
DIPLOMATS AND WARRIORS REVISITED, OR HOW FAOS CAN HELP

By

David T. Jones
Assistant for International Affairs
U.S. Embassy, Ottawa Canada

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For a generation or more the State Department has viewed the Department of Defense thru the prism of the Robert Murphy classic, *A Diplomat Among Warriors*, as if there were an axiomatic dichotomy between the two akin to "A Christian among Cannibals." There has been more than enough mutual defensiveness between State and DoD during the decades since World War II. State envies the massive financing available to the military (the cost of a small military exercise equals the entire State Department Politico-Military Bureau annual budget) and the muscle exercised by "arrogant" military commanders on foreign affairs issues in theaters with tens or hundreds of thousands of U.S. soldiers. For its part, DoD is persistently irritated over State's policies which frequently are perceived as "soft" toward countries and leaders which DoD perceives as enemies and "hard" toward others which DoD would accept as useful collaborators, if not close allies.

The incredibly rapid changes of the past three years mean that both State and Defense are facing the 21st century without the touchstones that have guided them for a generation. There could be a tendency to blame the other guy for emerging institutional problems, conveniently forgetting that we both work for the same "uncle." There will be no shortage of real challenges as we move toward the 21st century, be they financial, political or bureaucratic, and diplomats and warriors both should take time to reexamine some of the motivating forces and directions of their colleagues and our own perceptions of them.

OVERCOMING THE STEREOTYPES

The State Department Foreign Service Officers of previous generations were mostly male and formed by the experiences of WWII, Korea, Vietnam and the draft. As such, a high percentage of them had direct military experience. A representative FSO entering class in 1964 had 43% of its officers with military experience. My entering class (June 1968) had 8 of 25 with active duty military service. In contrast, in an entering FSI class to whom I spoke in 1990, only 2 of 46 FSO had comparable experience. I make this observation not to exalt military service (indeed, many who served from my generation either actively disliked or grimly tolerated it) but simply to note the previously FSOs knew from direct experience the pluses and minuses of military service. Consequently, it was easier both to appreciate the role and function of the military in U.S. society and foreign policy and to assess more accurately the roles of military actors in foreign states, few of which have military forces as subordinate and responsive to civilian control as those in the U.S. and thereby irrelevant to the political process. For many FSOs, the FAO-military attache will be the first military officer a diplomat has met "up close and personal"—a point to remember.

As fewer of State's FSOs have had direct military service, they have substituted stereotypes and "common knowledge" for personal experience. Just as we "know" about corporate lawyers, Wall Street businessman, small farmers, and professional entertainers, we "know" about the military. We have heard war stories from elderly relatives. We have read "Beetle Bailey" and *All Quiet on the Western Front*. We have watched *MASH*. We have seen *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and *Coming Home*. The military is everything from John Wayne to Dr Strangelove to old Uncle Charles or the boy down the street who just joined up. However, just as the stereotypes for lawyers, farmers, businessmen, etc., can get in the way of realities, some of the stereotypes associated with the military deserve reexamination. As FAOs, you should be aware of some of these stereotypes in order to better refute them.

- **The Military is Lazy.** A characterization probably most relentlessly perpetuated by the "Beetle Bailey" comic strip, it is the easiest to rebut. The lazy soldier cartoon image may have been born in the sleepy posts of between the wars and Depression America, but has not been true for decades. The norm is the JCS or Service staff or Embassy FAO officer who having arrived on the job at 6:00AM is still there 14 hours later. Just watching a FAO work should be sufficient to refute the stereotype.
- **The Military are War Lovers.** There is a long sanguinary history of military disaster attributable to military leaders insensitive to loss of life or in mindless pursuit of personal glory. The implicit conclusion is not just the intimation that military men are brutal butchers but that their judgment is suspect on all issues as their personalities are inherently warped by their careers. FAOs know the other side of the coin. For every gung-ho, snake-eater on active duty, there is a platoon of thoughtful senior officers well aware of the perils and tragedy of war. They have "seen the elephant", leaving friends dead on battlefields and not infrequently pieces of themselves as well. They are not eager for war as they know that they will do the dying.
- **The Military Isn't Very Smart.** Again the judgment is one driven by history and tradition. The Chinese adage that "you don't make good iron into nails or a good man into a soldier" has its modern echos. The Vietnam generation remembers that, other than the benighted few who volunteered, only those who weren't clever enough to avoid the draft through the loopholes of graduate school, National Guard and the like served in the war as diplomats, the "dumb soldier" image can be a partial byproduct of our self confident appreciation of our own intelligence. After all FSOs are very smart. We are among the most successful of our generation's test takers; facile verbally and adroit drafters.

The diplomat needs to be reminded, however, that he is not meeting the average military officer. In the interagency process and embassies, State's second or third tour FSOs are matched against lieutenant colonels and colonels with 15-25 years of experience and often the same level of academic and area experience from their FAO training as their State counterparts. Additionally, the military officers have commanded combat battalions, fighter squadrons and naval vessels before arriving on Joint or Service staffs. They have been personally responsible for the activities of more personnel than in all but our largest embassies. These are points that may not need to be made at all (or more than once) but FAOs should be prepared to make them.

A JUDGMENT

Obviously stereotypes are not a one way street. Military officers tend to view diplomats as "pin striped cookie pushers" and accept State's "Foggy Bottom" label (with its intimation of vague inexperience and a "children-lost-in-the-woods" air of impracticality) as fitting for FSOs. That diplomats bristle at such stereotypes only illustrates the point. There are probably proportionately as many effete "cookie pushers" in the foreign service as there are snake eating war lovers in the military. Just as FAOs cultural sensitivity make them alert to facets of foreign culture, the same sensitivity will serve them in good stead within the Embassy community.