

**Letter From 46 Foreign Service Officers to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance**

Washington, December 28, 1977

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We, as Foreign Service Officers, are gravely troubled by what is happening to the Foreign Service. We support and admire your efforts to deal with the many vital and complex foreign policy challenges facing this nation, and we hesitate to impose on you with yet another problem. But we believe your personal involvement is required to forestall a serious decline in the Service as an important national institution.

Recent legal, managerial, and political decisions, taken in a setting of extensive social change, have exacerbated our own long-standing organizational problems. Many of the societal forces for change are overdue and welcome. And many of the individual decisions are admirable. But too often these decisions have been taken in isolation without regard to their cumulative, long-term impact. Together they are undermining the Service's dedication to excellence and the merit principle, so that they now threaten the ability of the Service to assist you and the President effectively in the formulation and conduct of our foreign policy.

Mr. Secretary, the Service is now seized with speculation and serious concern about the consequences of the specific policies that will be adopted with respect to such issues as: retirement, outside appointments, non-competitive entry, assignments, promotions, quotas, ceilings, position cuts. This has led to:

—declining pride and commitment, as the principles of entry and advancement by merit are progressively eroded—while officers who have not proven to be competitive or able to maintain their motivation with the years are offered ever-easier methods to remain on the rolls;

—slackened dedication and application, owing to the perception that the Foreign Service is neither informed of, nor involved in, important decisions affecting its future;

—stagnation and reduction in incentives to superior performance, as upward movement through the system to positions of increasing responsibility has slowed drastically, resulting in fewer opportunities for substantive contribution or advancement, less recognition of achievement, and fewer financial rewards.

If these impediments to individual achievement and institutional vigor are left uncorrected, the effect could be devastating. Already too many of our best colleagues are looking for opportunities outside the Service, while more and more of those who elect to stay are seeking less demanding jobs, having seen that the relationship between extra effort and the rewards of the system appears increasingly haphazard.

In order to provide the nation with the most energetic, mobile, high-quality, professional Foreign Service possible, the Foreign Service Act called for special disciplines, recruitment and rapid promotion of the most able, selection-out based on time-in-grade or poor performance, worldwide availability and honorable early retirement.

Mr. Secretary, we ask for a renewed commitment to the principles of the Foreign Service Act, which sought to create a Service based on merit, devoted to excellence, and dedicated to the effective conduct of the foreign policy of the United States. We believe that revitalization of these precepts is the indispensable first step in restoring a sense of purpose and forward movement to our institution—and in furthering positive, long-term change.

We stand ready to work with you to help develop concrete proposals to solve the problems we have raised and to restore the Foreign Service to the condition the interests of the nation demand.

Respectfully,

Kenneth M. Quinn	James W. Shinn	Darryl N. Johnson
Alan D. Romberg	Thomas Macklin	J. Stapleton Roy
James F. Dobbins, Jr.	Stephanie Smith Kinney	David G. Brown
Ints M. Silins	Charles Hill	John P. Leonard
Kang S. Huang	J. A. Allitto	Ann Swift
Dennis Goodman	Richard E. Hecklinger	George E. Moose
Alvin P. Adams, Jr.	Arthur L. Kobler	George P. Fourier
Barbara Schrage	Charles W. Freeman, Jr.	Jane E. Becker
Adrienne Stefan	Barbara Bodine	Ann Darbyshire
Michael Sternberg	Judith R. Kaufmann	David Kenney

Carol Kay Stocker	Jane Coon	Timothy M. Carney
Wesley H. Parsons	Douglas S. Kinney	Michael J. Mercurio
Thomas J. Miller	Kenneth W. Bleakley	John D. Forbes
Alan S. Hegburg	David L. Schiele	Lionel A. Rosenblatt
Paul E. Barbian	Paul W. Hilburn	Richard J. Harrington
David Blakemore		