



Inside a U.S. Embassy: Diplomacy at Work, All-New Third Edition of the Essential Guide to the Foreign Service

Shawn Dorman (Editor)

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"Inside a U.S. Embassy" is widely recognized as the essential guide to the Foreign Service. This all-new third edition takes readers to more than fifty U.S. missions around the world, introducing Foreign Service professionals and providing detailed descriptions of their jobs and firsthand accounts of diplomacy in action. In addition to profiles of diplomats and specialists around the world from the ambassador to the consular officer, the public diplomacy officer to the security specialist is a selection from more than twenty countries of day-in-the-life accounts, each describing an actual day on the job. Personal reports from the field give a sense of the extraordinary challenges the coups, the natural disasters, the civil wars and rewards of representing America to the world. "Inside a U.S. Embassy" includes new chapters on the highly competitive Foreign Service entrance process, Foreign Service life outside the embassy, and briefings on topics such as handling high-level visits and service in war zones.

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Abi Olvera says

This book was given to us, as a group of young future foreign service officers. It was very helpful in giving a comprehensive view of the depth and variety of the many possible positions of work at embassies and in the foreign service. It had several testimonies from current officers, including memorable events they lived through and a typical day in the shoes. It explains the hiring process for the different types of foreign service jobs, and more information about each of these agencies. Overall, a very good informative book to get one started in their career search, so as to know what to expect. It was a bit dry at times, but it also had some very powerful moments which both intimidate and excite.

Andrew says

Decent look at Foreign Service life.

Kaleb Rogers says

This review is entirely contingent on one's desire to become a Foreign Service Officer, and more specifically an FSO Generalist.

Inside a U.S. Embassy: Diplomacy at Work has a lot of useful information for those who desire to be an FSO. I am currently preparing for the Foreign Service Oral Assessment (FSOA), and read this book to prepare. I wish I had read it sooner, however, as I learned many things about a career as an FSO that I did not know beforehand. I do find, however, that many of the stories, particularly those at the end, will be useful when answering the "Hypotheticals" section of the structured interview during my assessment.

For other aspects of the Foreign Service, the book becomes less useful. Though there is a good amount of information pertaining to other careers inside the embassy (Diplomatic Security Service, USAID, etc.) the book definitely seems like it was written with FSO Generalists in mind.

Moreover, if one is not personally interested in joining the Foreign Service, there are better books that strictly outline stories of American diplomatic work. Another book that I've been working on, American Diplomats, comes to mind.

Flor Cita says

Excellent book with the perfect insight of what life as a Foreign Service Officer is all about.

Arianna says

I thought this was a great and concise description of the Foreign Service. The amount of people that actually work in the embassies and consulates and the various positions really showed how people with different backgrounds, skill sets and lifestyles can truly blend into such a well run organization. I look forward to the day that I am sitting in my A-100 class with other fellow foreign service officers, but until that day, I'll keep learning everything I can about this amazing wing of our government. I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand the basic job functions and how foreign service officers adapt to life abroad. There are helpful suggestions in the back for applying to the FS and internships at the State Department.

Staci says

A good book to read for anyone considering a career in the Foreign Service. It covers pretty much every aspect of the Foreign Service, including the testing and selection process as well as providing examples of "typical" days from people in various positions within the foreign service. A lot of it is more anecdotal than objective, per se, but since life in the Foreign Service can be so varied it's hard to imagine how this book could have done it any other way.

Diana says

Extremely informative and really paints a picture of what day-to-day foreign service life is like through daily accounts with FSO in just about every position out there.

Joni says

This book is definitely 5 stars for anybody interested in the U.S. Foreign Service or diplomacy/politics of any kind. It gives an on-the-ground look at what a diplomatic life entails, and tells some truly inspiring stories of the power of diplomacy. It also clearly walks through how the Department of State works and how one goes about becoming an employee of it. It is a must-read for anyone considering life in that arena. One note: It is long and sometimes hard to get through. As you can see, it took me a full two months to get through it. However, I am notoriously bad at reading nonfiction. Be prepared to settle in for the long haul, though, because it's worth reading from start to finish!

Justin Tapp says

The State Department helps produce this book with the American Foreign Service Association as a marketing/recruitment piece for those interested in becoming Foreign Service Officers. It contains stories by FSOs in the different "cones" - Consular, Economic, Management, Political, or Public Diplomacy.

Something like 25,000 people apply annually to join the 14,000 member FSO workforce around the world; last year the State Department had money or need to hire fewer than 300. For many aspirants, reading this book is as close as they will come to achieving their dream.

The book begins with an introduction to the Foreign Service and a bit of its history. Part I is a collection of profiles of specific people in embassies around the world, including Ambassadors, USAID reps, entry-level FSOs, and even locally-hired employees. Part II explains the process of becoming an FSO and being deployed, and features some day-in-the-life profiles giving examples of work. Part III is a collection of "one day journals," "day-in-the-life" stories written by FSOs highlighting their everyday routines including problems they've solve, challenges they face, and routine boredom they deal with. It gives details about their family life (many spouses work or volunteer for the embassy), workout routines, deployment history, etc. Part IV contains tales from the field -- interesting stories written by FSOs highlighting stresses (disasters and terrorist attacks), problems they solve, and people they meet.

The most interesting story is by an FSO in Macedonia in 1999, serving under Christopher Hill (later a negotiator with North Korea and Ambassador to Iraq).

"One summer midnight in the Balkans, an American ambassador walked into a (Kosovar Albanian) refugee camp to try to quell a riot and save the lives of Roma (gypsy) refugees under attack. He succeeded, and went home to bed. It wasn't diplomacy around big tables in grand rooms. The U.S. embassy had no responsibility to intervene, and few who were not there ever heard about it. But the actions of Ambassador Christopher Hill highlight the power of the individual Foreign Service officer's moral and physical courage...We never talked much about that night again—each day at Embassy Skopje brought too many new problems and issues connected with the Kosovo crisis. But I've come to realize that night was characteristic of much of our work in the Foreign Service: We confront so many unknowns, we have so little time, and—on scales large and small—the consequences of our actions and inactions can be so extraordinarily profound."

I give the book 4.5 stars out of 5. A must-read if you're interested in the Foreign Service. The individual day-in-the-life stories get a bit repetitive or dry, as they should-- this is real life.

Paul says

In 2013, during my first FSO candidacy, I read "Career Diplomacy" while waiting for the results of my FSO Test and PNQ (didn't pass the PNQ stage). That book was interesting in its own right because it was like a "personal narrative" of two former US diplomats.

It's 2016 and here I am again - just submitted my PNQ answers and just finished reading another book about work and life in the foreign service. This book was broader in its scope, in that interviews were done with likely more than 100 FSOs and FSSes in nearly every position that exists. There are personal "day in the life" journal entries, job and career descriptions, post experiences, and a section that is helpful in explaining the process on how to become an FSO or an FSS.

I've read a lot about the foreign service in the last three years, so the process is more or less painfully clear to me. I used this book as a motivator while studying for the FSOT and while preparing my PNQ answers. I enjoyed reading stories about how US diplomats are working in all corners of the planet and doing things to help people, which might sound naive, but maybe that's what I needed at this time while evaluating my own candidacy and what I want for my future. I'd certainly love to be an FSO one day, and I'd recommend this

book for anyone looking to digest an "FSO Chicken Soup" book while waiting for their test results.

Brian Weisz says

If you're wondering what goes on in a US embassy, this is the book for you. The book details many of the people employed in the Foreign Service, daily life overseas, a day in the life of the various positions, and extraordinary "Tales from the Field". A section near the end details the process of joining the Foreign Service, which will be useful to nearly everyone reading the book.

Adam says

A comprehensive guide to what it is like to work in the foreign service. Very much directed toward those who are thinking about a career in the foreign service, it even has a chapter on the hiring process. Overall, though, a boring read for the casual reader. It was only interesting when it had people's stories from memorable activities in their country or job.

Ashwath says

An absolutely brilliant book. Very good for prospective diplomats of not only the USA but also for other countries. Considering the fact that you don't find a lot of books on diplomacy as a career, this one is a real keeper. The stories involving the day to day lives of diplomats and how they work is really inspiring.

Tiffani Diggs says

A truthful look inside an Embassy.

Ann Marie says

Fantastic for preparing for the Foreign Service Oral Exam! Basically everything you need to know about how embassies work.
