



Thugs and Drugs

Q: *When did you know you wanted to be a Foreign Service officer?*

A: I was introduced to the Foreign Service life when I was very young. Every embassy around the world has a program called Summer Hire Program for children of employees in the embassy. I worked in the consular section as a high school student, and the idea grew over time as a natural thing I knew I wanted to do. I also returned to Damascus to work as an intern with what was then the U.S. Information Agency. I took the exam to see if that path would work—and it worked!

Q: *What has been the most interesting part of your posts as a Foreign Service officer?*

A: The variety of work I've been involved in and the impact I've had. Everything from seeing quotes from a speech I wrote for an ambassador used in the local news

programs to conceptualizing and executing a multinational judicial conference and briefing a U.S. Supreme Court Justice on his role and participation.

Q: *Briefly describe the differences between a political officer and consular officer.*

A: They are two separate tracks (and most recently I have been a narcotics officer). A consular officer's bread and butter work is processing visas, processing people immigrating to the U.S., reuniting families, and assisting American citizens living in the host country. A political officer is more of a journalist. They are expected to develop an understanding of the host country, its issues, and its relevance to the U.S., and reporting back to Washington on those issues, providing the local context and point of view, as well as offering analysis for the policy makers in D.C. They also provide spot reports as results are coming up in developing events such as major protests, the fall of the government, or conflict. A political officer also assists Washington in drafting major reports to Congress, such as the Human Rights report, the Trafficking in Persons report, and the Religious Freedom report, among others. They place observers in various points around the country so our policy makers in Washington have a full arsenal of information of what they need. It's more writing, whereas a consular officer deals with the adjudication of U.S. law.

No Events