

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PARIS

THE AMBASSADOR

March 18, 2011

Dear Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership Award Committee:

Please accept this letter as my nomination of An Le for the 2011 Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership. An served as U.S. Embassy Paris Management Minister-Counselor from 2007 to 2010 and reported to me during the last year of his tour of duty. An was an outstanding member of my senior management team and invaluable advisor. I recommend him for this award with the greatest enthusiasm and without reservation.

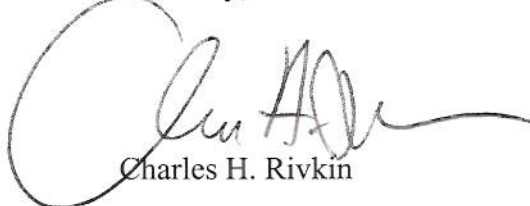
An consistently demonstrated throughout his three-year tour precisely the exceptional executive leadership, creativity, operational proficiency, and professionalism that this award was created to honor. It may sound like hyperbole, but I assure you it is not: An is a management genius. He significantly transformed our operations in Paris and produced long-term management improvements that will benefit Mission France for years to come. Thanks to An, costs are down, customer service is up, morale is high, efficiency is enhanced, and the interests of the American taxpayer have been safeguarded.

An's work also inspired others to act proactively and effectively, for the common good of the community, to improve our operations and to maximize customer service and cost effectiveness. As a senior manager and diplomat, An set a high standard for stewardship of our resources and was a model in leading a team of colleagues in complex tasks in the service of U.S. interests and the promotion of good relations with the French government.

An's talents and dedication are truly extraordinary. I feel profoundly fortunate to have worked with him in my first year as U.S. Ambassador to France. For his distinguished performance as a senior manager and American diplomat, I take pride in nominating An Le for the 2011 Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership with the following proposed citation: For sustained excellence in innovation, efficiency, and customer service; for brilliance in devising concrete solutions to challenging problems; and for dedication to the highest principles of the United States and its people, at U.S. Embassy Paris, France.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding An Le's qualifications for this award. He possesses in abundance all of the qualities the award is meant to recognize.

Sincerely,



Charles H. Rivkin

Roger W. Jones Award Nomination

The criteria for this prestigious award for federal career executives (members of SES) are demonstrated exceptional capabilities in the following areas:

- superior leadership which has resulted in outstanding organizational achievements
- a strong commitment to bringing about effective continuation of government by helping to develop the careers of people who will serve as managers and executives in the future federal service

Presidential appointees and other administration appointees are invited each spring to submit nominations of career executives responsible to them who have demonstrated outstanding executive leadership.

To nominate a candidate, the following four documents are requested:

- a brief biographical sketch including employment and significant awards (not to exceed two pages)
- a narrative description of the nominee's superior leadership that resulted in outstanding organizational achievement, making clear the achievement's nature and significance and the career executives specific role (not to exceed three pages)
- a narrative description of the nominee's strong commitment to effective continuity of government, through successful development of managers and executives, including the nominee's specific actions and success in institutionalizing the development of career executives and individual managers and executives (not to exceed three pages)
- a signed cover letter from the head of the agency, or other appropriate administration appointee, recommending the nominee for the award.

Nominations are due April 8, 2011 and may be [submitted online](#) or by mail to:

Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership
Office of the Dean
School of Public Affairs, Ward 310
American University
4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016-8022
202-885-2941
rogerjonesaward@american.edu

A brief biographical sketch including employment and significant awards (not to exceed two pages)

An Le, a member of the Senior Foreign Service since 2001 with the rank of Minister Counselor, arrived in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, on August 6, 2010, for a three-year assignment as Consul General. A resident of Virginia, he received both his Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering in 1976 and Master of Science in Engineering Administration in 1978 from George Washington University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1991, after having worked as a civil servant with the U.S. Department of the Navy for 15 years.

An Le was the recipient of the 1996 Federal Engineer of the Year Award, the Secretary's Award for Excellence, Meritorious Step Increases (MSIs), and several Superior and Meritorious Honor Awards from the Department of State over his 35-year career. He was recognized with the Department of State's highest management achievement award – The Luther I. Replogle Award for Management Improvement in 2006 – for significantly increasing the effectiveness of the Department in fulfilling its foreign affairs responsibilities.

An Le has broad experience with current economic, political, and security issues in Asia and Europe. He brings from more than two decades of professional managerial focus on East Asia, including overseas assignments in Beijing, China (1991 – 1994), Tokyo, Japan (1994 – 1997), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (1997 – 2001), Singapore (2001 – 2004), Seoul, Korea (2004 – 2007), as well as three years in Paris, France (2007 – 2010). He managed successfully the haze crisis in Kuala Lumpur and the SARS outbreak in Singapore and developed necessary tripwires to inform the whole American community in France about responding to a possible outbreak of H1N1 in the region.

An Le has a proven record of working closely with the expatriate business community. Over the years, his professional engineering background has provided him with the ability to understand and address issues within the business community at-large. Recognizing the need of adequate educational options for Embassy children in the future, An Le lobbied both his contacts with the Korean Government and the American business community for support to establish an adequate International School in Seoul. The new international school opened its door on a 20-acre, \$40 million ultra-modern campus in August 2006.

During his tenure in Paris, An Le completed the first ever public-private partnership in the Department of State to modernize a dilapidated USG-owned building, the historically significant Hôtel de Talleyrand in central Paris, to class A office space standards. After a two-year, €28 million renovation effort using private funds, the transition to tenant-occupancy was completed in May 2010.

An Le and his wife Tam, both born and raised in Vietnam, have three children.

A narrative description of the nominee's superior leadership that resulted in outstanding organizational achievement, making clear the achievement's nature and significance and the career executives specific role (not to exceed three pages)

An Le is an excellent senior executive manager who interacts well with subordinates, peers, and superiors; all agency heads, family members, and everyone in the embassy community in Paris regarded him as their advocate, defender, and friend. The full gamut of his professional skills, and his ability to innovate and cut through red-tape, were truly outstanding. He was an integral part of the Country Team and one of my key advisors.

An's success during his three-year tour in Paris, France, was attributed to an understanding of the issues, an ability to orchestrate specific action plans and assure follow-through to conclusion of key Mission Strategic Resource Plan (MSRP) and a defined Tri-Mission Management (TMM) road map. He established an in-house TMM Steering Committee that met to review our Mission Statement, core values, and strategic goals. He led Steering Committee in focusing on: (1) Standard Operation Procedures; (2) teamwork and locally-employed staff empowerment; (3) communications and customer service; and (4), real property and Green initiatives. This new Strategic Plan and Mission Statement is now the cornerstone to our management initiatives.

Winning a number of high-stakes negotiations with the French government (and with the Washington bureaucracy), An completed the first-ever conversion of the ownership of a USG building to a lease-hold – the historically significant Hôtel de Talleyrand in central Paris. After a two-year, € 28 million (\$37 Million in current USDollars) renovation effort using private funds to modernize a dilapidated building up to class A office space standards, the transition to tenant-occupancy and the reopening of the Talleyrand came to fruition with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony held in June 2010, in the presence of both senior American and French officials, including the Under Secretary of State for Management. An worked with the State Department on a number of groundbreaking efforts to create public-private partnerships to fund important cultural and political efforts. He negotiated with a global energy firm here in France to secure their contribution to a major rehabilitation of an important U.S. historical holding. He worked with local authorities, national officials, the police, non-governmental organizations, corporations, philanthropists, and others on massive contracts and deals that significantly advanced U.S. interests.

Over the past years, the Embassy has received more than \$4.2 million from U.S. and international corporate donors for the renovation of the George C. Marshall Center in the Hôtel de Talleyrand (added in 2003 to the Secretary of State's Register of Culturally Significant Properties). Working from zero, after the complete collapse of a previous financial arrangement before he arrived at post, An was able to secure permission from Legal/Ethics in the Department to accept a donation from an international energy firm, in which U.S. institutional investors hold a major stake, by channeling the donation of € 550,000 (\$900,000 in current USD) through a not-for-profit organization concerned with the conservation of architectural heritage in France. We had been stumped, but this significant contribution guaranteed completion of the restoration the Talleyrand in 2009.

Management and stewardship of the Mission's leased and USG owned functional space is high priority. Our real estate footprint in Paris is currently spread among three office buildings, supported by separate warehouse and maintenance facilities while we retain 50,000 square feet of USG owned property in Marseilles and Strasbourg. After more than 20 years in commercial-lease spaces, the entire Lourmel maintenance workshop operation was relocated to the Embassy basement while all expendable supplies were combined at a local warehouse. The elimination of the Lourmel lease represented a \$400,000 annual savings to our budget. Taking advantage of an obscure provision in the local French law, leases on two of our commercial office buildings were renegotiated, resulting in an additional \$1.6 million annual savings to the Department. The total savings accounted for a third of the annual lease costs of \$6.37 million.

After a careful review of workload counts and a comparison of unit costs, An worked with the Paris-based U.S. Missions to the OECD and UNESCO to combine motor pool operations, consolidate mail runs with the motor pool shuttles, and rearrange staff portfolios so the Missions could more fully benefit from the economies of scale with the larger bilateral mission. These changes have resulted in \$200,000 in overall savings in 2010 with more restructuring in IT, switchboard service, and building utilization to follow.

Official residence operations are one of the thorniest aspects of our work here in the Embassy, but An has now made it one of our success stories. He has reformed our ORE management from the ground up, including: streamlining staffing; comparing hotel standard practices for special events; handling the laundry load by contracting; reviewing of official residence practices across Western Europe; interviewing new residence managers and accountants; improving cost-accounting; and inventing a new outside group cost structure, which is the first ever in the world to incorporate wear and tear costs from non-official groups without supplementing our budget. Through the streamlining effort, we eliminated staff at the Ambassador's Residence from 15 to 10 so that the Bilateral Mission was able to hire additional professional staff from the associated savings of \$300,000 annually.

I also asked An to monitor the employee recreational association's semi-autonomous operations. With his persistence and sharp eye for small details that could snowball into major problems, he immediately discovered audit and inventory problems. Based on his natural understanding of organizational operations, financial flows, and the myriad issues facing a \$1 million annual-revenue organization such as ours, he dove in, creating twelve major internal controls, including cash accounting. These controls now protect against the vast majority of opportunities for fraud and theft. Always being vigilant of potential waste, fraud and abuse, An and his staff continued to follow-up on previous audits and identified further anomalies that appeared to show significant financial loss to the employee recreational association. Therefore, he sent a message to the OIG Hotline requesting their assistance with an investigation. An independent audit conducted by a Certified Public Accounting firm indicated that there was incorrect management and record keeping as well as a lack of segregation of duties concerning controls over cash, inventory, and financial accounting/reporting. While no evidence of malfeasance was found, the report made recommendations including those for improved financial controls, employee training, a revised charter, and new organization bylaws. Paris has implemented the recommendations. With stronger management oversight and successful implementation of the

recommendations, Embassy Paris and the employee association board of directors now are confident that they have the situation under control.

A narrative description of the nominee's strong commitment to effective continuity of government, through successful development of managers and executives, including the nominee's specific actions and success in institutionalizing the development of career executives and individual managers and executives (not to exceed three pages)

An's brilliance went far beyond the limits of his already broad primary role at the Embassy. When President Obama and the First Lady came to France for three days in early June 2009, our Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) asked An to be the overall control officer for the Paris portion of the visit (which also included a side trip to Normandy for the 65th anniversary of D-Day). The DCM selected An because he scored a perfect 10 on all the talents across the board -- leadership, management, morale, delegation, clear articulation of priorities, calm in crisis, and absolutely stellar judgment (as he had shown previously for a visit President and First Lady Bush in June 2008). Of course, he managed the visit with his usual poise and did so with complete success. Compelling testimony to his modesty, when An was nominated for a State Department Superior Honor Award, An requested that we withdraw the nomination because he felt strongly that a successful Presidential visit was simply part of his job. Every time we thanked or complimented An on his success, he publicly pointed to someone else who "deserved the credit."

An constantly thought about how to improve our processes on a global scale. Last year, to incentivize better management practices, he proposed for the Department's consideration a new concept called "gain-sahring," whereby if posts reduced their expenditures through more efficient resource use and allocation, they would retain a portion of the savings, and the Department would save the balance of the resources for redeployment.

When the Under Secretary for Management and the Director of the Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) in Washington elected to examine and overhaul how the operation and maintenance of our embassies and consulates worldwide are structured and funded, they asked An to be the lead officer on the project. They did so because An's substantive knowledge of how OBO has run facilities management and how overseas missions operate is unsurpassed in the Foreign Service. They recognized that An's superb communication and negotiating skills would be key to overcoming many years of mutual distrust, and they (and we) are confident he will develop a reform package acceptable to both OBO and its alienated customers.

On a Washington temporary duty trip, An quickly developed the framework for the reform package and recruited experts and stakeholders to organize themselves to propose specifics and obtain buy-in. Managing change is one of An's many strengths, and his terrific interpersonal skills were evident in his dealings with OBO offices that were asked to revise business practices -- often at the expense of authority and control. An's keen analytical and innovation skills were evident in a series of reform proposals that delegated design engineering decisions to posts with the requisite skills. This will greatly reduce the design review period and result in enormous cost savings and other efficiencies. This project was a major additional burden to An's already full plate; pushing the four working groups forward required daily phone calls to Washington and

late night rewrites of position papers. When staff confidence flagged in the face of opposition from vested interests, An's encouragement, brains, and personal prestige and reputation were instrumental in moving distrustful parties to common ground. Important institutional reforms such as these require the Department's best talents, and in An Le the Under Secretary for Management and the OBO Director had the right officer in charge.

A signed cover letter from the head of the agency, or other appropriate administration appointee, recommending the nominee for the award.

See cover letter.