational experience as well as prepare officers for two specific mid-career challenges (out-of-cone jobs and supervisory responsibility) that will be important experiences for advancing later to the Senior Foreign Service.

The opportunity for all officers in the mid-level program to take a demanding course in a second field or "cone" will serve an important career development objective by helping officers pre-qualify for out-of-cone assignments that may be necessary to gain the supervisory or policy development experience required in the Senior Foreign Service.

We would continue our present level of university studies for mid-level officers (39 annually).

While the target level for the mid-level program is new FSO-5s, the assignment process would have at least two shots at placing an officer in the program. For example, if new FSO-5 Jones were so desperately needed in Bamako that he could not be spared for five months now, he could now be scheduled for the mid-level course on completion of the Bamako tour.

Point 3 - The Threshold of the Senior Foreign Service

At FSO-3 level we would introduce a new, three-week course intended for all candidates for the Senior Foreign Service. This program management training would briefly review some of the basic supervisory and interpersonal skills that are the heart of courses that will be provided earlier in the career (the core skills and mid-level management courses) but concentrate on the budgetary and broader resource management aspects of program direction, plus the dimensions of Congressional, press and constituency relations. Systematic development by Personnel of assignment opportunities, including those outside the Department, with supervisory content for our promising mid-level officers, combined with these three tiers of management training, should over time produce better results at the senior levels.

In addition, at the FSO-3 or O-2 level most officers would benefit from an intellectual experience liberated from the institutional mold of the Department and the Government. Our selective efforts to provide this type of experience, e.g. the Executive (formerly "Senior") Seminar, Council on Foreign Relations Fellowship, have been widely praised by participants as a regenerative intellectual experience. We should provide a menu of such opportunities and look to provide it to more officers than are now selected each year for such programs (about 35). The foreign affairs training of the National Defense University ("War College") serves a less clear function for Foreign Service officers in this regard and the number of FSOs going annually could probably be reduced.

B. Upgrading the Quality of Training to the Standard of Top, Graduate-level Education

The second key element of the proposal as regards FSOs is that of raising the quality of FSI's professional training to that of top-level,

graduate education. For the Foreign Service officer still psychologically in the job environment of production pressure and living by the standard of relevance to career advancement, training can be mentally sloughed off unless the officer is strongly challenged by the intellectual depth and learning demands of the experience. Pedagogically, this is why many of FSI's short professional courses fail and why our most successful courses, e.g. language, the 26-week economic course, are those that are longer, demanding challenges with clear, high standards for success.

Most of our professional training should be set at a demanding, graduate level, given the educational level of our officers. In the economic area, for example, the 26-week course's mission of providing a solid undergraduate major to FSO economic officers has been completed. We now have fewer than 70 economic officers who do not have a solid undergraduate major or better, via the 26-week course or previous education, and virtually all of our entering economic officers have a solid major or better. Thus what we should now be offering our economic officers (as we propose to do in the new mid-level program) is an intensive graduate-level extension of basic theory plus its most advanced international applications, in finance, economic stabilization and global macro-economic management (i.e. the inter-relation of domestic economies that is the heart of economic summitry). In the other fields the standard should be the same, so that, say, the FSO-5 political officer with a 10-year-old advanced degree in political science works with analytical constructs of, for example, modernization and societal change, as well as case studies, to an extent that tasks the officer's abilities and leaves a lasting impact on his or her capacity to prove the inter-relationship of events and societal origins and trends. For consular and administrative officers the primary part of the course would similarly

concentrate on professional fields relevant to these cones, e.g. systems analysis and data systems, international law, the psychology of counseling, not job skills as such.

To provide a continuing structure for assuring high-quality content and high standards of performance in FSI professional courses, we propose to negotiate arrangements between FSI and two or three consortia of top graduate schools in international affairs, economics, area studies and administration, under which FSI courses would be accredited toward their advanced degrees. Our main objectives in such consortia arrangements would be two:

- to provide a structure in which our courses would maintain very high standards and a demanding pace, and testing of performance would be accepted as a normal part of the system—in other words to set a higher tone for the training experience in general.
- to engage some of our finest graduate schools in a continuing process of advising on course content to assure that it incorporates the best that academia has to offer which is relevant to Foreign Service professional development.

Once the structure has been in place some time it should also have some impact on officers' motivation. Rated language competence, advanced area studies, advanced professional studies in economics, political science or management (whether at FSI or a university) and continuing professional education in general will come to be seen as part of a building process that extends over a career. This process should have some impact on all officers including those entering with

an advanced degree in fields directly relevant to foreign affairs. This appeal of graduate degrees as such to FSOs, however, is not the main objective of the program. The main objectives of the consortia are to provide a set of standards and structure for maintaining the highest quality course content.

C. New Language Programs

As an additional alternative for all Foreign Service people, we propose to offer a series of shorter language courses in the 12 world and hard languages most frequently used in the Foreign Service. These would not be merely a portion of the 20-week and 44-week (hard language) courses designed for officers going to language-designated positions. The new courses would rather be new, self-contained, intensive courses directed to a definite objective—social fluency in the case of the world language (in 10 weeks) and familiarization with the writing systems and command of essential phrases for the hard languages (in 6 weeks). Each of these new short courses would include, for one half-day each week, a new country-specific area course aimed at readiness to live and operate in the culture and society.

The development objective of the courses is to offer a new alternative to 1) Foreign Service staff, 2) FSOs going to positions not designated as language (S-3) required and 3) family members, in the expectation that many more will be able to take an intensive language course if only a 6- or 10-week investment is required. Those able to take the 20- and 44-week courses could, of course, continue to do so if they wish.

D. New Area Studies Curriculum

Rather than providing area studies in 9 regional lecture courses, as at present, we propose to provide 24 country or sub-regional-specific seminars to help prepare Foreign Service people for overseas work and living. The seminars will be offered one-half day per week in the course of all language training. The modules offered with the 6- and 10-week language courses will stress cultural and social orientation to life in, say, the Soviet Union, Japan or the Arabian Peninsula and some of its political and historical background. The 20- and 44-week language courses will receive this material as well as additional political, economic and historical background. These longer area courses run by seminar leaders expert in the specific country or sub-region of one's next assignment will facilitate more profound preparation of our analytical reporters and negotiators than is now possible in the two-week regional courses.

Our 26 country and sub-regional experts would also participate in two-week programs designed for those not taking language but desiring area study. Within this broader structure and curriculum of area studies at FSI, we would be able to deal with questions relating to all dimensions of cultural preparation--from the social life of singles in Japan to the political effects of the fundamentalist revival in Islam.

E. A Foreign Service Training Complement

We can not adequately train our officer and staff personnel over a career if the size of the Foreign Service remains at its present level, which is below the number of line positions. In this circumstance, every person in training means one more vacant "line" position and an

adequate, sustained investment in training will be frustrated by the pressures of the assignment process. Therefore, the adoption of a program for development of Foreign Service personnel throughout their careers needs to be underpinned by the creation of a true training complement, authorized by OMB and the Congress to provide the resources

— to allow all our officers passing through the FSO-5 level to take the 5-month mid-level course and enable a significant number of senior officers to participate in a 9-month developmental experience outside the Department.

— to provide language and area training to a large number of staff personnel each year.

This means not only increased training positions but also increasing the size of the Foreign Service by 200 people so that the training can be provided without creating additional gaps in other jobs.

#### F. Schedule

The new courses for career candidates (the core skills material and the analytical reporting course) will be offered beginning in May and August of this year.

The revised area studies curriculum (24 seminars) and 12 shorter language courses will be phased in from August to December.

The mid-level program will be offered to an initial group of 10 to 50 in April 1981, and hopefully to two large groups in FY 82 if the training complement is established on time.

The consortia with graduate schools, for accreditation of FSI courses, will be negotiated starting in January 1981, after the content of the mid-level program and other elements of the revised FSI curriculum are fixed.

The expansion of the number of senior officers receiving 9-month professional development assignments would begin in FY 82.