

**STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR PATRICK KENNEDY,  
UNDER SECRETARY FOR MANAGEMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**BEFORE THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT, MANAGEMENT, THE  
FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL  
AFFAIRS**

**HEARING  
ON**

*Deployed Federal Citizens: Advancing Security and Opportunity Abroad*

**April 14, 2010**

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. I appreciate your ongoing interest in the State Department's efforts to train, prepare, and support our employees serving overseas, particularly in places such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. Dedicated men and women are working around the world, and around the clock, to advance our national interests. These civilians are doing vitally important work under increasingly challenging, difficult and dangerous conditions. The safety, security and welfare of these deployed civilians are a top priority for the State Department, Secretary Clinton, and me.

The State Department's global mission and operations have always required people to live and serve overseas. However, the breadth and depth of world issues continues to grow our mission is expanding. Two-thirds, or 184 of our State Department posts, currently are designated as hardship posts. More than 900 positions are at posts classified as "unaccompanied" or "partially unaccompanied" because of dangerous conditions – an increase from just 200 such positions in 2001. In addition, civilians now serve directly alongside their deployed military service counterparts in numerous locations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Throughout the past eight years, the Department reviewed its previous practices and constantly incorporated lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan to refine our assignment process and programs; augment its training for deployed civilians, provide additional support to family members, and establish a more robust medical support network. We explored alternate models of addressing the expanding foreign policy mission and, with support from Congress, created a Civilian Response Corps in October 2008 that can deploy quickly to support reconstruction and stabilization operations.

While the State Department continues to evaluate and analyze its internal policies and procedures, we also are committed to collaborating with our interagency colleagues. We appreciate the efforts of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in bringing together experts from the Departments of State, Defense (DoD) and, on key issues, Labor to share best practices and jointly begin developing a standard benefit package that would be available to all Federal civilian employees serving in zones of armed conflict.

## **DEPLOYMENT INCENTIVES AND PROGRAMS**

Our missions in Afghanistan and Iraq always have been fully staffed with volunteers. In turn, the Department has focused on ensuring that these volunteers are prepared, trained, compensated and supported before, during and after their assignments. In recognition of the personal risk and hardship to our employees, we have strengthened the compensation and benefit package received when serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

These employees receive a compensation package of incentives and benefits comprised of the following. All receive the maximum hardship differential and danger pay allowance allowed by law, totaling an additional 70% of an employee's basic pay. With the exception of political appointees, Senior Foreign Service, and the Senior Executive Service, employees receive overtime, or a comparable payment, to compensate for the long hours that extend the work week far beyond 40 hours. Employees also are offered several Rest and Recuperation (R&R) trips during their one-year tours and can choose to return to the U.S. or take R&R within the region. We offer administrative leave to facilitate the employee's ability to actually take these R&R trips. And we supported legislation that increased the annual premium pay cap to

equal the Vice President's salary and eliminated the aggregate pay cap for eligible employees serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We also established certain incentives specific to the Foreign Service. For example, Selection Boards are reminded that as they consider those eligible for promotion, they recognize that service at posts, like Iraq and Afghanistan, is done under exceptionally challenging circumstances in fulfillment of our foreign policy priorities. Moreover, support for our employees and their families during and after their assignments is critical. With 18 posts around the world designated by the State Department as "unaccompanied" or "partially unaccompanied" posts, we realized the importance of addressing the challenges invariably faced when families are separated for extended periods. Our Family Liaison Office (FLO) addresses these specific challenges. For example, we have established two positions in that office dedicated solely to working with the families of employees serving on an unaccompanied tour. These professionals provide the families with a single point of contact for information, referrals, emotional support, and assistance through personal consultations, e-mails, newsletters, phone calls, print and online publications, and group briefings. The Department also contracted with MHN (formerly Managed Health Network) to provide 24/7 access to a customized Web portal, telephone hotline, and face-to-face counseling sessions with a clinician for any family members residing outside the Washington, D.C. area. In addition, to address the unique needs of children with deployed parents, we developed individualized, age-appropriate handbooks to help State Department children understand and cope with the stress of having a parent serving on an unaccompanied tour. The Department recognizes the sacrifices of these children and therefore created a special "medal" that is presented to each child along with a certificate of recognition.

### **REQUISITE TRAINING AND MEDICAL SUPPORT FOR WORKING IN THE HIGH STRESS ENVIRONMENTS**

Training is a prerequisite for all employees serving overseas. Through training offered at the Department's National Foreign Affairs Training Center and elsewhere, we ensure that our employees have the cultural awareness and necessary knowledge to perform in all overseas environments. In particular, we emphasize this training requirement for civilians serving in combat zones.

The existing mandatory training for all U.S. government civilians assigned to Afghanistan is extensive. In addition to a one-week mandatory security training course, we provide a one-week Afghanistan Familiarization course for all Federal government civilians from 10 agencies assigned to Afghanistan. All civilians who will work outside Kabul in the provinces, districts, or regional platforms, and those who will support them from our embassy in Kabul, are required to take two additional weeks of training, a field-work focused "Provincial Reconstruction Team Orientation" course for all civilians plus integrated civilian-military field training at the the Department of Defense's Muscatatuck Urban Training Center in Indiana. This integrated civilian-military training ensures that civilians are prepared to work with their military counterparts in Afghanistan from the first day they arrive in-country. And, training waivers are rare.

Civilians serving in combat zones are exposed to stress levels comparable, at times, to those experienced by military personnel. To facilitate the capacity of our employees to recognize and handle the inherent stress of working in these types of environments, all employees assigned to Afghanistan and Iraq attend mandatory pre-departure sessions designed specifically to familiarize them with security issues unique to combat zone assignments, alert them to the causes and the signs of stress-related conditions, and provide them with techniques for managing the stress of being in a combat zone. In addition, they receive information about resources available that can provide needed support and assistance while they are in the field. Following any high stress assignment—including, but not limited to, those in Afghanistan and Iraq — our training operation, supported by the Office of Medical Services, conducts a mandatory "High Stress Outbrief" program intended specifically to assist employees in recognizing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Employees who cannot attend the course in Washington, can arrange to receive this outbrief through our health units at our Embassies abroad. We also offers over an INTRANET links a distance learning course to help those who are managing employees who previously worked at high-stress posts.

Recognizing the need for additional support services, the Office of Medical Services (MED) established a Deployment Stress Management Program (DSMP) with a board-certified psychiatrist serving as the Director supported by two social workers. It provides information, referrals, initial assessment, and brief treatment for all stress-related problems, including PTSD. It also provides resiliency training as an important element of our overall training for all

deploying civilians under the Ambassador's authority. This medical support unit is not working alone. Additional mental health practitioners are assigned to the Health Units in Kabul and Baghdad and supported by our regional psychiatrists in Amman, New Delhi, and Washington, D.C. They are tasked to provide strategies for stress management, PTSD screening, and initial treatment for all personnel under the Ambassador.

Employees who are identified as possibly suffering from stress-related disorders and who require treatment that is not locally available can return to Washington, D.C. for a six- to seven-week program of treatment. The goal of this program is to enable the majority of participants to return to full-duty and so far all five employees treated within the program have returned to work. Employees who incur work-related medical conditions are eligible for a wide variety of benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act, including medical and wage loss benefits. To facilitate continued monitoring, there is a follow-up PTSD screening initiative for Department of State employees who have served in combat zones since 2002 and we are in the process of establishing a personnel tracking mechanism for civilians deployed to Iraq and/or Afghanistan.

## **CIVILIAN RESPONSE CORPS AND OTHER RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION PERSONNEL**

In 2004, the State Department established the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, whose mission is to lead, coordinate and institutionalize U.S. government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict and/or civil strife so they can achieve a sustainable path toward peace and democracy. The State Department leads an interagency effort to significantly improve the ability of the U.S. to respond to conflict and create a civilian counterpart to the military that is ready and capable of assisting countries in transition from conflict and instability. The resulting the Civilian Response Corps (CRC) was authorized under the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008 (title XVI, P.L. 110-417) (RSCMA), in October 2008. The CRC, building on our experience in Iraq, is comprised of Active and Standby members from eight departments and agencies of the federal government, including the State Department and USAID.

Its primary mission is to respond to crises in countries that are failed or failing, not just in combat or war zones. Over 75 CRC members and other personnel from the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization have deployed to Afghanistan at varying times. A number of members also are currently deployed to Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo and have been actively engaged conducting Interagency Conflict Assessment Frameworks in a number of countries, including East Timor, Liberia, Yemen, and Kyrgyzstan.

The statute which authorized the creation of the CRC included language that authorizes many of the same benefits for the Civil Service members of the CRC as are authorized for the Foreign Service.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

We have been working with our colleagues at OPM, DoD and the Department of Labor to develop a legislative proposal that would regularize the benefits available to all Federal civilian employees serving in “zones of armed conflict”, make permanent essential temporary authorities granted in previous legislation, and address the concerns we share with Congress and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) about the well-being of our civilian employees, both during and following service in zones of armed conflict. For example, we are developing proposals to provide permanent authority for a higher premium pay cap and elimination of the aggregate pay limitation so that employees serving in a zone of armed conflict are able to receive enhanced payments under our incentive and benefit package. This authority, critical to maintaining the value of our benefits package, is currently only temporary and must be reauthorized annually. This interagency group also has addressed other concerns as well, including much needed rest and recuperation travel and leave, emergency visitation travel in case of family emergencies while deployed, and home leave and readjustment leave, with the goal of regularizing authorities across the agencies. We look forward to working with Congress to support all federal civilian employees serving in zones of armed conflict.

Our civilian employees and their families deserve comprehensive support before, during, and after their overseas assignments. The need is particularly great for those serving at our most difficult and dangerous posts. We recently remembered Terry Barnich, a colleague who was killed when his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device in Iraq, and also mourned the loss

of Victoria Delong who died in Port-au-Prince during Haiti's catastrophic earthquake. The Department is committed to providing benefits and programs that support our employees and their families as they serve our nation around the globe.