

Nancy J. Powell  
Confirmation Testimony  
As Director General of the Foreign Service  
And Director of Human Resources

June 16, 2009

Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee to serve as Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources at the Department of State. I am grateful for the confidence that President Obama and Secretary Clinton have shown in selecting me for this position.

If confirmed, I will have the responsibility for overseeing the recruitment, assignment, well-being, professional development, and retirement of the Department's greatest resource: its people, including Civil Service, Foreign Service, and locally engaged employees. I am excited by the prospect of joining the Human Resources professionals at the State Department to make this the most efficient, effective, and productive State Department possible. I am honored to serve.

I have been privileged to work for the State Department for thirty-two years. I believe we have a great team of U.S. Foreign and Civil Service employees, Locally Employed Staff, and retirees serving at our missions around the world and in Washington. Many serve under very difficult circumstances, far away from family and friends. More than 900 of our overseas jobs are at unaccompanied posts. Too many of our employees have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving overseas. If confirmed, one of my top priorities will be to ensure that we are providing comprehensive support to our employees and their families before, during, and after their overseas assignments. They deserve nothing but the best service because that is what they give to our country.

One of the Secretary Clinton's highest priorities is to increase our diplomatic staffing by 25% over the next four years. It is an ambitious but achievable goal, and can be achieved while maintaining the high standards that have allowed the Department over the years to attract and retain the nation's best. This hiring increase has been termed "Diplomacy 3.0: Diplomacy, Development, and Defense," reflecting the need to develop State Department personnel's skills to support an integrated approach to foreign policy goals.

The President's 2009 Budget will allow the Department of State to hire 2300 new Civil Service and Foreign Service employees this year, including 1200 new employees above attrition. These new personnel will fill existing vacancies, improve coordination with the Department of Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development and other interagency partners, and provide us opportunities to increase our training in critical skills.

Recruitment outreach is critical to Diplomacy 3.0. I look forward to leading the team which is already aggressively recruiting people who have skills in critically needed foreign languages and to fill deficits in some career tracks and specialist categories. To meet our needs we must take

advantage of all the tools at our disposal. I have been impressed with the use of the latest technologies, including the Facebook “Careers in Foreign Affairs” page, in addition to Twitter and Linked-In. I will be reviewing the efforts to ensure that security and medical clearances for these new employees as well as their training is handled as expeditiously as possible.

I share the Secretary’s commitment to a merit-based workforce that reflects the diversity of America. The Department has made enormous progress during my 32 years in the Foreign Service, but we must continue to work diligently toward this goal.

As we work to expand and diversify the Foreign Service, we will not lose focus on the equally important task of ensuring that our current work force is prepared for and deployed to those assignments most critical to our foreign policy goals. Efforts are already underway to fill vacancies for 2010 in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. I expect Foreign Service members will volunteer in sufficient numbers to fill these difficult and dangerous assignments, as they have in the past. If confirmed, I will work with others in the Department to strengthen the training and support offered to these members of the Foreign Service as well as to their families. We must ensure that all of our people have the skills and leadership capabilities to contribute fully to the inter-agency efforts needed to meet the foreign policy challenges our nation faces.

Our 9,000 Civil Service colleagues provide in-depth expertise and continuity in accomplishing all aspects of the Department’s mission. We must ensure that they have all the training and mentoring that they need to succeed. Currently, the Department has a range of leadership development and fellowship programs for Civil Service employees, and we will work to find more ways to give them opportunities for development at all levels.

The Department employs over 40,000 Locally Employed Staff in our missions around the world. Without their professional and technical expertise, we would be unable to achieve our foreign policy objectives. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that their compensation packages reflect their invaluable contributions to our work and the importance we place on their service.

Foreign Service Overseas Comparability Pay remains a significant priority at the Department of State. Foreign Service employees’ basic pay should not be cut by 23% when they serve overseas. I look forward to working with you, Madame Chairman, and other members of the Committee, so that there will be progress on this issue.

I was delighted, but not surprised, that State Department employees ranked the Department among the top five large federal agencies in the 2009 *Best Places to Work*. If confirmed, I will do all that I can to make it an even better place to work.

In conclusion, Madam Chairman, I am greatly honored to have the opportunity to appear before you and the members of the committee. I ask for your support in ensuring that we are able to assist U.S. citizens, advance America’s interests abroad, and provide our employees with the resources they need to get the job done. If confirmed, I look forward to helping the Secretary make certain that we are fully prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities before us.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.