Every organization has supervisors and managers, but leaders go beyond those duties. Jeff Culver is a true leader, who inspires, guides, mentors, and strongly supports those who serve under him. At the same time, he influences his superiors and peers with his exceptional insight, judgment, and knowledge.

Everywhere Jeff Culver serves, he establishes a record of

* Setting the highest standards for himself and the organization
* Focusing on the most important goals, and achieving them without fail
* Steady improvement in all areas
* Transparency
* Fiscal responsibility
* Accountability
* Fairness, equal opportunity, and personal development within the workplace

During his first months as Director of DSS, Jeff traveled to locations where the Department of State was facing its most difficult challenges. He wanted to see firsthand the dangers and hardships in the most demanding security environments where DS operates and deploys major assets: Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Nigeria, and the Sahel. These areas of the world are difficult to serve in for all Foreign Service personnel, but they are especially difficult for our men and women who protect all personnel that are under the Chief of Mission’s authority. As a result of his fact finding, Mr. Culver set about establishing an organization-wide, coordinated approach to provide the resources needed by our people in harm’s way. He directed the assessment and adjustment of training to improve efficiency and effectiveness, placed new emphasis on staffing critical positions with the right people, and ensured due consideration for those serving in those locations, and their families, during and after their extremely stressful assignments. He redirected resources to ensure that the right equipment was available where it was needed most. He fine-tuned inter- and intra-departmental and government coordination and ensured that Department leadership continued to have a clear understanding of our capabilities and limitations to aid decision making.

Shortly after the January 2010 earthquake, Jeff Culver went to Haiti, not only to review the DS effort underway there but also to encourage and recognize the DS cadre working in various relief capacities. Jeff did not confine his travels to overseas: over half of DS agents are deployed domestically, and Jeff accordingly made a series of trips to each of our field offices to review conditions and introduce himself to the agents. He knew it was important to demonstrate that no corner of the organization would be overlooked or neglected. He was able to pick up firsthand impressions of the state of DS on the law enforcement side, as well as conveying his vision as the new Director.

Jeff has extraordinary responsibilities. He manages a budget approaching $3 billion and a workforce of over 40,000, including agents, engineers, civil servants, couriers, and contractors. He tackles work with energy, imagination, and determination. He ensures that DS is aligned with our nation’s foreign policy goals and that the right security programs are being implemented and resourced to support those goals. He spends countless hours briefing Hill staffs to obtain congressional support for the Department’s security programs; as a result, DS is well known, popular, and robustly supported in key committees.

One of the biggest security challenges to confront the Department is the transition to take over security from the U.S. military in Iraq. This is a highly fluid situation in terms of resources and constantly changing security requirements on the ground. Jeff has been intimately involved in this initiative. He has chaired meetings, briefed House and Senate staffers, and created a Contingency Operations Working Group to bring all the elements of this endeavor into one room. Composed of senior managers and program personnel responsible for all essential programs and issues within Iraq, the group will ensure that DS is as fully prepared as humanly possible.

Mr. Culver is a champion of continuity of government and career development. As Director of DSS, he has strengthened key areas of our Bureau’s efforts to recruit, train, mentor, support, and develops our staff. The Department now operates in more dangerous locations than at any time in our history. This reality has a huge impact on our people and their families. Mr. Culver has worked to expand our Peer Support Group, which consists of a cadre of specially trained volunteers who provide emotional and administrative support in the aftermath of a critical incident, such as a terrorist attack or natural disaster. This highly successful initiative has made a profound difference for employees and their families going through difficult times and strengthened our organization overall.

Mr. Culver is directly involved in our volunteer mentoring program, which begins during initial training for new employees and continues throughout their careers. He publicly supports the program at every opportunity and encourages people to participate. This successful program has prepared employees to make better career choices and to serve effectively in progressively senior roles.

 Mr. Culver’s emphasis on career development is well known throughout the organization. He participates in the assignments process and uses his “Message from the Director” broadcasts to successfully encourage employees to volunteer for our most challenging assignments and to prepare for leadership roles. As a result, the Bureau has a remarkable record of fully staffing posts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and other difficult assignments with our best people. His messages are also used to highlight significant accomplishments, publicly thank those responsible, and to spotlight areas where the organization needs to improve. Mr. Culver’s obvious enthusiasm for high-level performance and accomplishing the mission is contagious and bolsters morale and esprit de corps.

Knowing that leaders don’t always have all of the facts and perspective they need, Mr. Culver established a very popular online “DS Suggestions” site, where any employee can post a suggestion on any topic relevant to the organization. He put into place a mechanism for ensuring that the suggestions are fairly evaluated by the relevant managers, and official responses are vetted and posted for all to see. Mr. Culver has been forceful in his efforts to improve knowledge management throughout DS. He has promoted the use of IT applications that improve efficiency, share valuable information, and track results. He instituted the “DS Planning System” throughout the organization to bring transparency to strategic planning and operations. Managers are empowered to set goals, establish priorities, and effectively manage their programs. The planning system allows for transparent tracking of resource allocations and results and enables the Bureau to adjust resources and priorities nimbly to meet the very dynamic world in which we operate.

Jeff’s superb engagement, diplomatic skills, and highly effective communication abilities allow him to articulate a coherent rationale for any argument. Not surprisingly, morale in DS is at an all-time high under Jeff’s stewardship.

 Jeff Culver is a superb, resourceful, and forward-thinking leader who is committed to public service of the highest order. I can think of no one more deserving of the Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership.