

Professional Staff

James D. Standish, Executive Director

Tom Carter, Director of Communications

Walter G. DeSocio, General Counsel

David Dettoni, Director of Operations and Outreach

Judith E. Golub, Director of Government Relations

Carmelita Hines, Director of Administration

Knox Thames, Director of Policy and Research

Dwight Bashir, Associate Director for Policy and Research

Elizabeth K. Cassidy, Associate Director for Policy and Research

Catherine Cosman, Senior Policy Analyst

Deborah DuCre, Receptionist

Scott Flipse, Senior Policy Analyst

Kody Kness, Assistant Director for Government Relations

Bridget Kustin, South Asia Researcher

Tiffany Lynch, Researcher

Jacqueline Mitchell, Executive Assistant

Stephen R. Snow, Senior Policy Analyst

Dwight Bashir, Associate Director for Policy and Research

Dwight

Bashir joined the Commission as a Policy Analyst in 2002. A Senior Policy Analyst since 2005, Mr. Bashir became Associate Director for Policy and Research in early 2009. Previously, he worked as a consultant with the United Nations and before that with various non-governmental organizations focusing on human rights and international conflict resolution with a concentration in the Near East region. Mr. Bashir is a specialist in ethnic and religious conflict and preventive diplomacy. He has traveled widely in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa and has lectured and published on an array of topics in international affairs, including peace and security, human rights, religious extremism, and U.S. foreign policy. He has advocated a range of international human rights issues before Members of Congress and senior U.S. government officials and has contributed to projects conducted by the Rand Corporation and the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. He has been interviewed by major national and international media, including CNN, Fox News, The Washington Post, The Washington Times, The Christian Science Monitor, National Public Radio, Associated Press, and Voice of America, as well as other regional media, such as Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, Al Hurra, and Arab News. Mr. Bashir holds a B.A. in Political Science and International Relations from the University of Richmond and a M.S. and Ph.D. from the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University.

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Tom Carter , Director of Communications

Tom Carter joined the Commission in March 2009. Prior to that, he was the Communications Director at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a Washington, D.C.-based public interest law firm protecting the free expression of all religious traditions . A graduate from Susquehanna University in English

literature, Tom spent 25 years reporting in Washington, and around the world. On the Washington Times foreign desk, Tom focused on human rights in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, and global health issues, including HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis. He interviewed dozens of international leaders, from the Dalai Lama and Benazir Bhutto, to heads of state including Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega, Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, Mexico's Vicente Fox, Uganda's Yoweri Museveni and Botswana's Festus Mogae. After three reporting trips to Cuba, he was banned from returning when his articles on human rights activists angered government officials. Tom and his wife Chizuko have been married for 26 years. They have two grown children.

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Elizabeth K. Cassidy, Associate Director for Policy and Research

Elizabeth K. Cassidy joined the Commission as International Legal Specialist in July 2007, and became Associate Director for Policy and Research in March 2009. Previously, she was Assistant Executive Director of UN Watch, a non-governmental organization in Geneva, Switzerland, where she monitored and analyzed United Nations affairs, with a particular focus on the U.N.'s Geneva-based human rights bodies. Before UN Watch, Ms. Cassidy taught courses in constitutional law, comparative law, and international human rights law at Princeton University, Seton Hall University School of Law and the University of Namibia and worked as a legal consultant to several human rights NGOs in Windhoek, Namibia. She also has practiced law in the Washington, D.C. office of Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld and worked as a judicial clerk to the Hon. Richard Nygaard of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and the Hon. William Bassler of the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey. Ms. Cassidy holds a B.A. in international politics from Wesleyan University, a J.D. from American University's Washington College of Law, and a LL.M in comparative constitutional law from the University of Stellenbosch.

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Catherine Cosman, Senior Policy Analyst

Catherine Cosman joined the staff of the Commission as Senior Policy Analyst in November 2003. Her areas of responsibility include the countries of the former Soviet Union, East and Central Europe and Western Europe. She served on the staff of the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe as senior analyst on Soviet dissent (1976-1989). Cosman was also a commentator on Soviet society for a nationally syndicated U.S. radio program. She then joined Human Rights Watch (1989-1992) where she wrote several studies on ethnic conflicts in Central Asia and the Caucasus and the human rights in the then-USSR. Working with emerging independent labor unions for the Free Trade Union Institute (1992-1996), she focussed on Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. She lived in Estonia where she was the Senior Expert of the OSCE Mission, working on the integration of the Russian minority into Estonian society (1996-1998.) She managed the Central Asian and Caucasus grants program at the National Endowment for Democracy, before joining the Communications Division at RFE/RL in 1999 where she edited "Media Matters" and "(Un)Civil Societies." She has lived, worked and studied in Berlin, Germany; Moscow, then-USSR; and Prague, Czech Republic. She received a BA in History from Grinnell College and a MA and an ABD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Brown University. She also has studied at the Free University of Berlin and the All-Union Institute of Cinematography in Moscow.

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Walter G. DeSocio, General Counsel

Walter G. DeSocio joined the Commission in January 2008. Previously, he served as Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Chief Administrative Officer of Lottomatica S.p.A., the world's largest global gaming technology company. Prior to that position, he served as General Counsel or in an equivalent position for U.S.-based global companies in the technology, Internet and communications sectors. Mr. DeSocio also practiced law in the New York City offices of Dewey Ballantine (now Dewey & LeBouef). Mr. DeSocio holds an LL.M. degree, first class honors with distinction, from Cambridge University (Corpus Christi College), a J.D., cum laude, from New York Law School and a B.A., cum laude, from Colgate University.

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David Dettoni, Director of Operations and Outreach

David Dettoni joined the Commission in February of 2003, after four years as a senior legislative assistant for Representative Frank R. Wolf, whom he advised on policy issues related to human rights, foreign affairs, religious freedom, and international terrorism. Mr. Dettoni was Rep. Wolf's staff liaison to the Foreign Operations appropriations subcommittee and assisted with pertinent issues relating to the Commerce, Justice, State, Judiciary appropriations subcommittee. He was also the primary staff person for Rep. Wolf to the Helsinki Commission, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, and the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. Prior to that, Mr. Dettoni was the assistant director of a faith-based undergraduate and graduate program at Stanford University, where he launched the first Veritas Forum and led outreach and special service projects in Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Israel, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela. He has also worked at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. Mr. Dettoni holds a B.A. in philosophy from Westmont College and a Master's degree in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary.

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Scott Flipse, Senior Policy Analyst

Scott Flipse joined the Commission in April of 2003. Before coming to the Commission he was Associate Director and Adjunct Professor of History for the University of Notre Dame's Washington Semester. Mr. Flipse is a specialist in American foreign policy, particularly toward Southeast and East Asia. He brings to the Commission a wealth of unique professional and educational experience. He served as a legislative assistant and committee staffer for Congressman Frank R. Wolf, specializing in human rights, religious freedom, and foreign operation's appropriations. After working on the Hill, he helped start an inner-city jobs and mentoring program in Los Angeles and later worked in Hollywood as a writer. Mr. Flipse has a B.A. in government from Calvin College, an M.A. in Social Ethics and Religion from the University of Southern California and Fuller Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. in History from the University of Notre Dame.

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Judith E. Golub , Director of Government Relations

Judith Golub joined the Commission in January, 2009. Before coming to the Commission, she was the Executive Director of the San Francisco-based Immigrant Legal Resource. She also was the Senior Director of Advocacy at the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and Legislative Director at the American Jewish Committee, both based in Washington DC. She brings to the Commission more than twenty years experience working with Congressional staff, federal agencies, and the White House; planning, coordinating and implementing legislative strategies; developing, policy, media and grassroots issue advocacy campaigns in support of legislation and policies; developing and working in coalitions with like-minded organizations to help create effective networks; and working with the media. Ms. Golub has focused on a broad range of issues during her career including religious freedom, hate crimes, due process protections, detention, deportation, expedited removal, civil rights, refugee and asylum issues, and immigration.

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Carmelita Hines, Director of Administration

Carmelita Hines (formally Carmelita Pratt) joined the Commission in April 2003 after serving as an administrator for the DC Public Charter School Board. In addition to her current appointment, she has served with four other Commissions: The Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, Commission on Manufactured Housing, Commission on the Cost of Higher Education, and Commission on the Advancement of Federal Law Enforcement. Mrs. Hines earned her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio.

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Kody Kness, Assistant Director for Government Affairs

Prior to joining the Commission in 2007, Mr. Kness was a policy analyst in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives' Legislative Office for Research Liaison. Mr. Kness has also worked in New York City for the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers and the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations. Mr. Kness has written on the identity of practitioners of Falun Gong and has presented his research at conferences of the Association of Asian Studies and at Columbia University. Mr. Kness holds an Honors Bachelor's degree from Arizona State University in Religious Studies with a certificate in East Asian Studies, and has done graduate coursework in policy analysis at Pennsylvania State University. Mr. Kness has also studied at Renmin University of China (People's University of China) in Beijing and at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Mr. Kness speaks Mandarin Chinese.

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Bridget Kustin, South Asia Researcher

Bridget Kustin joined the Commission in 2007. As a 2005-06 Fulbright Islamic Civilization Award recipient and 2005-06 Fulbright research scholar to Bangladesh, Ms. Kustin's study into U.S.-funded initiatives to increase the participation of imams in community development included a survey of 400 imams regarding their perceptions of Islam, the U.S., and local power politics. She has presented her research at conferences and workshops in Bangladesh, India, Tunisia, and throughout the United States. Ms. Kustin has studied Hindi in Washington, D.C. and in Jaipur, India through the School for International Training, and studied Bengali at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and for an academic year in Kolkata, India as a 2006-07 Fellow with the American Institute of Indian Studies. Ms. Kustin received her Bachelor's degree in English summa cum laude from Whitman College.

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Tiffany Lynch, Researcher

Tiffany Lynch is a researcher at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, where her work focuses on refugee and asylum issues, and religious freedom in Latin America, the Balkans, and Africa. She has been with the Commission since February 2006. Ms. Lynch came to the Commission after receiving a Master's degree in Anthropology and Development from the London School of Economics and Political Science. She has worked at the Stanhope Centre for Communication Policy and Research researching freedom of the press issues in East Africa and spent two and a half years at the National Endowment for Democracy where she managed the International Movement of Parliamentarians for Democracy, a World Movement for Democracy network of parliamentarians dedicated to the promotion of democracy and the protection of democratic parliamentarians. Ms. Lynch received a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Political Science and minor in French from the University of Indiana.

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Stephen R. Snow, Senior Policy Analyst

Steve Snow joined the Commission in April of 2001, after twenty-seven years as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State. His overseas experience as an American diplomat, usually as a political officer, was mainly in the Islamic world, with postings in Turkey,

Kuwait, Egypt, and Bangladesh. Other overseas assignments were to New Zealand and Barbados. His domestic assignments (in State's Bureaus of Intelligence and Research, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs) dealt with a number of countries in the Near East, Africa, and Asia. Mr. Snow has a B.A. in International Studies from Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee and an M.A. in Political Science from the University of Michigan. He studied Turkish on National Defense Foreign Language Fellowships at Columbia University and at Michigan and Arabic at the Foreign Service Institute in Tunis, Tunisia. His current responsibilities include Bangladesh, Eritrea, and Sudan. He also provides back-up support as needed on countries throughout South Asia, the Near East, and North Africa.

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James D. Standish , Executive Director

James D. Standish joined the Commission as Executive Director in August 2008. Mr. Standish has extensive experience working on human rights issues, and particularly religious freedom. He has lived ten years in Asia, four years in Europe, and eight years in Australia, and has traveled widely throughout the world. Mr. Standish is widely published, has discussed religious freedom issues on nationally broadcast television and radio, and has testified on religious freedom matters before the United States House of Representatives. Mr. Standish received his undergraduate degree from Newbold College in England, a M.B.A. from the University of Virginia and a J.D., cum laude, from Georgetown University. He is a member of the Bar of Virginia State and the District of Columbia, and has been admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court and the Fourth Circuit.

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Knox Thames , Director of Policy and Research

Knox Thames joined the Commission in February 2009.

Before coming to the Commission, he worked in the Office of International Religious Freedom at the U.S. Department of State, leading its engagement on issues of concern in multilateral fora (UN, OSCE) and was the Head of the Multilateral Section. Mr. Thames also served as Counsel for six years at the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (the Helsinki Commission), where he was the point-person for the Helsinki Commission on religious freedom matters and on issues involving refugees and internally displaced persons. An author of numerous articles on a range of human rights issues, in 2004, Mr. Thames was appointed by the State Department to serve as one of the two U.S. experts on the OSCE Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Mr. Thames earned a J.D. with honors from the American University Washington College of Law. He also holds a Master's in International Affairs from the American University School of International Service, and was a recipient of the Amnesty International Certificate of Achievement in the Study of Human Rights. He holds a B.A. from Georgetown College and has studied at Jagellonian University in Krakow, Poland.