

AMBASSADOR KENNETH M. QUINN  
Achievements- Fifty Years in Foreign Affairs

As a State Department Foreign Service Officer from his first assignment to Vietnam in 1967 until his retirement in 1999 as US Ambassador to Cambodia, including as:

**---A rural development adviser in Sa Dec Province in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam 1968-70;**

- BEING THE ONLY CIVILIAN EVER TO RECEIVE THE U.S. ARMY AIR MEDAL FOR COMMANDING U.S. ARMY HELICOPTER COMBAT OPERATIONS DURING THE WAR, INCLUDING PERSONALLY BOARDING AND TWICE GUIDING A MEDEVAC HELICOPTER INTO AN UNSECURED HOT LZ AT NIGHT TO EVACUATE TWENTY TO THIRTY WOUNDED SOUTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS.

- RECEIVING THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEDAL FOR HEROISM AND VALOR FOR FOUR INDIVIDUAL LIFESAVING RESCUES IN THE WAR ZONE IN VIETNAM, AND SEVERAL DECADES LATER DRIVING, WITHOUT ANY SECURITY EXCEPT THE AMERICAN FLAG ON THE CAR, INTO A LIVE BATTLE AREA TO PROTECT MORMON MISSIONARIES WHO WERE TRAPPED IN-BETWEEN FORCES ENGAGED IN CIVIL WAR IN CAMBODIA ;

- COMING UNDER ENEMY FIRE ON MULTIPLE OCCASIONS, INCLUDING WHILE OPERATING WITH US NAVY RIVERINE ASSAULT CRAFT IN BA XUYEN, ESCORTING A US AMMUNITION BARGE NEAR TAN CHAU, AND BEING WOUNDED IN A 122MM ROCKET ATTACK IN SAIGON;

- PERSONALLY INTERVENING TO PREVENT A YOUNG WOMAN FROM BEING TORTURED BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS;

**---A staff officer assigned to MACV Headquarters in Saigon, 1971-72:**

- CARRYING JOHN VANN'S BODY OFF THE PLANE AT TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT AFTER HE WAS KILLED IN A HELICOPTER CRASH;

**---A political reporting officer along the remote Cambodian - Vietnamese border in 1973-74;**

- RECOGNIZED AS FIRST PERSON ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD TO DISCOVER AND REPORT ON THE GENOCIDAL PRACTICES OF THE RADICAL KHMER ROUGE TERRORISTS. THIS EXTRAORDINARY REPORTING WAS HIGHLIGHTED IN SAMANTHA POWERS' BOOK AND PAUL JOHNSON'S *HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE* ;

- HIS 1982 DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ON THE ORIGINS OF THE POL POT REGIME WAS HAILED BY THE LATE CONGRESSMAN STEVE SOLARZ AS "THE MOST BRILLIANT ANALYSIS OF THE KHMER ROUGE I HAVE EVER READ";

- CAME UNDER HEAVY NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY FIRE WHILE ESCORTING A US CARGO SHIP ON THE INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING LANE OF THE MEKONG RIVER;

- SUPERIOR HONOR AWARD BY CONSUL GENERAL TOM BARNES AS TOP PERFORMER AMONG 16 FSOs SERVING AS PROVINCIAL POLITICAL REPORTING OFFICERS IN THE ENTIRE MEKONG DELTA FOLLOWING THE JANUARY 1973 CEASEFIRE;

**---A professional staff member of the National Security Council at the White House, 1974-76:**

- DISPLAYING EXTRAORDINARY COMMAND OF THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE BY SERVING AS INTERPRETER FOR PRESIDENT GERALD FORD DURING AN EMERGENCY MEETING WITH SENIOR SOUTH VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS IN THE CABINET ROOM OF THE WHITE HOUSE ON MARCH 25, 1975 AS SAIGON WAS COLLAPSING;

And one week later:

- WAS A MEMBER OF A SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL MISSION SENT TO VIETNAM IN LATE MARCH TO URGENTLY ASSESS THE SITUATION. TWENTY FIVE YEARS LATER, AFTER EXAMINING ALL NOW DECLASSIFIED RELATED DOCUMENTS, HISTORIAN DOUGLAS BRINKLEY WROTE IN TIME MAGAZINE THAT RETURNING FROM THAT TRIP, KENNETH QUINN PROVIDED THE "MOST PESSIMISTIC AND MOST ACCURATE" ASSESSMENT WITHIN THE ENTIRE U.S. GOVERNMENT ON THE COLLAPSING SITUATION IN SAIGON;

And on that same trip:

- IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY EMERGENCY PLANNING BY THE U.S. EMBASSY, PERSONALLY ORGANIZING AN UNAUTHORIZED, COVERT EVACUATION SYSTEM WITH SAFE HOUSES THAT ALLOWED HUNDREDS / THOUSANDS OF HIGH-RISK VIETNAMESE TO ESCAPE AS SAIGON FELL;

**---A special assistant to Richard Holbrooke in the East Asian Bureau of the State Department from 1977 to 1978:**

- SERVING ON THE WOODCOCK MISSION TO HANOI IN MARCH 1977 THAT ACHIEVED THE FIRST EVER POST WAR RETURN OF REMAINS OF MISSING AMERICAN SERVICEMEN;

- COMMENDED BY THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT FOR HIS CRITICAL ROLE IN IDENTIFYING, AND BEING THE CHIEF GOVERNMENT WITNESS AGAINST, TWO INDIVIDUALS CONVICTED OF ESPIONAGE ON BEHALF OF NORTH VIETNAM AGAINST THE UNITED STATES;

- ORGANIZED AND LED THE MID-LEVEL FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS "GROUP OF 46" AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT THAT SIGNED A STATEMENT OF CONCERNS ABOUT THE DECLINING COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE IN THE DEPARTMENT, AND THEN CONFRONTED SECRETARY OF STATE CYRUS VANCE WITH THE PETITION NOW ENDORSED BY 500 CAREER OFFICERS INCLUDING SEVERAL AMBASSADORS AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES. THE MOVEMENT RESULTED IN THE DRAFTING AND PASSAGE OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE ACT OF 1980. RECEIVED AFSA RIVKIN AWARD FOR INTELLECTUAL COURAGE AND DISSENT FOR LEADERSHIP OF THIS MOVEMENT.

**---A refugee adviser to the Governor of Iowa on loan from the State Department, 1978-82:**

. WHEN VIETNAMESE "BOAT PEOPLE" FLEEING COMMUNISM WERE PERISHING AT SEA BECAUSE NO COUNTRY, INCLUDING THE U.S., WOULD ACCEPT ANY MORE REFUGEES, FORMULATED THE GOVERNOR OF IOWA'S FIRST IN THE WORLD PUBLIC PLEDGE TO DOUBLE THE SIZE OF IOWA'S REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM, IF PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD REOPEN AMERICA'S DOORS TO ACCEPT MORE REFUGEES;  
THIS PROVIDED THE MORAL LEADERSHIP WHICH CONVINCED THE PRESIDENT TO CHANGE AMERICAN POLICY AND ADMIT 168,000 REFUGEES A YEAR, AND INSPIRED THE U.N. GLOBAL EFFORT THAT EVENTUALLY SAVED A MILLION REFUGEES;

. AFTER WITNESSING OVER 30,000 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES DYING OF STARVATION AND EXTREME SICKNESS ,ON THE CAMBODIAN BORDER OF THAILAND, RETURNING HOME TO LEAD THE "IOWA SHARES" CAMPAIGN THAT RUSHED LIFE SAVING IOWA DOCTORS AND NURSES AND FOOD AND MEDICINE TO THESE TRAGIC KHMER ROUGE GENOCIDE VICTIMS;

. TAKING XI ZHONGXUN, THE FATHER OF CHINA'S PRESIDENT, TO THE AMANA COLONIES OF IOWA IN 1980 WHERE HE OBSERVED THE AGRICULTURAL REFORM MODEL THAT HE WOULD USE TO TRANSFORM CHINESE AGRICULTURE;

. SECURITY COORDINATOR FOR VISIT OF POPE JOHN PAUL II IN OCTOBER, 1979 THAT DREW 350,000 PEOPLE TO LIVING HISTORY FARMS;

. CRISIS MANAGER FOR MANSON AND ALGONA TORNADOES IN 1979. TAKING VERY YOUNG NEW LT. GOVERNOR TERRY BRANSTAD BY HELICOPTER TO VISIT DEVASTATED TOWNS WHEN GOV. RAY WAS IN ROMANIA.

. CRISIS COORDINATOR DURING FORT MADISON PRISON RIOT IN 1980 WHEN GOVERNOR WAS ON ROAD FROM MILWAUKEE AND UNABLE TO BE CONTACTED. MADE DECISION ON GRANTING PRISONERS ACCESS TO THE PRESS WHEN THEY THREATENED TO KILL HOSTAGES. DIRECTED SENDING THE ENTIRE STATE PATROL, OVER 400 OFFICERS, TO FORT MADISON TO PREPARE TO ASSAULT THE PRISON.

. RECEIVING DEFENSE DEPARTMENT DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD AND NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU EAGLE AWARD FOR RESTORING INTEGRITY TO IOWA NATIONAL GUARD BY CHOOSING DYNAMIC NEW LEADERSHIP.

**---Between 1982 and 1984, while serving as Middle East Refugee Counselor at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Vienna, he was**

. THE ONLY FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER TO BE ABLE TO PASS UNDETECTED THROUGH SYRIAN MILITARY, WAR LORD AND PLO CHECKPOINTS IN WAR TORN LEBANON IN 1983 TO DISCOVER YASSIR ARAFAT'S HEADQUARTERS COMPOUND (UNDER A UN SCHOOL) AND REPORT ON PLO MILITARY PREPARATIONS AND PALESTINIAN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION ACTIVITY;

. SHOT AT WHILE AT UN FACILITY IN GAZA WHILE ON INSPECTION TRIP OF UNRWA FACILITIES IN WEST BANK, JORDAN, SYRIA AND LEBANON;

**--And as Deputy Chief of Mission in Manila between 1987 and 1990, when he was**

. UNDER DEATH THREAT FROM TERRORIST NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY, HAD FIVE BODYGUARDS WHENEVER MOVING ABOUT.

. SERVED AS EMBASSY CRISIS MANAGER DURING TWO COUP ATTEMPTS AGAINST THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT CORAZON AQUINO. ON ONE OCCASION, WHILE IN CHARGE OF THE EMBASSY, OBTAINED URGENT AUTHORIZATION TO PROVIDE ROCKETS FROM CLARK AIRBASE TO GENERAL EDDIE RAMOS AT FORT BONIFÁCIO WHICH PREVENTED HIM FROM BEING OVERRUN BY THE REBELS AND THE GOVERNMENT TOPPLED;

. PERSONALLY THANKED BY PRESIDENT AQUINO FOR DECISIVE ACTION TO PROTECT HER DAUGHTER WHO WAS THREATENED BY REBEL ELEMENTS WHILE IN THE UNITED STATES;

. CREATED THE EMBASSY CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM THAT BECAME THE MODEL USED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO TRAIN FUTURE AMBASSADORS AND SENIOR EMBASSY OFFICERS;

**---Chairman of the US inter Agency Working Group on POW / MIA Accounting 1990 to 1994;**

. PERSONALLY NEGOTIATING, IN THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE, THE FIRST EVER ENTRY BY U.S. PERSONNEL INTO A NORTH VIETNAMESE PRISON TO SEARCH FOR AMERICAN POW/MIAs;

. OBTAINING THE FIRST EVER AGREEMENT FROM THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT FOR U.S. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL TO ENTER CAMBODIA TO SEARCH FOR MISSING AMERICAN MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS;

. CONDUCTING FIRST NEGOTIATIONS WITH CHINESE OFFICIALS IN BEIJING WHICH LED TO THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE FATE OF U.S. PILOTS WHO CRASHED AND DIED IN CHINA DURING THE VIETNAM WAR AND WW II;

. BEING A MEMBER OF THE US-RUSSIA POW/ MIA COMMISSION THAT GAINED THE FIRST EVER ENTRY INTO A SOVIET PRISON AND FIRST EVER ACCESS TO SOVIET STATE ARCHIVES TO SEEK POW/MIA ACCOUNTING;

**- - -As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, 1990-94;**

. DRAFTING THE ROADMAP TO NORMALIZATION WITH VIETNAM. RECEIVED PRESIDENTIAL DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD (HIGHEST CIVILIAN CAREER RECOGNITION) FOR LEADERSHIP ON POW / MIA ISSUE; AND AFSA HARTER AWARD FOR INTELLECTUAL COURAGE;

. IN A FACE TO FACE MEETING, CONVINCING HUN SEN, THE LEADER OF THE COMMUNIST CAMBODIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY, TO ACCEPT THE RESULTS OF THE 1993 UN SUPERVISED FREE AND FAIR ELECTION AND FORM A DEMOCRATIC COALITION GOVERNMENT;

. CONVINCING THE NEW CAMBODIAN PRIME MINISTER TO ACCEPT HIS STRATEGY TO BUILD RURAL ROADS AND BRING NEW AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY INTO KHMER ROUGE BASE AREAS, IN AN EFFORT TO UNDERMINE THE 25,000 RADICAL TERRORIST FIGHTERS WHO, IN 1990, STILL CONTROLLED THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE CAMBODIAN COUNTRYSIDE;

**--- As US Ambassador to Cambodia, 1996-99:**

. HAVING HIS AMBASSADORIAL RESIDENCE STRUCK BY A ROCKET AND RINGED BY AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE WHILE HIS WIFE AND HE COVERED THEIR THREE CHILDREN WITH THEIR BODIES, AND HE SIMULTANEOUSLY DIRECTED THE PROTECTION OF AMERICAN CITIZENS;

. DRIVING WITHOUT ANY SECURITY INTO AN ACTIVE COMBAT ZONE, WITH ONLY THE AMERICAN AND AMBASSADORIAL FLAGS ON HIS CAR, TO RESCUE U.S. CITIZEN MORMON MISSIONARIES CAUGHT IN A CIVIL WAR CROSSFIRE IN CAMBODIA;

. PROVIDING SANCTUARY IN HIS EMBASSY FOR TWO MONTHS TO KEM SOKHA, AN ENDANGERED CAMBODIAN OPPOSITION POLITICIAN WHO FEARED FOR HIS LIFE. [SOKHA IS STILL ACTIVE IN CAMBODIAN POLITICS IN 2019];

. CREDITED BY THE WIFE OF OPPOSITION POLITICAL LEADER SAM RAINSY WITH "SAVING HIS LIFE" AND "PRESERVING DEMOCRACY IN CAMBODIA," DURING AN INTENSE PERIOD OF VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL TURMOIL;

. PRAISED BY THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS FOR DESIGNING AND INSTALLING A MARBLE MONUMENT AT THE US EMBASSY IN PHNOM PENH DEDICATED TO THE THREE US MARINES WHO DISPLAYED EXTRAORDINARY LOYALTY TO THE MARINE CORPS MOTTO *SEMPER FI*, BY REFUSING TO SURRENDER TO THE KHMER ROUGE DURING THE MAYAGUEZ RESCUE OPERATION ON KOH TANG ISLAND IN CAMBODIA;

. DIRECTING THE US EMBASSY OPERATION IN CAMBODIA THAT CAPTURED A NORTH KOREAN CONTROLLED TERRORIST, WHO WAS DISTRIBUTING COUNTERFEIT US CURRENCY THROUGHOUT SOUTHEAST ASIA;

. IN MARCH, 1999, REPORTING THAT THE LAST KHMER ROUGE HAD SURRENDERED. AND THAT THE STRATEGY OF RURAL ROADS AND AGRICULTURAL ENHANCEMENTS THAT HE HAD PUT IN PLACE IN 1990, HAD LED, IN JUST NINE YEARS, TO THE TOTAL ERADICATION OF THE WORST GENOCIDAL, MASS-MURDERING, TERRORIST ORGANIZATION OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

. ON THREE CONSECUTIVE OCCASIONS, WALKING ACROSS THE STAGE AT CIA HEADQUARTERS TO RECEIVE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE, THE DCI AWARD FOR EXCEPTIONAL POLITICAL REPORTING, THE ONLY EMBASSY WORLDWIDE TO RECEIVE SUCH CONSECUTIVE RECOGNITION.

. SUBMITTING A DISSENT CHANNEL MESSAGE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE REFUSING THE DEPARTMENT'S ORDERS TO PARTIALLY FORTIFY THE PHNOM PENH EMBASSY, WHICH HAD BEEN DECLARED THE MOST VULNERABLE MISSION IN THE WORLD BY THE DIPLOMATIC SECURITY SERVICE ASSESSMENT TEAM. RECEIVED THE AFSA HARTER AWARD FOR

INTELLECTUAL COURAGE FOR THAT DISSENT, WHICH FORCED THE DEPARTMENT TO CONSTRUCT A NEW SECURE EMBASSY WITH ADEQUATE SETBACK AND MARINE GUARDS;

**Wounded by a 122 mm rocket in Vietnam, was shot at, blown up or under death threat in every foreign assignment during his diplomatic career. At his retirement in 1999, presented the Secretary's Award for Heroism for four life saving rescues in Vietnam and personal action to protect endangered American citizens during civil conflict in Cambodia. He is the only Foreign Service Officer to ever receive on three occasions the AFSA awards for intellectual courage and dissent.**

**Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn of Iowa was nominated twice for the Presidential Medal of Freedom, based on his leadership in confronting global hunger while serving as president of the World Food Prize Foundation between 2000 and 2019. Ambassador Quinn was commended for:**

. FULFILLING THE VISION OF THE LATE DR. NORMAN E. BORLAUG, BY BUILDING THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE SO IT IS CONSIDERED THE "NOBEL PRIZE FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE," HONORING LAUREATES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE;

. SHAPING HIS ANNUAL "BORLAUG DIALOGUE" INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM SO IT IS PRAISED AS "THE PREMIER CONFERENCE IN THE WORLD ON GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY";

. DEVELOPING ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE PROGRAMS IN AMERICA TO INSPIRE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO PURSUE EDUCATION AND CAREERS IN SCIENCE AND CONFRONTING HUNGER, TWO-THIRDS OF THE PARTICIPANTS ARE YOUNG WOMEN;

. ON OCTOBER 16, 2011, PRESIDING AT THE OPENING AND DEDICATION OF THE NORMAN BORLAUG WORLD FOOD PRIZE HALL OF LAUREATES, A \$30 MILLION RESTORATION OF THE FORMER DES MOINES PUBLIC LIBRARY, WHICH SERVES AS A MUSEUM, CONFERENCE CENTER AND HEADQUARTERS FOR THE FOUNDATION. WITH A 100 YEAR LEASE, THIS 19TH CENTURY DESIGNED ARCHITECTURAL TREASURE, WHICH HAS ATTAINED "LEED PLATINUM" CERTIFICATION, THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVEL OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCE CONSERVATION, WILL BE HONORING INDIVIDUALS IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST HUNGER WELL INTO THE 22ND CENTURY.

#### **Innovative Leadership on Israel, Iran and Ebola**

Ambassador Quinn has continued to demonstrate significant innovative leadership in building increased international understanding and creating an atmosphere of peaceful cooperation through agriculture, including:

. IN 2012 WHEN AN ISRAELI SCIENTIST, NOMINATED BY PERSONS FROM THREE SEPARATE ARAB / MUSLIM COUNTRIES, RECEIVED THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE IN DES MOINES IN THE PRESENCE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

OF THE UNITED NATIONS, A MUSLIM PRINCESS, AN ISRAELI DIPLOMAT AND AN ARAB SHEIKH;

. AS THE FIRST FORMER US AMBASSADOR OR SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIAL / DIPLOMAT EVER INVITED TO ADDRESS A CONFERENCE IN IRAN, IN AUGUST, 2014. HE RECEIVED A STANDING OVATION FROM OVER 400 IRANIAN SCIENTISTS, INCLUDING THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FOR EMPHASIZING NORMAN BORLAUG'S LEGACY OF BUILDING UNDERSTANDING AND PEACE THROUGH AGRICULTURAL EXCHANGES;

. TWO MONTHS LATER, AS A FOLLOW ON ACTION HE WELCOMED AN IRANIAN WHEAT SPECIALIST TO DES MOINES TO TAKE PART IN THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE BORLAUG DIALOGUE SYMPOSIUM; THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY HIS TAKING ADDITIONAL STEPS IN 2015 AND 2016 TO SEND WORLD FOOD PRIZE LAUREATES TO DELIVER THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF THE NINTH IRANIAN BIOTECHNOLOGY CONGRESS IN TEHRAN AND THE IRAN NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL CONFERENCE ;

. ON MARCH 25, 2014, GAVE REMARKS AT THE UNVEILING OF NORMAN BORLAUG'S STATUE IN STATUARY HALL OF THE U.S. CAPITOL, IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE BORLAUG STATUE COMMITTEE;

. IN OCTOBER 2014, HIS WORLD FOOD PRIZE SYMPOSIUM WAS THE FIRST CONFERENCE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD TO ADDRESS THE DEVASTATING IMPACT OF EBOLA ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION IN WEST AFRICA.

Hon. Charles Rivkin, Assistant Secretary of State and former U.S. Ambassador to France, while addressing an audience in Des Moines on October 16, 2014, summed up Ambassador Quinn's contributions when he said:

*"AMBASSADOR QUINN HAS BEEN FIGHTING FOR CAUSES GREATER THAN HIMSELF FOR HIS ENTIRE CAREER, AND IT'S PRETTY CLEAR THAT AS A RESULT, HE'S CHANGED THE WORLD."*