

Continuity of Government Narrative –Joan Polaschik

The Department of State is pleased to nominate Joan Polaschik for the Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership for her extraordinary leadership, management and courage in helping to re-establish the United States presence in Libya following the 2011 Revolution and for advancing U.S. national security interests by contributing to the building of a new, democratic Libya.

In her initial year as Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM), Joan Polaschik demonstrated every necessary skill required to run a complex and growing mission. In a stunning and versatile performance, she oversaw a \$5 million renovation project, developed information technology, security, and embassy operational plans attendant to the project, led the embassy response to several political crises, ensured the smooth functioning of the Interagency Council, and showed a sophistication of writing and analysis recognized by the interagency system in Washington.

Ms. Polaschik maintained that leadership in the wake of the evacuation and suspension of Embassy operations. Working from Washington, she directed the Embassy's efforts to develop and maintain contact with the Libyan opposition, including the newly formed Transitional National Council. Drawing on the Embassy's contacts throughout Libya, Ms. Polaschik created a daily situation report which covered ongoing events inside Libya. This product served as the USG's most valuable insight into events on the ground in the wake of the February 17, 2011 revolution and won high praise from the Department's principals, National Security Staff, and the military for its quality and relevance.

The conflict in Libya posed enormous management challenges for our mission. Ms. Polaschik, with her clear grasp of our big-picture policy imperatives and the nitty-gritty details of our missions in Tripoli and Benghazi, developed a plan that addressed all of our equities. Exhibiting unparalleled strategic planning abilities, Ms. Polaschik's comprehensive foresight addressed issues related to American and locally engaged staff (LES), properties in Tripoli and Benghazi, and the budgets required to support these operations. Her innovative suggestions recast a potentially devastating moment –the administratively mandated disbanding of Embassy Tripoli after 180 days in evacuation status--into a process that constructively addressed our needs. For example, several Tripoli employees staffed the Office of the Special Envoy in Benghazi to ensure continuity and Libya-specific expertise in our relations with the post-Qadhafi government. Ms. Polaschik also came up with a plan to bring key Tripoli local staff to work in

Benghazi. Her excellent interpersonal skills helped to navigate some difficult moments, including the complete destruction of the Embassy and many of the residences on May 1, 2011.

Ms. Polaschik promoted interagency cooperation through a sometime fractious Libya policy process, helping steer discussion in the State Department-wide policy coordination meetings and ably representing the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs in numerous interagency meetings. She also mentored mid-level officers in the art of interagency collaboration, helping them develop the skills necessary to operate on an equal footing with counterparts from other agencies.

Ms. Polaschik demonstrated a sophisticated ability to parse the truth from a fluid environment in which information was rarely complete. She also worked closely with our first-tour consular officer, detailed to Benghazi as the Envoy's reporting officer, to hone his drafting skills. Her economic work—negotiating directly with the Transitional National Council's Finance Minister over the terms required to access Libyan assets frozen in the U.S. — was central to our ability to move ahead on a multi-billion dollar package of assistance and loans that is vital to the Transitional National Council's continued viability.

There is tremendous interest in providing technical assistance to the new Libyan government and the burgeoning civil society. The mission very quickly ran up against physical resources at post to meet this demand. Ms. Polaschik worked diligently with other agencies to ensure that the proposed technical assistance fit our policy objectives, constraints and needs of the Libyan government. She also led the mission's efforts to retain the Foreign Commercial Service operation, arguing to maintain our LES commercial staff at the time when U.S. businesses were starting to return to Libya.

Joan Polaschik, through this incredibly challenging time in Libya history, earned recognition for playing a lead role in establishing what may well be a future model democracy in the Middle East, working with the Libyan government, people and international partners.