U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER
ORAL ASSESSMENT STUDY GUIDE

- ✓ Composure
- ✓ Cultural Adaptability
- ✓ Experience and Motivation
- ✓ Information Integration and Analysis
- ✓ Initiative and Leadership
- ✓ Judgment
- ✓ Objectivity and Integrity
- ✓ Oral Communication
- ✓ Planning and Organizing
- ✓ Quantitative Analysis
- ✓ Resourcefulness
- ✓ Working With Others
- ✓ Written Communication

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The Foreign Service Act of 1980 tasks the U.S. Department of State – and the Board of Examiners (BEX) specifically – with the responsibility for the evaluation and selection of candidates for the Foreign Service. The Department takes this charge seriously and has devoted significant resources to the development of a Foreign Service Officer Selection Process with the goal of providing all candidates, regardless of socioeconomic background, education, or experience, a chance to demonstrate their potential to be a Foreign Service Officer. Candidates who are invited to the Foreign Service Oral Assessment will find that it is designed to challenge them and to give them the opportunity in three different settings (a group exercise, a structured interview, and a case management writing exercise) to demonstrate the thirteen dimensions that have been identified as the qualities necessary to become a successful Foreign Service Officer. Thus, the Board of Examiners stands by the validity and integrity of the assessment process as being a fair and accurate selection method for Foreign Service Officers. Indeed, it is vital to the U.S. Department of State's mission and purpose.

To ensure no bias in favor of any candidate, BEX periodically revises its testing materials. BEX also asks all candidates to sign a non-disclosure statement before beginning the assessment, and has implemented other safeguards. Please note that BEX will terminate the candidacy of someone found to have violated the non-disclosure agreement.

Study Guide for the Foreign Service Officer Oral Assessment

January 2014

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Introduction

The Foreign Service is a unique career and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the selection process is also unique. The purpose of the "Guide to the Foreign Service Oral Assessment" is to help familiarize candidates with the assessment process so that they will be able to better focus on their own performance during the oral assessment rather than spend their limited time reviewing procedures. While the main elements of the FSOA remain constant, information on smaller details – for example, time limits or speaking order – can change without warning. Candidates should stay alert and follow the instructions provided on the day of the Oral Assessment.

This guide includes the criteria used to evaluate candidates, common sense strategies candidates might use to ensure they are performing their best, a description of the activities during the day-long FSOA, sample Group Exercise materials, sample Case Management materials, as well as information on required clearances (in case the candidate passes the FSOA), language testing, and final observations.

The sample test materials in this guide represent the kind of information and exercises candidates in all five career tracks (Consular, Economic, Management, Political, and Public Diplomacy) will be given during the oral assessment. They represent a fictional country and issues at the fictional U.S. Embassy and/or its constituent posts in that country. This material is an edited and simplified version of materials used in past Oral Assessments. **The time limits suggested in the instructions in this guide are shorter than the actual time candidates will be given during their oral assessments** since the actual FSOA materials will contain a greater number of issues and more complicated scenarios to resolve. Candidates should keep in mind that exercise materials during the FSOA are assigned to candidates on a random basis, regardless of career track. A candidate in the consular career track should not be surprised to be asked to resolve an issue of a political nature. Similarly, a public diplomacy candidate should be prepared to address consular, economic, and management problems. FSOA candidates are *generalist* candidates – they should be prepared to deal with whatever comes up.

This guide is for the FSOA only – other guides are available for the Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT or Written Exam). There is also a separate study guide for Foreign Service Specialist Oral Assessment. Candidates should check with careers.state.gov for general information on a Foreign Service Career, including details on taking the FSOT, and sample FSOT questions. Candidates may also order a copy of the Study Guide to the FSOT online at http://www.act.org/fsot/. The http://careers.state.gov/ website also offers information on Foreign Service Specialist careers, civil Service careers, professional fellowship opportunities, Limited Non-Career Appointments, and student programs.

The Oral Assessment Process

Before the Assessment

Oral Assessments are held in Washington, DC and – budget and schedule permitting – other domestic locations in the United States. Once candidates schedule the FSOA, they should make travel and lodging plans.

- Be rested. Candidates who are tired cannot possibly be at their best – taking the FSOA can be a stressful experience, and candidates need to be "present" at all times during the day.
- Candidates traveling from out of town should plan to arrive at least a day in advance; candidates traveling from overseas should give themselves at least two days.
- Make allowances for delayed flights, lost luggage, broken down metro trains, stalled rush hour traffic, and taxi drivers who can't find the test center address.
- The day prior to the test, candidates should locate the test center and make sure they are familiar with how to get there.
- Do not spend the night prior to the FSOA studying; the extra factoids candidates might cram into their brains at this point will not make a difference. Visit a museum, go out to a movie, visit with friends – and get to bed at a decent hour (see "Be rested" above).

The FSOA is a job interview; candidates will want to dress for it. Men normally wear suits and ties; women normally wear the professional equivalent.

- That said, candidates need not go out and spend money on a new suit for the assessment. An outfit that is neat and professional is fine. It does not have to be this year's fashion. It does not have to be black, navy or grey.
- New shoes are actively discouraged. It's going to be a long day, so wear something comfortable.

The test day is tightly choreographed, so it is essential to be on time and in the right place. Not all candidates have the same schedule, so do not rely on another candidate's schedule to know when to take or return from a break. A candidate who is late, even by a few minutes, may necessitate changes in the schedules of up to thirty people.

Introduce yourself to your fellow candidates while you wait in the reception area.

- All of them are smart, interesting, and have great stories to tell. A year after your assessment your memory of the actual assessment will be blurred. You will be surprised,

however, at how well you recall your conversations with the guy from Philadelphia or with the woman who flew in from Zambia.

Oral Assessment Summary

Candidates must report to their assigned Assessment Center no later than 7:00 a.m. on their scheduled day. In Washington, DC the Assessment Center is at State Annex 44 (SA44) at 301 4th St. SW. The assessment may end as late as 7:00 p.m. for successful candidates, so individuals who need to plan return travel would be prudent to schedule a late evening flight on the test date – or even a flight the next morning – for the trip home. The email message that invites candidates to the Oral Assessment also advises candidates what documents they need to bring to the Assessment Center. This list of documents can be found in the Department of State's careers.state.gov website under the Selection Process heading. In addition to the listed documents, candidates are also asked to bring the Social Security numbers and dates of birth of family members who might be traveling with them overseas – this will help the medical clearance process. Provisions (known as "Reasonable Accommodations") for candidates with disabilities will be made available at each Assessment Center but must be arranged with the U.S. Department of State's Board of Examiners at least one week in advance – please see our website for the most updated information, as requirements may change. Candidates are allowed to bring snacks, sandwiches, coffee and/or soft drinks to the Assessment. Some individuals might wish to bring reading material or a deck of cards to pass the time between assessment modules. Water will be available at the Assessment Center, and all candidates will have 45 minutes for a lunch break. There is secure space to store coats, purses, and any luggage at the Assessment Center.

The Oral Assessment measures the following 13 dimensions:

- **Composure.** To stay calm, poised, and effective in stressful or difficult situations; to think on one's feet, adjusting quickly to changing situations; to maintain self-control.
- **Cultural Adaptability**. To work and communicate effectively and harmoniously with persons of other cultures, value systems, political beliefs, and economic circumstances; to recognize and respect differences in new and different cultural environments.
- **Experience and Motivation**. To demonstrate knowledge, skills or other attributes gained from previous experience of relevance to the Foreign Service; to articulate appropriate motivation for joining the Foreign Service.
- **Information Integration and Analysis**. To absorb and retain complex information drawn from a variety of sources; to draw reasoned conclusions from analysis and synthesis of available information; to evaluate the importance, reliability, and usefulness of information; to remember details of a meeting or an event without the benefit of notes.
- **Initiative and Leadership**. To recognize and assume responsibility for work that needs to be done; to persist in the completion of a task; to influence significantly a group's

activity, direction or opinion; to motivate others to participate in the activity one is leading.

- **Judgment.** To discern what is appropriate, practical, and realistic in a given situation; to weigh relative merits of competing demands.
- **Objectivity and Integrity**. To be fair and honest; to avoid deceit, favoritism, and discrimination; to present issues frankly and fully, without injecting subjective bias; to work without letting personal bias prejudice actions.
- **Oral Communication**. To speak fluently in a concise, grammatically correct, organized, precise, and persuasive manner; to convey nuances of meaning accurately; to use appropriate styles of communication to fit the audience and purpose.
- **Planning and Organizing**. To prioritize and order tasks effectively, to employ a systematic approach to achieving objectives, to make appropriate use of limited resources.
- **Quantitative Analysis**. To identify, compile, analyze, and draw correct conclusions from pertinent data; to recognize patterns or trends in numerical data; to perform simple mathematical operations.
- **Resourcefulness.** To formulate creative alternatives or solutions to resolve problems, to show flexibility in response to unanticipated circumstances.
- **Working With Others**. To interact in a constructive, cooperative, and harmonious manner; to work effectively as a team player; to establish positive relationships and gain the confidence of others; to use humor as appropriate.
- **Written Communication**. To write concise, well organized, grammatically correct, effective and persuasive English in a limited amount of time.

The 13 dimensions are the core of the Foreign Service Oral Assessment process. Candidates are encouraged to read the definitions of the 13 dimensions carefully, and to spend some time thinking about what they mean. While the definition of leadership, for example, may seem obvious, it is unlikely that the average person in the street would focus on the same aspects of leadership as those highlighted by the Department's definition.

Candidates are evaluated solely against these criteria by four assessors who observe the performance of candidates in a variety of situations designed to enable the candidates to demonstrate the requisite skills. The assessors are Foreign Service Officers from various career tracks with a wide variety of experience in the geographic and functional Bureaus of the Department. Assessors receive training from professional consultants on how to conduct assessments in an objective manner in which the candidate's performance is observed and where the candidate's score correlates to an established performance standard.

The Oral Assessment is not an adversarial process. Candidates do not compete against one another but instead are judged on their capacity to demonstrate skills and abilities necessary to be

an effective Foreign Service Officer. It is possible both that all the candidates taking the FSOA on a specific day will be successful in reaching the minimum cut-off score necessary to continue their candidacy, or that none of them will.

The Oral Assessment

1. The Group Exercise

Preparations

For the first exercise of the day, candidates are brought together in a group of three to six individuals to comprise an Embassy task force charged with allocating resources to competing projects in their host country. Each candidate receives a package of common background materials, as well as a five-page candidate-specific project to read and absorb (30 minutes). During this phase of the exercise, candidates must work individually – the group rooms are monitored to ensure candidates do not talk or communicate among themselves. Candidates may take notes at any time.

Common Materials Given to Each Candidate

- General instructions
- Memorandum from a senior U.S. Embassy official in one of various mythical countries appointing the candidate to a task force to consider proposals for use of scarce resources
- Country Background Notes
- The U.S. Country Plan and Objectives
- Lists of key U.S. Embassy and host government officials
- A map of the country (Note – In the practice materials of this guide, no map is included.)

Project Specific Information

- Five pages describing the candidate's individual project (Note – In the practice materials of this guide, each project is only two pages long.)

The Presentation Phase

When the 30-minute preparation time is over, four BEX assessors will join the group and take seats in the corners of the room. At this point in the assessment, the assessors know nothing about the candidates. The assessors do not participate; they only observe the group exercise. The lead assessor briefs candidates on the ground rules and invites them to begin their individual project presentations in any order they choose. Candidates should listen closely to all the instructions, including the warning against comparing or lobbying for projects during the

presentation phase. Each candidate has six minutes to present his or her project to the others, and should cover all relevant facets of the project, including both negative and positive points, U.S. interests, and required resources. Time may be left at the end of each presentation for questions from other candidates.

The Discussion Phase

After the last presentation has been made, the lead assessor informs the group that it is now entering the discussion phase of the exercise – the stage in which the candidates must reach a consensus on project selection and allocation of their limited resources. More instructions will be given. Please note that money is not necessarily the limited resource. In those cases, do not talk about "funding" a project – "supporting" or something similar may be more apt.

In this phase, candidates have two goals. One is to advocate the project they were given. The second goal is to help the group reach consensus within the time allotted on which project(s) or parts of projects to recommend to the Ambassador. It is acceptable to give up your project in favor of another candidate's project after the merits and/or drawbacks of all the projects have been thoroughly reviewed by the group – just explain your reasons for doing so. The time allotted for the discussion phase is normally 20-25 minutes, depending on group size.

Under no circumstances should candidates change or alter the projects they are given, or add information not provided. Candidates should <u>not</u> make up a new project if they do not like the one they are given. Candidates should <u>not</u> bring in real life facts or situations to bolster their arguments (e.g., "Plan Colombia was a real success in stemming the flow of drugs to the U.S. and this project would do the same thing"). Candidates should keep in mind that the purpose of the exercise is to make a recommendation to the Ambassador. Candidates should help the group reach a consensus on what to recommend. In the discussion phase, candidates may want to suggest reasonable ways of making a decision among the proposals being reviewed. Candidates should keep in mind that the Group Exercise is not adversarial – they are not competing against each other.

The Debriefing (a new component added effective March 3, 2014)

The Ambassador's debrief simulates a situation frequently experienced by FSOs. Following the conclusion of the group's discussion, each candidate will have three to four minutes privately to brief two assessors on the results of the group's deliberations. One of these assessors will play the role of the Ambassador and ask the candidate several follow-up questions, while the second assessor will escort the candidate from the group exercise room to the interview room. Both assessors remain in the room for the duration of the conversation.

Since the dynamics of each group will vary, a candidate's ability to prepare for the debrief will be limited. However, candidates may find it useful to practice oral briefing skills. It will also be

critical that candidates fully understand the group's final decision and the rationale that led to that decision. Although candidates may take notes during the presentation and discussion phases, these notes will not be available during the Ambassador's debrief.

The Dimensions

The specific dimensions rated during the group exercise include: Composure, Information Integration and Analysis, Initiative and Leadership, Judgment, Objectivity and Integrity, Oral Communication, Planning and Organizing, and Working with Others. Strong candidates are those who keep in mind the objective of the exercise – to help the Ambassador decide how best to allocate limited U.S. Government resources among a number of worthy projects. They have the ability to integrate information, not just about their own projects, but also about projects presented by their colleagues. They may suggest original ideas and solutions. A good leader can draw out others and help move the group to consensus.

Assessors cannot judge qualities they cannot see or hear. Active participation is essential to successful performance. Even if a candidate clearly and eloquently presents a project and the rest of the group then agree to support that candidate's project, lack of involvement in the discussion phase will have a negative impact on the evaluation of the candidate.

Sample Project

A candidate might be expected to describe the following information, based on four or five background documents, in the presentation phase:

Gargon University in the country of Erewhon requests Embassy help in purchasing equipment to complete the University's new sports facility.

Benefits of the project: The University would purchase U.S. equipment, aiding U.S. business interests and providing good public relations for the U.S.; the Chairman of the Board of the University would be rewarded for being the instrumental force in Erewhon's opposition to a hostile neighboring country's efforts to host the Summer Olympics; patients at Gargon Regional Rehabilitation Hospital, which is sadly under-equipped, would be able to use the pool and gymnasium.

Negative Aspects: Gargon is a private university and there is some question whether U.S. Government funds should be used to support it; this grant would not improve economic conditions or raise living standards for the majority of people; Gargon is the home district of chief opposition leader Reubello – a grant might displease the Prime Minister.

Benefits to the U.S.: A grant would promote U.S. export trade and support U.S. business interests in Erewhon; it would enhance public and official perceptions of the United States.

Project costs: The Embassy's total cost is $75,000. The host government would contribute $10,000. Total cost: $85,000.

2. The Structured Interview

All candidates participate individually in a Structured Interview conducted by two assessors. For this portion of the Oral Assessment, assessors will have reviewed portions of the candidate's ACT Application Form, stated career track preference, and Statement of Interest. Candidates are expected to respond to questions based on their personal background, experience, and motivation. Assessors will NOT have read the personal narratives (PNs) candidates submitted as part of the earlier QEP process, so candidates should not hesitate to use experiences already described in their PNs *if* those experiences directly answer a question from the assessors. Candidates should be careful to respond to the questions that are asked, rather than give a response that highlights the candidate's qualities or resume but does not reply to the specific question.

Candidates should expect assessors to remain stone-faced throughout the interview. They have been instructed to not provide any clues – including non-verbal ones – about how candidates are doing. This does not mean that assessors may not be impressed with something a candidate says or feel empathy when a candidate is struggling – they just will not express it. During the Structured Interview, assessors may interrupt candidates, shuffle papers, or cut short candidates' answers. Candidates should not assume that this signals <u>anything –</u> either positive or negative. The assessors may be watching the clock or may believe that they have heard all they need to on a given subject and move on.

The Structured Interview portion of the assessment consists of three testing modules lasting approximately one hour.

<u>A. Experience and Motivation Interview</u>

In this portion of the Structured Interview, the candidate should convey to the examiners a clear and precise picture of him/herself, including personality traits, and his/her understanding of the Foreign Service. The candidate's motivation to join the Foreign Service, education and work experience as well as cross-cultural skills are considered. Assessors will evaluate a candidate's potential to serve successfully as a Foreign Service Officer, including in the selected career track, by discussing what the candidate has done with the opportunities presented to this point in his or her life. Candidates must be succinct and persuasive in responding to the examiner's questions. Candidates should have previously informed themselves about the Foreign Service in general, and also about the work related to the career track they have selected.

Whenever possible and appropriate, candidates should go beyond just a "what" explanation, and also give the "how" and "why." Candidates should remember that they need to do more than

describe their experiences; they need to explain what they learned from them and why they are predictive of success in the Foreign Service. Candidates may be interrupted as assessors probe for details and manage the time. This is normal.

B. Hypothetical Scenarios

The second assessment module in the Structured Interview consists of a series of hypothetical scenarios designed to test the candidate's situational judgment.

Assessors will give the candidate a brief scenario to read that provides information about the country and the candidate's position in the embassy, setting the scene for the hypothetical situation. **Dimensions scored during this exercise include:** Planning and Organization, Working with Others, Cultural Adaptability, Initiative and Leadership, Judgment, Objectivity and Integrity, Information Integration and Analysis, Resourcefulness, and Composure. Although the problems presented in this exercise are hypothetical, they are closely related to real-life situations regularly encountered by Foreign Service Officers overseas. Candidates are advised, however, that, while the problems occur in a Foreign Service setting, candidates are not expected to know how an Embassy operates or to be familiar with government rules and regulations. Rather, candidates are asked to fashion a solution that employs good judgment and common sense. The hypothetical scenarios and questions will not necessarily be related to the candidate's career track.

The hypothetical scenarios challenge candidates to think quickly. Assessors look for a candidate who can organize for action, take responsibility, and respond to new situations creatively and effectively. While there is no single right or correct answer, a strong candidate will demonstrate mature thinking, recognize alternative approaches, and consider both the long- and short-term consequences of responses. In responding to these questions, candidates should:

- Be as thorough and complete as they can be in their approach to solving the problem;
- Make sure they have covered the most important courses of action before the examiner moves on; and
- Consider more than one possible course of action.

Candidates should not:

- Respond by throwing the hot potato into someone else's hands – the potato is the candidate's to deal with, and he or she should use all the available resources. Candidates should recognize their level of authority and use it to the full extent, but not exceed it.

Sample Hypothetical Exercise

Earthquake Scenario

You are working in a small embassy in a developing tropical island country. Relations with the United States have been strained for some time, although the island is visited by increasing numbers of American tourists lured by its beautiful beaches, national parks and wildlife, and interesting archaeological sites. The island has experienced numerous tremors recently and ten years ago suffered a major earthquake, which destroyed the port and much of the capital city.

You have been at this embassy for almost two years and are looking forward to moving on to your next post.

When you first arrived at post, you worked in the consular section, which is responsible for assisting American citizens in distress and for issuing visas to host country nationals wishing to visit the United States. You then rotated for a stint in the management section, responsible for maintenance and upkeep of staff housing. You supervised the Locally Employed Staff (LES) charged with maintaining the embassy buildings and grounds. This past six months you have been working as the ambassador's aide, which required you to move to an apartment three blocks from the embassy.

Question #1: On a Saturday afternoon the communications officer has called you in to the embassy for an urgent incoming telegram that needs immediate action. As you enter the embassy gate, you see two LES enter the building. Walking toward the building, you feel a sudden jolt and immediately realize you are in the middle of an earthquake. You have difficulty standing, and see windows in the embassy shatter. Then the earthquake ends. What do you do?

Question #2: The earthquake has knocked out electricity all over the city. Because of your in-country experience, the ambassador has asked you to lead the embassy's crisis response center. The city's only hospital requests fuel oil for its emergency generators, which will run out in a day. The embassy stocks emergency fuel oil to keep all embassy functions, including communications with the State Department, going continually for three days. What do you do?

Question #3: The earthquake hit residential areas hard, and many embassy officers and LES lack shelter. Building materials are scarce and the airport is temporarily closed. A local nightclub owner, known for his flashy life-style, offers building materials and labor to the embassy. The security office's head LES reports that the businessman is rumored to be engaged in drug smuggling and strongly urges you to decline this offer. What do you do?

C. Past Behavior Interview

In the final segment of the Structured Interview, the assessors ask the candidate a series of questions to which the candidate should respond with examples from his or her own experience.

The questions are designed to assess a range of dimensions determined through a documented job analysis to be linked to successful performance as a Foreign Service Officer. Candidates will be given a question sheet containing the different dimensions being assessed during this portion of the interview, with two questions listed under each dimension. Candidates will have five minutes to select the questions they wish to discuss for each dimension (one question for each dimension) and to prepare their responses. Candidates' examples should be appropriate and drawn from their own experience. During this portion of the Structure Interview, candidates should:

- Be sure their responses relate directly to the dimension; if the response does not answer the question, the candidate will be low ranked;
- Use responses that demonstrate their best achievement in the specific dimension – candidates should avoid responses that document themselves as failures;
- Even when talking about a group project, make sure they emphasize what they did. Candidates should choose examples in which their role highlights their command of the dimension being assessed.

The dimensions rated in this section of the Structured Interview are Planning and Organizing, Working with Others, Cultural Adaptability, Initiative and Leadership, Objectivity and Integrity, Composure, and Oral Communication.

3. Case Management

The third part of the Oral Assessment is the 90-minute Case Management Exercise. The purpose of this segment is to evaluate the candidate's management and writing skills. **The dimensions scored during this exercise include**: Working with Others, Judgment, Objectivity and Integrity, Information Integration and Analysis, Resourcefulness, Written Communication and Quantitative Skills. The candidate is expected to incorporate data and other numerical information in the analysis and recommended solutions.

The candidate is given a memo describing the tasks to complete, with information about the central issue, a summary of ongoing problems, an organizational chart, e-mail messages from different employees giving their perspectives on the problems, pertinent regulations, and details about the past performance of the staff. A calculator is not needed in reviewing the quantitative data, but the analysis and recommendations must show a clear understanding of these data. Candidates should be able to do basic arithmetic longhand or in their heads.

The candidate may want to spend 30 minutes reading and analyzing the material, 45 minutes writing the required memo, and 15 minutes reviewing and revising.

Evaluating the Three Exercises

Assessors observe the candidate's performance closely, taking notes during the testing module. At the end of each exercise, assessors individually enter their scores into a computer. The average of the exercises determines a candidate's overall score. The Oral Assessment cut-off to continue a candidacy is 5.25 out of a possible 7. For this cycle, each exercise and each component of each exercise have equal weight. The Group Exercise, Structured Interview, and Case Management Study each count for one-third of the total grade. Within the Structured Interview, the Experience and Motivation, Hypothetical and Past Behavior modules are equally weighted. Overall scoring is on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 representing poor performance and 7 representing an outstanding performance.

4. Exit Interviews

After the assessors complete the integration of their scores, candidates are notified whether they have been successful in reaching the cut-off. Along with their final overall score, candidates receive an indication as to whether they reached or exceeded the cut off on any of the three major components of the assessment.

Unsuccessful candidates are informed of their results in a private interview with two assessors. At this point, the candidate is given an opportunity to ask general questions about the assessment process or future assessments. Assessors are not permitted to provide specific feedback or critiques of the candidate's performance. This would be considered personal coaching, and would constitute an unfair advantage to those who take the assessment more than once.

Those candidates who pass the Oral Assessment receive an Immediate Conditional Offer and proceed to the next phase of the hiring process. Successful candidates are then given a briefing on the next steps in the Foreign Service Officer Selection Process, including information on the security background investigation, language bonus point system, veteran's preference points, the medical examination, and final suitability review. Candidates are also given the opportunity to ask questions about Foreign Service life. Diplomatic Security may then initiate background interviews.

GROUP EXERCISE

CANDIDATE INSTRUCTIONS AND MATERIALS

Working Group on Special Projects

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CANDIDATE

Group Exercise - Kuman

In this exercise candidates are asked to serve on a working group to decide on which special projects the Embassy will support. Candidates are tasked with:

1. Preparing an oral presentation of the special project proposal described in the materials provided;
2. Making an oral presentation of up to five minutes to the working group composed of him/herself and other candidates;
3. Listening critically to other candidates' presentations; and
4. During the discussion/decision-making phase, reaching consensus with working group colleagues on which proposals will be recommended.

In the initial review/preparation phase, candidates will have 20 minutes to review materials and prepare their individual presentation.

In the next phase, the examiners will enter the room and instruct the group to begin individual presentations. For practice purposes, candidates should begin their presentations as soon as the 20 minutes of preparation is over and time each presentation so it does not exceed the five minute limit.

After all the individual presentations are finished, the examiners will give further instructions for the third and final phase of this exercise: the discussion and decision-making phase. This is the time for advocacy and for comparison and evaluation of competing projects. For practice purposes, for the discussion phase candidates should allow no more than four minutes multiplied by the number of participants.

Candidates will be assessed in this exercise on the following dimensions: Composure, Information Integration and Analysis, Initiative and Leadership, Judgment, Objectivity and Integrity, Oral Communications, Planning and Organizing, and Working with Others.

A Note on Using this Material:

The group exercise in this study guide includes:

1) Memo from the U.S. Ambassador in Kuman directing the working group to make a recommendation on which proposals to fund (one page);
2) Background material on Kuman and U.S. objectives in the country (five pages); and
3) Memos describing and commenting on the proposal candidates are to present (16 pages).

To conduct a practice session of the group exercise consisting of, for example, four candidates:

- Each candidate should receive one (1) 2-page proposal to prepare, along with the full five pages of the background material.
- Group members should spend 20 minutes reading their materials, taking notes, and organizing their thoughts.
- After the preparation time is over, the Ambassador's memo should be read aloud. The individual organizing the exercise should decide beforehand on the funding available, and note that in the memo – the group members should not have to spend time determining, for example, what 50% of $750,000.00 is. This means the individual needs to conduct preparatory work by selecting the specific proposals before the exercise starts, adding up the dollar amounts being requested from the U.S. embassy in each, and noting the specific dollar value of the total funding available from the U.S. Embassy. (During an actual group exercise, the amount of funding will already have been determined for the candidates.)
- Each candidate should give a five-minute presentation on his or her proposal.
- Candidates should then begin the discussion phase and come to agreement on which projects to fund.
- After the exercise is over, candidates might want to review the dimensions that are assessed during group exercises and – using the definitions of the dimensions given in this study guide – critique the performance of group members, discussing where the dimensions were shown and where there could be improvements.

The Embassy of the United States of America

Asima, Kuman

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Working Group

FROM: The Ambassador

SUBJECT: Special Projects

I will allocate the available Embassy resources based on the proposals and recommendations of your Working Group.

The Working Group should consider proposals now before it and prepare a memorandum to me listing only those projects it recommends. The funding available is only ____.

(Note: Candidate who is organizing this exercise should fill in a sum equal to 50% of the total cost of the projects the group is reviewing prior to the beginning of the exercise).

Please list below the names of the projects that the Working Group recommends, and the dollar value of each.

COUNTRY PLAN FOR KUMAN

Our principal goals are to support Kuman's nascent democratic movement and its transition to a free-market economy. We strongly support the protection of human rights for all Kumani citizens, including ethnic minorities and women. Our public diplomacy strategy aims to increase Kumani understanding of and cooperation with U.S. diplomatic objectives in the region and to stress U.S. support for the country's democratic and economic reforms.

In the past, our bilateral relations with the Marxist Government of Kuman (GOK) were distant. However, without continued Soviet support, the GOK was forced to reassess both its political course and its need for Western capital, expertise and markets. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the government of President (Major) Abdul Karim al-Kurbi took the first steps toward a transition to democracy and a free-market economy. The GOK has instituted new investment and tax laws and lowered barriers to trade that have created a more hospitable climate for foreign investors and companies hoping to break into the once closed Kumani market.

President al-Kurbi's first tour of the U.S. three years ago to seek foreign investors for Kuman's lagging petroleum sector and a growing number of visits to Kuman by U.S. Congressional and business leaders symbolize the steady improvement in U.S.-Kuman relations. We are the country's second largest goods supplier and foreign investor, and its third largest market for oil. Last year, the U.S. imported $600 million worth of Kumani oil, plus a small amount of handicrafts, and exported to Kuman almost $2 billion in such products as oil and gas industry technology, refined oil products, telecommunications, manufactured foods and seeds, and heavy port-loading equipment.

Nonetheless, problems in our bilateral relationship continue. While the Kumani Government is making an effort to comply with UN Security Council Resolutions on combating terrorist financing, we remain concerned that terrorists or terrorist supporters could be using Kuman's unofficial banking system and its Januban charities to support their activities. The low level of U.S. aid to Kuman also remains a sore point in the bilateral relationship. Our aid has been limited to rural development projects, humanitarian assistance and minor initiatives to promote democratic institutions.

UNITED STATES OBJECTIVES IN KUMAN (NOT in priority order)

1. Encourage growth of democratic institutions, including free and fair elections.
2. Seek Kumani support on key U.S. foreign policy issues, bilaterally and in international organizations.
3. Strengthen Kuman's commitment to economic reform and a free market economy.
4. Promote U.S. exports and encourage and protect U.S. investments in Kuman.
5. Encourage Kuman to adopt policies to protect the environment.
6. Assist the Government of Kuman in improving the health and welfare of its people.
7. Foster dialogue between a variety of elements in U.S. and Kumani societies.
8. Maintain and strengthen U.S. influence in Kuman and the region.
9. Enhance opportunities for women.
10. Encourage Kuman to play a leading humanitarian role in the region.
11. Work with Kumani decision-makers to combat religious intolerance.

Background Notes

KUMAN

1. Geography: Kuman is a largely arid mountainous country on the Moccan Peninsula. The Northern Province is Kuman's economic center; the Western Desert is the major oil-producing region; and the humid southern coast remains relatively under-populated.

2. Population: Kuman has the highest population density on the Moccan Peninsula, with half of its 20 million residents living in the Northern Province. The overcrowded port of Asima is the nation's capital and terminus of Kuman's oil pipeline network. The dominant ethnic group is Kumani, with Janubans constituting the largest minority. Kumani is the official language, but the educated and commercial classes speak English.

3. Education and Health: The new Kumani constitution provides for universal education as a national objective, but 90% of the population remains illiterate. The national school system is under-funded, over-crowded and under-staffed. Most Kumani youth have no opportunity to attend either high school or university. Entry standards are stringent for the small National University in Asima, but its facilities are decrepit and most of the faculty either are products of discredited Soviet training or have anti-American, fundamentalist Januban sympathies. Health services are also poor. Government-run hospitals in urban areas are poorly run and ill-equipped to handle the country's rampant TB, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. Life expectancy is low (58 years urban, 48 rural), and infant mortality rates are high (250 per 1000 births).

4. Politics: A former British protectorate, Kuman was ruled by a figurehead prince until the 1985 military coup led by the USSR-supported Major Abdul Karim al-Kurbi. As head of the secular Kuman Motherland Movement (KMM), al-Kurbi was named President-for-Life and established a powerless legislature, the People's Parliament, of regional representatives handpicked from the KMM faithful by al-Kurbi and his Consultative Council of cronies.

The wily al-Kurbi was quick to see the writing on the wall as the Soviets began to disengage from other Third World clients in the late 1980s. In the 1990s, he called a formal end to single-party rule and announced a fifteen-year transition to democracy and a free-market economy. Having had himself "elected" by the Parliament for a first seven-year term as President to kick off this transition, al-Kurbi defeated two other KMM candidates six years ago for another seven-year term as President. Al-Kurbi's true democratic resolve will be tested by next year's free elections.

Under Kuman's new constitution, the executive remains strong, but more diffuse, with the power to dismiss a sitting Parliament to call for new elections. Although still under KMM control, the existing Parliament is already engaged in the political process. Under al-Kurbi's watchful eye, it has passed new voting rules and begun to liberalize tax, trade and foreign investment regimes; end state censorship; and curb police abuses.

Kuman's recent emergence from a combination of feudalism and socialism and its widespread poverty and illiteracy provide a weak foundation for representative government. However, the country is united in its support for democratic reform. Over a dozen political parties have formed (mostly along ethnic lines). More than 20 independent newspapers, many just xeroxed broadsides, now represent every shade of the political spectrum, but their audience is small. As up to 90% of Kumanis are illiterate, newly independent radio and TV stations are the main sources for news.

Religion is a rising political force. Traditional local tribunals, known as Yurtbars, are heavily influenced by Januban religious extremists. The newly formed, albeit disorganized, All Januba Party (AJP) is now the second largest political party. Fundamentalist extremism, combined with lingering Marxist-era anti-Americanism, increasingly influences university and secondary school populations. Lack of material prospects has also led many to reject Western values of which they have little understanding.

5. Economy: Years of Marxist mismanagement left the country's infrastructure in shambles. Budgetary woes forced the GOK to allow agricultural, refinery and once-thriving port facilities to deteriorate.

The government sector continues to dominate Kuman's economy, accounting for 55% of the country's annual GDP and crowding out investment in the small private sector. Oil is the Government's largest revenue source, but oil production is still not growing fast enough to slow the growth in the budget deficit (an estimated $1.1 billion this year). With the blessing of President al-Kurbi, Parliament enacted a new investment law to encourage more private-sector and foreign investment in the hope of alleviating both Kuman's budgetary woes and its severe unemployment problem (estimated at 40% of the urban labor force, perhaps double that in rural areas). Except for the oil and gas sector, however, private investment continues to lag, and the country has had to depend increasingly on international lending institutions.

KUMAN

KEY PERSONNEL

American Embassy Asima

Ambassador	Christopher T. Underwood
Counselor for Political Affairs	R. Hedwig Bigg
Counselor for Economic Affairs	Boswell West
Counselor for Commercial Affairs (FCS)	Darcy Colbert
Consul General	Patience Strong
Counselor for Management	Stanley Gibbons
Public Affairs Officer	Art Pressman
Director, USAID	Myra Saxgelt
Agricultural Attaché	Brad Field
Energy Attaché	Ernest Watts
Science and Technology Officer	Janice Springer
Labor Attaché	Robert Fairlough
Peace Corps Director	Gudrun DeSouliers

Kumani Government Officials

President	Abdul Karim al-Kurbi
Minister of Agriculture	Rifat Ziradda
Minister of Education	Ibrahim Kittab
Minister of Oil	Mohammed Samarrai
Minister of Transportation	Abdallah Nakeel
Minister of Trade and Industry	Dr. Amr al-Jubair
Adviser to the President for Nomadic Affairs	Dr. Fawaz al-Otaibi

The Embassy of the United States of America

Asima, Kuman

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Working Group on Special Projects

From: Bob Fairclough - Labor Attache

Subject: Oil Industry Safety Project

I regret that I cannot be present at our discussion of potential Embassy funding for various projects; I just found out that I must accompany the Ambassador to an urgent meeting today. This memo, however, provides essential information on an important project I believe is fully worthy of our support.

As you know, the Kumani Government depends heavily on oil revenues to pay for rising costs of hospitals, schools and critical infrastructure development. Thus, the Government is especially interested in making improvements to the Government-owned and -operated oil industry that will make it more productive and will increase revenue on a more reliable basis.

To this end, Kumani Oil Minister Mohammad Samarrai has advised the Embassy that the Government plans to spend $120,000 to modernize an oil loading facility at the northern port of Mina'al-Bahr to make it into a fire-fighting and safety station for offshore oil operations. The American Petroleum Institute (API), representing major U.S. oil firms, has agreed to spend $55,000 to send a specialist to Kuman for four months to advise the Oil Ministry on revision of the industry's safety codes. The Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA) will fund (at a cost of $27,000) an expert to come to Kuman for three weeks to train a new corps of Kumani oil industry occupational and safety inspectors. The Minister has asked the Embassy to contribute $185,000: $100,000 to refurbish one fire-fighting tug boat; $50,000 for protective clothing and gear for oil workers and firefighters; and $35,000 to purchase an initial stock of fire-fighting chemicals. The total cost of the project is $387,000, including the Embassy's contribution.

This project represents a key step toward improving the safety of thousands of workers in the oil industry, an issue largely neglected by the Government to date due to budget constraints and overall mismanagement. The provision of a fire-fighting tug is especially welcome in light of last year's rig fire, which killed 27 and seriously injured another 109 workers.

Energy Officer Ernie Watts also supports this project, noting that our own oil imports from Kumani have suffered disruptions because of periodic shutdowns of production facilities due to error or accident. Much of Kuman's oil production is exported to the U.S., so helping Kuman become a more reliable long-term supplier of oil is clearly in our interest as well as Kuman's. Ernie also points out that this, in turn, could help stabilize volatile oil prices.

Some of our colleagues see potential downsides to our participation. Citing poor food safety standards as an example, Consul General Patience Strong suggests that Kumanis' traditional disregard for obeying or enforcing rules of any kind makes effective implementation of the project doubtful. Patience is also concerned that the tugboat we are being asked to refurbish is 15 years old and that spare parts could, in coming years, become expensive and harder to find. She cautions against investing a relatively large amount of money in a piece of equipment that may have a limited useful life.

Public Affairs Officer Art Pressman is worried that the project is loaded with public relations risks. Given the Government's spotty follow-through record on regulation enforcement, Art foresees future accidents and even more gruesome pictures in the media of maimed oil workers. With the local and regional media's already negative portrayal of U.S. foreign and environmental policies, public blame for future oil safety lapses would be directed against the U.S because we helped fund this project.

I have given serious consideration to the points made by Patience and Art, but for the sake of Kuman's oil workers, improved reliability of oil supply to the U.S. market, and enhanced revenue badly needed by the Government of Kuman for its development initiatives, I recommend that we go forward with this project and provide the full amount sought by the Oil Minister.

The Embassy of the United States of America

Asima, Kuman

MEMORANDUM

From: Brad Field - Agriculture Attaché

To: Special Projects Working Group

Subject: Revitalization of the Cotton Industry Project

I regret that a last minute scheduling conflict prevents me from joining you at today's meeting. As the project I wanted to present to you is so important, I have pulled the essential elements together in this memo for your consideration.

The Kumani cotton industry has suffered serious reverses in recent years.

Many Kumani cotton fields have disappeared or degenerated, and the quality of the native cotton is now so poor that it is appropriate only for local use. However, Agriculture Minister Rifat Ziradda thinks conditions are ripe to revitalize this traditional industry given the growing international demand for natural fibers. By taking advantage of advances in American biotech research into genetically modified organism (GMO) cotton, particularly at Iowa A&M University, Ziradda believes that a revitalized cotton industry could eventually employ 5,000 rural families, stem rural migration to over-burdened cities, and generate over $22 million from annual cotton exports.

The Minister wants to establish an agricultural extension service office in Malik and three distribution centers in the Wadi Ibrahim area to promote biotech cotton. The total cost of the project is $495,000, including an $180,000 contribution from us. The U.S. Embassy would pay for the construction of the extension office ($90,000) and the distribution centers (total $90,000, each $30,000). The Cotton Council of America and Iowa A&M University will pay the salary and living expenses of an Iowa A&M technical expert sent to Kuman ($175,000). The Kuman Government will contribute $140,000 to: Cover the salaries of six local staff members ($60,000) and import high-quality seeds and environmentally friendly herbicides from the American firm Sanmonto ($80,000). The Foreign Agricultural Service will provide an in-kind contribution to the new extension office of used computers for record keeping and marketing and excess materials on cotton production from USDA's vast agricultural library.

Commercial Counselor Darcy Colbert sees this project as a great opportunity for American seed and chemical products. Kumani use of Sanmonto's exclusive, patented "Square-Up" cotton production system (seeds plus herbicide) will establish a potentially huge future market for Sanmonto in the region. GMO cotton crops produce sterile seeds so that fertile seeds must be purchased annually. Science and Technology Officer Janice Springer likes the project's environmental and health benefits. Kumani farmers have long overused toxic herbicides and pesticides. Sanmonto's all-purpose herbicide requires only one application to control weeds and pests for an entire season, which clearly will have a positive environmental impact. As use of protective clothing while applying herbicides is unknown here, the health benefits of reduced chemical use are also obvious.

Economic Counselor Boswell West, however, worries that the Kumani Economic Ministry might institute a governmental central marketing board for cotton (as it has for other agricultural products) that would pay the farmers a low set price while charging whatever the market allows when it exports the cotton. This would act against the interests of the farmers whose standard of living we are trying to improve. Boswell also is concerned about the propaganda campaign recently mounted by a European NGO, A Greener World, against Sanmonto and its cotton cultivation system. The NGO has generated sensationalistic headlines about "Frankenfood" and potential negative environmental consequences from its cultivation. Cotton is not food, but cottonseed oil is, plus there is always a small chance that pollen from GMO cotton could drift to nearby food crops.

Political Counselor Hedwig Bigg is also wary about our image and credibility should we suffer accusations of the U.S. genetically polluting Kuman's food supply. The project's use of sole-source Sanmonto products could also draw criticism over the USG "colluding" with "greedy" Sanmonto to dominate Kumani farmers, turning them into serfs of global monopolists.

If this pilot program succeeds, however, I see many possible downstream benefits, e.g., trucking to move cotton bales to ports, development of a local cotton processing industry, etc. Thus, I strongly urge you to recommend to the Ambassador that this project be fully funded.

The Embassy of the United States of America

Asima, Kuman

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Working Group on Special Projects

FROM: Science and Technology Office Manager – Todd Kowalski

SUBJECT: Improved Wood Stove Project

Science and Technology Officer Janice Springer just phoned to say she was on her way to the U.S. for a family emergency and will be unable to attend your meeting today. She has asked me to give you this outline of the essential elements of an improved wood stove proposal and offers social and ecological reasons for fully funding the project.

Partners from the Middle East, Europe, and the United States have collaborated on this project to encourage widespread use of locally produced improved wood stoves that will reduce timber cutting, boost local employment, and preserve Kuman's unique varieties of drought-resistant trees. The total cost of this one-year (or less) project is $375,000. The German NGO International Save the Forest Foundation (ISFF) will contribute $120,000 to cover two experts' salaries and expenses – one to teach stove building to local blacksmiths and the other to teach how to make metal flue liners and stove grates for this efficient stove. The Arab Fund for Local Initiatives will provide two project vehicles, including spare parts and maintenance ($60,000). The Peace Corps has committed two volunteers to help implement the project. ISFF has asked the Embassy for $195,000: (1) $80,000 for an office and training facilities; (2) $70,000 for tools and materials for training and an initial supply of metal for the blacksmiths; and (3) $45,000 for training aids, such as portable demonstration stoves.

Ms. Springer strongly supports the project because it will relieve the heavy burden that maintaining daily cooking fires places on rural Kumani women. On average, a woman spends over three hours a day just trying to collect wood for cooking. That time only lengthens as nearby wood sources are used up. After finding the wood, the women then have to undertake the laborious process of turning wood into charcoal. The inefficiency of the traditional open fires forces the women to forage almost every day, since even a back-breaking load of wood will only produce enough charcoal for a day or two, and no woman can afford to spend all day building up a supply of wood with all the other duties expected of her. The new stoves would use much less wood and eliminate the need to go through the laborious step of making charcoal.

The Peace Corps notes that the project will benefit those who most need our help: one of Kuman's poorest ethnic groups, the Haddadis. They are Kuman's traditional blacksmiths and have the basic skills needed to produce the metal parts of the new stoves. National Science Foundation Regional Director Linda Luonto also wrote the Ambassador to stress the ecological and scientific benefits of the project. Since the stoves use less than half the wood needed for open cooking fires, their widespread use would reduce timber harvesting. Thus, the project could preserve several species of semi-arid tropical trees found only in Kuman and which could be used for plant breeding and research. Such trees could be of great commercial value to the U.S. Southwest, for example.

On the other side of the issue, AID Director Myra Saxgelt warns that the ISFF Director in Kuman is reportedly difficult to work with, insists on total project control, and tries to take all the public credit for project success. Myra has also discovered that the Minister of Environment, President al-Kurbi's uncle, is a major shareholder in a joint venture with an Asian firm to produce solar cookers. These would compete directly with the new wood stoves. The Minister, therefore, could oppose the project given his personal financial interests in solar cookers.

The Counselor for Political Affairs, R. Hedwig Bigg, will also vote against funding this project as it does nothing to benefit Kuman's political movers and shakers. Mr. Bigg believes that our most important goal in Kuman is to nurture the country's fragile progress toward democracy and that the Embassy should fund only assistance projects that help re-elect President al-Kurbi and his pro-democracy party in next year's elections.

Janice has weighed the pros and the cons of this project and firmly believes that it can do so much good for so many people that it is well worth any potential downsides. She urges the Working Group to fund this project fully.

The Embassy of the United States of America

Asima, Kuman

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Working Group on Special Projects

FROM: Office of the Agricultural Attaché – Susan Prescott, Office Manager

SUBJECT: Refugee Feeding Project

Brad Field had an unexpected medical problem this morning and will be unable to make today's Working Group meeting. He just phoned to give me an outline of the points of a refugee feeding proposal for your consideration and urges the Working Group to fund fully this important project.

The New York-based non-governmental organization (NGO), Food for the World, has warned Brad that the Government of Kuman is facing a major crisis as it tries to respond to the urgent food needs of the burgeoning refugee population in and around the northern town of Bur Hassan. The recent crackdown by the ruling conservative Januban clergy in Didda against all Diddan citizens supporting religious tolerance and a secular state has led a growing number of ethnic Janubans from Didda to seek refuge in Kuman. Given the Kumani Government's severe budgetary problems, the Kumani authorities have difficulty providing even the most basic needs for the refugees and have called upon the international community for urgent help.

Food for the World estimates that the entire cost of feeding the refugees would be $420,000. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has agreed to provide for the refugees' basic food needs, primarily from U.S. surplus grain supplies. The UN's international food assistance organization, the World Food Program, will contribute $90,000 to build a warehouse near the largest Bur Hassan refugee camp. The Government will furnish security personnel to guard the food warehouse, at a cost of $40,000. Food for the World will pay $100,000 for the salaries of its five experts who will go to Kuman to oversee the food distribution operation. The NGO is asking for the remaining $190,000 from the U.S. Embassy to meet anticipated expenses for transportation and distribution of food: $100,000 to purchase five trucks to deliver food from the warehouse to the refugee camps; and $90,000 for shipment costs of surplus food from the U.S. to Kuman.

Brad points out that the project is not only of great humanitarian appeal but would help reduce U.S. stocks of surplus grain, which is expensive to store. We cannot sell this excess grain without depressing market prices and harming our own farmers. Political Counselor Hedwig Bigg says this project also offers a unique opportunity to demonstrate U.S. support of religious freedom, especially important in a region where fundamentalism and religious intolerance are on the rise. As more secular, modernizing Januban refugees settle permanently in Kuman, they could move Kuman's Januban community away from extremism and toward a more tolerant view of the U.S.

There are those in the Embassy who do not support this project. Public Affairs Officer Art Pressman is concerned about the quality of our surplus food sent to the refugees. This food includes old stocks, and he fears a public relations disaster if the press accuses us of dumping spoiled old grain on the refugees. The local media would have a field day with video coverage of U.S.-provided spoiled food and sickened refugees.

USAID Director Myra Saxgelt notes that Janubans are nomadic and cross the border between Didda and Kuman often. Janubans do not carry identity cards, and members of extended families live on both sides of the border. The Food for the World staff have never worked in this region, making it unlikely that they will be able to determine if an ethnic Januban is Diddan or Kumani. Thus, all ethnic Janubans in the area would ask for the free food. Myra worries that we would end up feeding as many Kumani Janubans, who do not need assistance, as legitimate Januban refugees from Didda, who do.

Peace Corps Director Gudrun DeSouliers has concluded that cultural norms here will make it difficult for Food for the World to distribute food directly to women as refugee men will insist on handling family food supplies. These men may well sell part of their families' food rations to buy addictive wongo leaves, a mild narcotic used widely among Januban men as a major form of social interaction with other men. She believes that our best efforts at refugee feeding will still leave those most in need, women and children, vulnerable to malnutrition and even starvation.

Brad is aware of the downside risks but believes that the benefits of this project far outweigh them. He urges the Working Group to support full funding for this worthy effort.

The Embassy of the United States of America

Asima, Kuman

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Working Group on Special Projects

FROM: USAID Office Manger – Todd Kowalski

SUBJECT: Micro-Credit Project (K8)

Unfortunately, USAID Director Myra Saxgelt will not be able to attend your meeting today due to a family emergency. She asked me to pass on to you information on a project proposed by Dr. Fawaz al-Otaibi, President al-Kurbi's adviser on nomadic affairs. Myra considers this proposal important for economic and social development throughout Kuman and, thus, worthy of full funding.

Using the model of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, Dr. al-Otaibi has developed a plan to establish a micro-credit institution in Kuman to provide would-be entrepreneurs with small loans (limited to $500 per client but usually much less) and with essential training in how to run small businesses. The most likely borrowers would establish small-scale trading or agricultural ventures, but there is potential for the service sector. Dr. al-Otaibi believes that a micro-credit institution will provide economic opportunities for a significant number of low income Kumanis, including nomads who have limited or no access to loans from existing credit institutions. Once free to cross national borders with their caravans and herds of camels and goats, Kuman's nomads are now a marginalized group beset by poverty, ill health, and lack of education. (Please note that President al-Kurbi's grandfather was a nomad.)

The total cost of the project is $355,000. The Government will provide $100,000 to cover all initial loans made, plus $60,000 for renovation of offices operated by the new credit facility in Asima and the four other Kumani cities and towns of any size. Kuman's leading economic development NGO, Dar al-Khalil, has no money to contribute but will advise the credit institution on which entrepreneurial projects to finance and will help train the loan recipients. The Government is asking us to provide the remaining $195,000: (1) $70,000 for the salary and living expenses of a Grameen Bank micro-credit expert to remain in Kuman for one year to help establish the new facility and train its staff; (2) $50,000 to cover travel and expenses for 10 members of the facility's staff to participate in internships at the Grameen Bank; (3) $45,000 for

computers and specialized software for the new institution to track loans; and (4) $30,000 to train the Kumani staff on the new tracking system.

Economic Counselor Boswell West supports the project as it would create large numbers of small businesses. This, in turn, fosters the emergence of a grassroots constituency for the Government's economic reform program and will encourage the Government to stay the course, despite competing demands. It would also demonstrate that the U.S. is concerned with the plight of the average Kumani. In a region where the U.S. is frequently portrayed as insensitive and domineering, our effort to empower Kumanis by helping them start independent businesses will go a long way to burnish our humanitarian image.

Commercial Counselor Darcy Colbert warns, however, that it is difficult for micro-credit institutions to become self-sustaining as the administrative costs of small loans are practically as high as for large ones. Moreover, the small ventures that such a micro-credit institution would fund are risky. Many might fail unless the Kumani economy improves significantly and soon. If they fail, their owners will not repay their loans, eroding the capitalization of the micro-credit facility and severely limiting new lending. All of these possibilities could threaten the viability of the new credit institution and could result in future requests by the Government for additional funds from participating donors like the Embassy.

Peace Corps Director Gudrun DeSouliers, who would normally support a micro-credit project given the Peace Corps' positive experience with them in other countries, also has reservations. She notes that Kumani women will not be able to take advantage of the credit facility as they are restricted by tradition from dealing face-to-face with men who are not close relatives. She does not believe that women from lower income families would go against social norms and seek a loan to engage in commerce. She is even more certain that no woman from a nomadic tribe would do so, given the strict conservatism of the nomads.

Myra, nonetheless, believes that the project achieves important U.S. objectives in Kuman and urges the Working Group on Special Projects to fund it fully.

The Embassy of the United States of America

Asima, Kuman

MEMORANDUM

From: Jane Jones - Economic Section Office Manager

To: Special Projects Working Group

Subject: Trade Facilitation Project (K9)

Due to a family medical emergency Economic Counselor Boswell West is unable to participate in your meeting today but has asked me to summarize the essential elements of a project he wanted to present to you for full funding consideration. Proposed by Kuman's Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr. Amr Al-Jubair, the project would revitalize the private sector and enhance Kuman's ability to engage competitively in international trade. It would do so by strengthening the newly formed National Chamber of Commerce (NCOC), providing technical assistance to local businesses, and establishing high-speed Internet connectivity for their use.

The total cost of the project is $520,000. Dr. al-Jubair already has received funding commitments from two reputable U.S.-based NGOs. The Corporate Council of the Gulf, representing U.S. businesses with interests in the Gulf, will provide $150,000 to hire fulltime staff, rent office space, and purchase office equipment for the NCOC. The International Executive Service Corps, focused on business development, will offer technical assistance to Kumani firms on how to set up and run businesses (worth $85,000). The Government of Kuman will pay $100,000 for a broadband, fiber-optic link between the Kuman Telephone Company (KTC) and NCOC facilities.

The Minister has asked the U.S. Embassy to provide $185,000. The first $100,000 would finance the establishment of a high-speed Internet gateway, entailing purchase and installation of computers in NCOC's new Asima headquarters and four branch offices to be established around the country. The remaining $85,000 would go to hire a consultant to train NCOC officials and business owners to use the Internet to facilitate business and identify trade opportunities.

Mr. West asserts that this project would expand economic growth, provide economic opportunities throughout Kuman, and help diversify the economy away from an over-dependence on the oil-dominated public sector and volatile world oil prices. The project would also promote U.S. interests in the World Trade Organization (WTO) by strengthening the Kumani Government's support for U.S. free trade initiatives in that organization.

Peace Corps Director Gudrun DeSouliers enthusiastically notes the project's potential for opening business opportunities for women by permitting them to engage in commercial

transactions over the Internet, without face-to-face contact with men discouraged by local cultural norms. Women control a surprising amount of money in Kuman; they own property and retain control of their dowry rights. Many are well-educated and understand business, coming as they do from merchant families with generations of commercial experience.

Management Counselor Stanley Gibbons, however, deems the Kumani phone system to be too slow and too unreliable to give the private sector the high-speed Internet access this project envisions. The equipment and wiring of Government monopoly KTC are obsolete. The alternative of a satellite link is illegal in Kuman without a special exemption, such as we have at the Embassy.

Political Counselor Hedwig Bigg is convinced that if Kuman takes a more active role in the WTO, it would side with other developing countries rather than support U.S. objectives (e.g., opening telecom services markets). Furthermore, Mr. Bigg refutes Ms. DeSouliers' arguments by stressing that regardless of gender, it is the wealthy, literate urban Kumanis who will benefit most from the project. It would do little for the poor and illiterate majority of the population we need most to reach if the current pro-democracy Government is to win next year's elections.

Taking into account his colleagues' points of view, Mr. West remains committed to this project and strongly recommends it for full Embassy funding. This project will result in a stronger, more dynamic private sector which will expand economic growth and opportunities. Greater economic security will result in a more stable country and ally. We certainly need many more such allies in this region.

The Embassy of the United States of America

Asima, Kuman

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Working Group

FROM: Economic Section Office Manager – Rebecca Mayer

SUBJECT: Transportation Improvement Project (K11)

Economic Counselor Boswell West asked me to notify you that he has had to deliver an urgent message to the Minister of Trade and Industry and will be unable to attend your meeting today. He gave me this outline of the major points of an important infrastructure proposal and urges the Working Group to fund the project fully.

Mr. West's project involves support for upgrading the road from Malik, the agricultural center of the fertile Wadi Ibrahim valley, to Asima in the north and to the rapidly growing port Ras Safira to the south. The road is the only connection between Kuman's farmers and its consumers and export markets. Currently, the road is in a deplorable state, making the trip long and dangerous even in good weather. It is often impassable in the rainy season.

An all-weather road would bring more and cheaper food to the populous Northern Province, reducing the country's need for expensive food imports and increasing its export potential in the Gulf region. Furthermore, Ras Safira is rapidly becoming the major Kumani port for non-oil exports destined for Western markets. The project could also help Kuman diversify the economy and overcome chronic trade deficits.

If work starts in the next month, the road could be finished by year's end, just in time for the winter harvest. Improving the road would require only $290,000. Transportation Minister Abdallah Nakeel will provide $95,000 of this to pay for local construction materials and labor. The Minister has asked the Embassy for $195,000 for: (1) a survey to produce mapping and technical requirements for the road, executed by a Kumani survey team overseen by a U.S. surveyor ($30,000); (2) improvement of the road surface, involving leveling and covering the roadbed with gravel from local quarries ($103,000); and (3) construction of a concrete bridge over a deep ravine where no bridge exists ($62,000). The only way trucks can now get around the ravine involves a lengthy detour over dangerous mountain roads that are impassable in bad weather. The road would require some regular maintenance, but the Government could do this at minimal cost.

In addition to boosting agricultural production, income and exports, the road would stimulate other sectors as well. Flocks of sheep and goats in the area could be substantially increased if their mutton and wool could be transported to major markets. Textile, clothing, and rug-making industries could also thrive. The growth of commercial agriculture could provide opportunities

for other entrepreneurs such as wholesale and retail merchants, food processors, and truckers. A passable road could also promote tourism in the scenic and historically significant Wadi Ibrahim area, bringing much needed income and employment to this neglected rural region.

On the other hand, Agricultural Attaché Brad Field fears that building the road would harm lucrative U.S. wheat and flour sales to the less affluent Kumani majority, although our higher quality product would still be popular with wealthy urbanites. If the Kumanis decide to subsidize wheat production to take advantage of new markets, furthermore, it could lead to a bilateral trade dispute.

Science and Technology Officer Janice Springer notes that road-building in developing countries often leads to deforestation. If we build this road, we may lose Kuman's last stand of a drought-resistant tree unique to the Wadi Ibrahim area. These trees could be useful in breeding drought-resistant plants for areas like the U.S. Southwest but will end up as nothing more than charcoal if we build this road.

Public Affairs Officer Art Pressman worries about how Kumani voters will view the fact that the brother-in-law of the Minister of Transportation owns the largest trucking company in Kuman and, therefore, would benefit substantially from a U.S.-supported road. The All Januba Party already decries the current level of U.S. "interference" in Kuman's economy. This "coincidence" of the road favoring the Minister's family could cause public criticism of the Government and the U.S. to become even more widespread. What we do not want to see is the fundamentalist opposition winning a large number of parliamentary seats next year and a renewed wave of demands for re-nationalization of key enterprises. U.S. companies and investors would be the focus of such calls, which could even morph into new security concerns for U.S. citizens and interests in Kuman.

Mr. West has weighed the pros and cons of this project but believes that it could do so much good for so many people that it is well worth the risks. He urges the Working Group to fund this project fully.

The Embassy of the United States of America

Asima, Kuman

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Working Group on Special Projects

FROM: Peace Corps Office Manager – Todd Kowalski

SUBJECT: Public School Reform (K12)

Peace Corps Director Gudrun DeSouliers had planned to attend your meeting today but has been unavoidably detained. She asked me to pass on the following information on a public school reform project proposed by Minister of Education Ibrahim Kittab and urges you to fund this worthy project fully.

Widespread illiteracy is one of Kuman's most difficult development challenges and a poor basis for its emerging representative government. About 90% of Kumanis are illiterate. Existing schools are under-funded, overcrowded and inadequately staffed. Urban schools must rely on grossly outdated textbooks and poorly prepared teachers. Rural schools are controlled by Januban fundamentalists.

The Minister plans to establish 50 new rural primary schools and 12 regional high schools in the next year. High schools will draw the best students from the primary schools. Old textbooks will be replaced with apolitical textbooks developed by Western-educated Kumanis, with help from two Peace Corps experts. The Government will give full scholarships for the top 10 percent of high-school graduates to attend Asima's National University or universities abroad, in return for teaching in public schools for two years after graduation. The Peace Corps will also provide volunteer English teachers, while the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs will provide its information and educational programs for use in the new public schools

The total cost of the project is $495,000. The World Bank and the United Kingdom are contributing $205,000 and $100,000, respectively, to train and hire new teachers. We have been asked to provide $190,000: $115,000 for the purchase of building materials for school construction (local villagers will provide the labor) and another $75,000 for the publication of new textbooks.

Political Counselor Hedwig Bigg says that Kuman's democratic experiment might fail unless the current Government meets rising public demands, across the political spectrum, for education reform. In particular, the fundamentalist extremists' growing appeal among the educated young is due to frustration with an educational system that does not prepare them for careers in a free-market economy or the bureaucracy of new democratic institutions. An educated electorate would not only provide a better basis for democracy but could lessen support for religious extremism, particularly in rural areas, by giving all Kumanis, for the first time, a chance at higher education and economic advancement.

Public Affairs Officer Art Pressman adds that our public diplomacy efforts have been severely limited by Kuman's poor school system, the population's limited contact with the outside world, and still lingering anti-Western Marxist leanings or, increasingly, fundamentalist Januban

sympathies. He says such distrust can be corrected gradually by secular education and that the new apolitical textbooks will help eliminate misperceptions of the U.S.

Conversely, Economic Counselor Boswell West argues that without broad economic reform, school reform cannot guarantee sufficient jobs for new graduates. Minister Kittab's plan merely delays unemployment for two years, while scholarship recipients complete their public service commitment. This could cause more voter discontent in the future. In addition, he believes that the cash-strapped Government may not be able to sustain long-term funding for teachers' salaries. Without sufficient numbers of teachers, our investment will be wasted.

Energy Attaché Ernest Watts thinks the project could increase Januban mistrust of the U.S. and the West if we help fund school reform that will serve, in effect, to end historic Januban traditionalist control of the countryside and rural schools. This could harm our long-term relations with the traditionalists who might one day control Kuman's government and threaten future oil supplies and regional stability.

Despite these criticisms, Gudrun thinks that this is a very important project that will lay the best long-term foundation for Kuman's democratic and economic transformation. She urges the Working Group to fund the project fully.

MANAGEMENT EXERCISE

CANDIDATE INSTRUCTIONS AND MATERIALS

Performance Issues in the Consular Section

Instructions to Candidate

In completing this practice Case Management exercise, the candidate should take **60 minutes** to read this introduction and to complete his or her memo. The exercise involves reading a variety of background documents describing performance problems in the Consular Section and writing a memo that both summarizes the situation, and presents a proposed action plan for addressing the performance issues.

This exercise is designed to assess the following dimensions: Working with Others, Judgment, Objectivity and Integrity, Information Integration and Analysis, Resourcefulness, Written Communication, and Quantitative Skills. Candidates should make sure their ideas are clear, and that they use correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Background Information

You will assume the role of Chris Johnson, newly assigned to replace Consular Officer Patience Strong in the U.S. Embassy in the country of Kuman. In this new role, you supervise two units: an American Citizens Services unit staffed by two Kumani nationals and a Visa Services unit staffed by three Kumani nationals and an American family member. Your predecessor, Patience Strong, left Kuman two months ago to move to her next assignment. In the interim, the Economic Counselor, Boswell West, has been running the Consular Section. You work for Steven Sinclair, the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM).

This is the first day in your new job. Steven is out of the office visiting a self-help project funded by the Embassy, and is not able to see you today. He has left you a memo describing the tasks you should complete. All the information you need to complete this exercise will be contained in Steven's memo and the supporting documents you have been provided.

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: August 30, 2007

TO: Chris Johnson

FROM: Steven Sinclair

RE: Performance Issues in the Consular Section

I am sorry I am not able to see you when you arrive, but my visit to the Micro-credit and Entrepreneurial Training Project proved impossible to reschedule. However, I would like you to attend to an important issue. We have a rather difficult problem that has been rumbling along for some time that you need to resolve as soon as possible. The Consular Section is not performing as it should. Because you are new to the office, I feel that you will have a fresh perspective on the situation. I have been gathering information, but have not had the chance to analyze it in great detail. I have attached some materials that I have collected that will give you the needed background information about the situation.

To briefly introduce the heads of the two units, Lena Beiruti manages the American Citizens Services unit and has been at the Embassy for almost 20 years. In addition, she is the senior Foreign Service National of the Section. Maher Safirani is in charge of the Visa Services unit and is relatively new to the Embassy, having joined only five years ago after working for Air France. However, in that time he has worked his way up from the junior to the senior position, displaying an excellent grasp of U.S. immigration law and customer service skills.

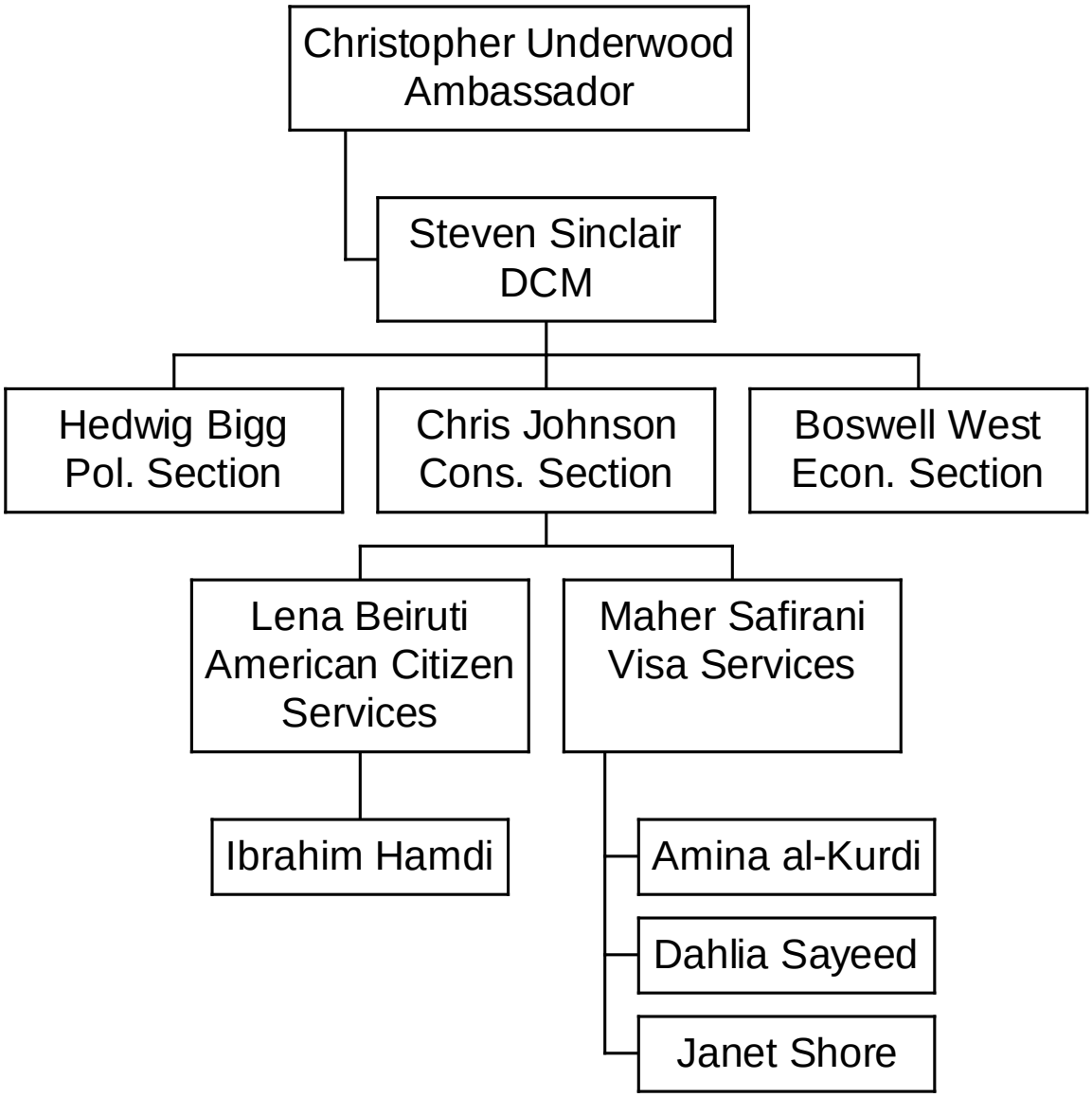
I know there will be questions in your mind after you have read the attached material, but please write a memo detailing your initial analysis of the situation, including your views on the reasons for the poor performance and how you would recommend solving this problem. In particular, your memo should be sure to cover the following points:

- Briefly summarize the situation.
- Outline your recommendations and the specific steps you would take to solve the problem.
- Incorporate the data and other statistical information that has been provided in your analysis and solution.
- Explain the reasoning for your proposed course of action

Given the pressures on my time, however, please keep the memo under two single-spaced pages in length.

Partial Organization Chart

American Embassy Asima, Kuman



DATE: AUGUST 17, 2007
FROM: STATE DEPARTMENT WASHINGTON DC
TO: ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS

SUBJECT: MID-YEAR REVIEW OF FUNDING ALLOTMENTS

1. THIS IS AN ACTION ITEM FOR THE CHIEF OF THE CONSULAR SECTION IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OFFICER. RESPONSES ARE DUE ASAP.

2. THE BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS BUDGET OFFICE (CA/EX) IS REVIEWING ALL FUNDING ALLOTMENTS SENT TO POSTS IN SUPPORT OF CONSULAR OPERATIONS.

3. AT THIS POINT IN THE FISCAL YEAR, ALL POSTS SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED FUNDING FOR THE FULL YEAR. WE NOW ASK THAT YOU REVIEW YOUR FUNDING AVAILABILITY TO DETERMINE ANY PROGRAM SURPLUSES OR SHORTFALLS AND ADVISE US OF THE STATUS OF YOUR FUNDS.

4. MANY POSTS HAVE SUBMITTED CABLES AND E-MAILS TO CA/EX SEEKING ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO COVER SHORTFALLS. PLEASE INCLUDE A BRIEF RECAP OF SUCH REQUESTS IN YOUR RESPONSE CABLE. THIS WILL PROVIDE US WITH A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF ALL YOUR RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE YEAR.

5. RECOGNIZING THAT NEW LEGAL REQUIREMENTS RECENTLY INTRODUCED MAY PLACE AN EXTRA BURDEN ON VISA SECTIONS OF SOME POSTS, CA IS PREPARED TO FUND ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL, EITHER ON A SHORT OR LONG TERM BASIS. CA WILL ALSO FUND OTHER ADDITIONAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS, IF POSTS SUPPLY SUFFICIENT JUSTIFICATION.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Johnson, Chris

From: Ibrahim Hamdi [hamdi_ibrahim@state.gov]

Sent: Monday, August 29, 2007 10:20 AM

To: Chris Johnson [johnson_chris@state.gov]

Subject: Updating the American Citizen Register

Welcome!

I would like to explain why we have not finished the updating of the American Citizen Registrations as directed by Ms. Strong before her departure. While it may be true, as she contended, that some of the people on the Register have left Kuman, the number of American Citizen prisoners has doubled! This has to be the top priority. All other things must wait!

The Visa Section has problems because they deal with everyone on “first-come, first-serve.” We have a better system: we take care of the important people first. Therefore we don’t get complaints!

Ms. Beiruti has taught me well. When we were busy, we expected people to tell the truth. Now, we have time to investigate possible fraud. American Services has always been the best Section. I know you have been told this. No changes needed here!

Again, welcome!

Sinclair, Steven

From: Patience Strong [strong_patience@state.gov]

Sent: Monday, June 13, 2007 3:03 PM

To: Steven Sinclair [sinclair_steven@state.gov]

Subject: Customer service survey results

Steve,

The results of our customer satisfaction survey are back and I'm not sure what to make of them. As you'll recall, we made surveys available for all individuals who came into the Embassy and used our services between March 15th and May 30th. We asked five questions (see below), and then left space for additional comments (I will get you a summary of these comments shortly).

According to the firm who compiled the data, they typically see ratings of between 75% and 80% in the kind of customer service work we do. Based on my experience, anything below 50% is likely to raise eyebrows in Washington. Let me know what you think.

Patience

	% Rating "Very Good" or "Excellent"	
Survey Item	American Citizens Services	Visa Services
1. Overall quality of service provided	75%	65%
2. Speed of service provided	93%	42%
3. Friendliness and helpfulness of service	55%	70%
4. Knowledge of Embassy worker	82%	74%
5. Respectfulness of treatment	47%	69%

Sinclair, Steven

From: Janet Shore [shore_janet@state.gov]

Sent: Thursday, July 28, 2007 6:35 PM

To: Steven Sinclair [sinclair_steven@state.gov]

Subject: Difficulties

Mr. Sinclair:

Just a quick note to let you know that it's getting increasingly difficult for me to work in the Consular Section, where the poor relations between Lena in American Citizen Services and Maher in Visas affect us all.

It seems to me that the four of us in the Visa Unit are overwhelmed by the volume of work, while the two employees who staff American Citizens Services seem calm in comparison. Our volume of work has increased dramatically, but our approach to handling it has not changed; maybe we need to look at new ways of managing the workload. And everybody is so busy working that I've had to learn "on-the-job" by just following people around.

I don't want to sound culturally insensitive, but I also think that part of the interpersonal problem is that Lena is very territorial and imperious. Although Patience transferred me to the Visa Unit because of a legitimate increase in workload, Lena fought it tooth and nail. I think she felt that she was losing "face" and power. Quite frankly, I am glad to be in the Visa Section because it was either Lena's way or the highway. I think that Ibrahim has adopted this attitude as well. I know that my knowledge of the local language needs work, but even I have occasionally overheard her say that Maher should "stay in Visas where he belongs" in an impolite tone of voice. Also, Lena and Maher come from opposite ends of the country, and she makes fun of his Southern accent.

I still do not feel comfortable in the new job. At least in the American Citizen Services I had the feeling of being effective – most of our clients spoke English and I could help them. In the Visa Unit, much of the time I need someone's help to translate. I'd be happy to sit down with you and/or Bill, or with the new Consular Officer to discuss how I can work most effectively.

Janet Shore

West, Boswell

From: Maher Safirani [safirani_maher@state.gov]

Sent: Tuesday, August 9, 2007 9:48 AM

To: Boswell West [west_boswell@state.gov]

Subject: Office concerns

Mr. West,

I'm sorry to bother you, but I feel I must let you know of some problems here in the office. As you know, there is no end to the number of visa cases, and, as the economic situation here in Kuman deteriorates, there are ever more applicants for U.S. visas who are not qualified. In addition, we are required to examine each case far more carefully than previously because of terrorism considerations; student visas have become a real headache. As you know, we work under the "first come, first served" model that has worked so well in the past, but we keep getting further and further behind.

Although one additional position, filled by Amina, was added following the riots last January, we are unable to keep up with the workload. We were also promised the assistance of the Family Member Employee, Janet Shore, who had initially been hired to help out with the evacuation, but unfortunately with her limited knowledge of the local language, she has difficulty conducting fraud investigations and frequently disrupts us with requests for translations.

I have repeatedly asked my colleagues in the American Services unit, Ms. Beiruti and Mr. Hamdi, for assistance, but they have refused to help, although their own workload has decreased since the coup and the departure of American citizens. I know they performed heroically during those troubled times, and received an award for their service, but that was some time ago.

Ms. Beiruti and I have not gotten along well since I started working here. Although I have sought advice from her at times, since she is the most senior employee, she is not up-to-date on the changes to visa and immigration law since she works exclusively on American Citizen Service issues. She still seems to think I should show deference to her out of seniority. I'm not sure whether she dislikes my youth, the fact that I am from the South, or because I am a man -- or maybe all three.

Maher

Johnson, Chris

From: Lena Beiruti [beiruti_lena@state.gov]

Sent: Monday, August 29, 2007 11:31 AM

To: Chris Johnson [Johnson_chris@state.gov]

Subject: Welcome and observations

Welcome to Kuman! We are honored by your presence in our country. I'd just like to share with you a few observations based on my many years of experience in the Consular Section.

I know Visa Services has taken on a great deal more work over the past couple of years, compared to what it previously had to do, but they've also gained the services of an additional Visa Assistant and the American Family Employee. If they can't cope with the workload, I would submit it's not the resources that are the problem, but rather Maher's management skills.

Although Maher is energetic and bright, he does demonstrate greater aptitude for whining than for leadership. As a result, there is no logical division of labor among the four staff in his unit, and they spend much of the day tripping over one another, rather than getting the work accomplished. In desperation, they look to Ibrahim and me for help, when we are fully occupied dealing with assisting American citizens through the increasingly difficult circumstances here in Kuman. In fact, we are even beginning to see signs of fraud in some of our birth registration applications.

If you like, I could recommend some strategies for streamlining the work in Visa Services (I have given this issue much thought), but even if they were adopted I am not sure Maher would be either amenable to or capable of carrying them out. I would be willing to supervise the streamlining process, however, if you wish.

Lena Beiruti

West, Boswell

From: Steven Sinclair[Sinclair_steven@state.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2007 9:35 AM

To: Boswell West [west_boswell@state.gov]

Subject: Ambassador's Letter

Boss, Attached is a copy of a letter the Ambassador recently received. As you might imagine, he doesn't like getting letters like this. I know that this probably happened during Patience's tenure, but it is still unacceptable. Let me know ASAP how we're going to prevent things like this in the future.

United States Senate

Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C.

August 2, 2007

Ambassador Christopher Underwood
U.S. Embassy Kuman

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

I am writing on behalf of my constituent, Arthur Dent, who contacted me regarding his efforts to obtain a student visa for his wife's cousin, Abdul Falafa, a citizen of Kuman. According to a letter written by Mr. Falafa, he was accepted for study by the Apex School of Engineering of the University of Canton, Ohio, and applied for a student visa at the U.S. Embassy in Asima. He finally got in for his visa interview three weeks after he contacted the Embassy and only one week prior to the day he was scheduled to begin classes in Canton. Mr. Falafa spent an entire day waiting in a crowded room before he was interviewed by a consular officer. He was told that his documents would need additional checking and administrative processing but was not told how long that would take. He further intimated that he had been treated with disrespect.

Mr. Dent, who was prepared to finance Mr. Falafa's engineering studies, called the consular section repeatedly during the following week but was unable to talk to an American who could tell him what was going on. Ultimately, no visa was issued in time for Mr. Falafa to begin his studies at the American university. Mr. Falafa chose to pursue his studies in England. I would greatly appreciate information I can pass to my constituent regarding why the Embassy failed to complete student visa processing for this genuine student.

Sincerely,

F.P. Leihigh
United States Senate

Sinclair, Steven

From: Hedwig Bigg [bigg_hedwig@state.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, July 20, 2007 1:03 PM

To: Steven Sinclair [sinclair_steven@state.gov]

Subject: Some Observations on the Consular Section

Steve, I know the Consular Section has been under a lot of pressure for the past several months to perform up to snuff, especially in the absence of a full time consular officer. Bos West has been doing his best to cover the section, but I guess he has his hands full with his own Econ work and the problems the Visa Section is facing. Since Patience's replacement is due in any day now, I thought I would mention the following incident to you. The situation is a bit delicate, so I would appreciate your keeping the information under wraps.

As you know, my wife Sue teaches part time at the American school. One of her co-workers is a former Peace Corps volunteer who married a Kumani more than ten years ago and stayed in the country. After years of trying to have a child, Karen was delighted to give birth a couple of months ago to a baby boy. By all accounts, the kid is a spitting image of his father.

Therein lies the rub. It seems that someone in the American Services Section gave Karen quite a hard time when she came in to get the baby's American passport. According to Karen, she was all but accused of presenting someone else's baby as her own. In fact, she was asked some pretty personal questions, which were asked in a way that Karen found very offensive.

Now I realize that fraud in all shapes and forms is pretty common here, and that country women are willing to give up their own babies for a price to women unable to deliver their own children. But as far as I can tell from Karen's story, this problem was not handled with any delicacy or sensitivity. Karen was in tears when she first told Sue about her visit to the Consular Section, almost in a state of shock that a Kumani should have been asking her such probing, personal questions.

Maybe you could raise this – leaving out the names, of course – with the new consular officer. I'd really appreciate it.

Hed

Sinclair, Steven

From: Ibrahim Hamdi [hamdi_ibrahim@state.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, July 13, 2007 1:03 PM

To: Steven Sinclair [sinclair_steven@state.gov]

Subject: American Citizen Services Workload

Mr. Sinclair:

Here is the report Ms. Beiruti asked me to complete for you. Based on data for this year (through June), 10% more passports have been issued (compared to the same time period last year) and there have been 361 births. There are currently 5 American Citizens in jail and only 4 deaths. We are still awaiting the data on the American Citizens registry, and tourism appears to be bouncing back from the 2005 lows, although the summer tourist lull is upon us because of the heat. I am not sure how we will be able to continue to provide our typically high levels of service given this increase in work.

If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Mr. Ibrahim Hamdi

American Citizen Services Workload, 2002-2006

	2002	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Passports issued	1,490	1,525	1,576	1,069	1,187
Reports of birth issued	806	864	919	375	401
American citizens in jail	2	3	2	2	4
American citizen deaths	12	15	13	18	14
American citizens registered	8,493	8,698	9,004	6,065	6,819
American tourists (est.)	5,200	6,000	6,500	1,000	2,500

Sinclair, Steven

From: Dahlia Sayeed [sayeed_dahlia@state.gov]

Sent: Thursday, July 21, 2007 6:07 PM

To: Steven Sinclair [sinclair_steven@state.gov]

Subject: Visa Services Workload

Mr. Sinclair:

Here is the report Mr. Safirani asked me to forward to you. I am sorry it has taken so long for me to compile this information; we have been swamped with work these past months. It always seems like something new keeps coming up that we have to attend to right away. We have not been able to compile the year-to-date data because we have been so busy. I will ask Amina to make some estimates (she is in the best position to make these judgments) and get in touch with you.

Respectfully,

Dahlia Sayeed

Visa Services Workload, 2002-2006

	2002	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Non-immigrant visas issued	12,368	13,907	14,764	14,321	15,877
Non-immigrant visas refused	2,218	2,945	3,814	7,341	8,417
Immigrant visas issued	2,539	2,809	3,672	4,209	4,986
Immigrant visas refused	151	197	272	301	349
Fraud investigations	25	64	209	384	514

Sinclair, Steven

From: Amina al-Kurdi [alkurdi_amina@state.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, July 27, 2007 5:57 PM

To: Steven Sinclair [sinclair_steven@state.gov]

Subject: Updated Visa Services Data

Mr. Sinclair:

Last week Dahlia asked me to give you an update as to the workload we have been experiencing in the first half of 2007. I apologize for not replying sooner, but I was out taking a presentation skills training course most of last week.

We have issued approximately 10% more non-immigrant visas but rejected 25% more non-immigrant visas than in the first six months of last year. The number of immigrant visas issued and refused has also increased, but only by 5% and 10%, respectively. The number of fraud investigations has increased dramatically. We have conducted 350 already this year. One thing that is not well represented in these numbers is the fact that amount of time spent on each visa application has gone up, so our workload has doubly increased. We keep falling further and further behind.

Amina al-Kurdi

Sinclair, Steven

From: Patience Strong [strong_patience@state.gov]

Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2007 7:25 PM

To: Steven Sinclair [sinclair_steven@state.gov]

Subject: Visa Services Workload

Steve:

Help! We are desperately in need of more people, especially in Visa Services! As you can see from the staffing pattern I have included below, our staffing levels have remained fairly constant over the past five years while our workload has dramatically increased (particularly in Visa Services). I know Washington prefers that we run lean, but I am very concerned about the level of service we are providing to both U.S. and Kumani nationals. I'll be leaving soon, but we should do something before Chris comes on board.

Patience

Consular Section Staffing, 2003-2007

	2003	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**
Consular Officers	1	1	1	1	1
Local National Employees: American Citizen Services	2	2	2	2	2
Local National Employees: Visa Services	2	2	2	2*	3
American Family Members	0	0	0	1	1

*additional position authorized, but not filled this year

American Beverages

Kuman Office

July 27, 2007
Mr. Steven Sinclair
Deputy Chief of Mission
American Embassy
Asima

Dear Steve:

I'm sorry to bother you with this, but I think you should be aware of a customer service problem involving your Consular Section. As you know, I have been running a bottling company for over twenty years in Kuman. We regularly seek visitor visas for our local managers to go to the home office in New Jersey for training. These visas used to be issued the same day.

In recent months the delays have varied from two days to two weeks. I recognize that terrorism concerns have heightened the need for security in doing background checks for visas, but we have already had several instances where employees missed their training courses because of the unpredictable level of service. I have found it difficult to justify these circumstances to management.

I understand that Patience Strong left several months ago, and has still not been replaced. I hope that, in the absence of a full-time Consular Officer, you can find some way of providing greater consistency in the Visa Unit. Lena and Ibrahim are just as helpful as ever in American Citizen Services; I had a couple of notarial services completed yesterday in record time.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Thornton
President

Sinclair, Steven

From: Lilly Mithweight [LillyMith23@hotmail.com]

Sent: Monday, August 8, 2007 10:43 AM

To: Steven Sinclair [sinclair_steven@state.gov]

Subject: Thought you should know

Steve,

It was great seeing you again last week at the reception. I hope Becky is well.

I wanted to let you know about something that recently happened when Constance (my youngest) and I went to get her passport renewed. We had forgotten some documentation and the person helping us (I believe her name was Lena) was very curt and condescending toward us. I understand that she probably has to answer the same questions a hundred times a day, but there is no need to be rude about it!

I just thought you would like to know. Give my regards to Becky.

Lilly

The 13 Dimensions – A Quick Reference

What **qualities** does the State Department seek in FSO candidates? The successful candidate will demonstrate the dimensions listed below that reflect the skills, abilities, and personal qualities deemed essential to the work of the Foreign Service. Candidates should keep in mind that the 13 dimensions are the only thing that they will be rated on during the Oral Assessment. **There is no specific education level, academic major, or proficiency in a foreign language required for appointment as a Foreign Service Officer.**

- **Composure.** To stay calm, poised, and effective in stressful or difficult situations; to think on one's feet, adjusting quickly to changing situations; to maintain self-control.
- **Cultural Adaptability**. To work and communicate effectively and harmoniously with persons of other cultures, value systems, political beliefs, and economic circumstances; to recognize and respect differences in new and different cultural environments.
- **Experience and Motivation.** To demonstrate knowledge, skills or other attributes gained from previous experience of relevance to the Foreign Service; to articulate appropriate motivation for joining the Foreign Service.
- **Information Integration and Analysis.** To absorb and retain complex information drawn from a variety of sources; to draw reasoned conclusions from analysis and synthesis of available information; to evaluate the importance, reliability, and usefulness of information; to remember details of a meeting or event without the benefit of notes.
- **Initiative and Leadership.** To recognize and assume responsibility for work that needs to be done; to persist in the completion of a task; to influence significantly a group's activity, direction, or opinion; to motivate others to participate in the activity one is leading.
- **Judgment.** To discern what is appropriate, practical, and realistic in a given situation; to weigh relative merits of competing demands.
- **Objectivity and Integrity**. To be fair and honest; to avoid deceit, favoritism, and discrimination; to present issues frankly and fully, without injecting subjective bias; to work without letting personal bias prejudice actions.
- **Oral Communication.** To speak fluently in a concise, grammatically correct, organized, precise, and persuasive manner; to convey nuances of meaning accurately; to use appropriate styles of communication to fit the audience and purpose.
- **Planning and Organizing**. To prioritize and order tasks effectively, to employ a systematic approach to achieving objectives, to make appropriate use of limited resources.
- **Quantitative Analysis**. To identify, compile, analyze, and draw correct conclusions from pertinent data; to recognize patterns or trends in numerical data; to perform simple mathematical operations.
- **Resourcefulness.** To formulate creative alternatives or solutions to resolve problems, to show flexibility in response to unanticipated circumstances.
- **Working With Others**. To interact in a constructive, cooperative, and harmonious manner; to work effectively as a team player; to establish positive relationships and gain the confidence of others; to use humor as appropriate.
- **Written Communication.** To write concise, well organized, grammatically correct, effective and persuasive English in a limited amount of time.

- **Foreign Language Bonus Points and Testing**
- Foreign language skills are now tested only after the candidate passes the Oral Assessment. Successful candidates will be given instructions on how to arrange for a telephone test during their Oral Assessment exit interviews. The telephone test will assess only the candidate's speaking skills.
- Beginning with those who took June 2012 Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT), candidates can receive .17 bonus points for all languages listed here (http://careers.state.gov/media/pdfs/language-points-2012) if they pass the telephone language test at the S3 speaking level. Candidates taking the telephone language test in the eight languages eligible for higher bonus points need only pass at the S2 speaking level to obtain the .17 language bonus points. Only the following eight languages are eligible for higher bonus points: Arabic; Chinese (Mandarin); Hindi; Persian (Dari); Persian (Farsi); Pashto; Urdu; and Korean.
- To receive the higher bonus points, candidates who pass the telephone test will then need to pass an in-person, two-hour speaking and reading test conducted by the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, Virginia. Any costs associated with the in-person test (travel, time in Washington) are at the candidate's expense. Those who achieve a minimum score of an S3 speaking level and an R2 reading level (S3/R2) will be eligible to receive a total of .38 bonus points. Candidates who receive a rating of at least S2 speaking level and an R1 reading level (S2/R1) but less than an S3 speaking level and an R2 reading level (S3/R2) will be eligible to receive a total of .25 bonus points. **Candidates who choose to take the in-person test and do not meet the minimum S2/R1 score will forfeit ALL language bonus points – in other words they will not receive any language bonus points at all.**
- Candidates may test in more than one language but will receive bonus points in only one. They may also retake the telephone test in the same language after six months. Candidates who do not pass the full in-person FSI test may take a first retest after six months; any subsequent retests are authorized only after a one year interval from the last full test in that language. Language scores are valid for 18 months or the length of any candidacy initiated during the 18 month language score validity period. A candidacy begins on the date the individual takes the FSOT**.** The Department of State requires candidates to be awarded a country-specific security clearance before being granted the higher language bonus.
- Candidates who receive .38 language bonus points must agree to serve once during their first two assignments and once after reaching mid-level grades of the Foreign Service in a country where that language is spoken. Candidates who qualify for .25 bonus points must agree to serve once during their first two assignments in a post where that language is spoken.
- Candidates whose candidacies began prior to the June 2012 FSOT, that is prior to June 2, 2012, are grandfathered under the previous policy. For the previous policy please consult our website.
- Should there be any differences between the foreign language testing information in this publication and that listed on the Department of State's website, please assume the information on the website is more current.
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Clearances Required After Passing the Oral Assessment

All Foreign Service candidates must receive valid medical, security and suitability clearances as a final condition of employment with the Department of State.

Security Clearance

All candidates should bring a completed, updated SF-86 form (Security questionnaire) to the Oral Assessment. Successful candidates are required to submit one as soon as possible, and the early submission will speed the clearance process. This applies even to candidates with existing Top Secret security clearances from the Department of State or another U.S. Government entity. Even if you have a current security clearance, an updated SF-86 is required for completion of a suitability clearance by the Final Review Panel. Candidates who do not complete and certify their online SF-86 security questionnaires using e-QIP on the day of the Oral Assessment have 30 days after the Oral Assessment to complete this requirement. **Candidacies where this deadline is missed will be automatically terminated.** This deadline is absolute and applies to those candidates who came to the Oral Assessment without completing their SF-86 and therefore did not have a consultation with the Diplomatic Security representative, and to those who needed to add information and therefore were not able to certify their SF-86 through e-QIP at that time. The eQIP can take many hours to complete and requires information that you may not have readily at hand. You should start working on your SF-86 sooner rather than later; you can begin as early as 90 days prior to your Oral Assessment.

Medical Clearance

Foreign Service employees must be able to serve in a wide variety of overseas posts, many of which are remote, unhealthy, or have limited medical support. In addition to other essential qualifications for entry into the Foreign Service, each candidate must meet medical fitness standards that are, of necessity, often more rigorous than those of most other professions.

Candidates must receive an unlimited medical clearance for worldwide assignment prior to being appointed to the Foreign Service. While medical clearance for worldwide availability is an essential qualification for prospective Foreign Service employees, the Department of State does not consider the medical condition of eligible family members in its pre-employment processes. The Department does, however, require medical clearances for family members before they can travel overseas at U.S. Government expense to accompany an employee on assignment.

The same-sex partner of a candidate who has signed an affidavit (DS-7669) declaring a domestic partner relationship is eligible for the same benefits that are accorded to the opposite-sex spouse of a candidate.

Final Review Panel

In addition to receiving valid medical and security clearances, all Foreign Service candidates must receive a valid suitability clearance as a final condition of employment with the Department of State. Upon completion of the medical examination and background investigation, a Final Review Panel will examine your complete file to determine whether there is any information about behavior that indicates that you fail to meet standards established in the Foreign Affairs Manual relative to suitability for employment with the Foreign Service. As described in the Foreign Affairs Manual (3 FAM 4114, http://www.state.gov/m/a/dir/regs/fam/), "the attainment of U.S. foreign policy objectives depends substantially on the confidence of both the American and foreign public in the individuals selected to serve in the Foreign Service. The agencies, therefore, require the maintenance of the highest standards of conduct by employees of the Foreign Service, including an especially high degree of integrity, reliability, and prudence. Given the representational nature of employment in the Service and the diplomatic privileges and immunities granted employees of the Service abroad, it is necessary that employees observe such standards during and after working hours or when the employee is on leave or in travel status."

In evaluating suitability, the Final Review Panel applies standards defined in the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM). Behaviors that violate these standards include misconduct or negligence in prior employment; poor or marginal job performance; criminal, dishonest, or disgraceful conduct, including a lack of financial responsibility; an intentional and material false statement, deception, or fraud in the Foreign Service examination or appointment process; abuse of alcohol or other intoxicants that could affect your ability to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position; illegal use of narcotics, drugs, or other controlled substances; conduct that gives rise to reasonable doubt as to loyalty to the U.S. Government; and conduct that clearly shows poor judgment or lack of discretion. For a full listing of suitability standards, please see 3 FAM 2215, www.state.gov/m/a/dir/regs/fam/.

Individuals who have been found unqualified for employment by a Department of State Final Review Panel within the previous two years are ineligible to apply for a Foreign Service position (unless the individual was a candidate for a Special Agent position with the Diplomatic Security Service and the decision to deny eligibility was based on the candidate's inability to fulfill the unique duties of that position).

The Register

After candidates receive their medical, security and suitability clearances, their names will be put on the rank-ordered Register of Cleared Candidates, sorted by career track. A candidate's rank order on the Register -- as determined by his or her Oral Assessment score, including any

bonuses -- is dynamic; that is, people who go on the list after a candidate, but with higher scores, will be ranked ahead of that candidate. Similarly, that candidate will be ranked ahead of people with lower scores, regardless of how much time they have spent on the list. Candidates with the same score will be ranked by date eligible to be placed on the Register. Ranking will also change as others receive their clearances, voluntarily drop off the list, run out of eligibility time, or are offered places in a new entry-level orientation class. The Registrar's Office will make confirmed offers based on the candidate's ranking on this Register and on the Department's hiring needs for each career track. Candidates can remain on the Register for up to 18 months after they are placed on it.