



Letter from the Director

When asked what I found most rewarding in nearly two years of service as counselor of the Department of State, one part of my answer is: working with former students. It was having two chiefs of staff in my office who had studied with me, seeing others running the Pakistan and Afghanistan desks at the Pentagon (not to mention the policy planning shop and Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict), representing OMB in the Sit Room, managing aid programs from our beleaguered Peshawar consulate, inspecting a commando training base in the Afghan hills, or briefing me in Baghdad about Al Qaeda or Langley about North Korean nuclear weapons. When the undersecretary of defense and I had to draft a sensitive document, our two special assistants helped put it together – not too hard, because they had been classmates. It became a running joke with colleagues in State and beyond, as when I whispered loudly to Secretary Rice, “Don’t look now, boss, but the head of your security detail is my former research assistant.”

Many of my former colleagues in government say that they miss the sense of mission and purpose that accompanied their work; I do not, because it is so abundantly clear to me that here at SAIS I get to help prepare new generations to serve, be it in government, the private, or the nongovernmental sectors. And thanks to Dr. Keaney, Mr. McLaughlin, Professor Habeck, Mrs. McKell and Mrs. Kunkel, as well as all of our adjunct faculty, I came back to a program that was stronger than ever.

In future newsletters I will tell you more about what lies ahead for the program, for now, though, a warm thanks to Erin Schenck and the other members of our alumni council for launching this newsletter and the association that it represents. I look forward to reconnecting with you now that I am out of government, and hope to see as many as possible at our second annual alumni dinner on October 29th.

Dr. Eliot A. Cohen, Director
Merrill Center for Strategic Studies

Strategic Studies in 2008-09

The program continues its expansion of courses offered to keep pace with an increasing number of students. This year Strategic Studies courses numbered fifteen. Newer titles include Anthropology for Strategists, Funding Transnational Threats, Decision Making in Wartime. The number of courses also reflects the return of Profs. Eliot Cohen and Mary Habeck in January. Eliot, as you will read elsewhere in the newsletter, returned for his time at State as the Counselor to the Department and Mary from the National Security Council Staff as Special Advisor for Strategic Planning and Institutional Reform. With their return, the program personnel consists of Director Cohen, Assoc Prof. Habeck, Associate Director and Senior Adjunct Prof. Thomas Keaney, Senior Research Fellow John McLaughlin, and the Program Coordinator, Ms. Thayer McKell.

Students and guests met and heard from a number of distinguished visitors during the year, foremost among the visits was by Army Vice Chief of Staff Peter Chiarelli to give the 5th annual Alvin H. Bernstein Lecture. Past lecturers include Army General David Petraeus and Prof. Richard Kohn of the University of North Carolina. The lectures have become signature events of the Strategic Studies Program.

Thanks to the Strategic Studies students, the program continued to offer an extensive number of other opportunities. Staff rides to Harpers Ferry (John Brown’s Raid & Civil War battles) in the fall, to Germany and the Czech Republic (the Cold War) during spring break, and to the Shenandoah Valley (1864 Valley Campaign) in the spring of 2009 served as high points; each of these staff rides included a total of fifty students, faculty and guests. Also continuing were a full schedule of speaker series, films and discussions, and the ever-popular Defense and Against the Dark Arts series (speakers discuss the ins and outs of Washington bureaucracy, or “how to be street-smart without being a mugger.”). Alumni may also recall the annual visits to Quantico for a taste of Marine basic training and to Norfolk VA to visit Naval facilities and ships, all of which continue. The student organizers of these events deserve special recognition: FSR, Luke Collin & Jordan Stewart; ISR, Ariella Viehe & Brian Katz; SSR, Will Upshur & Jake Harrington; Speaker Series, Peter Lohman; Film Series, Jacob Heim; DADA, Kat Hannah; Quantico trip, Marine Lt. Col. Bob Tobin; and Norfolk trip, Navy Lt. Commander Scott Asack.

Dr. Thomas Keaney, Associate Director

The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies

The Johns Hopkins University

Alumni Coordination

SAIS, and Strategic Studies in particular, inspires loyalty among its students. First-years, taking a break from the military, tired of finance, or fascinated by intelligence, arrive from Germany, Singapore, China, and Australia. In the classroom, dedicated professors refresh students and classmates offer foreign perspectives to common challenges. Drs. Cohen and Keaney introduce students to the fundamentals of Strategy and Policy, Mr. McLaughlin, with a dash of magic, cracks open the realm of spies, and Dr. Habeck brings order to irregular warfare. Adjuncts integrate contemporary topics with the basics of strategy.

In Strat, teaching is not solely the domain of professors, and lessons extend far beyond lectures. As Dr. Keaney has relayed, second-years lead activities year-round that add texture to the curriculum. From Staff Rides, students and faculty learn the tactics, strategies, and characters that have forged history. Trips to bases give a taste of the lives of generals and grunts. To temper the classroom's lessons with the world's realities, students invite foreign policy and military leaders as guest speakers. The Defense Intelligence Career Club illuminates career routes, and the Film Series projects society's conception of Strat's subjects.

This comprehensive education contributes immensely to the vitality of SAIS. It also contributes significantly to the policies and strategies crafted in Washington and other capitals and implemented around the globe. Graduates, recalling the challenges of Sicily's beaches, enter a diplomatic corps with an appreciation of the military's massive logistical feats. Majors return to the field impressed that, in the native mind, honor may trump fear, no matter the occupier's might. Joining a corporation, managers realize that squabbles over a pipeline may tumble into conflict.

Hundreds at SAIS, whether Strat concentrators, MIPPs, or intrigued itinerants from the International Development program, have learned these and larger lessons. Over the past two decades, the department has expanded from the Security Studies foundation that Charles Osgood established. In 1998, 13 MAs graduated from Strategic Studies. In 2008, the number reached 46. The program's camaraderie grows long after graduation and reunites alums, as Dr. Cohen describes, often in distant places.

So that our community not only endures but prospers, we have initiated the Friends and Alumni of SAIS Strategic Studies. We hope the effort will both strengthen bonds in the Strat family and contribute to the department's continued success, through several activities. This semi-annual newsletter will share the latest from Mass. Ave. and the adventures of alums worldwide. So that bonds grow beyond virtual, we will repeat last spring's inaugural Friends and Alum dinner (a tremendous success, with over 100 guests). Casual Happy Hours will pepper the year. Finally, a Strat annual fund will ensure that SAIS and the department continue to attract the best students and faculty.

If interested in assisting, please contact Steve Riccardi (MA 06, stevericcardi@gmail.com), Tali Wenger (MA 08, tali-wenger@gmail.com), Nadia Schadow (MA 89, PhD 05, nschadow@gmail.com), or me (hn7570@gmail.com). Please pass this newsletter on to any of your old classmates, teachers, and others that may be interested; encourage them to send in news. Requests to receive future issues can be sent to the distribution list at strat-distro@gmail.com.

Have a great summer,

Henry Nuzum (MA 07/08...)

Save the Dates:

- June 4, 2009: Happy Hour at Darlington House (1610 20th St. NW) — come welcome the Class of 2009 to the Alumni Community!
- October 29, 2009: Second Strategic Studies Alumni Dinner

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I hope that you have enjoyed the first issue of the Merrill Center for Strategic Studies Alumni Newsletter.

In the future, the newsletter will feature articles and stories by current student, professors, alumni, and friends of the Department. With this in mind, please share which topics/subjects would be of most interest to you. We welcome suggestions on and requests for alumni article topics, professor commentaries, and student activity updates. This is a great opportunity to ask current students, professor, alumni, and friends to write on topics of your choice. Let's shape this newsletter into something from which we can all benefit.

The next issue will also contain a section devoted to Alumni/Friend news. If you have recently switched jobs, married, had a baby, traveled abroad, changed the course of world events, or have anything you would like to share, please submit a blurb for the newsletter. Photos taken in the last year, with three or more alums, may also be published. We will accept news about other alums, but will only publish with their permission.

Please send article suggestions, offers to participate or write, and personal/professional news to StratNewsletter@gmail.com. Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you.

Erin Schenck (MA 07)