United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

November 9, 1999

The Honorable
Kenneth M. Quinn
c/o World Food Plaza
601 Locust Street
Suite 1000
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

Dear Ambassador Quinn:

Thank you for taking time the other day to share briefly, your recollection of events that gave rise to this grievance. This is a follow up to that discussion to get from you more detailed, written responses to specific inquiries. Before getting into those inquiries, I would like to alert you to certain aspects of the grievance process.

By statute, any individual filing a grievance is "free from any restraint, interference, coercion, harassment, discrimination, or reprisal in those proceedings or virtue by them" (22 USC 4133). The Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended, also requires that parties to grievances "be assured the maximum confidentiality." Accordingly, I must ask you not to divulge this inquiry or the information it conveys about the grievance to any other person beyond the extent necessary to prepare and transmit your written response. As you are not party to this grievance, the confidentiality of any information you provide is not similarly protected by the Act. While any information you provide in reply to this query will be treated administratively sensitive, the grievant may eventually learn of your response if we rely on specific details of it in grievance proceedings or if she exercises her right under 3FAM 4426.1a to review records kept by this office.

Finally, the grievant, if dissatisfied with the Departmental level decision, may file an appeal with the Foreign Service Grievance Board. This office would represent the Department before that Board. In those

proceedings, the grievant is entitled to request additional information through discovery which could call on you to respond to specific interrogatories produced by the grievant. You would not be asked to serve as a witness in a hearing, nor are you culpable in any way as an end result of this grievance. Therefore, we ask that you be as candid as possible to the best of your recollection.

As we discussed, Ms. Coskun is grieving certain language in her evaluation report covering the period 4/16/98-4/15/99 while serving as Office Manager in Phnom Penh. During a portion of that rating period, she was an OMS for both yourself and DCM Rodley. Specifically, she grieves language in her evaluation that refers to poor interpersonal skills based on an antagonistic relationship developed between her and a TDY Secretary from EAP, Ms. Mary Curry.

Ms. Coskun asserts that neither you nor DCM Rodley were ever a witness to any of the hostilities that occurred between her and Ms. Curry. She further states that if you were aware, you or the DCM never brought it to her attention through a formal counseling session. I note that the formal counseling session is shown on the EER to have occurred on March 25, 1999. Ms. Curry's stay in the front office appears to have been from February 8, 1999 through March 11, 1999, so that formal counseling session as listed would have occurred after the situation in question. Please provide your recollection on all of the above.

Ms. Coskun claims that DCM Rodley asked her upon Ms. Curry's arrival to develop a working arrangement between the two that would best suit the needs of the office. Ms. Coskun states that she approached Ms. Curry and asked if she would prefer to work for the DCM or the Ambassador to which Ms. Curry allegedly stated she did not want to work for the Ambassador. Ms. Coskun claims she spent a great deal of time showing Ms. Curry the ropes but noted soon after her arrival that she was not interested in performing all the necessary duties but only those "personally related to the DCM." Specifically, she alleges that there was some unclassified filing left from 1998 that she asked Ms. Curry to file but Ms. Curry refused to file anything but recent

material. Soon afterward, Ms. Coskun claims, Ms. Curry told her "to stop talking to her, ignored me when I spoke with her regarding the office and made it very clear she wanted nothing to do with me." Please comment on your recollection of these events focusing on how you remember Ms. Coskun approaching Ms. Curry with work arrangements/assignments, why or if Ms. Curry was reluctant and/or refused to take on those arrangements/assignments, and if it was clear early on that there were going to be problems in this working relationship.

Did you and/or the DCM intervene and try to alleviate the problems in the working relationship? In her grievance, Ms. Coskun alleges that she tried to initiate discussions with both of you (on at least three occasions) but that nothing happened other than you both advising that she should ignore the situation and that she "should take a walk around the building when it got too bad." It wasn't until the final incident where Ms. Curry allegedly grabs Ms. Coskun that you and the DCM actually intervened, by her account.

According to Ms. Coskun, the "final incident" revolved around a filing cabinet that Ms. Curry used to store personal belongings. This cabinet apparently also stored "work/forms" used in the front office at all times. When Ms. Coskun asked Ms. Curry for the key to get into the cabinet, Ms. Curry refused to tell her where it was. Finally, on or about March 11 (1999), after much begging, Ms. Curry finally opened the cabinet "and I took the key from her." She then "physically lunged at me and grabbed me." Describe your recollection of that final incident?

After the incident, Ms. Curry evidently left the office and never returned. Ms. Coskun claims that she felt "out of the loop" on how you and the DCM were handling the situation and felt in a very awkward position. When you and the DCM asked her if she would mind working with Ms. Curry again, she said she had no problem, "it was always Ms. Curry who didn't want to work with me" she allegedly advised you both. She claims that nothing else was ever

said to her until she received her EER on May 11, 1999. Ms. Coskun feels strongly that both you and the DCM were unaware of what was really going on and that when she tried to make you aware, either during the time in question or when she discussed the EER with you later, that you both really didn't believe what she was saying was actually happening. Please provide your reaction to Ms. Coskun's allegations.

Ms. Coskun claims that on one occasion Ms. Curry responded to a work assignment by stating that she "did not come to Cambodia to file, supervise cleaning crews or shred." Did you ever detect a poor working or personal attitude on the part of Ms. Curry?

Finally, describe in more detail the extremely busy business of the Embassy during this one-month time period (you mentioned at least three CODELs). Could this environment have led you and/or the DCM to overlook that which Ms. Coskun describes?

Due to statutory time constraints we are bound by, I ask that you provide your written response as soon as conveniently possible but no later than December 3, 1999. Any other comment you want to include in your response is welcome.

You may FAX your response directly to this office at 202-261-8121. That FAX would come into PER/G ensuring its administrative sensitivity. Otherwise, send your response to my attention at the Department of State, PER/G, Room H-523, SA-1, Washington, D.C. 20522-0105.

Should you have any questions or comments, please call me anytime at 202-261-8110.

Sincerely,

Steven J. Polson
Grievance Analyst
Grievance Staff