

Robert S. Ford, Ambassador (ret)

Ambassador Robert S. Ford served thirty years in the State Department and Peace Corps, finishing his career as the U.S. Ambassador to Syria from 2011 to 2014. For his leadership of the American Embassy in Damascus he received a Presidential Honor award in 2012, and for his work on Syria he received in 2014 the Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Award, the State Department's highest award. For his defense of human rights in Syria, he received from the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston the 2012 Profile in Courage award.

Ford also served as the U.S. Ambassador to Algeria (2006-2008) where he boosted bilateral cooperation in fields such as education and rule of law.

He served three times in Iraq between 2003 and 2010, including as the Ambassador's senior political advisor during the tumultuous elections and stand-up of the new, permanent Iraqi government 2004-2006. Later, as Deputy Ambassador in Iraq 2008-2010 he assembled a government team that devised the logistical and security plans the new Obama administration used to establish American diplomatic posts in Iraq after the withdrawal of U.S. military forces.

As Deputy Ambassador in Bahrain 2001-2003 Ford led the Embassy team that helped negotiate a free trade agreement with Bahrain, the first of free trade deal with a Persian Gulf state. Ford also served in Cameroon, in Algeria 1994-1997 during the civil war there, in Egypt and Turkey and in domestic assignments at the U.S. Department of State in Washington. He started his career as a Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco 1980-1982. He speaks fluent Arabic and French. Ford has a B.A. from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and an M.A. from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

Ford is now a scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington where he writes and speaks about Iraq, Syria and North Africa. He will also be a senior fellow at Yale University in 2016. He has appeared on CNN, NBC, PBS, MSNBC, Fox

News, NPR, the BBC and in Arabic language interviews on Arab networks. His wife, Alison Barkley, is also a retired Foreign Service Officer, and they are avid fans of hiking, theater, classical music and the Baltimore Orioles.