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Sent: Wednesday, January 19, 2011 1:30 PM
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Cc: Abedin, Huma; Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Diplomacy in Tough Places

This was posted on "This I Believe," an NPR website, by one of our FSOs. You will want to read it – and I love the image of diplomats as "first responders." I would have worked it into the QDDR if I had thought of it. AM

Diplomacy in Tough Places

Aaron Snipe - Falls Church, Virginia

Entered on July 1, 2010

Themes: [America & patriotism](#), [charity & service](#), [democracy](#), [patriotism](#)

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I'm a United States diplomat and I believe in diplomacy in tough places. Far away from the cocktail parties in cushy Western capitals that still represent the narrow stereotype of my chosen profession, American diplomacy is being practiced in the most difficult places and under the most challenging of circumstances.

For this Windsor-knotted, pinstriped, wing-tipped American diplomat, and for my many intrepid colleagues of the United States Foreign Service serving around the world in places where there is no wine, nor cheese, the practice of diplomacy in tough places has always been the rule rather than the exception.

From Badghis to Bujumbura, from Juba to Muthanna, America's diplomats have consistently answered the call to serve on the front lines of diplomacy, representing the breadth and depth of America and all that she stands for. Without the camouflage of our uniformed military siblings, the slow and steady cadence of "wing tips" rather than "boots on the ground" continues to walk America's ideas closer to foreign audiences around the globe. Through veterinary support to rural farmers, technical assistance for local electoral commissions, and strengthening the voices of rural women through artistic expression, diplomacy gives America the opportunity to reach that sweet spot of diplomatic engagement; what Edward R. Murrow called, "the last three feet."

When earthquakes rumble, when tsunamis roar, when terrorism rages in places most Americans know only from headlines, the men and women of the Foreign Service are often tasked with being our nation's first responders.

My last overseas diplomatic assignment – a year spent on a civilian-led provincial reconstruction team in Iraq's deep south – taught me many things about diplomacy. Chief among them was this: in the toughest neighborhoods on earth, when the front lines of war transform into the main streets and peace and stability, diplomacy must be first on the scene. It is neither convenient, nor always safe, to practice diplomacy in such places, but it is absolutely necessary if America is to successfully engage the world.

As I head back to Iraq for another year of diplomatic service in a few short days, I count myself fortunate to be among the many "wing tips on the ground" who represent America and practice diplomacy in tough places.

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