

**DISCUSSION PAPERS IN DIPLOMACY**

*The Transformation of Consular Affairs:  
the United States Experience*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The US consular service dates from the founding of the republic and has always had as its central mission assisting US citizens in difficulty abroad. Two major issues in the twenty-first century are transforming the way consular work is done. The first is the focus on security following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack. The need for improved border security to counter the threat of terrorism has led to more sophisticated visa screening and closer coordination with other government agencies. It has also raised the profile of the Bureau of Consular Affairs within the U.S. Government. The second issue is managing a growing public appetite for immediate information available on the internet. To satisfy these needs, the consular bureau has taken advantage of opportunities the internet offers for expanded outreach and as a result has shifted from a reactive to a proactive approach to the public. The process of developing a solid technological base has been evolutionary. The one constant in adapting technology to the particular needs of consular work is that of rapid change, and the rate of change accelerated in recent years. This paper traces the development of consular automation in the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs and describes current programs in place to meet twenty-first century challenges. Although the focus is on consular developments, similar changes throughout the Department of State have altered the approach to political, economic, management and public diplomacy aspects of its mission. Work methods, especially involving use of the internet, are universally shared. Security and public outreach are central concerns throughout our Embassies. Technology has brought positive change to the entire State Department, and the transformation of consular affairs is an important part of this change.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Donna Hamilton has spent her career in consular affairs. After receiving an MA in International Relations from the University of Wisconsin, she joined the U.S. Foreign Service and served in consular positions in Bogota, Colombia; Mexico City, Mexico; and Thessaloniki, Greece. Other early assignments were as Chief of the Anti-Fraud Division and of the Systems Division in the Office of Visa Services. Later Mrs. Hamilton was Consul General in Lima, Peru and in San Jose, Costa Rica. She served in the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs as Deputy Executive Director, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Visa Services, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in charge of Overseas Citizens Services.

# **THE TRANSFORMATION OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS: THE UNITED STATES EXPERIENCE\***

*Donna Hamilton*

## ***Introduction***

Two current issues are transforming consular affairs in the twenty-first century. The first of these is security. The response to the 9/11 attacks marked a turning point for the consular function in the United States. Visa procedures, passport and visa formats, and handling of crisis situations changed dramatically. Relationships to other agencies, especially to the Department of Homeland Security, were strengthened, with consular leadership assuming a larger policy role in border security.

The second issue is access to information via the internet. Both the quantity of available information and the speed of access to that information are exploding. Rapid access to vast quantities of information has raised expectations of what should be available. People expect immediate answers, especially in a crisis, equal to information available on twenty-four hour cable news channels. Meanwhile, the demand for consular services has grown, foreign travel increased and the Department of State taken on new responsibilities in the areas of international adoption and parental child abduction. Using technology to keep up with expectations in this new environment is a challenge that must be met to satisfy the demands of the traveling public and provide high quality service.

This paper discusses how the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) is meeting this challenge, dealing effectively with the public and addressing security requirements. It begins with a brief review of the history and organization of consular affairs within the Department of State and discusses the relationship between consular and diplomatic functions. It then reviews the application of advanced technology to consular services, both visas and citizens services, and the resulting changes to the consular function. Finally, it looks at how consular services are adopting an active approach to the public, using the internet as a means of outreach. This approach has

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\*) A slightly different version of this paper will be published as a book chapter in: Ana Mar Fernandez and Jan Melissen (eds), *Consular Affairs and the Transformation of Diplomacy* (2010).

changed the relationship to the public from one of response to inquiries and crises to anticipation of needs and active outreach.

### ***Consuls and Diplomats***

Following the first debate between Presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama on September 26, 2008, television reporters interviewed a number of voters. One comment was particularly striking. The person interviewed commented that this debate was about foreign policy, which he didn't understand. He was looking forward to future debates where the candidates would discuss domestic issues.

This view reflects the attitude of many Americans toward diplomacy. Certain high profile foreign policy issues, such as the global economy, conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and terrorism, are at the top of the public agenda, but the ongoing work of diplomats and of foreign policy experts in Washington seldom touches the individual American. International news is hard to get, as many news organizations have closed overseas bureaus and TV networks report only the hottest issues, leaving Americans uninformed of diplomatic activity in most of the world. The domestic constituency for traditional diplomacy, consisting of foreign policy think tanks, international non-governmental organizations, and academia, represents a small slice of American society.

Consular work is different. The consular officer is the face of the Embassy to most Americans traveling or residing abroad and to most foreigners seeking to visit the United States. Information about consular issues as well as visa and passport services is in great demand. During times of crisis abroad, the public turns to consular personnel for information regarding Americans traveling or residing in the affected area. Individuals in highly charged emotional situations abroad, ranging from injury or death of a loved one to the abduction of a child, seek direct help from consular case officers. Since 9/11, visa issues, particularly concerns about balancing security and free travel, are of great public interest. These security concerns have elevated certain aspects of the consular function to the high profile status of some other diplomatic issues, but the core of consular services remains direct contact with individuals at all levels of society both domestically and abroad.

### *A Brief History*

The Department of State was established in 1789, and formed a diplomatic service and a consular service. Consular and diplomatic functions were different, with ministers located in capitals and maintaining diplomatic relations with foreign governments while consuls were located in ports and commercial centers performing specific duties relating to shipping and international commerce. Both ministers and consuls were appointed by the President and initially neither received salaries, limiting appointments to the independently wealthy or, in the case of consuls, to those who could make a living from fees and related commercial activities. Public understanding of diplomatic functions was extremely limited, while the job of the consul was more widely understood, especially among the commercial sector of the population. Diplomatic and consular appointments were similar only in that they were carried out in a foreign environment.

The consular service grew rapidly during the administration of George Washington. During this administration the consular service 'spread itself throughout Europe, the West Indies and North Africa and kept its representation in Asia.'<sup>2</sup> According to the same source, by 1800, there were seventy consular posts, about half of which were staffed by non-Americans. In the same year diplomats were assigned only to Paris, Berlin, The Hague, Lisbon, Madrid and London.

Consular work in this early period required considerable initiative. Fulwar Skipwith, sent as consul to Martinique in 1790, was faced with a difficult situation. The timing of his appointment had him arriving at his new post the year after the fall of the Bastille, just as Martinique was feeling the effects of the political turmoil then gripping France. The new consul was 'more or less dumped on the unfriendly shores of Martinique with no official status because the colonial French governor would not recognize [him] as consul, not having received instructions from the Foreign Ministry in Paris, which was otherwise occupied.'<sup>3</sup>

Another consul whose timing was bad was William Tudor, appointed as consul to Callao, the port of Lima, Peru, after the United States recognized Peruvian independence in 1822. Arriving after a voyage of one hundred and

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2) Charles Stuart Kennedy, *The American Consul: A History of the United States Consular Service, 1776-1914* (Greenwood Press 1990) pp. 19-20.

3) Kennedy (1990), pp. 23-24.

twenty days from Boston, he found that he had gotten there early. The Spanish had still not relinquished control of the port. Rather than wait the eight months it would take to request and receive further instructions, he presented his credentials to the Spanish authorities and then went ahead and did his job while waiting for a reply. He had better luck than the British consul, who put on his British military uniform to greet the independence fighters as they entered Callao. They arrived at dusk and, mistaking the consul for a Spanish officer, shot him. He later died of his wounds.<sup>4</sup>

During the nineteenth century, the United States was generally inward looking as the country expanded and developed. Diplomatic efforts were important, especially for those seeking support for the opposing sides in the Civil War, but the country remained fundamentally isolated from international politics. A quote from President Andrew Jackson's message to Congress on December 8, 1829, expresses the self-sufficiency that permitted this isolation, 'Blessed as our country is with everything which constitutes national strength, she is fully adequate to the maintenance of all her interests...'<sup>5</sup>

Although remaining politically isolated throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the rapid growth of manufacturing and international trade led to a greater need for competent diplomats and consuls. As the nineteenth century came to a close, the United States entered an expansionist period, seeking influence abroad and establishing a larger presence in Asia and Latin America.

During the progressive era, roughly from 1890-1920, the public demanded reform of government, including the elimination of corruption and favoritism in government employment. Although the value of consular representation to American commerce was appreciated, the consular service wasn't seen in a positive light by the general public.

'The original consular service ... had a bad reputation. Historians had little that was good to say about consuls, often representing them as incompetent, corrupt, unregenerate alcoholics, or, at best, political hacks. In the fiction of the period, no consuls were lionized as heroes. The consul, if he appeared at all as a character, was portrayed as a failure figure, an unsympathetic bureaucrat.'<sup>6</sup> The consular service was ripe for reform.

In 1905 Secretary of State Elihu Root and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge joined forces to push a consular reform bill through Congress. The

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4) Kennedy (1990), pp. 55-56.

5) James D Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Volume II* (Project Gutenberg E Book # 10858), p. 1006.

6) Kennedy (1990), Preface viii.

reform was aimed at correcting abuses of the system, including: (1) the partial and inadequate salary basis of the service which 'retained in large measure the preexisting evils of the fee system'; (2) the need for an organization that was more flexible and responsive to the commercial needs of the country; (3) dependence on political appointments rather than on fitness for the job and the fact that tenure in the job depended on political changes in the United States, ignoring the advantages of experience and (4) the lack of inspection of consular offices.

The pressure to reform the service culminated in a consular reform convention in Washington in March 1906, and passage of the Lodge Act, which was signed into law on August 5, 1906. This act put the consular service on a professional footing which has continued to this day. The bill provided that all fees collected for consular services must go to the U.S. Treasury, placing all consular officers on a salaried basis. An executive order from the same year established a board of examiners and implemented a merit system for appointment and promotion within the consular service.

The Consular and Diplomatic Services remained separate until the Rogers Act of 1924, which merged them into the U.S. Foreign Service. This act provided for a merit system for entry into the diplomatic as well as the consular service and for promotion within the service. The fundamental structure of the Foreign Service established by the Rogers Act, combining diplomatic and consular functions in a unified organization, has continued to the present day. This combination has not always been a comfortable fit. An article published shortly after the consolidation stated that 'at last, the U.S. Consulate became something more distinguished than a passport and visa office.'<sup>7</sup>

Despite the view expressed in this statement, the perception of consular work within the foreign affairs community has at times been that it is of a lesser order than diplomacy. Shortly after the passage of the Rogers Act, the commercial responsibilities of the consul were transferred to a separate Foreign Commercial Service.<sup>8</sup> During the twentieth century, the volume of both passport and visa issuance grew, becoming two of the principal functions of the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA), the third being protection of U.S. citizens abroad. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 established the legal basis for the adjudication of visas, and as immigration surged later in the

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7) 'Consuls, Diplomats', *Time Magazine*, Vol. VIII, No. 22, Nov. 29, 1926.

8) The Foreign Commercial Service was established within the State Department in 1927 and in 1980 moved to the Department of Commerce and became the US and the Foreign Commercial Service.

twentieth century, visa screening focused on identifying potential illegal immigrants.

In recent years, CA has become even more involved in domestic affairs, adding responsibilities in the areas of international adoption and international parental child abduction, both of which have large domestic as well as international components. These changes have reinforced the consular function's character as the part of the diplomatic service dealing directly with large numbers of both American citizens and foreign nationals and as the part of the State Department with the greatest involvement in domestic issues.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Current Organization*

The Department of State Foreign Service is made up of approximately 12,018 employees, including officers and specialists<sup>10</sup> serving at 269 posts abroad.<sup>11</sup> Foreign Service officers enter the service through an examination process and receive career appointments after obtaining tenure. Political, as opposed to career, appointments are limited to the Ambassadorial level abroad and Deputy Assistant Secretary and above domestically. Approximately seventy percent of Ambassadorial appointments are from the career service.<sup>12</sup> Foreign Service officers staff overseas posts as well as many positions in the State Department. The Department is also staffed domestically by over 9,000 Civil Service employees serving in both officer and staff positions in all bureaus.

Consular is one of the five basic specializations within the Foreign Service officer corps.<sup>13</sup> The other specializations are political, economic, public diplomacy and management. Officers enter the service having already selected a specialization. The Foreign Service encourages general experience and knowledge among its officers regardless of specialization. All Foreign Service officers serve at least one consular tour<sup>14</sup> at the beginning of their careers, and the normal career path has officers serving in at least two

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9) Emory Richard Johnson, Thurman, William Van Metre, Grover Gerhart Hueber, David Scott Hanchett, *History of Domestic and Foreign Commerce of the United States, Publication No. 215A* (Washington DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1922).

10) 6899 generalists and 5119 specialists as of June 2009.

11) Bureau of Human Resources, Department of State, 'HR Fact Sheet', June 30, 2009.

12) Lee, Matthew, The Associated Press, 'Inside Washington: Political Ambassadors Persist', *The American Academy of Diplomacy*, May 28, 2009.

13) The terms 'Foreign Service Officer (FSO)' and 'Foreign Service generalist' are interchangeable.

14) The requirement to serve a consular tour is unique to that specialization and is due to the large number of entry level consular positions.

different functional specializations during a career. Officers from all specializations are eligible to compete for promotion to the Senior Foreign Service and for senior level interfunctional positions such as Deputy Chief of Mission or Ambassador.

In the contemporary Foreign Service, distinctions between diplomatic and consular functions are somewhat blurred, especially at overseas posts. Consular officers frequently deal with foreign officials, send diplomatic notes, and develop contacts in the local community while officers in other specialties serve as duty officers, handling consular emergencies outside office hours, assist in evacuations during major crises, and answer questions about visas. Ambassadors are fully informed of, and often involved in, critical consular issues at their posts, frequently dealing directly with American citizens and the media in consular cases.

Nevertheless, consular and diplomatic functions remain separate. At a very basic level, only officers with consular titles can legally adjudicate visas, perform notarial services and represent the interests of citizens in foreign courts. These are the traditional 'consular functions.' The State Department staff at embassies and larger consulates are divided into political, economic, consular, public affairs and management sections and officers are specifically assigned to a section. The Consular Bureau is a separate entity within the Department of State and is responsible for consular matters, whereas diplomatic functions are dispersed throughout a number of geographic and functional bureaus.

Since the middle of the last century, as travel to and from the United States surged, CA has assumed responsibility for its internal management and for monitoring consular workload at posts abroad. This includes compiling information to support staffing requests and developing information technology appropriate for large workloads.

Consular work is one of the few 'quantifiable' areas within the State Department. By demonstrating workload growth in terms of both increasing numbers of cases and length of time required for each, CA has been able to obtain additional personnel resources. The General Accounting Office observed that 'In the event of staffing shortfalls, State has mechanisms for requesting additional staff resources. For example, if the Consular Affairs Bureau identifies a need for additional staff in headquarters or overseas, it may request that the Human Resources Bureau establish new positions. In addition, posts can also describe their needs for additional positions through

their consular package—a report submitted annually to the Consular Affairs Bureau that details workload statistics and staffing requirements.’<sup>15</sup>

The workload, especially for visas, grew rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century and many visa sections were crowded with long lines of applicants snaking around the Embassy. Consular sections were often overwhelmed, and the work repetitive and exhausting. But consular work began to change as the application of information technology eliminated manual visa stamping, and rapid communications brought the public into closer contact with the State Department. In the twenty-first century, consular affairs have gained greater prominence, not only because of the recognition that large staffs and workloads require skillful management, but also because of the policy focus on border security.

## ***Technology and Security***

### *Automation Fundamentals*

Three basics—the Consular Lookout and Support System (CLASS), the State Department intranet, the Consular Consolidated Database—are the foundation of current consular technology and provide the building blocks for the further development of technology in consular services. They are an invaluable resource, reflecting an evolutionary process of automation over the past fifteen years. And, fortunately, they were in place to facilitate the response to the security concerns that emerged after 9/11.

The need for greater efficiency and improved security provided the impetus for automation of consular functions. The need to connect Foreign Service posts to a lookout data base in Washington was driven by Cold War security concerns. ‘Lookout books’ containing the names of individuals found to be ineligible for visas<sup>16</sup> eventually evolved into a computerized system known as AVLOS, the Automated Visa Lookout System. Over time the lookout data base was expanded to include not only those who had been found ineligible for a visa but also those suspected of involvement in terrorist

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15) US Government Accountability Office, ‘Border Security: Reassessment of Consular Resource Requirements Could Help Address Visa Delays’, GAO-06-542T, April 4, 2006. This document includes a detailed review of consular resource shortages post 9/11.

16) Visa ineligibilities are defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, the McCarran-Walter Bill, Public Law No. 82-414.

or criminal activities that might lead to an ineligibility, and CA began sharing lookout information with other immigration and law enforcement agencies.

AVLOS was linked to overseas posts using a telex system, adequate for its time, but slow and unreliable. In the late 1980's, CA had obtained high speed access to AVLOS from the largest volume visa issuing posts, giving them faster access to name check data and facilitating the production of the Machine Readable Visa (MRV), which represented a significant improvement in the security of the visa document. In the early 1990's AVLOS was incorporated into the Consular Lookout and Support System (CLASS), a technically more sophisticated system with expanded functionality. The use of high speed lines, development of CLASS, and production of the MRV marked a significant improvement in document quality, efficiency and security. However, bandwidth and new computer systems were expensive and the early 90's were a time of budget austerity throughout the federal government. Despite the obvious advantages of more advanced technology, funding was not available to expand beyond a relatively few large posts.

In response to the budget austerity of the early 90's, a movement began throughout the government, spurred by the Vice President Gore's Reinventing Government initiative, to expand the use of a fee-for-service approach to generate additional funds. Although fees that had traditionally gone to the U.S. Treasury continued to do so (for CA this included fees for passports and immigrant visas), some agencies were authorized to retain new fees. After the World Trade Center Bombing in 1993, Congress authorized additional fee collection by the Department of State as well as a surcharge on visa issuance to upgrade and computerize the visa lookout system.<sup>17</sup>

Two new fees—the Machine Readable Visa (MRV) fee and the Passport Expedite fee—were retained by the Department. The money generated by these fees funded the unclassified communications network that tied all posts and the Department together by the late 1990's. The Machine Readable Visa system, including checks of the visa lookout system using high speed communications lines and printing of a secure visa foil, was implemented at all posts by the end of the century. Consular automation, and the consular function in general, benefited from additional funding and the availability of high speed communications.

The basic unclassified communications network of the Department of State, commonly called the 'intranet', incorporates high speed connections to

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17) Section 104, Public Law No. 103-236, Foreign Relations Authorization Act FY 1994 and FY1995 as amended.

every post and carries unclassified information, including consular and visa data, visa and passport name checks, updated travel information, citizen registration data and e-mail. This communications system feeds the Consular Consolidated Database (CCD), a vast pool of data including consular statistics, registration data of U.S. citizens living and traveling abroad, and records of visa applicants. The CCD is the heart of most consular systems as well as a vital source of management information.

#### *9/11: A Watershed for the Consular Function*

It is impossible to overstate the impact on the United States of the attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon on September 11, 2001. This event focused the attention of the U.S. Government and the American public on the threat of international terrorism. Among the many aspects of security under close scrutiny after the attack, border security was near the top of the list. As the first level of security screening for travelers to the United States, the visa function was the focus of intense interest.

Aspects of the visa process that had traditionally received little or no high level attention suddenly surged in importance: interagency data sharing, accurate identification of travelers, document security, even the visa interview, were closely examined. How could these processes be improved and strengthened to prevent travel to the United States by terrorists and criminals without impeding legitimate travel? One way to do this was to use technology to build a virtual border screen, admitting legitimate travellers while identifying and excluding potential threats.

Better information sharing was the first requirement. During the 1980's and 90's, automation in the U.S. government had followed a predictable course. Each Department and Agency had developed its own systems to serve its own needs. Even among agencies with related missions, such as the Bureau of Consular Affairs and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), automated information was stove-piped and not broadly shared. Although CA, INS and U.S. Customs had shared unclassified lookout information for some time, the development of new approaches to identification was not always closely coordinated.

Sharing information with and between law enforcement and intelligence agencies was even more difficult than sharing with INS and Customs because of concerns over the protection of law enforcement data and the classification of intelligence. Incentives to protect information were more powerful than those to share it. These data sharing issues were a major focus of the 9/11 Commission investigation. The Commission concluded that 'current security

requirements nurture over classification and excessive compartmentalization of information among agencies' and recommended that information procedures 'provide incentives for sharing, to restore a better balance between security and shared knowledge.'<sup>18</sup> The Report also recommended that 'the President should lead the government-wide effort to bring the major national security institutions into the information revolution' and 'coordinate the resolution of the legal, policy and technical issues across agencies to create a "trusted information network".'<sup>19</sup>

Even prior to the publication of the Commission report, Congress had passed a number of bills requiring improved information sharing, screening of visa applicants and inclusion of biometrics in visas. Legislation included the USA Patriot Act of October 26, 2001, the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002 and the Homeland Security Act of 2002. Still later, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 required that all visa applicants, with the exception of diplomats and a limited set of visa renewals, receive personal interviews. Additional name check requirements were imposed to insure a thorough, government-wide review, and training of consular officers was expanded. As a result of this legislation, the number of visa entries in the CLASS system grew to 34.4 million.<sup>20</sup> The Homeland Security Act of 2002 consolidated all the domestic border agencies into one government department and gave the Secretary of Homeland Security policy oversight of the visa function. This change required continuing high level coordination between Homeland Security and CA.

In addition to information sharing among U.S. Government agencies, obtaining the cooperation of foreign government in sharing terrorist screening information, received increased attention after 9/11. On September 16, 2003, the White House directed the Secretary of State to 'develop a proposal. . . for enhancing cooperation with certain foreign governments, beginning with those countries for which the United States has waived visa requirements, to establish appropriate access to terrorism screening information of the

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18) National Commission on Terrorist Attacks on the United States, (Philip Zelikow, Executive Director; Bonnie D. Jenkins, Counsel; Ernest R. May, Senior Advisor), *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004) p. 417.

19) *Ibid*, p. 418.

20) For the week of October 12-18, 2008, the number of CLASS queries was over 600,000, almost evenly divided between visa and passport checks. Source: Office of Consular Systems Development, Office of the Executive Director, Bureau of Consular Affairs.

participating governments.’<sup>21</sup> This responsibility was assigned to a new International Programs Division within CA’s Office of Policy and Public Affairs. This office has the lead for negotiating bilateral agreements on the sharing of terrorist screening information which are implemented for the United States by the Terrorist Screening Centre.

The exchange of data ‘does not replace existing intelligence or information sharing practices. Instead it provides a systematic mechanism for visa, immigration and law enforcement officers to determine if a person is the subject of current identifying data as a known or suspected terrorist.’<sup>22</sup> The agreements provide for the exchange of unclassified identity information about known and suspected terrorists, including full name and data of birth. Aliases, place of birth, passport number, nationality, and biometric identifiers may also be provided if available. To date, agreements have been signed with fifteen countries.

These changes and new requirements had immense repercussions at the policy level in State Department. Consular issues were suddenly of central interest within the Department, in the Department’s relations with other agencies and dealings with Congress. The leadership of the consular bureau became more deeply involved in Congressional relations, received intense press scrutiny and took the lead in coordinating with other agencies on both procedural and policy matters involving border security. The bureau became more outward looking, reaching out to the public to advocate and explain consular procedures and to posts abroad for input on policies. When student visa applications dropped because of perceived delays in obtaining visas, CA’s leadership traveled across the country, visiting campuses and meeting with foreign student NGO’s with the message that foreign students were still welcome. The interagency message was one of ‘secure borders, open doors’, stressing that the United States can welcome foreign visitors and still maintain the level of scrutiny that is essential to our security.

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21) Homeland Security Presidential Directive 6: Directive on Integration and Use of Screening Information to Protect against Terrorism, September 16, 2003. see [http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/laws/editorial\\_0607.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/laws/editorial_0607.shtm)

22) White Paper, HSPD-6, January 28, 2008.

### *Biometrics: A Case Study in Change*

The changes brought about after 9/11 transformed consular work in the field, reflecting the high profile interest in Washington. Visa procedures and technology underwent extensive change, and new legislation imposed new labor intensive requirements. The requirement for biometrics is illustrative of this change.

In the normal course of developing technology, CA had been exploring the use of biometrics, especially finger scans and facial recognition technology for some time. But these approaches, while promising, seemed too labor intensive for worldwide use. The interest in biometrics was driven by the need to identify travelers. Identity fraud had plagued the visa process for years, with altered visas and assumption of false identities, two major sources of the problem. The MRV, which incorporated a photograph, was a step toward solving this problem, but even a photograph was not sufficient to identify those with multiple identities and aliases. In the late 1990's, INS previewed the IDENT system, which, among other things, captured digital images of the index fingers of those who were apprehended by the INS in violation of immigration law. During the same period, CA, in close coordination with INS, developed a new border crossing card for applicants from Mexico. This card included digital index finger scans of all applicants which were compared against the IDENT data base and embedded in the card itself.

The post 9/11 Enhanced Border Security Act of 2002<sup>23</sup> required the inclusion of biometrics on all entry documents. In response, CA expanded the machine readable visa system to include finger scans and digital capture of index finger images. This system was expanded to all posts by 2005. To be completely effective, however, the system needed to be compatible with law enforcement systems that held complete fingerprint records, so CA expanded its system to capture all ten images. Although consular officers anticipated that this change would slow down the application process, surprisingly, it did not, and all posts began using the expanded system in 2007. This new system allows checks against law enforcement data bases, resulting in quick responses and accurate identification of individuals who are ineligible for visa. Not only does this approach inhibit identity fraud, it streamlines the application process for those with common names who had often waited long periods for resolution of questions about their identity.<sup>24</sup>

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23) The Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002, PL 107-703.

24) Although not discussed here, passport security is also a major focus of CA's efforts.

The requirement for personal interviews is driving additional change. Prior to 9/11, the interview was waived for many applicants based primarily on their previous record of travel. The need to interview virtually all applicants has put a strain on posts, particularly on staff and facilities in areas with surging workloads such as Mexico, Brazil, China and India. Space limitations at some posts have led to the implementation of double shifts, with interviews running twelve hours a day. Although staffing in visa sections has increased substantially to handle the additional work<sup>25</sup>, managers are taxed to find ways to meet the legislative requirements with the resources available.

So, what does this mean for the transformation of the consular work? Although visa lines are still long and interviewing is still hard work, security information is now available to facilitate accurate decisions. Travel documents lock in the identity of the bearer. In some ways, these improvements to the visa process, particularly the use of biometrics and expanded data sharing, are evolutionary changes. Arguably, they would have happened eventually even without the post-9/11 legislation. The fact that they happened so rapidly, however, is due to a fundamental change in the perception of visa work not only throughout the government, but also within the diplomatic community. Although visa issuance has always been the first level of review for those seeking to travel to the United States, it has not always been understood as a critical way to identify and intercept those who are security threats.

### ***Consular Affairs and the Information Revolution***

#### *Meeting Public Expectations*

While visa services have changed dramatically due to the imperatives of security, the entire consular function is being altered by another feature of the twenty-first century, the information revolution. While technology is a vital tool in meeting security requirements, it also provides the basis for satisfying the public's information needs and expectations.

A recent New York Times editorial<sup>26</sup> documented a shift in the U.S. public's expectations of government. In a poll conducted by Democratic

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25) According to consular workload statistics reported by posts, officer work hours devoted to nonimmigrant visas increased from approximately 700 thousand in fiscal year 1997 to 1.2 million in fiscal year 2007. The number of applications rose in the same period from 6.5 to 7.7 million.

26) Mark Mellman, 'Another Country', *New York Times* OP-ED, September 17, 2008.

pollster Mark Gellman in 2008, sixty percent of the respondents were most concerned that ‘the federal government will not do enough to help ordinary people with the problems they face.’ This represents a change from previous polls that indicated distrust of government’s ability to help. Although the health care debate of 2009 illustrates that there are limits to the general acceptance of government involvement in new areas of domestic policy, expectations of government’s responsibility to help in situations involving foreign travel have always been and continue to be high. Problems that arise in foreign settings, often involving difficulties with language and unfamiliar laws and customs, create high anxiety and feelings of helplessness. The U.S. consul must be there to help in ways that often go far beyond what is expected of government authorities at home.

The State Department estimates that approximately five million Americans reside overseas and nearly sixty million travel abroad each year.<sup>27</sup> An indicator of the increase in travel abroad is the number of passport applications. This number has grown over the past twenty years from 4.8 million in FY 1987 to 18.3 million in FY 2007. Although these figures are skewed by the implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative<sup>28</sup> in 2007, they confirm that foreign travel has been on the rise.<sup>29</sup> Although the great majority of travelers complete their trips without ever needing to contact a consular officer, more travel inevitably means more inquiries and more requests for consular services at posts abroad.

As opposed to staffing levels for visas, overseas citizen’s services staffing levels at Embassies abroad have not kept pace with the increase in travel and demand for information. Work hours devoted to overseas consular services have remained fairly constant over the past fifteen years.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the numbers of arrests, Americans in detention, and deaths have increased. In addition to assisting Americans traveling and living abroad, CA’s Office of Overseas Citizens Services (OCS) provides services to parents in intercountry adoptions and overseas parental child abductions. OCS also

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27) Estimate of residents provided by CA/OCS; estimate of travelers from Department of State/USAID Strategic Plan, FY 2007/2012.

28) The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative required those entering the US by air from Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean to have a passport. Passport volume increased fifty percent in FY 2007. Passport volume will certainly increase again when the passport requirement for land border crossings goes into effect in 2009.

29) The continued increase of foreign travel is doubtful at this time due to the economic crisis.

30) Staffing and workload statistics use data reported by posts to the Consular Workload Statistics System.

handles inquiries about incidents occurring overseas and organizes task forces in response to large-scale emergencies occurring abroad. In order for consular officers to devote sufficient time to emergencies, sensitive cases requiring personal contact and other non-routine duties, CA has increasingly turned to technology to provide routine information and basic services.

In addition to increased travel, rising expectations are at least partly due to the pervasive use of technology in everyday life. As people turn to the internet and cell phones for information and communications, they expect government offices to be easily accessible using those media. The 2008 Presidential campaign made unprecedented use of information technology, and immediately after the election President-elect Obama's transition team launched a web site as means of direct communication with the public. The definition of government responsiveness has changed to include not only being able to reach a helpful person on the phone, but also to have rapid access to user friendly automated information and assistance on the web. The challenge for CA in its dealings with the public, both the domestic and foreign, is to find the balance between automated information and personal service. Such a balance must take maximum advantage of information technology and develop automated support structures that provide quick, accurate information in emergency situations and facilitate the work of the case officer in Washington and consular officer in the field. As reliance on information technology grows, the availability of information to the public and transparency of consular activity also increase, transforming the nature of consular work.

#### *Taking Advantage of the Internet*

The internet is a primary source of information for the American public, and for certain age groups, it is THE primary information source. The requirement for immediate access to information is one of the primary changes in public expectations since the turn of the century. A recent *New York Times* article<sup>31</sup> discussing new software to speed up boot time for computers, quoted the executive director for marketing of a company making quick-boot software as saying 'it's ridiculous to ask people to wait a couple of minutes'. The article goes on to state 'fast-boot systems cater to an

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31) Matt Richel, Ashlee Vance 'In a New Age of Impatience, Cutting Computer Start Time', *New York Times*, October 26, 2008.

information-addicted society that is agitated by even a moment of downtime.’ Expectations definitely are changing.

CA started early in developing its relationship with the internet. Building on the impetus of Vice President Gore’s Reinventing Government Initiative in 1993, the Bureau of Consular Affairs officially launched its home page, <http://travel.state.gov>, in February 1995. The home page architecture was updated in July 2004 and again in 2006 changing the look and feel of the site, using a content management system to structure the site and each page with a consistent format and branding. Contractors were hired to oversee all technical aspects of the site, its maintenance and security. Contractors provide valuable technical expertise (for example in the areas of graphic design, site architecture, and navigation), and significantly upgrade the page to meet changing expectations. CA directorates provide fresh content, and the CA Public Affairs office oversees the entire site. In addition to the central website, embassies and consulates maintain their own sites. The consular portions of these websites contain specific information about local consular services, public hours and specific local conditions. These websites can be accessed directly or using links from the CA website.<sup>32</sup>

As an indication of the growth in the use of web technology, in FY 1997 the consular affairs website got 9.6 million page views compared to over 321 million page views in FY 2007. [Travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) is viewed over 830,000 times a day.<sup>33</sup> The Web site includes information about all aspects of consular work, both domestic and foreign. As opposed to earlier approaches like recorded telephone information and printed information sheets, the web site encourages contact. The appearance of the site has evolved over time, becoming increasingly attractive, user friendly and easy to navigate. Page changes are rapid. Some recent improvements include tables of contents for country specific information, a country map showing major cities and natural features, and links to the citizens services section of each embassy or consulate website.

In May 2008, CA’s Office of Overseas Citizens Services (OCS) launched a new website called ‘Students Abroad’ ([www.studentsabroad.state.gov](http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov)). The goal of this site is to use a design appealing to young people to offer college students important information about staying safe overseas. Using aggressive publicity, including generating

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32) [Travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) pops up first of non-sponsored links for Google search of ‘travel information’, ‘foreign travel’, ‘US passports’ and ‘US visas’.

33) Information on number of web page views obtained from Office of Public Affairs, Bureau of Consular Affairs.

coverage in the New York Times and the Washington Post, OCS promoted the site with the public as well as with the international education community and student travel organizations, which have welcomed the new site. To date there have been over 300,000 hits on the site.

The Department of State and posts abroad also make use of Twitter, sending travel information and alerts and warden messages to the public as tweets. A number of posts also have Face Book pages and use them to post consular information. For example, the US Embassy in Belmopan, Belize, has a consular Face Book page that includes timely warden messages. The Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica, posted information on its Face Book page seeking assistance in locating a missing American citizen.

While there is nothing new in the idea of providing travel information to the public, what is new is the amount of information available, the ease of access, and speed with which new information is made available. Although the basic consular function remains the same, the execution of this function has been transformed by technology.

Such a balance must take maximum advantage of information technology and develop automated support structures that provide quick, accurate information in emergency.

#### *The Consular Information Program*

The provision of travel information to the public and the security requirement to inform the public of threat information meet in the Consular Information Program (CIP). This program takes maximum advantage of internet technology to keep the public informed of travel conditions on a real time basis. The program has evolved over time from the original 'travel advisory' system, warning travellers about dangerous areas via information sheets and recorded messages, to today's internet based multi-layered information source. The CIP is a three-tiered travel advice program intended not only to inform American citizens of potential threats to their safety abroad but also to provide general information.

The elements of the program are country specific information, which provides basic information to enable travellers to make informed preparations for travel to a particular country; travel alerts, which disseminate information about relatively short-term conditions posing imminent security risks to American citizens; and travel warnings, which recommend that American citizens defer travel to a country because the situation is dangerous or unstable and/or the government's ability to assist Americans is constrained by an embassy drawdown or closure. These elements are supplemented by fact

sheets providing general information relevant to travellers and residents abroad. They include such diverse information as 'Vote Absentee 2008' and 'Hurricane Season 2008'.

Much of the information for the CIP comes from posts abroad. This is especially true of country specific information, which might include unusual entry or exit requirements, and background on medical services and facilities, road safety, areas of instability and crime. This information is available for every country and is updated regularly as well as whenever there is a significant change.

Threat information, most often included in travel alerts and travel warnings, is evaluated by the Department of State based on the specific criteria outlined in the Aviation Security Improvement Act of 1990. This act was passed in response to the 1998 Pan Am 103 tragedy in which a 747 aircraft flying between London and New York was blown up by a terrorist bomb and crashed in Lockerbie, Scotland, killing the 243 passengers and 16 crew members on board as well as 11 people on the ground. The criteria set out in the act were initially focused on the evaluation of security threats to aviation. The Department later adopted them to evaluate all threat information. Information about threats must be specific, credible and non-counterable. The Act also established tenets, generally known as the 'no double standard policy', for disseminating threat information to the American public. The no double standard policy requires the government to inform the public of security information made available to government employees. For example, if a U.S. Embassy abroad restricts travel of its staff for security reasons or goes to authorized departure status, this information must be made public. In situations requiring immediate notification of a threat, a post will coordinate with the Department to issue a Warden Message to Americans registered with the embassy and add that information to post's website.

The security information contained in travel alerts and travel warnings is based on threat information gathered from all sources, including embassies and consulates, the intelligence community, open sources and other governments. Very often, a post will specifically request a travel alert or warning and provide specific language. Regardless of the source of the information, the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security reviews it to determine that the threat is specific, credible and non-counterable. Once they have made that determination, Overseas Citizens Services works with affected posts to develop appropriate language and clears the alert within the Department of State. Then the alert is immediately released to the public via the Internet and through the registration system, both of which allow for after-hours dissemination if necessary.

### *Interactive Services*

The CA web page, like most commercial web sites, also has interactive capabilities, allowing users to easily obtain certain basic services. Both passport and visa applications are available on-line, and passport applications can be traced through a link on the web page. The Internet Based Registration System allows American citizens to register their overseas travel or residence directly on the internet site. This system replaces the cumbersome, and often ignored, procedure of having Americans come to the Embassy to register. The ease of registering on the internet greatly improves the ability to locate travelers in emergency situations. Registration data is collected in a secure system and transmitted to the Consular Consolidated Database, allowing posts, the Department and task forces to access the information as needed, subject to Privacy Act restrictions. Since the registration system went on line in 2004, more than 1.5 million registrations have been recorded.

Registration for the annual Diversity Visa (DV) lottery went totally electronic in 2005. Prior to that time, the Kentucky Consular Center received over fifteen million paper applications each year. It is estimated that the shift from a paper to an electronic process has eliminated 345.69 tons of paper in the first three years and freed up three regulation size basketball courts of additional floor space. Despite fears that this requirement might disadvantage applicants from less developed countries, experience has shown that the relative number of applications from various countries did not change. The electronic filing system also includes ways of identifying duplicate or multiple applications and of confirming the identity of applicants, eliminating opportunities for fraud in the process.

### *Handling Telephone Inquiries*

Another outgrowth of the Reinventing Government initiative was the idea of contracting out those services that did not need to be performed by government employees, saving government employees, in this case consular staff, for that part of the work that is 'governmental', generally meaning work that is sensitive or requires legal adjudication or protection of individual privacy. In the case of consular services, this meant finding ways to divert basic inquiries away from busy consular staff and congested switchboards. The web page is one way of doing this, but although capable of answering large numbers of inquiries, it cannot provide the personal contact that people

want, especially when dealing with emergencies. Americans want to talk to a person and do not want endless dead-end recorded messages.

Advances in communication technology and development of call centers by private industry opened the option of using call centers to the government, especially to areas such as consular affairs that receive huge volumes of calls. Call centers have been especially effective in providing general information and in screening calls to direct those that need to talk to a consular case officer to the appropriate person. They are also useful in scheduling appointments for visa or passport applications and in certain cases collecting data to be entered in consular automated systems.

The Office of Overseas Citizens Services (OCS) has used a call center since October 2001 to answer general inquiries and to forward case-specific and action calls directly to the appropriate officer. Calls to the Lakeland, Florida center are toll free from within the U.S. and Canada, providing the American public free personal access to information and to consular staff as needed. The volume of calls to the center averages 500-600 per day, with the vast majority concerning country-specific travel safety and security questions. During a crisis, call center capacity can be increased to meet the need and can be extended to 24/7 coverage if necessary. For example, during the Southeast Asia tsunami of 2004 the center received 35,000 calls. The London bombings of July 2005 generated 25,000 calls and the Lebanon crisis of 2006 25,000 calls.<sup>34</sup> During a crisis, the CA representatives on a task force provide the call center with current information and monitor call statistics from the call center to increase capacity as needed.

CA has also used call centers since the late 1990's to handle general inquiries overseas. Call centers abroad are used primarily for general inquiries, scheduling visa appointments and collecting data needed to complete visa applications. Use of call centers has evolved from stand alone local centers in the early 90's to larger international centers with multiple functions currently serving the majority of visa applicants abroad. Calls to visa call centers are toll calls. With the increasing quality and sophistication of web-based resources, many applicants prefer the web to the phone, and CA is examining ways to provide no-fee appointments on the web. For overseas posts, directing visa calls to call centers has provided welcome relief to overburdened switchboard operators. For CA as whole, both domestically and overseas, the use of web pages and call centers covers the overwhelming

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34) Statistics on OCS call center volume provided by the Office of Overseas Services, Bureau of Consular Affairs.

majority of inquiries, leaving only the most sensitive and urgent for consular staff.

*Crisis Management: Using All the Tool*

With any major crisis, whether it is domestic or foreign, the American public expects the government to respond quickly, to have accurate information and to help people get out of harm's way. Failure in a crisis, as in the response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, can fatally damage the reputation of an administration. Success is assumed. The ultimate test of the use of technology in consular affairs is in how well all the various aspects come together to assist American citizens in a crisis abroad.

The Department of State organizes for foreign crises through its Operations Center, a twenty-four hour nerve center tracking vital information on developments overseas for the Secretary of State and Department principals. In a crisis, the Operations Center establishes a task force headed by the affected geographic bureau, and, if the crisis involves private American citizens, a second consular task force managed by CA. These task forces operate twenty-four hours a day and are staffed by officers from all involved bureaus. Consular task forces are staffed by volunteers from all parts of CA and work in close coordination with the primary task force and with consular staff at the site.

Crisis management, the overall effort involving a task force, an overseas post or posts and foreign government officials, relies on information technology more intensely than any other aspect of consular work. Automated systems keep track of incoming inquiries and record information to facilitate ongoing communication with callers. Telephonic communication from the site of the crisis to the task force, access to information on people known to be in the disaster area, transmission of current information to the public via the call center and web page, coordination with other agencies, Department offices and foreign governments—all of these are anticipated and planned for in the abstract in advance of any specific crisis.

The Consular Task Force (CTF) automated system provides the basic technological platform for task force operations as well as for obtaining information from the Consular Consolidated Database to support these operations. CTF is an intranet based application that allows both posts and OCS to enter information about, and/or search for American citizens who may be involved in a crisis abroad. The software is designed to be used with political turmoil, armed conflict situations, natural disasters such as earthquakes or hurricanes, plane crashes and other similar situations.

Consular officers at a remote site can access and update CTF via the Open Net Everywhere (ONE) program. Data about registered American citizens from post registration information and from internet based registrations can also be imported into CTF.

Development of CTF in its current state involved a series of attempts and missteps using older technology. As with all consular systems, the application evolved from an initial record-keeping system that sought to organize information about a crisis and those involved as well as about callers and their inquiries. The challenge was developing systems adaptable enough to handle the range of crisis situations, fast enough to be responsive to inquiries and accurate enough to be reliable. Technological advances involving web-based structures available world-wide via the intranet with access to information stored in a commonly accessible database made such a system possible.

#### *Hurricane Response in Mexico: A Case Study*

Hurricane Response in Mexico: A Case Study While technology is key in crisis management at the Washington-end, the closer one gets to the actual crisis site, the more likely it is that automated solutions alone will not work. Recent experience in Mexico provides a case in point.

Hurricane Wilma in October 2005 was the most powerful hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic. It struck the eastern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula, lingered for a period of sixty-three hours, and dropped one and a half times the normal annual rainfall on the region. The hurricane damaged the local power grid, communications network and airports, and flooded highways linking the region to the rest of Mexico. It devastated the major tourist areas of Cancun, Cozumel and the Mayan Riviera. Following the hurricane, 25,000 American citizens were evacuated on commercial airlines within one week and one hundred eighty critical medical cases were evacuated as quickly as possible. Mission Mexico<sup>35</sup> sent teams of officers to the area, fielded over 12,000 phone calls and organized relief for short-supplied hurricane shelters. The success of relief efforts owes a great debt to Mexican government authorities, who had the foresight to evacuate tourists to shelters before the hurricane hit.

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35) In addition to the Embassy, Mission Mexico consists of nine consulates and thirteen consular agencies, covering major tourist sites and areas with large concentrations of foreign residents.

Embassy Mexico and Consulate Merida had anticipated the storm by creating a consular task force in Mexico City, assisting tourists to depart prior to the hurricane hitting, and sending warden messages from the consulate to those known to be in the area. Task force members logged caller information into the Consular Consolidated Database (CCD), using a predecessor to the CTF application, and passed current information on conditions to callers. They also received information from callers about medical cases and shelter conditions in the affected area. Useful as this was, the consular agencies in Cancun and Cozumel did not have access to the CCD, and officers at the site had no means of updating the system. Local telephone service and most cell phone service were unavailable, and roads into the area were flooded. Urgent case information had to be relayed by phone, handheld radio, the Cancun municipal authorities and e-mail as available.

Following Wilma, Mission Mexico identified communications as a crucial element for attention and upgrade. Although it is not possible to know when a natural disaster might occur, in the case of Mexico the likelihood of tropical storms in tourist areas on both the Caribbean and Pacific coasts or of earthquakes in any part of the country, is high. The experience with Wilma clearly demonstrated the need for reliable communications that would not be affected by disruptions in telephone service, such as a VHF radio network and satellite telephones. It illustrated the importance of taking advantage of the most advanced means of communication available as soon as it becomes available, sharing these communication capabilities not only with outlying Consulates but also with consular agents, and of testing communications systems regularly. Some changes have already been implemented. Consular Agencies on the Yucatan Peninsula currently have access to the CCD, for example, and with it, access to the Consular Task Force application. Creating a culture of crisis preparedness, however, requires anticipating further cracks in the communication network, building redundant and overlapping communication systems, training newly arrived staff in the technology and staying informed about new and better communication systems as they are developed.

A related area is the need for team leaders at all levels, and for clear and uniform guidance as the crisis unfolds. Information of all kinds—Mission telephone lists, names and contact information for Mexican authorities, action plans developed with local civil aviation and airport authorities—must be current and easily available to task force members and personnel sent to the disaster area. Coordinating information with the task force in Washington and the OCS call center is also a necessity. While the Mexico experience highlights areas that require attention and that can improve crisis response, it

also shows that technology is not a panacea. Communications may not work at a disaster site and those involved will need to resort to backup approaches. Advance planning, testing of existing systems, easily available basic information and clear lines of authority keep an assistance effort running smoothly during the chaotic early hours and days when communications are down.

### ***Conclusion***

This paper describes the evolution of consular affairs in the United States as security concerns and public expectations have driven a transformation facilitated by technology. Although basic consular functions are the same as they have been since the middle of the twentieth century: adjudicating visas and passports, responding to citizens in trouble, organizing and planning for large scale emergencies, and managing people and facilities, the way these functions are performed has been transformed. Processes and documents are more secure, information flows easily to the public, overseas posts and the Department of State anticipate public needs and plan ahead, and consular leadership has a policy role in interagency discussions. Security needs have driven many of these changes and have provided the rationale for obtaining the added resources they require. Technology underpins a more secure visa process as well as the ability to meet the information needs of the traveling public. The adaptation of new technology to consular work will certainly continue. Use of sophisticated biometrics will enhance border security, new communications approaches and innovative uses of the internet will encourage contact with the public, basic consular support systems for every function will be streamlined and moved to web-based approaches.

Consular programs, and the shift to more proactive approaches, have an important impact on diplomacy. They bolster diplomatic activities abroad in very concrete ways. For example, in 2008 Mission Russia issued visas to approximately 32,000 Russian university students as part of a work/study program. To manage a program of this size, Embassy Moscow adopted new approaches to scheduling interviews, consolidating interviews and focusing only on students interviews on the days they applied. Former Ambassador to Russia William Burns, now Under Secretary for Political Affairs, 'said the program is 'a great means of connecting to the next generation of Russians, opening up their understanding of America and building bridges between our two societies...' Embassy Moscow's consular staff, he said, 'deserves credit

for its initiative and hard work, another reminder of the extraordinarily valuable role consular staffs play in American diplomacy.<sup>36</sup>

The nature of diplomacy is changing due at least in part to the growing importance of contact with the broader public, both domestic and foreign, and to the need to meet public expectations. The consular function, as I discussed above, has adapted naturally to this approach because it has always dealt directly with the general public. Reporting and analysis functions are also bolstered by outreach to contacts in all sectors of society, which not only gives officers insight into local conditions but also enriches local understanding of the United States. While diplomats have always relied on their contacts, the breadth of their public contact is greatly expanded by technology just as consular outreach is. Secretary of State Rice's Transformational Diplomacy initiative, launched in 2006, recognized the importance of enhanced public outreach efforts. Although the initiative did not focus on consular work, it promoted the adoption of those skills used by consular officers every day.

The US Foreign Service has been thoroughly transformed since 1800, when consuls traveled for months to reach posts where they might have trouble finding a government official to accept their credentials or when diplomats were assigned to only a few Western European capitals and sent their dispatches home via sailing ship. In the twenty-first century, the State Department's overseas presence has moved well beyond the traditional diplomatic/consular dichotomy into a much more complex environment where functions overlap. Work methods, especially involving use of the internet to enhance communications, are universally shared. Security concerns require that Embassy sections work together to develop and share information on individuals and groups that could pose a threat. Crisis planning and sharing of after hours' responsibility for emergencies brings all Embassy officers together to focus on helping American citizens. Foreign Service Officers of all specializations are asked to serve in Afghanistan and Iraq, often as provincial team leaders. The nature of diplomacy has changed, and the transformation of consular affairs is an integral part of that change.

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36) Morin, Eric, 'Next Stop: U.S.A.', *State Magazine*, October 2008, pp. 8-9.

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  - 2 Melissen (2005), p. 24.
  - 3 Ingrid d'Hooghe, 'Public Diplomacy in the People's Republic of China', in Jan Melissen (ed), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005) pp. 88-103.
  - 4 D'Hooghe (2005), p. 90.
  - 5 Dominic Kelly, 'Rice, Oil and the Atom: A Study of the Role of Key Material Resources in the Security and Development of Japan', *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2005), pp. 278-327.
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