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Good morning! Ambassador Ron Neumann gave you the 30,000-foot view of our profession, and I'll try to give you a more personal one from the ground about my own experiences. This comes from my 29 years in the Department of State, service in seven different countries, working for six presidents, 11 or 13 Secretaries of States depending on whom you count, and a Secretary of Commerce.

During the 1992 presidential campaign, businessman/candidate Ross Perot said that embassies were a thing of the past: they had gone the way of the sailing ship, and if he were elected he would move to do away with them. Well, how would you communicate with world leaders, someone asked? Perot replied that he would do so by this new invention called email. All communication would be electronic, and there would be no need for embassies. Thankfully for us career diplomats, he was not elected, and I had a job for the next 15 years or so before I retired from government service. But, in fact, Ross Perot was wrong: you can never really know an opponent from afar. The State Department provides a service and a skill that no other agency can, and that is knowledge of foreign countries.

During the Clinton administration, then-Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced that he would undertake a reform of the State Department. Christopher was not the first, nor would he be the last, Secretary of State to attempt to bring change to State – in fact there was an effort to do so under this administration. But Christopher asked some of us – I was drafted to serve in this effort – to take a look from the ground up and to make recommendations

on how to make the State Department more effective. We did a deep dive in trying to understand what was the Department of State's contribution to United States foreign policy? Where was our value added? Was it cooperating with our military or law enforcement? Was it in helping American citizens overseas or issuing visas? Fighting narco-trafficking? All of these tasks are important, but we found that what the State Department does that other agencies can't is to provide expert knowledge of foreign countries. Nobody else can tell you that, if you go to in Buenos Aires or Mexico City and you schedule a meeting, and your interlocutor is 30 minutes late, it's not that he's disrespecting you, and you should not take offense. Rather, it's called "hora Latina," or a common practice in societies which are not as time-driven as our own. Or, if one wants to make a deal in the Middle East, methods and practices that work in the U.S., such as getting to the point and defining the bottom line, will be considered impolite, turn off your counterpart and will not work. No, first you have to ask "How are the children? What a sandstorm we had! And how about them Yankees (or better yet, the World Cup)? After serving overseas in foreign countries for many years, Foreign Service officers know how best to achieve U.S. objectives in a foreign environment.

So, the State Department usually understands what will or will not work overseas. Unfortunately, at times in inter-agency meetings in Washington, State Department officers have developed a reputation of being the naysayers. It falls to the State Department representatives to tell their often enthusiastic colleagues from other agencies why many of their ideas will not work. This leads folks in the National Security Council or the military to at times get frustrated and say that the State Department officers aren't with the program, or are not loyal to the

president. But there have been countless times where the State Department has played a vital role in helping to avoid U.S. foreign policy missteps or embarrassment.

Let me give you just a few instances from my career of how the State Department knowledge of countries can provide key contributions to the U.S. effort. When I was a junior officer in the Dominican Republic, which is a country where we intervened militarily in 1965, the country was having a critical election. The Dominican president, who was pro-U.S., had been reelected three times and everybody assumed he would be reelected again. Before the election, I was given the assignment to go to the eastern part of the country to report on how the campaign was going. Because I was born in Cuba, I had no problem blending into the Dominican Republic: the culture was very similar, and the language was perfectly understood by me. I did a tour of the eastern part of the island talking to mayors, political leaders, businessmen, and others, and wrote a report saying that I thought the opposition was going to emerge triumphant in the next election in the eastern part of the country.

Well, the Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM), or number two, who was a 30-year veteran, read my report and essentially tossed it in the trash can, probably concluding that I was only an inexperienced first tour officer who did not know what I was talking about. Well, the opposition did win the election, and then some folks remembered the guy who wrote that report saying the opposition would win. (I did learn subsequently never to predict anything as a diplomat because no one will remember if you are right, and everyone will blame you if you are wrong.) But, by a diplomat who understood the language and the country going out in the countryside talking to people, and writing a report, you alert Washington to the fact that there

may soon be a new government which might require a new approach. I think that's value added to the Department of State and for U.S. foreign policy.

When I was in Haiti, and this was a case where foreign policy intersects with domestic politics, we had what we called a boat crisis, as many Haitians started taking to the seas in record numbers and landing on Florida's shores. Naturally, Florida authorities were yelling at Washington saying "why can't you stop this," and this exodus, of course, unleashed a number of other players like human rights activists who urged the U.S. to take these people in because they were fleeing a dictatorship where they were being oppressed. In contrast, local officials were urging us to send them back because we simply couldn't take them in. That put the Reagan administration in a big quandary.

After negotiating with the Haitian government, it became clear that Haiti had no interest in preventing the boat people from leaving the island. Haiti was the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, so this mass exodus meant fewer mouths to feed. However, we were able to negotiate an agreement with the Haitian government that allowed the U.S. to return Haitian boat people to Haiti. At that time the U.S. Coast Guard had 17 cutters off Haiti and were ready to intercept migrants at sea. Under the diplomatic agreement signed with the Haitian government, U.S. immigration officials would interview the migrants who were intercepted at sea, find out if any had valid claims for political asylum, and bring the ones who did not back to Haiti. To satisfy human rights advocates, we would send Embassy officers to interview them in their homes in the countryside to make sure they were not being persecuted by the authorities for attempting to flee the country. So, without a diplomatic corps that was willing to look at all

these aspects, to negotiate with this government of Haitian President Jean-Claude Duvalier, president for life, we were able to get to a win-win situation where we could satisfy human rights activists, Florida authorities, and the Haitian government all at once. This is something that you cannot do by gunboat diplomacy alone. You need people who know the country and who know what can be accomplished to get to a win-win for both countries.

I was also deployed to Grenada in 1983 shortly after United States military forces came in to save over 1,000 U.S. medical students during an attempted coup. I was given the task of negotiating with the Cuban diplomats who were still on the island and to help negotiate the return of the hundreds of Cuban construction workers/military reservists who were hiding out at the Russian Embassy and other places. In this case, my having been born in Cuba, and my knowledge of the language, history, and culture of that country, allowed me to establish clear lines of communication that facilitated coming to a solution. I delivered a very clear message to the Cuban authorities to let them know what the United States was prepared to do to ensure their departure from the island. I have to say that it's easy to do diplomacy with the U.S. 82nd airborne behind you. Nevertheless, we worked out a compromise where the Cuban diplomats would agree to leave on U.S. military aircraft after being searched. Although at first they publicly refused to have their diplomats searched by U.S. troops, their options were limited and we both knew it. So, we had to engage in a little bit of guerrilla theater, in that we would bring in trucks to transport them and their luggage, and they would make a speech saying "No, we will never allow anyone to bodily search us." So our trucks would leave, and then return the next day and we would search them.

The knowledge of how to know and deal with what the other party expects, I think, is something that a diplomat who knows a country and knows a language can do quite successfully. I will relate a couple more experiences in my career. When I was the U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua, we had hurricane Mitch, which was the worst disaster in Central American history. It was a hurricane that stayed put rather than moving quickly, as most do. Hurricane Mitch stayed on top of Central America, and there was more rain in a short period of time than there had been in history. The hurricane washed away much of the infrastructure and killed thousands of people, particularly in Honduras and Nicaragua. Faced with this disaster, I requested help for disaster relief in the country. I called General Wilhelm, who was the SOUTHCOM combatant commander, to request his help. Although SOUTHCOM had its hands full with help to other countries, we were able to persuade them to send an army construction team that would come in with U.S. troops to help rebuild schools, roads, and bridges.

This would seem to have been a win-win situation for Nicaragua and the U.S., but Nicaragua has a history of U.S. interventions and some anti-Americanism. The Sandinista opposition in Nicaragua was very anti-American, and was then led by the current president, Daniel Ortega, who is not a friend of the United States. The opposition mounted a propaganda campaign that claimed that the U.S. troops were the same Marines who invaded Nicaragua at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the days of “Chesty” Puller when the Marines were chasing the rebel leader Sandino. Ortega claimed that the Marines were coming back and would bring an AIDS epidemic to the population. He also said our troops were going to map out targets to bomb later. This is the time when the U.S. was engaged in a bombing campaign against Milosevic in Serbia by the Apache helicopters. How could we counter such lies and propaganda?

To counter the opposition's falsehoods, we turned to one of the weapons in our toolkit: something we call public diplomacy. How did we do that? Well, we had to ensure that we destroyed some of the stereotypes in the Nicaraguan population that the Sandinistas were trying to exploit. In order to dispel the notion that we were coming to invade, I negotiated with the military commander to make sure that, when the troops landed in Nicaragua, they would not get off the planes carrying their weapons. Instead, they would be unarmed and their weapons would come in crates. We also did everything possible to promote cooperation between our two militaries. The Nicaraguan army agreed to provide perimeter security for the U.S. troops, which took quite a bit of negotiation. Also, we agreed to have U.S. and Nicaraguan helicopters work side by side delivering relief supplies. And in order to avoid negative incidents – this one may not have been popular with our troops -- there was to be no liquor allowed in the country and our troops would not be allowed to go to local bars.

When the troops arrived, we gave the Nicaraguan press access to the arriving soldiers and marines, and they found that our guys and ladies were people just like them. The press had an image of 6-foot-tall blonde Americans who spoke no Spanish, but they ran into something very different. Our troops included many women and a rainbow of races: many Latinos, African-Americans, Arab-Americans, and whites who spoke Spanish. The reporters would ask “Are you here to invade us?” or “Are you bringing AIDS?” and our troops would respond “No, we’re here to help.” End of story. Ortega was not heard from again, and the troops were universally welcomed. This is where public diplomacy can be effective, and it can only happen when you have the experience and knowledge of the local conditions and language to make it work.

We live in a messy world today. When Ron Neumann and I came into the Foreign Service as young Foreign Service officers, our world was very black and white. You knew who the enemy was: they were the ones who had the missiles pointed at our cities. It wasn't the French, it wasn't the Germans, and it wasn't the Iranians at the time. It was the Russians, the Soviet Union. We lived in a bipolar world. Often foreign policy became a zero-sum game, which I think we probably took a little too far. But, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Francis Fukuyama wrote his famous article, "The end of History" as he saw it. The world changed, and it wasn't the end of one history, but the beginning of another, and this could be called a messier and more complicated world. It is a world where there are not just two superpowers but one major superpower, although maybe with China creeping up behind us we can talk about bipolarity again, and a lot of independent actors. It is a world with less control, where nuclear weapons could be lost or not accounted for, and a world where issues like climate change are pressing.

In recent years, we diplomats have had to become experts on issues like human trafficking, cyber warfare, narco-trafficking, and others. Today's diplomat must know a lot more than we did when we came in to deal with all the threats that come to the United States. In fact, I had to become an entomologist of sorts, an insect expert, a couple of times in my career. One time was when I was the Portugal desk officer, and we had a problem in the Azores, where we had a military base. Near our base, local farmers alerted us that they were facing a plague of Japanese beetles – which had never been found in the islands – which were all over the country. The Portuguese blamed U.S. military flights that came from places where there were Japanese

beetles. While we did not admit that we had brought the beetles, we agreed to help in dealing with the problem. So, we had to negotiate an agreement with the Portuguese to see if we could get rid of the Japanese beetles. I had to learn not only how eradication by spraying worked, but we found it to be too expensive and it may not have solved the problem. The program that we finally agreed on was a “milky spore” program, whereby we would bring in sterile flies or insects that would mate with Japanese beetles and prevent them from reproducing, and then there would be no more Japanese beetles in the Azores. We agreed to pay for the program, and that was a lot less expensive than spraying. So, there are the kinds of issues we must deal with.

Today we must do a better job of explaining to the American public what we do. When many of us go back home after service overseas, sometimes we get asked: “So you work for the State Department? What State? Alabama? Georgia?” Or, “You say you are in the Forest Service?” We have to explain what we do to the American public and why it’s beneficial to the American taxpayer. We live in difficult times for U.S. diplomacy. Many Americans fail to see the benefits of diplomacy and don’t believe it’s important. Some think that a military force is the best way to exert power overseas and get our way. When the administration proposed a pre-emptive cut of 30% to the Department of State, many people say “Well, these people are just wearing striped pants and drinking tea.” I think we need to educate the public. We need to show them images of our embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi when they were bombed, and show those diplomats underneath the rubble trying to save their local employees. Or show them in the jungle looking for lost American citizens. Or tell them that more Foreign Service officers have died in service than generals in combat. These are kinds of things the American public needs to know and we need to do a better job of telling them.

So, in conclusion, diplomacy is of paramount importance, and the United States needs diplomats to carry out its interests overseas. We must do a better job of explaining, and a better job at being adaptable. We must be ready for anything to face future challenges in the messy world we live in. I believe we can do this but we need your support. Thank you.