I. SUMMARY

Under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA), the Department of State is tasked with training Foreign Service Officers in human rights broadly and religious freedom specifically. The Department of State’s Foreign Service Institute (FSI) works closely with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) and the Office of International Religious Freedom (DRL/IRF) to do so. Training in human rights and religious freedom begins when an officer enters the Foreign Service and continues through various levels and career stages.

FSI and DRL continue to offer Promoting Human Rights and Democracy, presented three times a year. This course featured specific modules dealing with aspects of religious freedom. FSI and DRL also continue to offer a Religion and Foreign Policy course twice a year. Over the past year, DRL has developed and offered five region-specific Religious Freedom Training Workshops, reaching some 90 officers and local staff currently serving at embassies and consulates abroad. During FSI language and area studies classes, class reading materials and language learning modules also regularly address the topic of religious freedom and tolerance, and guest speakers also address these themes.

II. COURSES OFFERED

A. Courses on Human Rights and Religious Freedom

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY (PP530)
Offered since October 2010, this course provides a broad overview of human rights-related issues and a deeper examination of key current issues. FSI offers this course three times a year to provide entry- and midlevel officers and locally
employed overseas staff tools and best practices for promoting human rights and democracy, including religious freedom, in the field. FSI and DRL jointly developed the curriculum, which includes a session specifically devoted to religious freedom, along with other sessions that address issues relevant to religious freedom including human rights law, working with nongovernmental organizations, and monitoring and reporting human rights abuses.

**RELIGION AND FOREIGN POLICY (PP225)**
First offered in 2011, the course content continues to be a collaborative effort between FSI, DRL, and the Office of Religion and Global Affairs (S/RGA). The course exposes U.S. officials to common themes appropriate for engaging religious and faith-based communities in the field and teaches best practices for incorporating religious community outreach into broader U.S. foreign policy objectives and post engagements. Through a focus on tradecraft skills, the course trains entry- and midlevel officers who will serve in Washington and in embassies and consulates overseas to use the annual International Religious Freedom Report and other tools to expand outreach to, and strengthen relationships with, members of religious communities. Course topics include: tools for interfaith outreach and dialogue, the relationship between religion and foreign policy, the promotion of religious freedom, religion, and national security, engaging religious actors, addressing anti-Semitism and promoting tolerance, vulnerable religious minorities, the role of women in religious communities, and U.S. initiatives to prevent and counter violent extremism.

**INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REGIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP (EXWKP1001)**
First offered in 2015, these two-day workshops help give officers and locally employed staff currently serving in the field a clearer understanding of what religious freedom entails, why it matters in the broader context of U.S. foreign policy, and how most effectively to promote these rights from an embassy or consulate. Specific modules cover engagement with governments and local civil society, religious freedom assistance programs, the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution, and the religious freedom visa ineligibility. These workshops are conducted by DRL/IRF staff at Foreign Service Institute training facilities.
around the world. The first such training took place in September 2015 in Bangkok for staff serving at posts in South and East Asia, followed by three individual sessions at the FSI facility in Frankfurt for staff serving in Africa (March 2016), the Middle East (March 2016), and Europe and Central Asia (May 2016). In May 2016, the Department conducted a session for staff posted throughout the Western Hemisphere at the State Department’s Florida Regional Center in Fort Lauderdale.

RELIGION AND CONFLICT (PP467)
Additionally, FSI offers a distance learning course entitled Religion and Conflict, designed to help foreign affairs professionals better assess religion-relevant dynamics in conflict and better engage religious leaders and communities in conflict mitigation efforts. FSI recommends Religion and Conflict to those interested in improving their understanding of religious dynamics; exploring ways to promote tolerance across religious groups; developing relationships with representatives of faith communities; and ultimately addressing drivers of conflict. The Religion and Conflict course – developed through the leadership of the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, a grant from the Una Chapman Cox Foundation, and expertise from members of an interagency Religion and Conflict Working Group – grew out of the work of the Secretary’s Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society Initiative and its Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group. The course is a complement to the four-day classroom-based course Religion and Foreign Policy.

UPDATING THE ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT AND THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT (PP470)
Developed for those at post and in the Department who draft, edit, and clear these reports, this distance learning course provides detailed instruction on the annual update process. It also includes information on the legislative underpinning of the reports, tips on how to collect information throughout the year for both reports, and notes on how to develop a deeper understanding of the instructions for the two reports.

B. Additional Training on Human Rights and Religious Freedom at FSI
DRL works closely with FSI to integrate material on human rights and religious freedom into training at all levels. Officers receive training from when they enter the Foreign Service and when they prepare for their first consular, political, economic, or public diplomacy tours. Annual FSI training courses for locally employed staff serving in political and combined political/economic sections overseas also include modules on human rights and religious freedom.

DRL and FSI cooperate closely to incorporate information about human rights and religious freedom into the language studies and geographical area studies courses. DRL officers participate in presenting topics such as international human rights law, including the right to freedom of religion; theological beliefs of different religious groups; state actions against members of religious groups and violations and abuses of religious freedom; involvement of members of religious groups in politics; diplomatic tools used by the United States to promote respect for religious freedom; means of protection of those who have fled religious persecution; and the relationships among religious freedom, democracy, and national security.

In addition, FSI offers more than 25 two-week cultural/regional area studies courses, all of which cover the role of religion, including: specifics of religious practice, religious sensitivities, differing ways of thinking about religious identity, the relationship of religion to broader questions of citizenship and enfranchisement, and the link between human rights broadly and religious freedom. FSI also offers a course specifically on Islam and Muslim communities: Islam: Formation, Institutions, and Reform. Among other topics, this course addresses countering violent extremism, and inclusion as a way of moderating religiously based political movements.

III. BACKGROUND MATERIAL ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM PROVIDED TO STUDENTS AT FSI

DRL continually updates information on the humanrights.gov website and material distributed at FSI courses. It also has revamped or created intranet sites containing background materials on religious freedom and highlighting best practices for protecting and promoting religious freedom.
DRL intranet sites, which are available only to Department of State and embassy personnel, provide background on human rights and religious freedom issues, including country-specific information on religious freedom issues, information on the designation of Countries of Particular Concern, and general information on the Office of International Religious Freedom.

The following background materials related to religious freedom are made available to FSI students:

- [www.humanrights.gov](http://www.humanrights.gov) (internet website also available to the public)
- Annual Reports on International Religious Freedom from 1999 through the present
- Department statements on religious freedom, specific to various countries
- Policy statements of the Secretary and other U.S. government officials on religious freedom
- Diplopedia, an intranet wiki, contains an online compendium of posts’ engagement with religious entities as a source for best practices in promoting religious freedom.
- Highlights from Key International Documents: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 18); and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (articles 18, 26, & 27).