

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, DIPLOMATIC SECURITY SERVICE,
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: DOES IT WARRANT CHANGE?

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General Studies

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, DIPLOMATIC SECURITY SERVICE, CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: DOES IT WARRANT CHANGE?, by George A. Semertsidis, 59 pages.

The United States (U.S.) Department of State's (DOS) Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) is tasked with ensuring the safety and security of all U.S. diplomatic missions around the world. Domestically, DSS Special Agents investigate Passport and Visa fraud, as well as protect visiting foreign dignitaries. DSS today faces the unprecedented challenge of staffing a large number of Special Agents in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan (AIP) in order to maintain the security needs for U.S. personnel working in those locations. As an incentive to serve in these less desirable locations, DSS Special Agents serving in AIP are given priority for their follow-on assignment. It is becoming increasingly difficult for a DSS Special Agent serving domestically to obtain an overseas assignment, which is a requirement for promotion under the current DSS career development program. This thesis addresses the question, "what changes are needed to the current DSS career development program?" Utilizing open-source data from the DOS, as well as past Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports, it was determined that the current DSS assignment process is not sustainable; thus a change in the DSS career development program is necessary. This will require a change of culture within DOS. Suggestions are made based on the Kotter Model for how to best make the needed changes.

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ACRONYMS

AIP	Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan
DOS	Department of State
DSS	Diplomatic Security Service
GAO	Government Accountability Office
QDDR	Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review
U.S.	United States

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We have begun to address these extraordinary security challenges in many parts of the world and are undertaking expanded efforts, despite the heightened risks, through enhanced mitigation efforts. From Southern Sudan to Yemen to Iraq and Afghanistan we are developing additional measures to balance the objectives of our mission with the risks inherent in high-threat-level countries. We will build on the lessons learned in frontline states by establishing a new global standard for risk management, recognizing that in order for State and USAID to fulfill our missions today, a greater level of mitigated risk, commensurate with the expected benefits, must be acceptable.

— Department of State, QSSR

The United States (U.S.) Department of State's (DOS) Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) is tasked with ensuring the safety and security of all U.S. diplomatic missions around the world. In order to effectively accomplish this mission, each DSS Special Agent, who is charged with executing the safety and security standards must be extremely focused and committed to ensure no harm comes to any U.S. missions or personnel they are tasked to protect. Thus, any problems with the organization's morale could undermine security as "low morale can effect a Special Agent's work production" (C. Stewart n.d.). One issue that has directly impacted the morale of the DSS is the opportunity for fair and equitable career advancement. This study examines the current DSS career development program, as well as current assignment policies, in order to see if changes are necessary to improve the organizational morale, and thus improve work performance, of the DSS.

Present State

The U.S. DOS has had a heavy presence in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan (AIP) since the onset of U.S. military operations in 2001 and 2003 respectively. This was a result of the U.S. whole-of-government approach which is “an approach that integrates the collaborative efforts of the departments and agencies of the United States Government to achieve unity of effort toward a shared goal” (U.S. Army 2008, 1-4). The work of DOS and U.S. Agency for International Development employees is imperative to the development of both Afghanistan and Iraq, and as such requires an inordinate amount of staff to accomplish its mission goals. In Iraq alone, and as of December 2011, there are approximately 11,000 U.S. civilian employees working in some capacity throughout the country (S. Stewart 2011). As one might surmise, the safety and security of all of these individuals is of utmost importance, and the responsibility of protecting those working at the U.S. missions, not only in Iraq and Afghanistan but throughout the world, falls on the U.S. Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Service.

The DSS is the law enforcement arm of the U.S. Department of State. Domestically, DSS Special Agents investigate Passport and Visa fraud, as well as protect visiting foreign dignitaries. Overseas, DSS Special Agents serve in virtually every U.S. mission as the Regional Security Officer. The Regional Security Officer acts as the law enforcement attaché and is charged with protecting U.S. mission employees, facilities, and information.

As DSS Special Agents are expected to serve at U. S. Embassies and Consulates all over the world, it is only natural for some assignments to be more sought after than others. For example, an assignment in Paris, France would usually draw more requests, or

bids, than an assignment in a location with a harsher quality of life compared with what we have come to expect in the U.S. Examples of such “hardship” assignments would include Baghdad, Kabul, and Ndjamen, Chad to name just a few.

Since the recent departure of U.S. troops from Iraq, and with the deteriorating relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan, it will be assumed that the security needs for the U.S. diplomatic missions at those locations, as well as those in Afghanistan will remain relatively high for years to come. Since the onset of U.S. military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the number of DSS Special Agents needed at U. S. Embassies and Consulates in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan has risen from a handful to well over 100. In order to meet the demand, Special Agents who chose to serve in those countries are rewarded with financial incentives, such as no salary caps on the overtime they earn, and priority with regards to their future onward assignments. However, as the number of Special Agents in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan has grown, the number of positions in other parts of the world has remained relatively stable. Thus, Special Agents in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are finding a situation in which they are competing with others in similar status for a small pool of desirable locations.

Along with AIP, there are other countries with hardship or critical need classifications. These classifications are based on a myriad of factors to include crime, availability of goods and services, and availability of adequate health care. Special Agents who serve in these assignments, such as Ndjamen, are not given financial incentives or onward assignment priority for their service. Thus, it is possible that the morale of a Special Agent serving in Ndjamen may be affected by the special status given to AIP bidders. Also, as the number of Special Agents in AIP has grown, so has the

demand for those Special Agents to remain overseas. Thus, DSS Special Agents in AIP now find themselves bidding on onward assignments to hardship posts and making the opportunity that much more difficult for a Special Agent serving domestically to obtain an overseas assignment.

The Problem

As previously mentioned, the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, must staff missions across the U.S. and overseas. The number of Special Agents and the number of positions are about equal, but the value of those positions to career advancement is quite unequal. Historically, promotions have come faster to Special Agents who have served a significant amount of their careers overseas. Domestic assignments count for far less, even when the level of responsibility and difficulty is higher.

In the May 2006 issue of *Foreign Service Journal*, J. Christian Kennedy, a Senior Foreign Service Officer and a senior advisor for the State Department's Career Development Program for Specialists, stated that the career development program "requires a commitment to service in hardship posts" (Kennedy 2006, 33). The Bureau of Diplomatic Security today faces the unprecedented challenge of staffing a large number of Special Agents in AIP in order to maintain the security needs for U.S. personnel working in those locations. As these hardship locations are not the most desirable, special incentives are offered as a benefit for those who serve in AIP. These incentives take the form of both financial rewards and preferential assignments following AIP service. While the number of Special Agents assigned to AIP has risen exponentially since the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the number of Special Agent assignments to all other overseas

diplomatic missions has remained relatively stable. Thus, the gap between the number of AIP positions and the number at all other overseas diplomatic missions has significantly narrowed. Consequently, it is increasingly difficult for a Special Agent to obtain an overseas assignment without having first served in AIP. The fact that a Special Agent may be unable to serve in AIP for any number of legitimate reasons is not taken into consideration by assignment panels or promotion boards, nor is the importance of the work DSS has to do within the U.S. The result is that a large number of Special Agents are spending more time in domestic assignments and are suffering a possible delay in their career advancement. Special Agent morale suffers, along with retention of experienced mid-level agents who are needed to staff domestic assignments.

Research Question

The DSS Special Agents who are assigned to AIP do outstanding work in less than ideal conditions, and the need to reward those who serve there does exist. However, the current assignment process does not take into consideration the best possible candidate for open positions. Thus, Special Agents who are proficient in a particular language or have past experience with a particular culture may not be considered for an assignment until all those with priority, Special Agents serving in AIP for example, have received their onward assignments.

The problem therein is not solely with the priority assignments granted to Special Agents serving in AIP, but with the career development program itself. The DOS judges the operational effectiveness of a Special Agent by how many overseas tours a Special Agent serves. By judging operational effectiveness on this merit, a perception may develop that the DOS dismisses the tremendous work accomplished by Special Agents

serving in domestic assignments. Combined with the difficulty a Special Agent finds in obtaining an overseas assignment, based on the priority granted to AIP bidders, the question becomes “has the time arrived to re-evaluate Diplomatic Security’s career development program?”

The primary thesis research question this study attempts to answer is this; “what changes are needed to the current DOS Diplomatic Security Service’s career development program?” Answering the primary thesis research question will enable DOS leadership to ensure each Special Agent has a fair and equitable chance for career advancement, while simultaneously filling all hardship positions, to include AIP, and maintaining high morale throughout the workforce. In order to best answer the primary thesis research question the following secondary questions must be answered:

1. What is the total number of DSS Special Agents?
2. How many DSS Special Agents are assigned overseas?
3. How many DSS Special Agents are assigned domestically?
4. What pay grades are most represented among the work force?
5. How many overseas assignments are available for each pay grade?
6. Is the current AIP priority assignment process sustainable?

The purpose of this study is to identify how the U.S. Department of State should address the problems in the current Diplomatic Security career development program, as well as fill the need for DSS Special Agents in AIP assignments in the most effective way. In other words, will the DOS be able to maintain an incentive policy, such as priority assignments, without harming the long-term career progression of a substantial

number of Special Agents, thereby making the program unsustainable over the long term?

Significance of the Study

The U.S Department of State finds itself at a crossroads. How will DOS continue to staff positions in AIP if prospective employees are no longer offered incentives for those dangerous assignments? This study attempts to discover whether DOS can find alternatives or more effective ways to staff these positions in order to make career advancement equitable for all Special Agents. A 2009 Government Accountability Office (GAO) study found that the DSS often relies on short-term solutions for long-term problems, and that DSS does “not benefit from adequate strategic guidance” (GAO 2009, 35). This study attempts to provide a long-term solution to possible issues for future staffing. This study also offers an initial look into whether changes must occur in the current Diplomatic Security career development program as it is these changes that may be the solution to the current ongoing problem within DSS.

This study also attempts to separate the realities of the current situation from the perceptions held presently by DSS Special Agents. A common perception is that one must serve overseas in order to be promoted, and the sooner one serves overseas, the sooner one will be promoted. This perception also holds true, that no matter how great a Special Agent’s performance is in their domestic assignment, a Special Agent serving overseas will always be promoted before the domestic agent, regardless of the performance of the Special Agent serving overseas. Tied into this perception is the belief that a Special Agent serving in a non-supervisory role overseas will be promoted ahead of a Special Agent serving in a supervisory role domestically. This study will attempt, in its

quantitative research, to determine whether the perceptions are accurate or just rumors among the workforce.

Assumptions

The author assumes that the security needs for the U.S. diplomatic missions in AIP will remain high for many years to come. Thus, the number of DSS Special Agents needed to staff those missions will remain at current levels, or higher, for the foreseeable future. Additionally, the author assumes that the incentives in place to facilitate staffing at those missions, such as financial rewards and preferred onward assignments, will continue.

Limitations

This study limits itself specifically to DSS Special Agents, and whether the present priority granted to Special Agents in AIP for onward assignments should necessitate a change in the current Diplomatic Security career development program. As such, this study focuses on the number of Special Agents with preferred assignments combined with the total number of overseas assignments available to them and the rest of the workforce. As literature on this subject is limited, this study will utilize data from U.S. government sources to include the DOS and the GAO.

Delimitations

DSS relies heavily on private contract security support in order to fulfill their mission goals. For example, the number of private security contractors in Iraq numbers approximately 5,000 (S. Stewart 2011). A large number of DSS Special Agents assigned

to Iraq are there to oversee the work done by private security contractors; however, this study will not examine the specific work that private contractors provide for the DOS.

Summary

Chapter 1 has identified the DSS's potential long-term problems, created by not selecting the best candidates for a particular assignment, but rather giving priority for an assignment solely based on the candidate's last assignment in AIP. The question is whether this dilemma has affected the current career development program and, if so, what changes must be made to address the problem. This chapter has also identified the significance of this study, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations with the hopes that a clear answer to the research question will emerge.

Chapter 2 examines relevant literature related to the topic, specifically governmental publications, professional journals, and other open-source reporting dealing with staffing hardship assignments within U.S. government agencies. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology used for this study and examines the process for evaluating potential solutions to the research question. Quantitative research seeks to find numerical descriptions, relationships, or changes in order to find a numerical answer to the proposed question; thus, chapter 4 explains the answers found through analysis of quantitative research. Finally, chapter 5 concludes with the impact of the answers on U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service assignments.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature discusses the relevant written materials related to the research question as detailed in chapter 1. That is, how can the U.S. Department of State adequately allow a Special Agent to fulfill the current career development program requirements, and fill the need for DSS Special Agents in AIP assignments in the most effective way? In truth, there has been little written about DSS assignment patterns and the potential long-term problems that may arise due to the incentives offered to those serving in AIP. However, there has been a fair amount written about the increased role of DOS and the potential problems faced with the expanding DOS workforce in AIP. This chapter focuses on the works most relevant to the topic and they are discussed in the following sections: government publications, professional journals, and public sources.

Government Publications

The first literature review is an assessment of the current Diplomatic Security career development program playbook. The playbook was written by the DOS and last updated in 2006. It lays out the “four principles that each member of the Foreign Service must develop and demonstrate over the course of his or her career, from entry through tenure and up to consideration for promotion to the pinnacle of his or her skill group” (DOS 2006, 7). The four principles are as follows: operational effectiveness, leadership and management effectiveness, sustained professional technical and language proficiency, and responsiveness to service needs (DOS 2006, 7). The playbook further breaks down the principles into six mandatory requirements. It should be noted that these

requirements are for the entire course of one's career and not for each Pay Grade level.

The requirements are as follows (DOS 2006, 7-8):

1. Two tours or four years overseas, one of these tours in a designated Regional Security Officer position, and in addition to overseas service, one tour at DSS headquarters.
2. Participation in the DSS physical fitness program.
3. Management training required at each Pay Grade.
4. Complete DSS Special Agent in-service and Regional Security Officer in-service training, after tenure.
5. One foreign language proficiency at the 2-2 level, as tested by the Foreign Service Institute.
6. After tenure, service at a hardship differential-danger pay post.

This study focuses on the first requirement and attempts to answer the question as to whether this requirement needs to be altered to accommodate the large number of Special Agents serving in AIP who receive preference for their onward assignments. Are Special Agents unable to fulfill their career development requirements because they are unable to get assigned overseas in a timely manner? This study develops an answer to that question; however, let us first examine the strategic guidance that put DSS in this current condition.

As a component of the U.S.' national security strategy, the President's *National Security Strategy* report sets the strategic direction and plan to meet the long-term objectives for the U.S. President Barack Obama, in his May 2010 *National Security Strategy* report, sets the tone for the DOS's strategy by stating "our diplomacy and

development capabilities must help prevent conflict, spur economic growth, strengthen weak and failing states, lift people out of poverty, combat climate change and epidemic disease, and strengthen institutions of democratic governance” (United States President 2010, 11). This statement underscores the importance of the DOS’s involvement with the President’s strategic objective and why the DOS’s heavy presence is needed in war torn countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

The *National Security Strategy* also directly outlines the DSS’s involvement in accomplishing the strategic mission by stating that “our intelligence and law enforcement agencies must cooperate effectively with foreign governments to anticipate events, respond to crises, and provide safety and security” (United States President 2010, 11). As the law enforcement arm of the DOS, the DSS must meet these objectives by providing sufficient personnel to protect the large number of U.S. mission employees around the world. With approximately 11,000 people working for the U.S. mission in Iraq alone, one can see why the number of Special Agents needed to accomplish these security goals has risen to the present day numbers.

The Department of State’s *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (QDDR), published in December 2010, “provides a blueprint for elevating American “civilian power” to better advance our national interests and to be a better partner to the U.S. military” (DOS 2010b). The QDDR specifically assigns Diplomatic Security with the following tasks:

1. Diplomatic Security Regional Directors, who oversee Regional Security Offices in all missions assigned to their respective region of the world, work closely with those at the DOS “responsible for developing and implementing policy” (DOS 2010b,

72) in order to provide the necessary security measures to accomplish the mission's goals. Thus, when the DOS increases the numbers of personnel needed to implement their policy in a particular country, Iraq for example, the Diplomatic Security Regional Directors must ensure the numbers of Diplomatic Security personnel in that particular country also increase.

2. "Diplomatic Security and Department of State civilian responders must work together to manage and mitigate risk in dangerous environments such as Iraq and Afghanistan" (DOS 2010b, 141). Again, an increase in the number of civilian responders would also necessitate an increase in security personnel needed to keep those responders as safe as possible.

3. Finally, the QDDR specifically addresses Diplomatic Security's need "for more effective oversight over its private security contractors" (DOS 2010b, 183). In order to provide the necessary security to ensure the safety of mission personnel, the DSS relies heavily on private security contractors. In Iraq alone, there are approximately 5,000 private security contractors working for the DOS. Thus, there exists a need for a large number of DSS Special Agents to oversee such an enormous private contractor contingent.

The *National Security Strategy* and *QDDR* outline the role of DSS with regard to U.S. diplomacy. The question remains as to how DSS accomplished its objectives in the past. In November 2009, the U.S. Government Accountability Office published GAO-10-156, *Diplomatic Security's Recent Growth Warrants Strategic Review*. This GAO study examined and analyzed the DSS from 1998 through 2008 and published the following recommendations for DSS to address:

1. “Operating with adequate staff” (GAO 2009, a).
2. “Securing facilities that do not meet security standards” (GAO 2009, a).
3. “Staffing foreign missions with officials who have appropriate language skills” (GAO 2009, a).
4. “Operating programs with experienced staff” (GAO 2009, 1).
5. “Balancing security with State’s diplomatic mission” (GAO 2009, 1).

This report is relevant to this thesis as it specifically addresses the potential long-term problems associated with assigning Special Agents based solely on their most recent service in AIP. GAO-10-156, *Diplomatic Security’s Recent Growth Warrants Strategic Review*, conducted an exhaustive study of DSS and it is this study from which a large portion of the analysis of this thesis is drawn. GAO-10-156, offers the following conclusion:

Diplomatic Security faces human capital challenges, such as inexperienced staff and foreign language proficiency shortfalls. The implications of this growth-in conjunction with the potential for increased challenges in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other hostile environments as well as the management challenges listed above- have not been strategically reviewed by the department. (GAO 2009, 38)

GAO-10-156, is examined more closely in chapters 3 and 4, as is the testimony of the Director for International Affairs and Trade, Jess T. Ford.

GAO-02-659T, *Overseas Presence, Observations on a Rightsizing Framework*, is a U.S. Government Accountability Office report, dated 1 May 2002, and consists of testimony from Jess T. Ford, Director for International Affairs and Trade, before a U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee. The testimony centers on U.S. Embassies overseas and their need for adequate staffing. Director Ford’s testimony uses the U.S. Embassy in Paris, France as a reference point; however, the testimony does draw on

historical trends, to include security incidents and staffing issues, with other U.S. missions around the world. In summary, Director Ford testified to the difficulty the DOS faces when trying to add positions overseas and the simple solution of adding more overseas positions to alleviate the current problem is not an available option.

Professional Journals

The *Foreign Service Journal*, published by the American Foreign Service Association, is a monthly professional journal. There have been several articles over the last few years that focused directly on career development for Diplomatic Security employees, as well as articles on staffing AIP positions.

The May 2006 edition of the *Foreign Service Journal* centered on Foreign Service Specialists, which include Special Agents of the DSS. The articles in the May 2006 journal all had a central theme which was, in order to be considered for career advancement, or promotion, a Foreign Service Specialist needed to serve overseas, and needed to serve in at least one overseas assignment that was considered a hardship. The articles did not address Diplomatic Security's domestic mandate and how that may affect one's career development. The domestic mandate for DSS includes statutory authority to investigate Passport and Visa fraud, as well as the protection of designated foreign dignitaries visiting the U.S. The articles also failed to address the lack of overseas positions that may prevent a Special Agent from obtaining the overseas experience needed to advance one's career.

The *Foreign Service Journal*, March 2006, discussed the impact of Iraq assignments on the Foreign Service. The articles, though focusing more on the Foreign Service Generalist as opposed to a Foreign Service Specialist, all dealt with the issues

employees faced when deciding to serve in Iraq and whether there would be staffing shortages in the future. J. Anthony Holmes, the President of American Foreign Service Association at the time the March 2006 edition of the *Foreign Service Journal* was published, summed up the feelings of employees serving in Iraq by stating “no compromises are acceptable when it comes to their security and career rewards must be transparent and based on quality of service, not just showing up” (Holmes 2006, 5). This thesis has the benefit of hindsight, and thus can state that there has not been any shortage of applicants for positions in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Pakistan. The financial and preferred assignment incentives were implemented to avoid future staffing shortages, and this study examines whether it may now be time to eliminate incentives with regards to staffing those positions. However, the March 2006 issue does lay the foundation for this study as it provided a basis as to the general feeling of employees within the DOS with regards to serving in war zones. For instance, a 2007 American Foreign Service Association survey of DOS Foreign Service personnel showed that the leading reasons one chose to serve in Iraq (68 percent of those surveyed) were extra pay and benefits (Johnson 2009, 3).

Public Sources

The amount of literature that focused directly on the topic of this study was scarce. There were several publications used for historical knowledge, but which would not be a part of the methodology or analysis of this study.

The book written by Jeremy Scahill in 2007 titled, *Blackwater, The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, provided a historical account of incidents in Iraq involving private security contractors working for the DOS. It was based on these incidents, to include the killing of Iraqi civilians, which led the QDDR to specifically task

DSS for more contractor oversight. The end result was that more Special Agents were needed to oversee the thousands of private contractors in AIP, which directly led to the drastic increases in AIP positions.

In 2002, Samuel Katz wrote a book titled *Relentless Pursuit, The DSS and the Manhunt For the Al-Qaeda Terrorists*. This book provides the reader an account on what DSS Special Agents actually do, to include training. The book also provides a look at the importance of DSSs' domestic operations, and the role these agents play in the War on Terror, as stated in the following excerpt:

The DSS has been the lead investigative agency in hundreds of organized crime prosecutions of narcotics smugglers, child pornographers, illegal alien and white slavery rings, and espionage agents. DSS special agents have been involved in wild shootouts overseas involving assassins, psychos, coups, and revolutions; they have pulled out bodies of their comrades in embassies that have collapsed in the destructive wake of a suicide bomber. They've debriefed hostages released in the Middle East, and they've protected Princess Diana in the United States. They are America's cops overseas and, according to one supervisor in the New York City Police Department's Emergency Service Unit, "the best kept secret in American law enforcement. The work is incredibly diverse and demanding. (Katz 2002, 13-14).

Though *Relentless Pursuit* . . . does not provide any specific assignment or promotion data for use in the subsequent chapters of this study, it does provide a good foundation for the reader on DSS operations.

Chapter Conclusion

The literature review in this chapter showed that a substantial number of DSS Special Agents are needed to serve in AIP. The strategic objectives of both the President's *National Security Strategy* and the Department of State's *QDDR* both specifically address the security concerns faced by U.S. diplomats overseas. The 2009 GAO report does study DSS and addresses DSS shortfalls; however, that particular study

does not focus on the potential problems faced by giving an ever-growing number of Special Agents priority in onward assignments. Thus, this thesis provides a needed addition to this particular field and provides an answer as to whether a more effective way exists in staffing DSS Special Agent positions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the primary thesis research question as to what changes may be necessary to the career development program for the DSS Special Agent, a proper study and analysis must be conducted in order to see if disproportionate anomalies exist in the current career development plan. In addition to the primary thesis research question, the following secondary questions need to be answered:

1. What is the total number of DSS Special Agents?
2. How many DSS Special Agents are assigned overseas?
3. How many DSS Special Agents are assigned domestically?
4. What Pay Grades are most represented among the work force?
5. How many overseas assignments are available for each Pay Grade?
6. Is the current AIP priority assignment process sustainable?

This chapter delves into the process as to how the author looked for the answer to the aforementioned thesis questions.

Qualitative v. Quantitative

The best way for answering the primary thesis question and offering a viable solution to the existing problem is to find the proper research method. There are two basic types of accepted research, qualitative research and quantitative research.

Qualitative research seeks the nature, or qualities, of what is being studied. In other words, qualitative research seeks to find the what, how, and why and identify those

important factors that will assist in generating theories or possible answers to the problem.

Quantitative research seeks to find numerical descriptions, relationships, or changes in order to find a numerical answer to the proposed question. For example, quantitative research looks to answer questions such as how many, what percentage, or how widespread.

The author conducted a quantitative research study in order to answer the question as to what changes need to be made to the DSS Special Agent's career development program. The reason for this choice of study is to see if any numerical anomalies exist that would warrant such changes. A qualitative study would focus on possible theories as to why the problem exists and would not necessarily lend itself to finding a viable solution. Also, qualitative studies can be influenced by biases of the study author. As a DSS Special Agent, the author prefers to avoid offering any alternatives to the current career development program based solely on qualitative research, as any theories could undoubtedly be biased towards solutions that would best benefit the author's own career development and enhancement.

What Will Be Studied

To best answer the thesis question as to what changes are necessary in the current DSS career development plan, the following questions must be addressed:

1. What is the total number of DSS Special Agents?
2. How many DSS Special Agents are assigned overseas?
3. How many DSS Special Agents are assigned domestically?
4. What Pay Grades are most represented among the work force?

5. How many overseas assignments are available for each Pay Grade?

By answering the above questions, progress can be made to ascertain whether any anomalies and disproportions exist that would necessitate a change in the current career development program. The answers to the aforementioned questions in this section must be clear and succinct and must preclude any semblance of bias.

Data Collection

As the research study for this thesis will be quantitative in nature, the author utilized several sources to obtain pertinent data. First, the author used open-source data found with the Department of State's Human Resource Office. The information obtained from this particular source includes statistics that relate to the number of employees, as well as the number of employees at each pay grade. Additionally, the Human Resource Office offers the most recent statistics on promotions within the DSS, and these statistics will be utilized during the analytical phase of this study.

The 2009 study conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, entitled GAO-10-156, *Diplomatic Security's Recent Growth Warrants Strategic Review*, consisted of the following related to the DSS over a 10 year period:

1. "How Diplomatic Security's mission has evolved since the embassy attacks in 1998" (GAO 2009, 40).
2. "The change in human and financial resources for Diplomatic Security over the last 10 years" (GAO 2009, 40).
3. "The challenges Diplomatic Security faces in conducting its missions" (GAO 2009, 40).

This author will use the data found in this study, which looked at the years 1998 through 2008, and will conduct a meta-analysis of the GAO study in order to illustrate the tremendous growth of DSS over those particular years, and how that growth has affected the current career development program for Special Agents. Meta-analysis is defined as “a development of systematic reviews of randomized, controlled studies in a particular field” (Marcovitch 2006, 454). In other words, the data and statistics already collected in GAO-10-156, *Diplomatic Security’s Recent Growth Warrants Strategic Review*, will be applicable to this thesis study. Meta-analysis will eliminate any bias that can occur by interpreting the statistics as they were in GAO-10-156.

Finally, the author will utilize open-source data obtained from the Department of State’s Office of Career Development and Assignments which shows the number of overseas assignments available to DSS Special Agents. By combining the Department of State Human Resource and Career Development and Assignments statistics, as well as the statistics found in GAO-10-156, an analysis can be drawn to answer the thesis question, “what changes are needed to the current Diplomatic Security Service’s career development program?”

Chapter Conclusion

The research methodology that is utilized in this study is quantitative in nature and consists of open-source data found within the Department of State’s Bureau of Human Resources, as well as the Department of State’s Office of Career Development and Assignments. This author will conduct a meta-analysis review of a 2009 U.S. Government Accountability Office study, GAO-10-156, *Diplomatic Security’s Recent Growth Warrants Strategic Review*, in order to further prove or disprove the thesis

question. Chapter 4 will explain the answers found through analysis of the quantitative data. Chapter 5 will conclude with how the data impacts U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Service career development and assignments, and will answer the question as to what recommendations and changes need to be made to the current DSS Special Agents career development program.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

In order to answer the question as to whether changes need to be made to the current Diplomatic Security Special Agent's career development program, as well as what impact incentives offered to Special Agents serving in AIP have had on the rank-and-file officer's ability to fulfill the career development requirements, the following questions must be answered:

1. What is the total number of DSS Special Agents?
2. How many DSS Special Agents are assigned overseas?
3. How many DSS Special Agents are assigned domestically?
4. What Pay Grades are most represented among the work force?
5. How many overseas assignments are specific to AIP?
6. Is the current AIP priority assignment process sustainable?

The answers to the above questions will give a more definitive answer as to whether anomalies or disproportions exist within the current Diplomatic Security Special Agent workforce, and whether these disproportions directly affect the Special Agents' career development program.

Number of Diplomatic Security Special Agents

The most recent data obtained from the Department of State's Bureau of Human Resources shows that, as of 31 December 2011, there are 1,908 men and women employed as U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Security Special Agents (DOS 2011a). DSS Special Agents are categorized as Foreign Service Specialists, meaning "they

provide important technical, support or administrative services in 19 career categories, to include Doctors and Physician Assistants, Office Management Specialists, Information Management Specialists, Diplomatic Security Agents, Human Resource Specialists” (DOS 2012b). It should be noted that another category exists in the DOS, that of the Foreign Service Generalist. Foreign Service Generalists, also referred to as Foreign Service Officers, “enter in one of five career tracks to include Consular, Economic, Management, Political, or Public Diplomacy” (DOS 2012b).

To measure the impact of the total number of DSS Special Agents on the current career development program, one needs to examine the tremendous increase in the number of Special Agents over the last 10 years. In 2002, the number of DSS Special Agents totaled 1,244, and that number has risen by 53 percent to a total number of 1,908 as of 31 December 2011 (GAO 2009, 19). To put this number into context, the U.S. Secret Service, an organization that serves a similar dual purpose of protective services and criminal investigations to that of Diplomatic Security, has only grown (U.S. Department of Justice 2003, 3) by approximately 14 percent over that same time period (U.S. Secret Service 2012).

Thus, the unprecedented increase in the total number of DSS Special Agents over a short amount of time has been accomplished “without the benefit of solid strategic planning as neither State’s departmental strategic plan nor Diplomatic Security’s bureau strategic plan specifically addresses the bureau’s resource needs or its management challenges” (GAO 2009, 23). This indicates that it is the career development program, in its current state, that has contributed to these management challenges faced by Diplomatic Security leadership.

Number of Special Agents Assigned Overseas and Domestically

The dramatic increase in DSS Special Agents over the last 10 years can be attributed to two major events: the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya, and the attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 (GAO 2009, 14). In 2006 “Diplomatic Security submitted to Congress a strategic plan that entailed significantly expanding the bureau’s investigative capacity” (GAO 2009, 15), and it is this plan that has led to a heavier DSS presence within the U.S.

Presently, out of the 1,908 Special Agents in DSS, 762 are assigned overseas (DOS 2012a). Thus, simple math shows that 1,146 Special Agents are assigned to positions within the U.S. (figure 1). These agents perform a wide range of duties, but mainly focus on Passport and Visa fraud investigations as well as protective services. In addition to protecting the Secretary of State and the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, the latest statistics show that DSS Special Agents assigned domestically “provided 178 protection details in 259 American cities for foreign dignitaries” (DOS 2010a, 15). With regard to their statutory investigative authorities, the latest statistics show that DSS Special Agents conducted over 6,000 criminal investigations which resulted in 1,630 domestic arrests (DOS 2010a, 24).

The purpose of examining where Special Agents are assigned is to determine if a disproportion exists. The numbers show that 1,146 DSS Special Agents, which is approximately 60 percent of the overall total, are assigned domestically. Thus, a disproportionate number of Special Agents are assigned domestically.

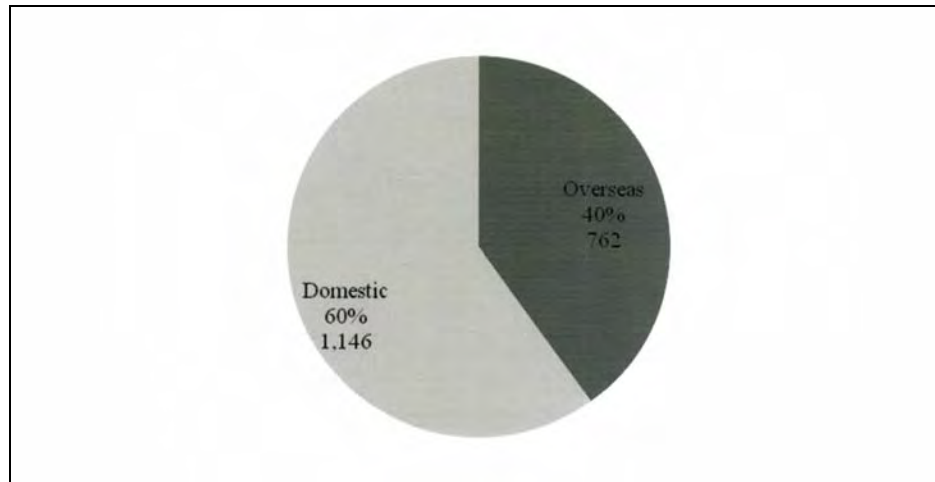


Figure 1. DSS Special Agent Assignments

Source: United States Department of State (DOS), Office of Career Development and Assignments (CDA), *CDA World* (Washington, DC, 2012).

Pay Grades

Diplomatic Security Special Agents are categorized by a Foreign Service Pay Grade, and this pay grade is similar to those found throughout the federal government. A DSS Special Agent begins his or her career as a Grade Six, which would be the equivalent to an O-1, Second Lieutenant, in the U.S. Army. DSS Special Agents receive administrative, non-competitive, promotions to Grades Five (First Lieutenant) and Four (Captain), and have their first competitive promotion cycle to Grade Three (Major). The average length of service a DSS Special Agent has before their competitive promotion to Grade Three is approximately five years (DOS 2011b). The pay grades continue to a Grade Two (Lieutenant Colonel) and Grade One (Colonel) followed by an opportunity to be promoted to the Senior Foreign Service which is the equivalent of the U.S. Army's Flag Officers rank.

Presently, of the 1,908 employed DSS Special Agents, 628, or approximately 33 percent of the total DSS Special Agent work force, are at the Grade Three level (DOS 2011a). Thus, the largest number of DSS Special Agents is at the Grade Three level, with over half the total DSS Special Agent work force at the Grade Three and Grade Four levels (figure 2).

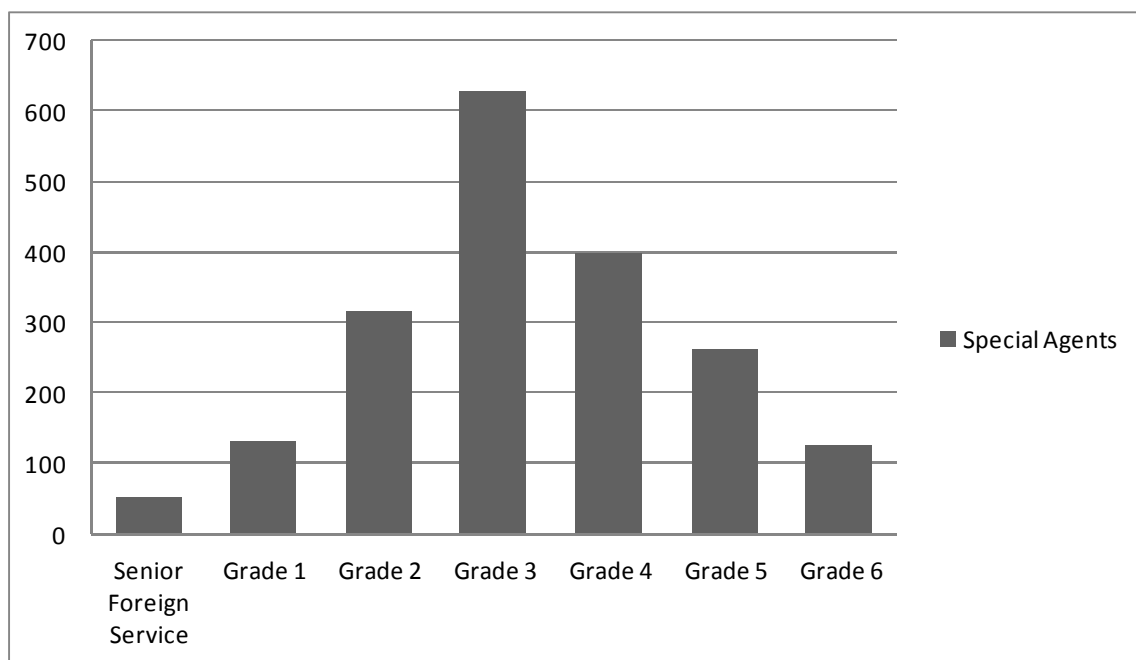


Figure 2. DSS Special Agents by Pay Grade

Source: United States Department of State (DOS), Bureau of Human Resources, *Foreign Service-FTP by Skill Group Statistics* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011).

This large group must compete for future promotions with an ever increasing number of DSS Special Agents. According to the latest DOS promotion figures, only 10.6 percent of Grade Three Special Agents are promoted to Grade Two (DOS 2011b).

During that same time frame, 44 percent of Grade Four Special Agents were promoted to Grade Three. Thus, for every 66 DSS Special Agents that are promoted to Grade Two, 175 DSS Special Agents are promoted to Grade Three. This has created an ever-expanding group at the Grade Three level which has directly impacted organizational morale. As “job satisfaction is an attitude that individuals have about their job” (Ivancevich 1996, 129), poor job satisfaction will translate into a poor work attitude. Also, opportunities for promotion are a “dimension associated with job satisfaction” (Ivancevich 1996, 129), and if these opportunities are not perceived to be fair and equitable the results will be a workforce with job dissatisfaction. Morale can effect a Special Agent’s work production which could directly lead to a lapse in security.

The high percentage of DSS Special Agents at the Grade Three level has occurred based on the tremendous surge in new DSS Special Agent hires over the last decade. As the workforce has nearly doubled over that time, a large percentage of DSS Special Agents are closely clustered together at pay grades Three and below. In fact, 1,410 DSS Special Agents, or nearly 74 percent of all DSS Special Agents, are at Grade Three and below (DOS 2011a). The statistics also show that 1,025 DSS Special Agents are at the Grade Three and Grade Four levels (DOS 2011a). There are 628 Grade Three Special Agents and 397 Grade Four Special Agents which is nearly 54 percent of the total DSS Special Agent work force (DOS 2011a). While these numbers are needed to ensure staffing is met at the tactical and operational level, the number of Special Agents at these levels fails to meet the DOS need for mid-level supervisory Special Agents. As noted in GAO-10-156, *Diplomatic Security’s Recent Growth Warrants Strategic Review*:

Diplomatic Security faces human capital challenges, such as inexperienced staff and foreign language shortfalls. The implications of this growth—in conjunction with the potential for increased challenges in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other hostile environments as well as the management challenges listed above—have not been strategically reviewed by the department. (GAO 2009, 38)

While a large percentage of DSS Special Agents are at the Grade Three level, most Grade Three DSS Special Agent positions are in non-supervisory roles. In essence, GAO-10-156, *Diplomatic Security's Recent Growth Warrants Strategic Review*, acknowledges the staffing problems faced by DSS leadership; however, this study has noted that DSS leadership has not adequately addressed the problem and to date, DSS leadership has not offered any explanation.

The disproportional number of DSS Special Agents at the Grade Three and Grade Four levels affects the career development of those Special Agents in this manner; Special Agents are able to bid on an assignment one grade higher, or “stretch bid” when they make their assignment preferences. This fact, coupled with the requirement in the career development program playbook for a Special Agent to serve overseas in order to be considered for promotion, shows that over half of the entire DSS Special Agent workforce have the ability to bid on the same assignments. There is a very real problem with 1,025 Special Agents applying for approximately 400 overseas positions at the Grade Three level, in order to meet their career development program requirements. This problem becomes compounded when combined with the priority for onward assignments given to DSS Special Agents serving in AIP.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan Positions

The latest statistics show that there are 178 DSS Special Agents serving in AIP positions. The total number of U.S. Missions around the world is 274 (DOS, 2011c)

(figure 3). AIP, which accounts for just over one percent of the total overseas missions, accounts for approximately 23 percent of the total overseas positions (figure 4).

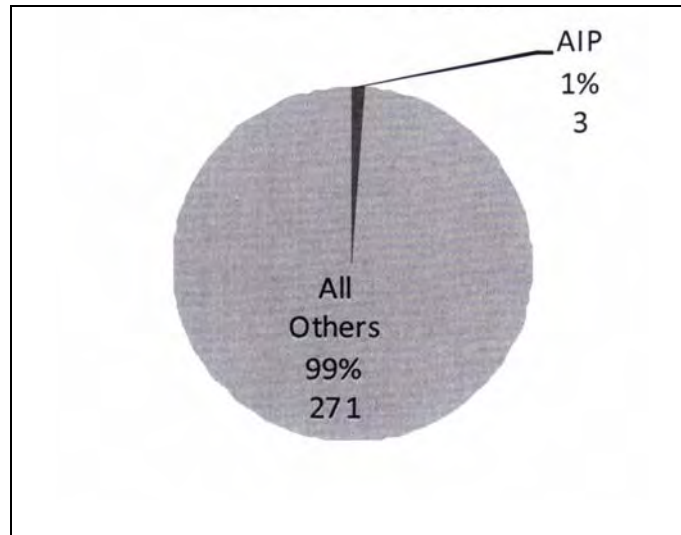


Figure 3. Number of U.S. Missions Overseas

Source: United States Department of State (DOS), Bureau of Human Resources, *HR Fact Sheet* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011).

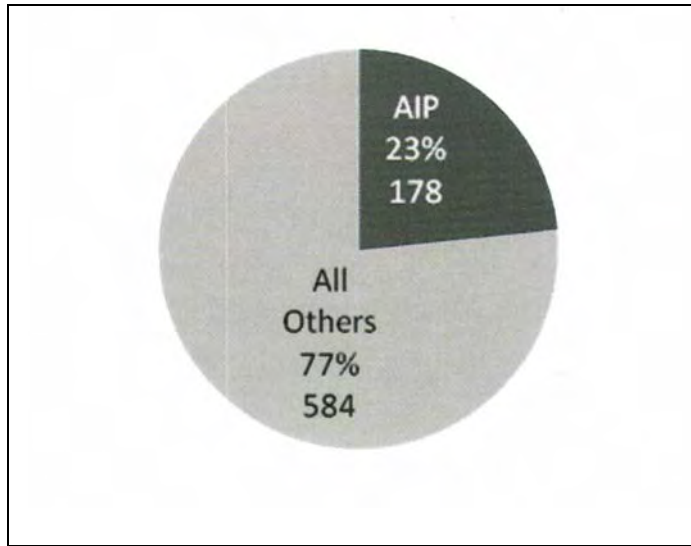


Figure 4. Number of DSS Special Agent Overseas Assignments

Source: United States Department of State (DOS), Office of Career Development and Assignments (CDA), *CDA World* (Washington, DC, 2012).

Thus, there is a disproportionate number of DSS Special Agents assigned to AIP compared to the total number of DSS Special Agent positions available. The reason for this disproportion is quite obvious as those locations are at the forefront of two wars. However, by not having the foresight to see the potential problems faced in giving AIP Special Agents priority for onward assignments, DSS leadership has created an environment where workforce morale may suffer due to fewer opportunities for career advancement.

Special Agents serving in AIP are given priority for their onward assignment. At this time, the author has not been able to get the State Department to provide a breakdown by Pay Grade for the Special Agents assigned to AIP. However, using the same percentage of Special Agents in the DSS workforce that are a Grade Three or Grade

Four, one can logically conclude that there are approximately 95 DSS Special Agents at the Grade Three or Grade Four level serving in AIP. As these AIP Special Agents are given priority for their onward assignments, it presents the possibility that over 900 Special Agents are competing for the approximately 300 non-AIP overseas assignments available to them. It is therefore safe to conclude that only one out of every three DSS Special Agents are able to receive an overseas assignment and fulfill their career development program requirements in a timely manner to be eligible for promotion with their peers. These statistics clearly show that the disproportionate number of DSS Special Agents serving in AIP has directly affected the ability to adequately follow the current Diplomatic Security career development program.

Sustainability

The question remains as to whether the current system of giving priority for onward assignments to Special Agents serving in AIP is sustainable. Based on the quantitative data presented in this study, the current system, combined with the current career development program, is not sustainable. As the average length of an assignment for the majority of non-AIP assignments is two years, the data has shown that for every two year cycle AIP bidders are accounting for nearly 50 percent of the 762 total overseas assignments. This disproportion has furthered the difficulty for Special Agents serving domestically to obtain an overseas assignment, thus stunting their career advancement. This problem will only grow as the number of Grade Three Special Agents increases with each passing year.

Thus, in order to improve morale and ensure each Special Agent has a fair and equitable opportunity for career advancement, a change in culture is necessary within the

DOS with regard to DSS. The current culture is that DOS personnel serve their country overseas; however, based on the number of Special Agents needed to serve important roles domestically, this culture must change. Chapter 5 will outline the steps needed in order for this change of culture to occur.

Chapter Conclusions

An analysis of all the available statistics demonstrated that the DSS experienced unprecedented growth with regard to the total number of Special Agents that are presently employed with the DOS. The analysis shows that a disproportionate number of DSS Special Agents are at a pay grade of Grade Three and below. The analysis shows that a disproportionate number of DSS Special Agents are serving in AIP, and these Special Agents have the benefit of a preferred onward assignment following their AIP service. Finally, the analysis shows that only one out of every three DSS Special Agents is able to receive an overseas assignment due to the priority given to Special Agents serving in AIP, and this backlog will continue to grow every year. Chapter 5 will conclude with how the data impacts U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service career development assignments, and will offer recommendations and suggested changes to the current DSS Special Agents career development program and culture within the DOS.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study examined the current U.S. Department of State career development program for Diplomatic Security Service Special Agents and the priority assignment process with regard to DSS Special Agents serving in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. This study sought to answer the question as to what changes are needed to the current DOS Diplomatic Security Service's career development program. Based on the DSS career development program requirement that a DSS Special Agent must serve overseas before consideration for promotion can be given, and based on the insufficient number of overseas assignments available to DSS Special Agents, this author has concluded that changes are necessary to the DSS career development program. This study has shown that problems with the DSS career development program are further exacerbated by the unsustainable policy of granting priority for onward assignments to DSS Special Agents serving in AIP.

Recommendations

This author recommends that the DOS no longer grant priority for onward assignments to DSS Special Agents serving in AIP. This policy is not sustainable and could eventually lead to a situation where all DSS Special Agents have to serve first in AIP before becoming eligible to serve in any other U.S. mission overseas, though this "AIP-first" requirement does not formally exist. Priority status for those serving in AIP also undermines the morale of DSS Special Agents serving in other hardship posts that do

not get any special benefits by DOS, though their level of danger may be just as high as AIP. Finally, the 2007 American Foreign Service Association study has shown that the majority of those serving in Iraq do so for the extra pay and benefits other than priority follow-on assignment, thus the number of AIP applicants can still be expected to meet the requirements of the organization.

This author also recommends the removal of the overseas requirement for promotion from the DSS career development program. Domestic assignments for DSS Special Agents account for approximately 60 percent of the entire DSS Special Agent workforce. Thus, to have a requirement that does not recognize the work conducted by 60 percent of the workforce is illogical and can only serve to disenfranchise otherwise dedicated and productive employees.

The question remains as to how DSS and DOS could change the culture of their organizations to one that recognizes the work conducted by all DSS Special Agents. It is this author's belief that the application of the Kotter Model would be an appropriate option for this solution as discussed below.

The Kotter Model

In his 1996 book, *Leading Change*, John P. Kotter created a model that would "lead transformational change in organizations" (Doll and Miller 2008, 97). It is this author's belief that changing the culture of the DOS from one that rewards work conducted overseas to one that rewards equally; the work conducted both domestically and overseas would qualify as a transformational change to the organization. In 1999, General Eric Shinseki, then Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, applied the Kotter Model when he "called for a comprehensive Army transformation change process to better

prepare the U.S. Army for the future threats and challenges of the twenty-first century” (Doll and Miller 2008, 99).

Though the effects of the transformational change of the U.S. Army are still not complete, “today’s Army Soldiers are not only better equipped, but better educated trained, and developed with greater focus on their self-awareness, cultural awareness, agility, with an increased ability to adapt to the diverse situations throughout the full spectrum of conflict” (Doll and Miller 2008, 101). Thus, it is this author’s contention that the application of the Kotter Model to the DOS could lead to the changes necessary to address the problems shown in this study. The Kotter Model is comprised of eight stages that could be followed in order to create a permanent change in the DOS culture, and “skipping a step, making a critical mistake within a step, or jumping ahead prematurely can have a crippling effect on the success of the change initiative” (Doll and Miller 2008, 98). The eight stages are as follows:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency.
2. Creating the guiding coalition.
3. Developing a vision and strategy.
4. Communicating the change vision.
5. Empowering a broad base of people to take action.
6. Generating short-term wins.
7. Consolidating gains and producing even more change.
8. Institutionalizing new approaches in the culture (Doll and Miller 2009, 98).

The following paragraphs show what measures DOS and DSS might take in each stage in order to make for a successful change to the organization.

Stage One

The first stage in the Kotter Model is “establishing a sense of urgency by demonstrating the benefits and necessity of change” (Doll and Miller 2008, 97). This urgency is further developed by “understanding why the change is needed, how the change will benefit the organization and what may happen if change does not take place” (Doll and Miller 2008, 97). This study has shown that problems had been identified as early as 2009, yet DSS leadership has not implemented any solutions to the presented problem.

Change is needed because the current career development program, combined with the current incentive program of offering AIP Special Agents priority for their onward assignments, is not sustainable. As approximately 60 percent of DSS Special Agents are assigned domestically, there is need to recognize that fact within the career development program. As with all Foreign Service personnel, DSS Special Agents should be expected to serve overseas at some point in their careers, but to make that service a requirement undermines the morale of the workforce. The fact of the matter is that chance plays a role in the overseas assignment of a DSS Special Agent. A DSS Special Agent may get an overseas assignment, while another with equal credentials may not. This study has shown that there are not enough overseas assignments to satisfy the needs of all those who bid on anything overseas. Thus, to make such a requirement without offering enough positions to satisfy that requirement will ultimately undermine the DSS Special Agent’s job satisfaction. Added to the dilemma is the priority for onward assignments given to AIP Special Agents which has further diminished the number of available overseas assignments. Service to any AIP post should be rewarded, and it is, by

the financial incentives given to those who serve there. The American Foreign Service Association survey showed that the majority of those who served in Iraq did so based on the extra pay and benefits, thus those positions will still be in demand by prospective employees even without the incentive of priority assignments.

Changes to the DSS career development program will reap immediate rewards within the DSS workforce. Eliminating the overseas requirement for promotion would show that all DSS Special Agent positions are important and would shift promotions to those with deserving employee evaluations as opposed to where they served. Morale within the department would increase as DSS Special Agents serving domestically would have the sense that promotions would be fair and equitable based on job performance as opposed to job location. As stated earlier in this study, DSS Special Agents are federal law enforcement officers who are expected to serve domestically in this capacity. In 2011, 173 law enforcement officers were killed in the line of duty within the U.S. (Cratty 2011), indicating the dangerous nature of these particular assignments. DOS leadership needs to recognize the sacrifice DSS Special Agents make domestically as well as those serving overseas.

This study has shown that if change is not made to the career development program fewer DSS Special Agents would qualify for promotion, as the lack of sufficient overseas assignments would prohibit all those desiring overseas assignments from obtaining them. The ranks among Grade Three Special Agents would continue to swell causing more and more competition among Special Agents. Promotions would be based more on where a person served as opposed to the quality of work performed. The most

likely result would be diminished job satisfaction leading to poor morale, and a loss of work production which a law enforcement agency cannot afford to have.

Stage Two

The second stage of the Kotter Model is “creating the guiding coalition” (Doll and Miller 2008, 99). This coalition of “senior and respected leaders” is established to allow for the process of change (Doll and Miller 2008, 99). In order for changes to be made to the DSS career development program this coalition would consist of senior DSS leadership, namely the Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security and the Director of DSS, as well as senior DOS management. Senior DOS leadership, such as the Under Secretary of State for Management and the Director General of the Foreign Service, would assist in changing the culture among the Foreign Service Generalists who may not know exactly the domestic duties of a DSS Special Agent. As Foreign Service Generalists sit on the promotion boards for DSS Special Agents, they would follow any recommendations made by senior DOS leadership.

This coalition of respected senior leaders would use their application of power and influence to change the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the entire State Department with regards to how domestic assignments are viewed. Again, the current culture is that State Department employees serve overseas; however, this coalition would gain commitment by reinforcing the domestic obligations required of DSS. Also, as the Under Secretary of State for Management and the Director General of the Foreign Service oversee the Department of State’s Bureau of Human Resources, promotion boards would be obligated to follow any changes made to the career development

program. Thus, this coalition would not only have the ability to get a commitment from the workforce, they would have the ability to gain compliance as well.

Stage Three

The third stage of the Kotter Model is “developing a vision and strategy” (Doll and Miller 2008, 99). The present DSS vision and strategy is as follows:

To provide a safe and secure environment for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Every diplomatic mission in the world operates under a security program designed and maintained by Diplomatic Security. In the United States, Diplomatic Security personnel protect the Secretary of State and high-ranking foreign dignitaries and officials visiting the United States, investigates passport and visa fraud, and conducts personnel security investigations. Operating from a global platform in 25 U.S. cities and 159 foreign countries, DS ensures that America can conduct diplomacy safely and securely. DS plays a vital role in protecting U.S. embassies and personnel overseas, securing critical information systems, investigating passport and visa fraud, and fighting the war on terror. (DSS 2012c)

Changes to this vision and strategy are not necessary as it encompasses all the duties performed by DSS Special Agents. What is of note is that the vision makes no mention that overseas service is of greater importance to the work conducted by DSS Special Agents. In fact, this statement treats equally the work DSS does both domestically and overseas in providing for a safe and secure environment for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Thus, the DSS career development program should reflect this equality by treating all positions equally for promotion and not to require only overseas assignments as the basis for promotion.

Stage Four

The fourth stage of the Kotter Model is “communicating the change vision” (Doll and Miller 2008, 100). This stage would require the coalition of respected senior leaders to communicate the change of culture and the reason that change is necessary. This could

be as simple as communicating to the workforce that the work DSS Special Agents do domestically is just as important in providing a safe and secure environment for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy as the work conducted by DSS Special Agents assigned to overseas posts. DSS Special Agents working overseas do make sacrifices, such as living conditions that may differ substantially from conditions in the continental U.S. However, this study has shown that the problem is not getting enough DSS Special Agents to serve overseas, but in the insufficient number of overseas assignments available to DSS Special Agents. Removing the overseas requirement for promotion from the DSS career development program would communicate the change needed for a fully committed workforce.

Stage Five

The fifth stage of the Kotter Model is “empowering broad-based action” (Doll and Miller 2008, 100). This stage requires subordinates to take the appropriate steps in order to gain the level of commitment needed for such a change. Another aspect of this stage is the removal of any obstacles that may be resistant to changing the career development program (Doll and Miller 2008, 100).

The removal of any obstacles that may be resistant to change could be accomplished by the coalition of senior and respected leadership. Those with decision-making abilities within the career development process who are resistant to making the changes suggested by senior DOS and DSS leadership would need to be removed from the decision-making process for this change in the DSS career development program to occur.

Stage Six

The sixth stage of the Kotter Model is “generating short-term wins” (Doll and Miller 2008, 100). DSS and DOS leadership can show immediate results to the workforce by removing the overseas requirement for promotion from the DSS career development plan, and by promoting those whose employee evaluations have warranted such a promotion despite not having served overseas.

Another short-term win could be the removal of onward assignment priority from those serving in AIP. This would prove to the workforce that all hardship positions merit reward, not just those serving in less than one percent of the total number of U.S. missions worldwide. Generating short-term wins is perhaps the most important of all the stages in the Kotter Model in that it proves to the employees that changes are taking place and leadership is immediately acting on those changes (Doll and Miller 2008, 100). However, if the workforce does not see any immediate “short-term wins” then the workforce may feel any talk of change was merely empty rhetoric and the Kotter Model would fail at this stage in the process.

Stage Seven

The seventh stage of the Kotter Model is “consolidating gains and producing more change” (Doll and Miller 2008, 101). The importance of this stage is that after the workforce sees short-term wins then an “increase in credibility will reinvigorate the process for more change” (Doll and Miller 2008, 101). In essence, once the changes to the DSS career development program and assignment process are made, the belief that DSS Special Agents serving domestically are just as vital to the success of the DSS vision as those serving overseas will expand quickly throughout the DOS.

Employees of the DOS must recognize that the DSS is a law enforcement agency with U.S. statutory authorities to investigate crimes as well as protect visiting foreign dignitaries. Consolidating the short-term wins of promoting worthy employees who may not have served overseas would assist in changing the culture within the entire organization.

Stage Eight

The eighth and final stage of the Kotter Model is “anchoring new approaches in the culture” (Doll and Miller 2008, 101). The new approach to the DOS culture, that domestic assignments are just as vital to fulfilling the DSS vision, can be “rooted in the organizational culture when people believe, *this is the way we do things here*” (Doll and Miller 2008, 101). The DOS sees change in its organization every time a new Secretary of State is sworn in. DOS employees have shown resiliency and have adapted successfully to new changes time and time again. Thus, the commitment from the DOS to any changes to the DSS career development program would become rooted fairly quickly and be the norm relatively soon after the changes are made.

Further Study

Changing the DSS career development program to no longer reflect an overseas requirement would be a radical change to the organization. DSS prides itself on its ability to protect facilities, personnel, and information overseas; thus, any change to this culture would likely be difficult. This author recommends to the DOS further study to pinpoint exactly how assignments are being handled, as well as the work history of those being promoted. The current perception is that overseas assignments with limited

responsibilities outweigh domestic assignments with tremendous responsibilities. Thus, a clear and transparent accounting of the entire process is necessary in order to find the best option to better prepare DSS for future success.

Once any further studies are completed, it is recommended that DSS and DOS proceed with a sense of urgency to make the necessary changes before additional damage is done to employee morale and performance.

GLOSSARY

Assignment	The work location and duties of a DOS employee
Bidding	The process where a DOS employee seeks an assignment
Diplomatic Security Service	The law enforcement arm of DOS
Grade (or Pay Grade)	The personal rank of the employee
Hardship Post	Foreign areas where conditions of environment differ substantially from conditions of environment in the continental United States
Incentive	Special rewards, such as money or a preferred assignment, for serving a hardship assignment
Post	The geographic location of a DOS assignment
Stretch Assignment	An assignment which is graded above or below the employees rank
U.S. Missions	United States overseas diplomatic missions, to include embassies and consulates

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