

ADST ORAL HISTORY LESSON PLAN: Embassy in Crisis: Diplomats and the 1968 Tet Offensive
Middle School Grades 6-8
High School Grades 9-12

Big Idea: Oral history is a tool for learning about people, places, and events. Diplomats have a front-seat perspective on many international historical events. This lesson provides 3 excerpts from oral histories of diplomats on the scene in Saigon and Hue during the Tet Offensive, providing multiple perspectives on this important historical event that was a turning point for the Vietnam War.

Topics

- Diplomatic Oral Histories
- U.S. Foreign Policy
- 20th and 21st Century U.S. and World History

Description: The Tet Offensive was a massive North Vietnamese attack against various American and South Vietnamese targets, including the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. The event was a turning point in the war. Primary sources offer rich insights into the lives of real people. The fragmented, personal nature of these sources requires careful reading in context and comparison across multiple accounts to glean information and construct understanding.

Students explore how historians use primary source oral histories to understand events, people, and places from the past. They will read 3 oral histories at stations around the room given by individuals who were U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officers serving in Saigon during the Tet Offensive and conduct a critical analysis of the interviews in order to better understand their experiences described. Students are encouraged to make connections between the experiences described in the oral histories and their own lives.

*[Teachers: Please note that this sample unit is for the Tet Offensive during Vietnam War but this lesson and format can be used with any historical events on our site, adst.org, by searching the event in **Moments in Diplomatic History** or our **Country Reader Series** by country.]*

Objectives:

Students will:

- Understand oral history as a primary source as a way of gathering detailed information that helps us understand a specific time, place, person, or event.
- Connect past and present experiences.
- Understand that perspectives of events change over time.
- Understand that all of us have important stories to tell and perspectives to share.

Skills:

- Identify, analyze, and interpret primary sources to make generalizations about events and life in world history.

- Evaluate the authenticity, authority, and credibility of sources.
- Develop perspectives of time and place.

Standards

This unit is aligned with the following 2015 [Virginia Department of Education History and Social Science Standards of Learning](#):

- **World History and Geography: 1500 A.D. (C.E.) to the Present**
The Modern Era
WHII.1, WHII.11, WHII.12
- **The United States since World War II**
VUS.12
- **Virginia and United States Government**
GOVT.1, GOVT.3, GOVT.12
- **Civics and Economics**
CE.1, CE.3, CE.4

Using Primary Sources

Primary sources are the raw materials of history — original documents which were created at the time under study. They are different from secondary sources, accounts or interpretations of events created by someone without firsthand experience, such as textbooks.

Examining primary sources gives students a powerful sense of history and the complexity of the past. Helping students analyze primary sources can also guide them toward higher-order thinking and better critical thinking and analysis skills.

Essential Questions:

- How do historians learn about the past?
- How can the past inform our understanding about the present?
- How can one’s understanding of an event change over time?
- How are historical accounts influenced by the biases of eyewitnesses?

Time Frame:

1-3 class periods. This activity has been designed to be customized to your learning goals and your students’ individual needs. Choose to do the complete lesson plan or select parts with your students based on your schedule and objectives.

General Background for Teachers: Why study the work of diplomats?

Primary source diplomatic oral histories provide your students with a rare, front-seat glimpse into our nation's role in many of the most significant international events over the last seven decades. Studying oral history fosters students' historical empathy. These unique stories help students understand individual and institutional agency in response to historical conditions. Using oral histories provides opportunities for your students to analyze the authenticity and credibility of sources and develop perspectives of time and place, all part of developing skills in global competence.

1. **Diplomats work on important issues.** Diplomats work on a broad range of topics. Their portfolios span areas such as environmental issues, climate change, counter-terrorism, women's rights, conflict resolution, technology, science, human trafficking, global health, and the preservation of cultural property. They work with business leaders, NGOs, and carry out development work that improves lives. They are often first on the scene during natural disasters and their expertise in crisis management can save lives.
2. **Diplomats become Country Experts.** Part of the job is mastering a country's language, culture, and traditions. And through day-to-day responsibilities, diplomats work with a fascinating range of people from artists and musicians to parliamentarians, journalists, and scientists.
3. **Diplomats have Transferable Skills.** Diplomats conduct high-level discussions with foreign leaders, analyze political and economic developments, write speeches for their ambassadors, and engage in social media. Above all, they are masters at communicating across cultures.
4. **Diplomats are Part of a Team.** In a typical embassy or consulate, diplomats collaborate with many agencies and learn how to assemble people with a variety of skills to accomplish international goals. They work alongside colleagues from the military, the intelligence services, commerce, trade, agricultural, law enforcement, science, and technology.

(Source: Thompson-Jones, Mary. "Why Study Diplomacy and International Relations." Northeastern University Graduate Education News. July 6, 2016. Accessed November 5, 2017.

[https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/why-study-diplomacy/.](https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/why-study-diplomacy/))

Specific Background for Teachers: U.S. Embassy in Crisis: U.S. Diplomats and the Tet Offensive

During the Tet Offensive, E. Allen Wendt, an Economic Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon at the time, was the Duty Officer for that week at the Embassy. (Duty Officer is a rotating position and all Foreign Service Officers take turns as the initial contact for handling after-hours emergencies for the Embassy, keeping a log of all incidents, and reporting those to senior Embassy management the following morning.) Wendt received the U.S. Department of State's Award for Heroism for his performance during the Tet Offensive, and later became an Ambassador. Five U.S. Marines died at the Embassy during the Tet Offensive and 19 Viet Cong were killed. One Marine, Sargent Ron Harper, a 20 year-old from Minnesota, earned a Bronze Star for his service and heroism during the attack. Harper ran back into the building and made certain the doors to the Embassy were locked, an action which most likely saved the lives of those inside.

Preparation - Materials:

- 1) This unit relates to the 1968 Vietnam Tet Offensive, but this lesson format can be used with any international historical event from post WWII-present by searching our site by that historical event. Find content related to your curriculum at ADST's website in ***Moments in Diplomatic History***, ***Fascinating Figures***, written or podcast Oral Histories, or ***Country Readers*** which often have different perspectives on the same event (available at <http://adst.org/>).
- 2) Make 3-5 copies of each Oral History Transcript/Moment in the **Appendix** and place them at 2-4 stations around the classroom. There are 3 attachments chosen for their varied perspectives on the same historical event.

Student Worksheets – choose among the following and distribute to the class:

- Discussion Questions on p. 8 of this packet
- [Versions of History Chart](http://www.edsitement.org) (www.edsitement.org)
- [Document Analysis Worksheet](http://www.archives.gov) (www.archives.gov)
- [Venn Diagram Worksheet](http://www.eduplace.com) (www.eduplace.com)
- [Appendix: Vietnam Oral Histories & Dictionary of Diplomatic Terms](#)
 - Oral History - U.S. Ambassador Theresa Tull (*in Appendix*)
 - Moments in Diplomatic History - Viet Cong Invade American Embassy — The 1968 Tet Offensive (*in Appendix*)
 - Moments in Diplomatic History - Reunited on Valentine's Day (*in Appendix*)
 - Dictionary of Diplomatic Terms (*in Appendix*)

Vocabulary:

- Oral History
- Perspective
- Bias

Procedure:

Pre-Lesson Prep (*to be completed before the day of the lesson*):

- 1) Watch the 55-min. video, [America's Diplomats](#) on www.adst.org in class or assign as homework to become familiar with the work of U.S. Foreign Service Officers. Students can also read *How do you become a diplomat?* at the [U.S. Diplomacy Center website](#) or [Diplomacy 101](#)

Part 1: Introduction

- 1) Ask students if they know any childhood stories about their parents or grandparents related to the historical event being studied -- in this case, the Vietnam War, and specifically, the Tet Offensive.
- 2) Ask a few students to share their stories with students to share those stories with someone sitting next to them, then ask 1-2 students to share with the class.
- 3) Ask students how they know about those stories if they were not alive when those stories took place? Reinforce that information is often received through stories that people tell each other. *Lesson extension option:* Ask for 5-6 volunteers to play the game of Telephone. Tell the first student a brief story and then compare the first and final versions to illustrate the need for an objective eye when reading first-person accounts.
- 4) Connect the exercise to the work of historians. Explain to students that historians learn about the past by asking people to tell them stories about it. These stories are called oral histories.
- 5) Ask students if they know what a diplomat or Foreign Service Officer does? Ask class if anyone knows a diplomat or Foreign Service Officer? This may be a good point to gloss what Foreign Service Officers are at [U.S. Diplomacy Center's How do you become a diplomat?](#) and gloss some diplomatic vocabulary from the oral histories. See the U.S. Diplomacy Center's [Diplomatic Dictionary](#) in **Appendix**. For example,
 - FSO= Foreign Service Officer
 - Tour=an assignment overseas or in Washington, DC, usually 2-4 years in duration
 - Embassy=the chief U.S. mission, usually based in the capital city
 - Consulate=based in other cities within a country
 - CG=Consulate General who heads the Consulate

Part 2: Activity

- 1) Tell students that in today's lesson they will compare/contrast different oral histories among the choices on the topic of Vietnam in order to understand the different perspectives of each diplomat, to learn what it was like for U.S. diplomats dealing with the same historical event. In addition, students should look for what they shared in common, using the Document Analysis and Venn Diagram worksheet attachments.
- 2) Distribute copies of oral history transcripts at 2-4 stations around the room. Break class into small groups of 4-5 students and leave 4-5 copies of each oral history for small groups at each station.
- 3) Each group can decide to read aloud to one another in their small group, or silently. After the reading, they will then complete the worksheets individually or as a group, discussing each one. Allow enough time for students to complete each oral history (15-20 minutes) before moving to the next station with a buzzer/bell.
- 4) Ask students what they learned about each of the experiences of the U.S. diplomats/Foreign Service Officers.
- 5) Record students' observations on the board.

- 6) Ask students to pay close attention to clues that help us understand how each diplomat/Foreign Service Officer felt about their experience during the Tet Offensive.
- 7) Discuss as a class various students' observations they are willing to share.
- 8) Have students attribute adjectives to describe the ideas and feelings captured within the oral history. Guiding questions might include:
 - What do you think it would feel like to be placed overseas in Saigon, Vietnam, away from your family and friends for several years during wartime?
 - How might that help us understand their experiences?
 - What do you think it would feel like to live, speak, and read in a new, unfamiliar language to complete your job? How might that help us understand their experience?
 - Has anyone in class had a story from childhood that they retold again and again? How has your telling of stories changed over the years?
 - What does this tell us about how we should think about *their* oral histories?
 - Can we take them as absolute truth?

Part 3: Wrap-Up

- 1) Instruct students to write a short paragraph reflecting on two versions of experience of the same historical event as told by the two of the diplomats. In what ways were their experiences different? In what ways were their experiences similar?
- 2) Invite some students to share their thinking with the class. In what ways did reading their oral histories add a dimension to their understanding of the Tet Offensive before this activity?
- 3) Encourage students to think about the oral histories of these two diplomats whenever they think of this historical event.

Assessment:

- 1) Review the students' reflective writing.
- 2) Note what kind of details students were able to pull out from the oral histories. Did students pick up on how the two diplomats might have felt? Were they able to gain historical empathy?
- 3) Note whether or not students were able to make personal connections to the diplomats' stories.

Extensions:

- 1) Have students interview a family member or U.S. veteran or visit a senior living center member about their experiences with the same historical event (Vietnam/Tet Offensive) and include that additional perspective in their essays.
- 2) Facilitate a discussion about the historical event. Ask students how this debate relates to the two diplomats' stories. Ask students where they stand on the issue.

RESOURCES

U.S. Resources:

- **ADST:** Moments in Diplomatic History: Viet Cong Invade American Embassy – The 1968 Tet Offensive: <http://adst.org/2013/07/viet-cong-invade-american-embassy-the-1968-tet-offensive/>
- **ADST:** Reunited on Valentine’s Day: <http://adst.org/2015/02/reunited-on-valentines-day/>
- **ADST:** Excerpts from Oral History of Ambassador Theresa Tull
- **U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian:** U.S. Involvement in the Vietnam War: The Tet Offensive, 1968: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/tet>
- **C-SPAN:** The LBJ Tapes: 1968 Tet Offensive: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?440623-1/lbj-tapes-1968-tet-offensive>
- **C-SPAN:** U.S. Marines and the Vietnam War's Tet Offensive: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?439943-1/us-marines-vietnam-wars-tet-offensive>
- **History.com:** How the Tet Offensive Shocked Americans into Questioning if the Vietnam War Could be Won: <http://www.history.com/news/tet-offensive-1968-vietnam-war-surprise-attack-changed-american-public-opinion>
- **The Saint Cloud Times:** *St. Cloud vet recalls long, deadly night 50 years ago defending U.S. Embassy in Saigon*, January 25, 2018: <https://www.sctimes.com/story/news/local/2018/01/25/st-cloud-vet-recalls-long-deadly-night-50-years-ago-defending-u-s-embassy-saigon/1028796001/>
- Cooley, Jennifer. “Primary Source Sets Toolkit.” *State Historical Society of Iowa Educator Resources*, <https://lowaculture.gov/History>, lowaculture.gov/sites/default/files/history-education-pss-toolkit-final.pdf
- **U.S. Diplomacy Center:** Photo -- Section of sidewalk from outside U.S. Embassy Saigon, South Vietnam. In 1968, when the Embassy was attacked, State Department security officers and U.S. troops skirmished with attackers on the sidewalk, which surrounded the Embassy compound’s outer wall. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usdiplomacycenter/36241682963/in/album-72157686160947994/>



**ADST ORAL HISTORY LESSON PLAN:
The 1968 Tet Offensive
Discussion Questions based on:**

- Oral History Excerpt - U.S. Ambassador Theresa Tull
 - Moments in Diplomatic History - *Viet Cong Invade American Embassy — The 1968 Tet Offensive*
 - Moments in Diplomatic History - *Reunited on Valentine's Day*
1. An Embassy's Duty Officer works overnight to handle any emergencies that occur. George Wendt had more than he bargained for that night. How would you evaluate his response? What would you have done in his shoes?
 2. Who were the heroes that rose to the occasion that night? Who did not? Why? What sets apart those who took action? What qualities did they possess?
 3. What do you think of General Westmoreland's request that the Embassy be cleaned up and staffed by noon? Realistic or not realistic?
 4. Theresa Tull was a brand new female Foreign Service Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon when the Tet Offensive hit. In fact, she was still staying in a hotel and had not yet been assigned housing. How does she describe what went through her mind when the siege began?
 5. What was her most vivid memory that she describes?
 6. Why did Theresa Tull refuse to take photos once she arrived at the Embassy?
 7. James Bullington was in Hue, visiting his fiancé, Tuy-Cam, a Vietnamese woman who worked at the U.S. Consulate in Da Nang, when the Tet Offensive began. (Embassies are usually in the capital city and consulates are smaller, satellite offices in other cities in the country.) How did he get past the North Vietnamese?
 8. How does he describe the experience? If you were in Bullington's shoes, how would you describe the experience?
 9. How did James Bullington's parents find out about what had happened to him?
 10. What happened to Tuy-Cam's family?

APPENDIX: ADST'S ORAL HISTORIES & MOMENTS IN DIPLOMATIC HISTORY
RELATED TO THE TET OFFENSIVE

AMBASSADOR THERESA A. TULL

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Excerpts - Initial interview date: November 9, 2004 ©ADST

Q: Okay, let's move back to 1967. You took Vietnamese for, how did this come about?

TULL: I began Vietnamese language training in 1967. I took it from January of '67 for 44 weeks. It came about through the intercession and help of Bob Beaudry who was the political counselor who had taken an interest in my career and performance. I was assigned as I indicated earlier to be a consular officer in Saigon and I wanted to do political work and Bob said he would talk with a friend of his provided I was willing to go and be a consular officer in Saigon and I said yes, I definitely would do it. Anyway, the word came back and my orders, by the time they were finalized were to be a political officer in Saigon with 44 weeks of Vietnamese language training in Washington. I would not have gotten the language training, I don't think, with the consular assignment.

Q: How did you fit with Vietnamese as far as, how did you find learning Vietnamese? A difficult language?

TULL: I was fortunate. I found it, well, I can't say its easy, but it's a tonal language and I had no difficulty with the tones. I've played the piano, I like to sing. I could detect the differences in tone and there were small classes. You know how the Foreign Service Institute works, there were four or five of us in the class. I didn't have any difficulty. I earned a 3/3 at the end of the course.

Q: I can speak as one who does not play the piano and does not sing and I was exposed to a couple of weeks of Vietnamese and found it just, I never could hear the difference been the damn things, you know. It all sounds like one thing and maybe you raised your eyebrows or something like that. Anyway. You got to Vietnam, what were you picking up while you were taking Vietnamese, those 44 weeks of, what was going on in Vietnam at the time. We're talking about the Washington scene.

TULL: Yes, 1967. Well, of course the war was very controversial among our college students and a segment of our population, but I was a strong supporter of what we were trying to do there and I still remain convinced it was worth the effort. Unfortunate it didn't work out the way I would have liked to have seen it work out, but it was a time when there were difficulties, a lot of campus riots and takeovers of selective service offices and things like that, but I was not aware of any particular downturns in the military situation in Vietnam itself. I felt I was going into an operation that had a chance of success. It was a war. There was no question about it, but I was not frightened at the thought that I was going into the war. When I arrived in Saigon in January of 1968 it was

two weeks before the Tet Offensive. I was billeted at a hotel in downtown Saigon, on Tundo Street and I got a rather rude awakening when the Tet Offensive hit in the middle of the night right outside my window.

Q: Before we get to that even though it was a short period, what were you getting, was there a sort of a sizable group that was going out in the training process when you were back in Washington getting ready? Was there a real program to get people to Vietnam?

TULL: Oh, very large numbers of students. The CORDS program, I forget what the acronym stands for, Civil Operations Rural Development or something like that. They were getting a lot of people military as well as Foreign Service, AID people, USIA to learn Vietnamese and they would go out and they would be staffing embassy offices in each of the provinces of South Vietnam. We'd have a CORDS office in each of those provinces and maybe it even had suboffices in the smaller administrative units within the province itself. There might have been other small offices. There were a lot of people taking Vietnamese language in 1967. Not all were taking 44 weeks. Some of them were taking shorter periods, but most of the Foreign Service people were taking it for 44 weeks.

Q: Was there a cadre within those going out there of junior officers like yourself and all who were dubious about this, or were they enthusiastic about this, were they opposed to the war? Did you get any feel, was there any sort of movement going on?

TULL: I got no feeling of that whatsoever. The people that I studied with and ended up working with over there for almost three years in Saigon, I think they were like me. They viewed Vietnam as the hot issue of our time for the U.S. government. It was exciting to be involved with it. I didn't detect any sense that we shouldn't have been involved. Most of the Foreign Service people I met were willing, maybe even volunteered, but were definitely willing to go. Probably that might not have been the uniform case of say older officers who were sent over, I don't know, but this group that I went with, most of whom either ended up in the embassy or at provincial offices were junior officers, or, were one or two promotions up from junior officer. There was not a lot of feeling of what a waste this is. What am I doing to my career? This is a total waste. No, let's get over there. This is the exciting issue of our day. I guess this is probably a similar sentiment that a lot of our Foreign Service people might feel today about volunteering to go to Iraq, God bless them.

Q: Yes. Well, when you got there, I mean this is before the Tet Offensive, how was the situation explained to you and all when you got there? What were you doing?

TULL: I was assigned to the internal affairs unit of the political section. We had a very large political section. There were close to 20 officers. I believe that might have included the political officers who were assigned to each of the four military corps areas. There might have been one in each Corps area who actually technically belonged to us in the political section, but I believe we had five or six in the internal affairs unit, which

followed the internal Vietnamese developments, particularly political developments. There was the external affairs unit which dealt with Vietnam's relations with foreign countries and ultimately with the peace process with the negotiations in Paris; the political/military section; a labor office with a couple of officers. When I first went there and here I'm drawing on a memory to try to pull a name out, there was a very famous retired American general who had a little operation in our political section. He shared the space. He didn't report to anybody except the ambassador, but this is frustrating. He had been very active in the Philippines. I've got it: General Lansdale, I think it was Edward Lansdale.

Q: Oh, yes, he was the man who, he had been a colonel and very much close to Magsaysay.

TULL: He was very close to Magsaysay, in combating a communist insurgency in the Philippines. He was very well known at the time. He wrote a book and he was regarded as an expert in counter insurgency warfare. He was fascinating. We had the head of the political section who was on our floor and then there was a political counselor on the floor above me. It was a large operation. I believe I was the first woman officer ever assigned to the Saigon political section.

Q: Who was head of the political section, the political counselor?

TULL: The counselor when I first went was Arch Calhoun and he was later, when his tour was finished, Martin Herz. The head of the political section when I first went was Laurin Askew and he was replaced by Galen Stone. Both very nice people.

Q: Very competent.

TULL: Yes, they were.

Q: Again, prior to Tet, what were you getting, were they saying we're winning the war. The government really has extended its control or were they saying this is very problematic?

TULL: I don't recall. I definitely don't recall that there was any hyping of progress, certainly not in the political section. The sentiment was pretty strong and again whether it was before the Tet Offensive that I got this or after, the sentiment was strong that our military, the military components were under extreme pressure from McNamara to do body counts of dead enemies to show progress. In the political section this approach was ridiculed.

The first couple of weeks I got there, it was a question of finding your way around Saigon and being assigned certain duties. I as the junior-most person in the section got a lot of the grunt work. There was a daily publication put out by the Vietnamese government in Vietnamese, French and English and it was my job to scan that for items of information.

You had to look at all three because the one that had the meatiest coverage and the thickest number of items was the Vietnamese, but you would also maybe see an item in English and then check it in the Vietnamese and find out there were four or five more sentences that gave you more information about who was doing what or what the Vietnamese government would be up to. That sort of thing. I was pushed into doing that. I was also made the biographic officer, one of the “fun” things that junior officers get to do. I also perused Vietnamese newspapers. Saigon had about 35 daily newspapers, most of them in Vietnamese, a couple in English. I skimmed those daily to find out who was attacking whom. The average American did not realize the variety of opinion that was allowed to be freely expressed in South Vietnam. So, you had different groups that had their own newspapers and they could attack government policies pretty strongly provided they did not support the communist policies. They could criticize bland issues, they could criticize this, that and the other, so there was a lot to look at there and they were vying for their audience. There was many a night, not in the first couple of weeks, that I would take home newspapers, home being the hotel and I would work to 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning writing cables summarizing some of the key editorial comments in these papers that reflected fledgling political party views. I had hardly gotten my feet wet when the Tet Offensive struck.

Q: How did it hit you personally?

TULL: I was in this hotel.

Q: Which hotel do you remember?

TULL: Let's see, the Astor on Tudo Street, but we would pronounce it Tudo, T-U-D-O, Tudo Street and it was about a block around the corner from the Vietnamese naval headquarters. It was around maybe 2:00 in the morning and I heard tremendous blasts of what I thought were firecrackers going off, but major sounds of firecrackers. Not being totally stupid I slithered to the window and cracked a Venetian blind of the hotel room and saw some people shooting at each other in the street, running around the corner. Were you there for the Tet Offensive?

Q: No.

TULL: No. There were strings of firecrackers hung from buildings and earlier in the evening people had been igniting them illegally because the government didn't want that, but you saw all the red strings of firecrackers hanging and in the street the paper red paper residue. So, when I heard suddenly at 2:00 a.m. or 3:00 whatever it was, this tremendous racket, I just assumed it was more of that, but it sounded stronger, so I didn't want to stick my head out the window obviously so I just cracked the blind. I could see some fighters, but they were scooting around the corner. Apparently they were part of the attack force on the Vietnamese naval headquarters. That was just as I say around the corner. I was pretty scared and decided I wasn't going to stand by the window. I remember being concerned naturally thinking well, now if these people take me over,

they come into the hotel, they're right outside, if they come in the hotel, should I acknowledge that I speak Vietnamese? Would it be better if I didn't? You know, these thoughts are running through your head. At any rate they did not come into that hotel. We got through the night and when daylight came I put the radio on. Armed Forces Radio was announcing that the embassy had been attacked and that there was a widescale offensive going on in sections of Saigon and it said that personnel, embassy and military personnel should remain in their quarters until further notice, but keep the radio on. It was in the middle of the Tet holiday and so I went on the roof of the hotel, it had a rooftop restaurant, because I wanted to see what was going on. You could see tanks going back and forth and bodies in the street. You could see helicopters and still hear fighting and shooting. This would have been maybe 7:00 a.m. or something like that. While I was there two army majors who were billeted in the hotel, they had not been there in Saigon very long, they came up and they were astounded to see me. What is this American woman doing here on the roof? Because the hotel staff, most of them, were off. They were not serving breakfast; the restaurant was closed and we knew that it would be closed.

Q: It was Tet, yes.

TULL: It was Tet. These two fellows, they were really antsy. They wanted to get to MACV and see what was what, but the radio was telling them to stay where you are unless you're called. We watched, the three of us watched the show, from the roof. At one point I looked across the street. We were on about the sixth or seventh floor of the hotel. There was an apartment house across the way and I looked out and here's a middle aged Vietnamese man coming out on his rooftop in his undershorts, which is what they'd wear all the time, no problem with that. He comes out and he starts feeding his chickens on his rooftop terrace, just oblivious to the noise and the military action. After a while, these two majors got hungry and they thought we could take a chance. They were looking down the other side of the hotel roof and they saw a restaurant across the street that seemed to be open. This was on Tundo Street. They said, why don't we give it a shot? I said, well, we're supposed to listen to the radio. They said, yes, but you also have to get something to eat and that restaurant's open. You don't know how long its going to be open. I thought hey, with these two guys I'll go, and we went and got breakfast. No problem. Went back to my room, got the radio on and suddenly there's an announcement that says, all the employees of the American Embassy should report to the embassy immediately, but USIA personnel and AID personnel should stay in their billets. Well, I'm thinking, what am I going to do? I was brand new. How am I going to get to the embassy? It was feasible walking distance; I had walked daily up to this point. It was the equivalent of maybe 10 blocks, but am I going to be walking over bodies or dodging bullets? I thought it was kind of stupid myself, but needless to say I was also very curious and I'm brand new, the first woman in the section and I'm not going to be hiding behind my bed in the hotel. I did use a little commonsense because there was an apartment building around the corner about a block away where I knew two of the secretaries from the political section had apartments and I thought maybe if I go around there if the three of us decide to go to the embassy there will be safety in numbers and we'll see what's

what. Anyway, I screwed my courage to the sticking point and went out on the street, went around to the apartment building. They were very happy to see me because they had heard the word, too, but they were concerned about just walking, getting out and walking up to the embassy. They wanted to obey the order, as did I. Well, also in that apartment building were a couple of USIA officers who had been there for a while and they had a Jeep between them and they were just champing at the bit because the instructions were State Department should go to the embassy, not USIA and other people. They said, we'll take you in our Jeep. That gave them the excuse, if they were challenged to say, oh we were just taking these embassy girls, these embassy women to the embassy. We agreed and they drove us to the embassy. The trip was a series of sights I'll never forget, with streets with a sprinkling of dead bodies in the gutter and shooting in the background. When we got to the embassy itself they had not yet removed the bodies of the Viet Cong who had been killed in the embassy front yard, caught I guess inside the compound, the front lawn you might say. These bodies, so young, were there and I remember the images are so vivid. I remember being so struck by how red the blood was and how it was so red on the white concrete surface of the embassy steps and, huge flower pots.

I went in. One thing I absolutely would not do under any circumstances was take pictures. I just felt that was beneath contempt. I didn't even take a camera although I know other people were there snapping. I didn't do it. I got to my office. First I reported to the section chief, Ted Heavner, he was the chief of the internal affairs unit. He was startled to see me. I said, "Well, the order came out over the radio that we were supposed to come and we had a couple of secretaries with us, too." He thought it was a mistake to call us all in.

In my office, there was some concrete debris on my typewriter and on my desk from rounds, I guess mortar rounds that had been launched against the embassy. It had a concrete screen outside, probably set back maybe a foot or so, but still some of that chipped off.

Q: An ornamental screen, but the idea was to detonate any rocket-propelled grenade.

TULL: Right. So, there was obviously some debris there on the typewriter and the desk. Can't say that I did much work because everybody was just trying to figure out what was going on. There was still fighting in the streets. The Viet Cong had taken over part of a building across from the embassy. It was a substantial distance across. It wasn't like from here to there, but it was probably with this other apartment building, half a football field or something and the Viet Cong were occasionally putting out sniper shots. I guess about the only thing I was able to do was to send a cable to my family telling them I was alive and well. We were all doing that. They said everybody can send one short cable to have the State Department call your family. Before too long I guess a few hours after that it was decided that most people should go home. There was not a whole lot we could do that particular day. I don't think I went in the next day. I think the day after that they sent a vehicle to pick us up.

Q: Did you get any feel for what's going on or well, this is a big surprise?

TULL: The element of surprise was clear. Yes, it was a great surprise, but very quickly within a day or so it was clear that it was a massive defeat for the Viet Cong. Absolutely massive defeat because they had risen up quite confidently all over the country and after the initial shock was over they were mowed down. They were really mowed down. It was a tremendous setback for the Viet Cong military. For the U.S. however, psychologically I think it was the turning point of the U.S. involvement because the idea that these Viet Cong had actually gotten into the embassy courtyard, they never got into the embassy building, they might have actually gotten in the door of the consular section which was next to the embassy, a separate building, but the idea that they had gotten there was just so shocking and was played up so much in the press that nobody ever believed, I don't think the average American ever believed that it ended up as a defeat for the Viet Cong. Adding to that the fact that, George Jacobsen. He had a position at the embassy.

Q: He was an administrator.

TULL: Some sort of a mission coordinator. I think he handled aircraft and whatever the ambassador wanted. He lived in a house on the embassy compound and he actually at point blank had to kill a Viet Cong who was coming up the stairs to get him. Somebody I think threw a gun up to him or whatever and so that got tremendous play on television and all. That really did steer things away from the fact that so many Viet Cong had been destroyed. It really set them back immensely, but the VC won the offensive psychologically.

Q: I would have thought that being in internal affairs this must have put quite a load on the whole internal affairs unit, what the hell does this mean within the Vietnamese society? I'd talk to people and find out how what the effects of this were.

TULL: Yes, we were so large that we, individual officers had individual political parties that they followed. Following the Viet Cong and their doings was not something we did in the internal affairs section. The external affairs people had someone who was pretty expert on Viet Cong operations, but was principally it was CIA that dealt with that. No, I was quite a shock that they had managed to come into the city and they held sections of it for a while. It was wild and woolly.

Q: In Cholon there were a couple of fights there.

TULL: Oh, major, yes, major. It was after a few days the hotel opened up again for food and all and there were rocket attacks and various things. It was surreal. You work all day literally through the lunch hour in that case and get back to the hotel where I lived for such a long time, go up to the roof because life has to go on. You have to feed yourself and you have to give yourself enough strength to go on the next day. You'd be sitting up there, a friend would come and join you, you'd have a drink and a meal. It's dark at 6:30 or so in that part of the world and you'd watch the pretty tracer bullets and the patterns

flares would make. You would think I'm looking at lethal fire that could be killing people on the ground and I'm thinking isn't this making an interesting pattern against the night sky.

[...]

Q: Did you have contacts within the various parties that you went to see and if you were what were you getting from them?

TULL: No, at this stage of my embassy career shall we say I was not having contacts to speak of with Vietnamese outside the embassy. The political parties were divided among other officers and I was the junior person and I think there was a feeling that well, let her prove herself and then maybe we'll let her have a political party or something like that. Eventually I did get the job of following a political party, but it took a long time, several Months.

Q: Did you feel that being a woman was a problem? You know sometimes.

TULL: It might have been a problem with my male colleagues, or male superiors. I think they felt protective.

Q: Yes and also sometimes there's a feeling well, playing the game, well, its fine we accept her fully as an equal, but will the foreigners do this? This has often been the excuse.

TULL: I don't think that was an issue in my experience in Saigon. I think it was more, I'll be very kind and generous. I think I was more concern about my physical safety. For example, I didn't have, I was not put on the embassy duty roster. As I indicated in Brussels after three weeks I was on the embassy duty roster. I found out I was not on the embassy duty roster and when I inquired about it I was told it was because the duty officer had to sleep in the embassy every night. They had a little room with a bed and bath. You had to physically be there and they just felt it wouldn't really be appropriate for me to be there alone and then of course the officer who was there in the embassy on the night of the Tet Offensive he was a little bit under siege. He did a fine job. Allen Wendt was his name.

[....]

TULL: I did not push for the idea of getting on that duty roster. I did push to try to get out and do what I regarded was real political work. It took quite along time. In addition to the work I was telling you about with the newspapers, anytime President Thieu gave a speech, there was a voracious appetite not only in the embassy but in Washington to get a verbatim account of what he had said. Usually two really superb Vietnamese language officers in the section recorded the speeches and did a highlights cable.

Q: Who were they?

TULL: Hal Colebaugh and Harry Dunlop. Particularly Hal. Hal spoke Vietnamese like a native. So, when there was a speech, they would listen to the speech on radio or television, but also record it and then go through it and do a highlights cable, put together a cable saying President Thieu expressed strong support for blah, blah and expressed concern about the lack of whatever. I remember this one occasion I had gone to dinner at a friend's house and the next thing I know there's a phone call and I was told that I would be picked up. We had a curfew at this time. I was going to spend the night at this friend's home. If you went to dinner you spent the night during this period of a curfew, a 7:00 p.m. curfew, whatever it was. I was prepared to spend the night, but I was told I had to go back to the embassy it was around maybe 8:00 when I got the word. We were gathered up, the three of us who spoke Vietnamese, and taken to the embassy because the word that we got was that the highlights cable of this particular speech had aroused such interest that President Johnson wanted the entire text word for word, an hour-long speech. The three of us spent the night going over it, we each took a section of the tape, and did a word-for-word translation from Vietnamese into English. I will say that this was a little later on, maybe it related to preparations to go to Paris for the peace talks I'm not sure. I remember Galen Stone was there by that time. I think Galen came in the summer of '68. It was around then. Anyway, he very nicely, since he had called his officers in he came in to the embassy, too. He didn't know Vietnamese or anything, but he felt that he should. I remember that. Then he insisted we go home I guess around 9:00 or 10:00 when we got the cable off and have a couple of hours sleep before we came back in. We did that sort of thing. I wasn't given a political party to follow until later in the year.

[...]

Q: Well, had there been any reflection on what you were doing and your fellow officers and all of the demonstrations in the United States mainly student demonstrations and all. How did these affect you all?

TULL: Well, I was concerned. I thought it was unfortunate. I don't think the war had been properly explained and I thought the emphasis on body counts was probably aggravating the situation, but I felt that we were there because we were invited to be there to help South Vietnam forestall the communist takeover from the North. I had idealistic views that eventually perhaps the North and South could work out some reasonable accommodation, maybe a federalist type arrangement where there'd be some freedoms in the South that didn't exist in the North and I also thought that perhaps the South which has I believe some oil deposits offshore might eventually be able to even finance their own continuing strife if that's what they had to do. Yes, it was distressing to know that what you were doing, was opposed by so many people. My own family was very supportive, but I had friends in the Foreign Service who weren't in Vietnam who opposed the whole business of the Vietnam War and who couldn't understand what I was doing there and why I would think it was worthwhile. It was something I thought was worthwhile.

[...]

Q: When you came back [to the U.S.], did you find was there a different feel for Vietnam, you know, sort of the departmental feel for this group that was dealing with it that you had at the embassy or was it?

TULL: In the Department itself? I don't know. In the country I think attitudes had hardened, as a result of what I believe was the misinterpretation of the Tet Offensive. We knew that the Viet Cong had been devastated by that, yet that was not the perception. The perception was it was a major U.S. and South Vietnamese defeat and we ought to get out of there. I know in retrospect we were just trying to hold back a wave with a bucket, but you couldn't fight against that opinion, but things weren't looking bad in September of '70.

Q: When you got back to the U.S. during that time, what were you picking up during this two year period you were dealing with internal affairs?

TULL: At times I made speaking trips to college campuses and to media outlets, and that was quite interesting. I have to say I was a little concerned at first; the first time I was going to go to a college campus I thought we'll see about the questions. A lot of the questions were based on ignorance and when you could explain specifically what was going on or answer a question with specifics I didn't get as much hostility as I would have thought. These young people had been fed a lot of slogans and they didn't want to go and be drafted, and I don't blame them for being concerned. It was a wretched situation. My own personal view is that the conduct of the war from the way the U.S. government managed the draft was so unfair. It was absolutely absurd. Because you could afford to go to college you would be out of the draft or you could come up with some phony baloney like Cheney did, get four or five different deferments, or you could go to graduate school or you could say you're going to be a minister. It was just so wretchedly unfair. Only those who couldn't afford college got drafted.

Q: The National Guard.

TULL: Oh, yes, like the National Guard nonsense of our current beloved leader. It just was not right. I have a personal view that a lot of the antagonism toward the war by the young college people stemmed from guilt. They claimed they were opposing the war because it's an unjust war, etc. I think part of it was they had to oppose it on those grounds because otherwise they would be opposing it because they were afraid to go and fight in the war. They justified their resistance by saying this is an unjust war. They did not want to say I don't want to serve my country. They said this is an unjust war, therefore, I am virtuous and anybody who does go is not virtuous, therefore I am not guilty of shirking my duty. That attitude contributed probably to the poor treatment that some of our veterans received when they returned to the United States.

Q: Oh, yes. I agree with you absolutely. Just shown by the fact that as soon as the draft stopped the protests stopped. Nobody cared anymore.

TULL: It's a shame it wasn't corrected a lot sooner where you have a draft number and you knew right away you were going to go or you weren't going to go. Just changing the mechanisms of it so that you had your magic number. They had a draft lottery after that. That made much more sense. It did. It just defused the whole business. It was wretched and of course horrible mistakes were made here. I mean at Kent State, that was so stupid, and tragic. It's so sad that these young people were killed while protesting. It's crazy that people would have reacted that way, but meanwhile I'm trotting along and I'm going, making speeches on local television stations and going to college campuses.

MOMENTS IN DIPLOMATIC HISTORY:

Viet Cong Invade American Embassy — The 1968 Tet Offensive



On Jan. 30, 1968, Vietnamese communists attacked the American embassy in Saigon. For several hours they held the embassy grounds, inflicting injury and damage and trapping a small group of U.S. military and diplomatic personnel within the embassy. The assailants failed ever to enter the building, and all of them ultimately were killed or captured. This was part of the broader Tet offensive, a military campaign that carried the Vietnam War from the countryside into cities and towns.

In strictly military terms the assault on the embassy, and indeed the broader offensive failed. The attackers occupied the embassy compound and caused considerable damage but never succeeded in entering the building itself. All of the attackers were killed or captured. But the Vietnam War never was entirely military. Americans had been told — and many then still believed — that the war was being won. How, then, could a supposedly ragtag guerrilla army suddenly assault the citadel and symbol of America's presence in Vietnam, the very building from which the daily war- progress reports flowed?



“Viet Cong Invade American Embassy.” That incident (and those headlines and TV images) stuck in the American public consciousness, and no future body counts, pacification plans, presidential promises of victory, or even genuine military gains could ever quite dislodge it. The Vietnam War had been waged through much of the 1960s and was to bleed on for another seven years before Saigon's final collapse. But the U.S. war effort may well have been doomed — politically and psychologically — by the events of that January night.

What follows is the account of E. Allan Wendt, a Foreign Service officer who was on duty at the embassy that night. His report, written soon after the attack and then classified for years was originally published by The Wall Street Journal (which also wrote this introduction and the opening paragraphs below) on November 3-4, 1981. It is reprinted with their permission.



The account was written merely as one participant's chronology of the night's events at the embassy. But it also raises broader issues: the unpreparedness of the U.S. military machine for the Tet offensive; the seeming chaos of a command structure in which generals (and the White House) were able to obtain instant situation reports from the embassy while the embattled defenders couldn't get military support from colonels and majors a few miles away; the very human reactions- from clear heroism to considerably less- of individuals caught up in crisis; and the plaintive, perhaps symbolic, Vietnamese voice – that of the code clerk who, in the midst of battle, reported that he was on overtime and asked to go home.

This report, of course, is history. But history has a way of remaining relevant. The protection of American government facilities overseas, the reaction speed of U.S. military forces, the quality of American Intelligence, the play of politics and psychology in warfare- there are controversial issues in 1981, just as they were in 1968. Parenthetical notes of explanation and identification have been inserted by the [Wall Street Journal] editors. You can see a [CBS video on Tet here](#).

You can read about how one FSO had to dress up as a priest to avoid killed during the Tet offensive and how he eventually [reunited with his Vietnamese bride-to-be](#) on Valentine's Day.

Endangered Lives

I was asleep in room 433, the duty officer's quarters, when the building was shaken by a loud explosion just before 3 a.m. I rolled out of bed and reached for the telephone. Automatic- weapons fire broke out. I called Mr. Calhoun at his home and told him the embassy was under attack. [John A. Calhoun was a political officer in the embassy.] As I was speaking, another explosion tore into the building. Recalling the need for shelter from falling debris in the event of a bomb explosion, I crawled under the bed while talking to Mr. Calhoun.



I emerged from under the bed just as [James A.] Griffin, who was on duty in the communications, came in and asked what was happening. I said I was not sure but I presumed the embassy was being attacked. I quickly dressed, gathered up my few personal possessions, and withdrew into the communications room next door, which was safer than the duty room and had more telephones. Neither of us could know the extent of the attack or whether the Viet Cong were already in the building. One of our first reactions, therefore, was to close the vault door to the communications room.

I called Mr. Calhoun's residence, and by that time Mr. [David J.] Carpenter of the political section and Mr. [Gilbert H.] Sheinbaum, the ambassador's aide, had reached the residence and set up a command post. I reported that I had moved into the communications room and should be called on extension 321 or 322. I told them I would pass information on to them as soon as I obtained it. I understood they would undertake to alert others, both in Saigon and elsewhere. It is worth noting that I had left the duty officer's manual in Ambassador [Ellsworth Bunker's] outer office on the third floor. I was not in the habit of taking it with me to the duty officer's quarters, for I knew that much of the information in it was out of date. Even had this not been so, it contained little that would have helped in the crisis that had suddenly burst upon us.

Automatic weapons fire continued, interspersed with periodic louder explosions that we took to be rockets or mortars. All of the shooting and explosions seemed very near, so much so that we feared not only that penetration of the embassy was inevitable but that our lives were in imminent danger. Indeed, we thought our only hope lay in securing the vault door to the code room and simply staying inside. We knew it would take a very heavy charge to blow that door, but we did not exclude the possibility that the Viet Cong were capable of doing it.

We next called the extension of the Marine guard on the ground floor inside the embassy. I personally thought he must be dead. To my surprise, he answered, and although he was obviously very harassed, he was quite coherent. This was to be the first of many conversations with Sgt. [Ronald W.] Harper, who, despite his predicament, remained virtually our only source of information on what was happening in the compound.

Harper told us the VC [Viet Cong] were inside the compound but not in the embassy building itself. He said he could hear them talking outside the building. He did not know how many of them there were. A few minutes later Harper told us he had a wounded Marine on the ground floor. He asked us to come and get him.

Considerable Damage



With trepidation, I went downstairs in the elevator and stepped onto the ground floor. With the aid of Sgt. Harper, I picked up the wounded Marine and put him on the elevator. Griffin then came down and helped me assist him to the fourth floor. (Then, and always thereafter, we locked the elevators in place so that they could not be called down to the ground floor had the VC gotten into the building.) A hurried and fearful glance at the ground floor revealed that considerable damage had already been done. The situation of the one remaining Marine looked bleak. We carried the wounded man into the fourth floor duty room and placed him on the bed I had been sleeping in. He was covered in blood but did not appear to be critically wounded. His leg seemed broken and he was obviously suffering from shock. Unfortunately, none of us had any usable knowledge of first aid, and there was little we could do for him. He kept asking for a corpsman. We tried to call the 17th field hospital but could not get through. We gave the wounded man some water and two Bufferin tablets, and I took his .38 revolver. It was the only weapon I had and I was to carry it with me for the next 5 1/2 hours.

I called Calhoun's residence and passed on the above. I should note here that our communications all were working normally. I called Calhoun's residence on many occasions and always got through except when the line was busy, which it frequently was.

I next called Dr. [Harold J.] Holleran, the embassy physician, and told him we needed medical assistance. He said that in view of all the shooting the best thing he could do was stay home.

At this point, to my knowledge, the following people were in the building: myself, Griffin, Sgt. Harper, Fisher [an Army communications man] and three OSA communications personnel, a total of seven, not including the wounded Marine. [OSA, which stands for Office of the Special Assistant, was the name the Central Intelligence Agency went under in Vietnam.]

About 4 a.m., Maj. Hudson, called. We gave him an account of the situation as we saw it. He had already heard about the wounded Marine and said a Medevac helicopter would arrive shortly to evacuate him. We were to take him to the roof and wait for the chopper. Only the Marine guard on the ground floor, however, had keys to the two doors through which one must pass to get from the sixth floor, where the elevators end, to the roof. We called Harper and told him we needed the keys. He said someone should ride the elevator downstairs, stay in the corner of it so as not to be directly in the line of fire, and he would throw the keys in. Fisher accomplished this task and was back in a few minutes.

For greater security, we had in the meantime moved the wounded Marine into the code room. Had the VC broken into the building, as we expected they might at any time, we would not have had enough time to rescue him in room 433.

We then set about the cumbersome job of getting the wounded man up to the roof. Fisher, who was armed with a .38 revolver and a shotgun, opened the doors to the roof, while I had not seen before and who turned out to be the OSA duty officer, carried the Marine into the elevator, up to the sixth floor and then up two more flights of stairs to the roof. When the Medevac chopper failed to appear, we took him back to the sixth floor and placed him next to the stairwell on the blood-soaked mattress that had been in room 433. The Marine resisted leaving. He was still in shock and insisted on talking to the captain of the Marine guard unit. We let him talk to Maj. Hudson, of MACV [Military Assistance Command Vietnam] COC [Command Operations Center], who ordered him to leave.



At this point, two men, Fisher and the one OSA communicator, remained in a stairwell just below the roof waiting for the chopper. The OSA communicator had a snub-nosed .38 revolver and a two-way radio to the OSA duty officer, who, I noted later, carried a 9 mm. Beretta sub-machine gun.

Maj. Hudson had said the chopper would arrive in about 15 minutes. After a half-hour, we called Maj. Hudson and told him there was no sign of the chopper. He said it had been driven away, and even hit, by enemy fire. This event occurred about 5:30 a.m., and it was the first time any chopper had even tried to land. Sending another chopper would take more time, the major said, since it would have to come from Long Binh. Tan Son Nhut's operations had been curtailed by the military activity there.

A Request for Lights

Maj. Hudson then informed us that two choppers were on the way, one Medevac and one chopper carrying ammunition. It was essential, he said, that someone be on the roof with the wounded Marine to guide in the choppers. Maj. Hudson also said the pilots were having trouble finding the roof in the dark and asked that the lights be turned on. None of us knew where the lights were. Griffin called Harper downstairs who explained where the switches were. Griffin and I both went to the roof, so that the code room was empty and its inner cage door locked. We were no longer locking the vault door, inasmuch as the VC, so far as we knew, were not in the building. Had the enemy broken into the building with the specific purpose of entering the code room as soon as possible, they might have succeeded. It would have been possible to enter the stairwell from the ground floor, go up to the fourth

floor, and blow the steel door providing access to that floor. They would then have had to break open the wooden door inside the vault area. We assumed the enemy had no such precise objective but rather would have attempted to blow up the whole building.

We were relying on Harper's periodic assurance that the VC were not in the building, and we assumed they could not have gotten in without his knowing it. The main reason we left the vault door open, however, was that we could not have kept MACV COC regularly informed of the situation on the roof, both with regard to enemy fire and the whereabouts of the choppers, had we had to lock the vault every time we left the code room.

While we both were on the roof, Griffin put on the lights. It took a while to locate the right switches and see exactly what was lit up. We flashed the lights several times, while Fisher sat in the middle of the roof and described an arc with an electric lantern. These activities were according to Maj. Hudson's instructions. He also had warned us to get off the roof itself as a chopper came near, since if the first one was carrying ammunition and drew enemy fire, it would hover, drop its ammunition, and move out. The lights we had turned on were red, white, and blue runway-type lights and described the exact area of the roof. We called Maj. Hudson and so informed him. He instructed us to leave the lights on. We did. Nonetheless, according to the major, the choppers were having some trouble finding their way in. It still was dark, despite the flares that filled the skies.

I estimate that the wounded Marine was kept on a mattress on the sixth floor for about an hour. Once we were told that the Medevac and ammunition choppers were on their way, we carried him to the roof itself, where he waited another 45 minutes until the first chopper finally arrived.

“Stay Till the Shooting Stops”

On one of my many trips to the roof—I would say at about 6:15 a.m. -- I saw an armed Marine guard on the floor below the roof crawling around on his belly with a rifle. I asked him how he had gotten there, since I had assumed there was only one functioning Marine guard in the building, namely, the one on the ground floor. He replied that he had been there all the time. Not feeling inclined to ask him what he had been doing, I hurried back to the fourth floor code room to report on the situation to MACV [Military Assistance Command Vietnam] COC [Command Operations Center] and Mr. Calhoun's residence. A half-hour later, when I returned to the roof, I was told a chopper finally had arrived, offloaded three cases of M-16 tracer ammunition, and evacuated the wounded Marine.



Griffin and the OSA communicator discovered the chopper had left the ammunition in the middle of the helipad. Realizing that its presence there would hamper the arrival of other choppers, Griffin and the OSA communicator crawled out to the middle of the helipad and retrieved the ammunition. While they were in the middle of the roof, a chopper came in as if to land but could not because of enemy ground fire.

I might have questioned the emphasis on ammunition, since we had only the few weapons described above and, in any case, no M-16s. In my preoccupation, however, I simply assumed this move had some rational, though as yet unfathomed, purpose. I considered that the ammunition might be for later troop arrivals, but I rejected this idea, thinking they would certainly bring more than enough of their own. I place these events at about 6:45 a.m., nearly four hours after our ordeal had begun. To my consternation, I also discovered upon returning to the roof that both the armed Marine guard and the Army soldier had left with the chopper. The OSA man on the roof had no idea why they had done so. Neither did we.

We were thus reduced effectively to three men — Griffin, the OSA communicator, who remained just below the roof practically the entire time, and me. The OSA duty officer was also in the building, but I had only seen him when he helped me carry the wounded Marine from the code room to the sixth floor. There were also two other OSA communicators, one of whom I once saw in the hall of the fourth floor. Later I learned he had been handling incoming and outgoing calls, and I wish to say he was doing it very skillfully, even to the point of weeding out the nuisance calls.

Calls Received

At this point, I should mention some of the many calls we received. They are not in sequence, and I do not remember exactly when they came in. They were handled by Griffin and by me. Frequently, we were both talking at the same time on extensions 321 and 322.



Philip Habib [then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State] called twice from the White House Situation Room. The first time, I gave him a full account of what was happening as we saw it. I recall having told him, among other things, that the VC had surrounded the building inside the compound, which was in turn surrounded by U.S. MPs [Military Police] and the Vietnamese police, none of whom, however, had broken into the compound. (The VC thus were protected from the outside by the wall around the compound.) I said we had been promised a reaction force but none had arrived, nor, at that time, had any choppers arrived. This was about 5 a.m.

Later, the senior watch officer at the State Department Operations Center called and asked for a sitrep [situation report], which I provided.

Mr. Habib called on another occasion trying to reach Mr. Calhoun. All we could do was provide the

operator with Calhoun's PTT [telephone] number. On still another occasion, Mr. Habib called and spoke first to Griffin and then to me. As we were speaking, another rocket thudded into the building.

A Vietnamese policeman called and asked for one of the OSA men. I could not find him. When I called over to OSA communications from inside the code room, no one answered. I told the policeman to call another number Griffin had given me.

An American called and asked for Saigon Control, an OSA number that I did not know. The same person, I believe, also asked about the destruction of cryptographic equipment.

A Request to Leave

About 7:30, Mr. Kidston of USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] called on the phone in room 433. I had an urgent call from MACV at the time and could not continue the conversation. An American female communications employee called and asked about the destruction of communications equipment. She was appalled to learn that I was in the code room by myself and knew nothing about the equipment. I explained I had been asked by MACV COC and Mr. Calhoun to remain there and handle the incoming and outgoing calls, which were numerous. Griffin was then up on the roof. We took turns at these activities. Sometimes we were both on the roof, leaving no one in the code room.

A Vietnamese employee marooned in the unclassified communications room on the ground floor called and asked for permission to go home. He said he had been working many hours and was tired. I told him I was sorry but he would have to stay where he was until the shooting stopped.

About 5:30 a.m., more than an hour before the arrival of the ammunition chopper, Col. Garrison called to announce a plan to land a rifle platoon of infantry on the roof. Shortly afterwards, Colonel Fuller called from Second Field Force Victor in Long Binh to inform us of a plan to land a platoon from the 101st airborne. In subsequent conversations with Maj. Hudson, to whom we described the calls from Garrison and Fuller, we learned that the two colonels were talking about the same force.

Many conversations with Maj. Hudson ensued. In fact, we asked him to keep one line open, so that we could always get through to him to report on the latest developments. Long after the ammunition chopper had arrived and evacuated the three men, no other chopper came near, despite Maj. Hudson's assurances that they had to be there, since they had been dispatched some time previously. Frequently, the major was surprised to learn that none had landed. We called him regularly to say no choppers had come, although they could be seen orbiting a considerable distance away. Often, he asked us to hold the line while he checked on the choppers. Unfortunately, he could not call them directly, so coordinating all our information in one conversation proved nearly impossible.

Sometime after the air rifle platoon was to have landed, we called Maj. Hudson and pleaded with him somewhat despairingly for relief from the ground. Finally, he said a mechanized infantry unit with heavy armor was on its way. We asked how long it would take. He said the unit was on the outskirts of the city and moved slowly. It never arrived.

In the meantime, we kept passing out this information to Mr. Calhoun's residence, to the Marine guard downstairs, and occasionally to Washington. Twice Gen. [John H.] Cushman [Commanding Officer, Second Brigade, 101st airborne] called and asked for a report, which we provided as best we could. Between 6:30 and 7, Maj. Hudson called to say that there could be no landing before daylight because of poor visibility, despite the roof lights being on.

Is the Cavalry Coming?



Eventually, dawn broke. Maj. Hudson said the situation had become critical. We readily agreed. He said the latest plan was to gas the VC inside the compound and then land troops on the roof. The gas choppers were to be sent right away. We immediately called Sgt. Harper and told him of this plan. He pleaded with us to stop the use of gas, since by this time (about 7:30), the U.S. MPs had fought their way into the compound. We would be gassing our own men. I called Maj. Hudson back at once. After a 15-minute delay, he said the gas probably would be used anyway. At one point, he said not to worry, that the cavalry was coming. I had heard so much about the air cavalry that I thought he was being serious.

In the meantime, Mr. Sheinbaum, who had been receiving regular reports from us, had told us of [Col. George] Jacobson's presence in his house at the rear of the compound. (He was mission coordinator at the embassy.) Vietcong were either in or near the house. We assured him we would inform the paratroopers as soon as they arrived on the roof.

Maj. Hudson, apparently based on conversations with Sgt. Harper, had drawn up a battle plan that he said we were to convey to the platoon commander immediately upon the arrival of troops on the roof.

The plan was for the troops to deploy down the stairwells on each side of the building rather than go down the elevators, which were in the line of fire. Upon reaching the ground floor, they were to go out the side entrances and into the compound. These doors were locked from the outside and could be pushed open outwards.

The atmosphere in the code room was one of generally unrelieved tension mixed with frustration and helplessness. Sometimes the tensions would ease, but periodically, another rocket round would hit the wall to remind us of our plight. There were lulls in the firing, but they never lasted long.

Greeted by Paratroopers

Well after daybreak, trips to the roof revealed several orbiting helicopters, though none with any discernible intention of landing. We waited, always wondering why there was still no landing. About 8:15, I headed back up to the roof. The OSA communicator had gone back to his code room, so the roof

was unattended. As I stepped off the elevator on the sixth floor, I was greeted by a strange site. Standing before me were five paratroopers in full battle dress from the 101st airborne division. They carried M-16s, M-79 grenade launchers, hand grenades, and knives. I asked for the platoon commander. Maj. [Hillel] Schwartz stepped forward, and I told him I was the duty officer. He offered me a hand grenade, which I declined. He said 30 more men would land soon. I explained that we knew of no VC in the building. While the major took some notes, I described the building briefly, repeated MACV's deployment instructions, and informed him of Col. Jacobson's situation in the rear of the compound. I also urged him to watch for the one Vietnamese employee on the ground floor. Maj. Schwartz, fearing there actually might be VC in the building, deployed his men so as to secure it floor by floor, beginning with the sixth.

I took Schwartz to the fourth floor so that he could call the Marine guard on the ground and obtain the very latest information. He then rejoined his men. I called Sheinbaum to say the troops had landed and were deploying through the building. Two or three calls then came through from Bien Hoa Army. In each case, a general officer of the Army wanted urgently to speak with Maj. Schwartz. I said he was engaged in securing the embassy and could not be reached but that I would have him call back as soon as I could. Carpenter called and said he needed to know exactly how many VC had been inside the compound.

I then made several more trips to the roof to receive incoming paratroopers. About 45 minutes after Maj. Schwartz had landed, I went down to the ground floor. There had been no shooting for a while.

I was told all the VC were dead and that there were 19 of them. I went upstairs and relayed this information to Carpenter. I then went back downstairs.



As I was surveying the damage to the ground floor, someone told me Gen. [William C.] Westmoreland [Commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command] wanted to see me in the Marine guard's office. I went there, and Gen. Westmoreland said his advice was that the embassy be cleaned up as soon as possible and that its staff be at work by noon. He then said he wished to speak to Mr. Habib.

I returned to the fourth floor and put through a flash call to Mr. Habib in the White House situation room. As soon as Mr. Habib was on the line, Griffin went downstairs to fetch Gen. Westmoreland. In the meantime, I told Mr. Habib the embassy had been relieved and there were 19 dead VC in the compound. I also relayed Gen. Westmoreland's advice. After several minutes Gen. Westmoreland arrived and spoke for about 10 minutes with Mr. Habib.

Everything that happened after the paratroopers reached the ground floor, by which time all the Viet Cong had already been killed (or captured), is well known to many others. The above account is written from the vantage point of those inside the embassy. There are, of course, other accounts, each one conveying a different part of the picture. The only thing I would like to add is high praise for those with whom I worked inside the embassy through the siege. Griffin, in particular, shared all the tasks and never flinched or failed throughout the ordeal. Sgt. Harper's heroic stand on the ground floor needs no elaboration.



Plaque commemorating the Marine and Four MPs who died defending U.S. Embassy Saigon

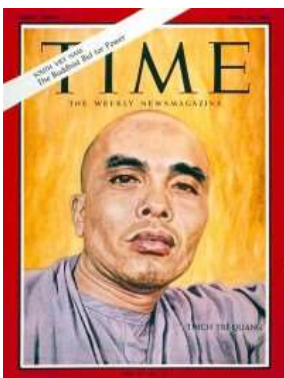
MOMENTS IN DIPLOMATIC HISTORY: **Reunited on Valentine's Day**



January 30th, 1968 marked the beginning of one of the most significant campaigns of the Vietnam War: the Tet Offensive. Named for the traditional Vietnamese New Year, Tết Nguyên Đán, it was the day the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces launched their surprise attacks on military and civilian command-and-control centers throughout South Vietnam, including Embassy Saigon. The normal celebratory drums and fireworks were replaced by the sound of gunfire. James R. Bullington served in Vietnam during Tet and spent the weeks during the battle holed up in Hue, not far from VC troops. Bullington recollects how he had to hide in a mission disguised as a priest as he worried about the safety of his bride-to-be.

He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy beginning July 2001.

“She was my interpreter”



Q: Where did you meet your wife?

BULLINGTON: She was a Foreign Service National (FSN) employee working at the Consulate in Hue.

She was my interpreter when I met with Thich Tri Quang [leader of the Buddhists].... He was well known, had even been on the cover of *Time* magazine just a couple of weeks earlier. The previous week he had sent a message through me to President Johnson, and I was to deliver that day the President's response. So I went to his headquarters at Tu Dam Pagoda and delivered the message. Tuy-Cam, who is now my wife, was with me to interpret, since Tri Quang spoke no French.

We had developed an interest in each other when I was there. After I went to the Embassy as Ambassador [Henry Cabot] Lodge's aide, she was transferred to AID [Agency for International Development] in Saigon, and the courtship became more serious.

I'd been engaged to a woman in Washington before I left for Vietnam, and the idea was when I finished my tour in Vietnam we were going to get married. But when I finished that first tour and came back I found that she had decided she didn't like the Vietnam War or anything to do with it including me. Then my courtship with Tuy-Cam really got serious....

I was in Vietnam until March of '68. This was my third job in Vietnam. First Hue, and then staff aide to Henry Cabot Lodge, and the third tour I came back to work in what by then was the CORDS [Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support] program in Quang Tri province, the northernmost province of South Vietnam.

I could have gone other places....But I went back to I Corps, mainly because by this time Tuy-Cam was there. She was in Da Nang, where the U.S. Consulate had been moved after it was burned in Hue. I wanted to be in that region so we could continue the courtship.

“I had quite an adventure during the Tet Offensive”



I had quite an adventure during the Tet Offensive. I was working in Quang Tri, but I had decided to go down to visit Hue, to see Tuy-Cam. We were engaged by this time. She was working in the Consulate General in Da Nang and had come up to her home in Hue, and I was to come down from Quang Tri, to be with her for her last Tet in Vietnam before we were to be married in March and go off to the U.S. So it was a big deal for her and the family.

I had done some favors for a French guy, he was Franco-Vietnamese actually, whose company ran the power plants in Hue and Quang Tri. I had put him on some Air America flights when the roads were blocked. So he had invited me when I visited Hue to stay in a little guesthouse they had at the power plant there.

I flew down on the afternoon Air America flight from Quang Tri, arriving in Hue on the afternoon of January 30th, 1968. This proved to be a poor choice of time to visit Hue. I went by the CORDS headquarters, and was able to borrow one of their USAID jeeps to get around town. We'd had some intelligence in Quang Tri that there might be attacks during that period, but it didn't seem to be anything unusual. There were always attacks of one sort or another.

When I got to Hue I asked at CORDS headquarters if anything special was going on, and they said no, though there were some low-level rumors that there might be problems during the Tet holidays. But nobody seemed to be especially concerned.

“Oh, my God, don't you see what's happened? There they are!”

We had dinner that night at Tuy-Cam's house. We had two other Americans there. One was Steve Miller, who was the USIA [U.S. Information Agency] representative in Thua Thin province, where Hue is located. He had been a Foreign Service classmate of mine. The other was Steve Haukness, who was a friend of Tuy-Cam's at the Consulate in Da Nang. He was a Foreign Service communicator. He had never visited Hue so he wanted to come up to the old imperial capital for some tourism. After a nice Vietnamese dinner at Tuy-Cam's house, the two Steves went to Steve Miller's house, and I went back to the power plant, to the guest room, to spend the night.

About two a.m., I was awakened by the sounds of incoming mortars. It was evident that there was some serious fighting going on. Of course there wasn't much I could do about it. I expected that it would be over by dawn.

There had never been a North Vietnamese or VC [Viet Cong] attack in a major city where they had come and stayed. It was always a hit-and-run thing. They would get out of town by dawn because by occupying fixed positions in an urban area they became vulnerable to counterattacks. By dawn things had quieted down, so I figured that's what had happened, they had come in and raided the town and blew up a bridge or something like that and were gone.



I walked out of the door of the guest room and across the courtyard into the power plant looking for my French friend. He was in the power plant, but when I got there he said, “Oh, my God, don’t you see what’s happened? There they are!” And he pointed to the other end of the courtyard where for the first time I saw armed men with pith helmets. They obviously weren’t friendlies. My friend said “Get back, get back,” and I did. I went back to the guest room and spent several very anxious hours there.

Eventually that afternoon my friend came by and knocked on the door. It was with some terror that I opened that door, not knowing what I would find, but thankfully it was my friend instead of the NVA [North Vietnam Army]. He told me a little more about what was going on. The power plant obviously was a main target of any invading army that’s going to occupy a city. The NVA had set up a command post right there in the power plant, not more than 25-30 yards from the guest room where I was staying. My friend said that it’s not a good idea to stay at the power plant, and I certainly agreed with that.

So we worked out a signal. That evening he was to stand across the courtyard and give me a thumbs-up when it was clear to move across. The first time we tried he gave me a ‘don’t come’ signal because the NVA were evidently looking. But the next time, about sundown, they were all busily cooking dinner around a campfire, and he signaled me to ‘come on.’

I walked across the courtyard with my heart in my throat. If the NVA soldiers noticed me they didn’t do anything. They probably assumed I was a Frenchman working at the power plant. I passed within 25-30 yards of them. When I got to the other side of the courtyard my friend guided me over some fences, through some backyards to a house where two French priests welcomed me.

“For the next nine days I became a French priest behind the North Vietnamese lines in Hue”

One, Father Cressonier, had been in Hue for 30 years with the Société des Missions Etrangères, the missionary society headquartered in Paris that was active in Vietnam. The other, Father Poncet, had been at Khe Sahn. Because of the fighting at Khe Sahn he had to leave a few weeks before that and was staying with Father Cressonier in Hue. Cressonier was a big guy like me, and he gave me one of his soutanes, the black gown, and the beads and the whole priestly outfit.

So for the next nine days I became a French priest behind the North Vietnamese lines in Hue. For an East Tennessee hillbilly raised in the Church of Christ, that it itself was quite a thrill.

A couple of times the local VC cadre came to the door, but they didn't demand to come in. If they did, the story was going to be that I was a visiting French-Canadian priest. I don't know whether that would have worked or not, but thankfully we didn't have to put it to the test.

The greatest danger turned out to be the counterattack, especially incoming artillery from friendly forces. The fighting was pretty intense around there, and we saw a lot of refugees and a lot of North Vietnamese units, including one tank, which they had evidently captured from the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam]. There was a lot of incoming mortar and artillery fire.

“The house became one-story all of a sudden”



Father Cressonier's house was a two-story French Colonial type. When the artillery started coming in heavily we would all go downstairs, and huddle under the staircase. And thankfully so, because we took a direct hit from what was probably a 105-mm artillery shell.

The house became one-story all of a sudden. The second story just was no longer there. But we were downstairs and didn't get hurt. After nine days of this, the U.S. Marines, working their way house to house in fierce combat throughout Hue, got to where I was, the priest's house, and liberated me. The company commander was Ron Christmas. He later went on to become a Marine Lieutenant General. I was never so glad to see anyone as Captain Christmas and his Marines.

They wrapped me in a blanket and carried me out as if I were a wounded Marine, so the neighbors would not see that these priests had been harboring an American. I had invited, in fact urged, the two priests to come with me to safety, but they had pastoral duties they felt kept them there. There were Catholic refugees they could now get to at a nearby cathedral, several thousand people. They wanted to stay and minister to the flock.

The Marines took me to MACV [Military Assistance Command – Vietnam] headquarters. I spent one night there, and was interviewed by reporters. The next day the story of my liberation was on the front page of *The Washington Post*. In fact that's how my parents found out about it, through a newspaper report. They'd been told by the State Department that I was missing. They eventually saw the newspaper report from *The Washington Post* via the Chattanooga paper.

“I told them I had to go back to look for Tuy-Cam”



After another day at MACV, I went to Da Nang to take a bath, which I hadn't had in nearly two weeks, and get some food as well as to report in to the CORDS regional headquarters there. After the staff at CORDS debriefed me, I told them I had to go back to look for Tuy-Cam.

Even though the house where she lived was no more than 500 yards away from Father Cressonier's house, there was no way I could get there because it was on the other side of the Phu Cam canal, which was one of the many lines along which the fighting took place. I knew the Marines would eventually get there, so I wanted to go back to Hue.

My CORDS bosses told me, "No, you can't go." I told them, "The hell with that, I'm going."

By that time I'd been around long enough and knew the territory well enough to arrange my own travel, so I just went out to Da Nang airbase where I knew the appropriate sergeant. I got on a helicopter back to Hue, to look for Tuy-Cam.

When I landed at the helicopter pad, she was there! She and her family had just made it to safety that morning, and she had come to the helicopter pad to look for me, and was trying to go to Da Nang. So that's where I found her.

We were reunited on Valentine's Day at the helicopter pad outside the MACV compound in Hue.

Her family was at a nearby refugee camp. She had two brothers who were military officers, one was an ARVN officer and the other was an Air Force cadet. They were both home on leave for Tet. They had successfully hidden in the attic of the house for the first few days. But eventually because of all the incoming ordnance they decided it wouldn't be safe where they were. The family all left the house and was on the way out of town with other refugees when a group of VC or NVA stopped them and took out all the young males in the group.

Tuy-Cam's two brothers were taken out and apparently shot. They were never heard from again.

[Tuy-Cam and I] got married. It was near the end of my tour, in March. We got married at the Consulate General in Da Nang. Before Tet, we had planned a traditional Vietnamese style wedding in Hue, but now we couldn't do that. We organized the wedding right at the Consulate.



APPENDIX: DIPLOMATIC DICTIONARY TERMS

(Source: United States Diplomacy Center, <https://diplomacy.state.gov/>)

A

ACCORDS

International agreements originally thought to be for lesser subjects than those covered by treaties, but now really treaties by a different name.

AMBASSADOR

The chief of a diplomatic mission; the ranking official diplomatic representative of a country to the country to which s/he is appointed, and the personal representative of his/her own head of state to the head of state of the host country. Ambassador is capitalized when referring to a specific person (i.e., Ambassador Smith)

ATTACHÉ

An official assigned to a diplomatic mission or embassy. Usually, this person has advanced expertise in a specific field, such as agriculture, commerce, or the military.

ASYLUM

To receive asylum is to receive protection from another nation, in some cases one's own nation. This can occur by allowing individuals to find refuge within the grounds of an embassy (not generally done in American embassies); and when one state allows someone to live within its borders, out of reach of the authority of a second state from which the person seeks protection.

B

BILATERAL

Bilateral discussions, negotiations, or treaties are between a sovereign state and one other entity, either another sovereign state or an international organization. The relationship between two nations is referred to as a bilateral relationship.

BREAKING RELATIONS

The formal act of severing diplomatic relations with another nation to underscore disapproval of its actions or policies. It is only done under severe situations.

C

CHANCERY

The office space where the Chief of Mission and his staff work. This office is sometimes called the embassy, but, technically, the embassy refers to the diplomatic delegation itself.

CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES

Formerly, a chargé d'affaires was the title of a chief of mission, inferior in rank to an ambassador or a minister. It is still used as the title of the head of a US mission where the US and other nation do not have

full diplomatic relations. Today with the a.i. (ad interim) added, it designates the senior officer taking charge for the interval when a chief of mission is absent from his/her post or the position is vacant.

CHIEF OF MISSION

Usually called an ambassador, this is the ranking officer in an embassy or permanent mission and the personal representative of the head of state of his/her nation.

COMMUNIQUÉ

A brief public summary statement issued following important bilateral or multilateral meetings.

CONVENTION

An agreement between two or more states, often concerning matters of common interest such as commerce.

COUNTRY DESK

The Department of State has an office for each country with whom the U.S. shares diplomatic relations. These offices are often called country desks, and if a large country is involved, the desk is likely to be staffed by a large number of officers. A smaller country may require a one-officer desk only.

COUNTRY TEAM

An interagency group made up of the heads of each State Department section in the embassy and the heads of the other U.S. government agencies represented at post. The country team meeting represents a regular occasion for the sharing of information among sections and agencies, and an opportunity to coordinate activities.

CREDENTIALS

The name for letters given to an ambassador by his/her chief of state, and addressed to the chief of state of the host country. They are delivered to the latter by the ambassador in a formal credentials ceremony, which generally takes place shortly after his/her arrival at a new post.

CONSULATE

An office that is part of an embassy or established by one nation in an important city of another nation for the purpose of supporting and protecting its citizens traveling or residing there. All consulates, whether located in the capital city or in other communities, are administratively under the ambassador and the embassy.

CONSULATE GENERAL

The person that is head of the Consulate, also known as the "CG."

CONVENTION

An assembly of persons who meet for a common purpose especially a meeting of delegates for the purpose of formulating a written agreement on specific issues. The word also refers to the written agreement itself.

D

DEFECTION

When an official gives up his or her allegiance to one state in preference for another, usually because of disagreement over government policy, often immigrating to or seeking asylum in the new state. Defecting generally indicates a desire to participate in opposition or political activity that is illegal or impossible in the original country, differentiating it from a simple change in citizenship.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The oldest and head agency in the President's cabinet. The Secretary of State leads the Department of State in carrying out the President's foreign policies. The Department was initially founded as the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1781 and then renamed in 1789 in the Constitution as the Department of State.

DIPLOMACY

The art and practice of conducting negotiations and maintaining relations between nations; skill in handling affairs without arousing hostility.

DIPLOMAT

A diplomat is one employed or skilled in diplomacy.

DIPLOMATIC COURIER

A member of a diplomatic service entrusted with bearing messages is referred to as a diplomatic courier.

DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

The formal protection given to diplomats by their host country which shields them from prosecution or arrest. It also allows freedom of movement and is considered customary worldwide except in special circumstances.

E

EMBASSY

The diplomatic delegation from one country to another. Embassy is often used to refer to the chancery – containing the office of the chief of mission, or ambassador – and other buildings for the offices of diplomatic staff.

EMBARGO

An embargo is an order of a government prohibiting the departure of commercial ships and other vehicles from its ports. It is a legal prohibition on commerce.

ENVOY

In the past a diplomatic minister who was accredited to a foreign government and who ranked between an ambassador and a resident minister was also called "envoy extraordinary". Today, the term is generally synonymous with diplomat, or in the case of a Special Envoy, a person sent to deal with a specific issue.

EXTRADITION

The legal process by which an accused or confirmed criminal is transferred from one country to another. Generally, treaties signed between governments determine the precise requirements, rules, and exemptions for transferring suspected criminals from one sovereign legal authority to another.

EXPULSION

The formal deportation of a diplomat, often as a form of protest against the diplomat's home country or as a result of actions by the diplomat, such as espionage.

F

FOREIGN AID

Assistance (often in the form of economic aid) provided by one nation to another.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The relations among states within the international system, including the roles of states and international organizations; can also include the roles of non-governmental organizations and multinational corporations.

FOREIGN POLICY

In the United States, the plan or strategy that the President and senior policymakers define and establish to achieve national objectives and interests.

FORMAL DIPLOMACY

This is government-to-government diplomacy – also called Track I Diplomacy – that goes through formal, traditional channels of communication to communicate with foreign governments (written documents, meetings, summits, diplomatic visits, etc). This type of diplomacy is conducted by diplomats of one nation with diplomats and other officials of another nation or international organization.

I

INFORMAL DIPLOMACY

Informal diplomacy includes Public Diplomacy which involves government-to-people diplomacy and reaching out to non-executive branch officials and the broader public, particularly opinion-shapers, in foreign countries, explaining both foreign policy and the national context out of which that policy arises. Public Diplomacy is carried out by both diplomats and, under their programs and auspices, non-officials such as academic scholars, journalists, experts in various fields, members of non-governmental organizations, public figures such as state and local government officials, and social activists.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (IO)

An organization with an international membership, mission, or presence. There are two main types: International nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that

operate internationally, such as the International Olympic Committee or the International Committee of the Red Cross. Intergovernmental organizations, also known as international governmental organizations (IGOs), the type of organization most closely associated with the term "international organization" are organizations that are made up primarily of sovereign states (referred to as member states). Examples include the United Nations; NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization); OAS (Organization of American States); APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation); ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations); and the WTO (World Trade Organization).

L

LOCALLY EMPLOYED STAFF

Staff that work at a Foreign Service post (Embassy/Consulate/Mission) abroad. The overwhelming majority are citizens of the country the post is located in, but some are American citizens living in the country and family members of Foreign Service Officers and other full time USG employees who are assigned to a post. More than 53,000 Locally Employed Staff work at U.S. Missions around the world. They provide local expertise, language skills, continuity and contacts within the host country. They are indispensable full-fledged members of our American missions abroad.

M

MISSION

A diplomatic representation to an international organization. Mission is also used to refer to an embassy.

MINISTERIAL

A formally arranged meeting of ministers of various states, such as the Defense or Foreign Ministers of the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

MULTILATERAL

Involving more than two nations (which would be bilateral). International organizations, such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, are multilateral in nature.

N

NEGOTIATION

Discussion between the representatives of two or more parties intended to reach a compromise on a disputed topic of interest. Governmental negotiations can be bilateral (between two states or between a state and a non-state entity, such as an International Organization or Non-Governmental Organization) or multilateral.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION (NGO)

A private institution that is independent of the government.

O

OPERATIONS CENTER

The Operations Center (Ops Center) is the Secretary's and the Department's communications and crisis management center. Working 24 hours a day, the Operations Center monitors world events, prepares briefings for the Secretary and other Department principals, and facilitates communication between the Department and the rest of the world. The Operations Center also coordinates the Department's response to crises and supports task forces, monitoring groups, and other crisis-related activities.

P

PASSPORT

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue, or verify United States passports.

PERSONA NON GRATA

A Latin phrase meaning “unwelcome person.” As a legal term, it refers to the practice of a state prohibiting a diplomat from entering the country as a diplomat, or censuring a diplomat already resident in the country for conduct unbecoming of the status of a diplomat.

PROTOCOL

Refers to the ceremonial side of diplomacy, including matters of diplomatic courtesy and precedence.

R

RATIFICATION

To approve and sanction formally, as with a treaty.

RECOGNITION

Commonly used in connection with the recognition by one state of the existence of another state (for example when a new one is formed), or the existence of a government which is in effective control of a state.

S

SANCTIONS

A form of hard power, these are coercive measures taken by one or more states to protest another state's actions and to force a change of behavior. Although sanctions may technically include military action, they usually refer to measures taken by diplomats in lieu of military action. Diplomatically, sanctions may include the breaking of formal relations or the removal of a country's embassy. Other forms include economic sanctions to ban certain types of trade, and sports sanctions to prevent a country's people and teams from competing in international events.

SMART POWER

The flexible and combined use of hard power – military force or economic sanctions – and soft power – diplomatic and cultural influence – to overcome a foreign policy challenge.

SUMMIT

A formally arranged meeting of heads of governments.

T

TREATY

An agreement or arrangement made by negotiation; a contract in writing between two or more political authorities such as sovereign states, formally signed by authorized representatives, and usually approved by the legislature of the state.

V

VISA

A document issued by a country giving an individual permission to formally request entrance to the country during a given period of time and for certain purposes and usually stamped or glued inside a passport, or sometimes issued as separate pieces of paper.