

Good News at State

Mary Good

Dateline 20 September 2000: "I am very pleased to announce today that Dr. Norman Neureiter has joined the Department of State as my Science and Technology Advisor. Dr. Neureiter has served with great distinction in the industry, most recently as Vice President of Texas Instruments Japan; in the federal government, including the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; and with several advisory boards within the science and academic communities. He is eminently qualified to help the Department carry out the critical mandate that I have set forth of ensuring that science, technology and health issues are fully integrated into U.S. foreign policy. I am delighted to welcome him to my leadership team."

This announcement by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright of Dr. Neureiter's appointment marks the culmination of a long campaign by Secretary Albright, the science and technology community, and various friends of the U.S. Department of State. Concerns about science capacity at State have been around for some time, beginning with precipitous declines in the number of science counselors in U.S. embassies abroad. A National Research Council (NRC) study, commissioned at Secretary Albright's request and released in October of 1999, pointed out that the department needs to make expertise in science, technology, and health an asset in its foreign service professionals, observing that such competence is now often a career handicap. It recommended restoration of the science counselor track. And, perhaps most important, it urged the secretary to appoint a "highly qualified senior advisor on science, technology and health."

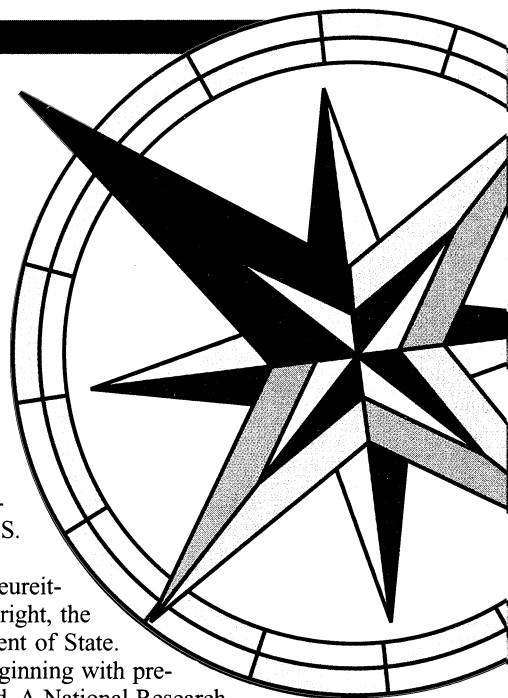
That recommendation is abundantly fulfilled with the appointment of Dr. Neureiter. An organic chemist with a doctorate from Northwestern University, he began a career dotted with international assignments as a Fulbright scholar at the University of Munich, served the State Department as a Foreign Service officer in Bonn and Warsaw, and was the National Science Foundation's director for the U.S.-Japan Cooperative Science Program. His career in research began with Humble Oil and ended with his retirement from Texas Instruments (TI) as Vice President for TI Asia. In my own interactions with him as a colleague on the U.S.-Japan Joint High Level Advisory Committee, I found him a person of unusual intellectual breadth and high integrity. Imagine the job description they must have written at State: "Distinguished scientist, with broad international experience and knowledge of the department; must speak six languages." It is good news indeed that they found someone who could fill it!

The appointment is a major statement of the importance of science and technology policy in the continuing development of U.S. relationships around the world. It is certainly time for that kind of statement. Issues ranging from nonproliferation and arms control to global changes in environmental quality and international health present problems that bear in increasingly important ways on the national interest. And science activities continue to become more international. There is thus every reason for instituting a formal office through which the secretary can be supplied with knowledgeable advice on issues of this kind.

The Department of State has long labored in an environment of limited resources and has had to accommodate by reallocation. In the past, these shifts have tended to disfavor the role of science. The creation of this new office is the result of outside studies, including the NRC report, and of internal department activities aimed at shaping a new role for science and technology advice. Its welcome implementation in this appointment offers a real opportunity for the science and technology community to support the initiative, in ways that will be helpful to the new office. We hope that the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) might play a useful bridging role between the department, the academic community, and other professional and scientific societies. One purpose would be to identify mechanisms for enhancing science and technology training for department personnel, for supplementing the flow of appropriately prepared fellows to the department, and perhaps creating fellowship opportunities for faculty sabbaticals at State.

It is worth noting that this came about in part because the AAAS played an institutional role—in several ways, but not least through the constructive, continued initiative taken by William T. Golden. The long-time treasurer of the AAAS and the Presidential Adviser with the longest term of service, Bill has long advocated a larger science presence at State. It is a pleasure to congratulate him on this success.

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"[A] new role
for science and
technology
advice."

EDITORIAL

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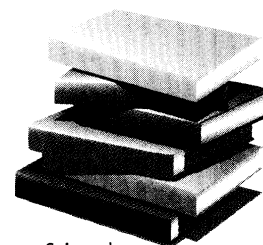
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