

Ambassador Judith B. Cefkin (Ret.)

An accomplished diplomat who has worked to advance U.S. interests throughout the world, Ambassador Cefkin is passionate about connecting people and ideas. Her 35-year career as a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State provided her a rich body of experience in building cross-cultural cooperation and in leading diverse teams.

She most recently served as the U.S. Ambassador to Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu (2015-2018). In that role, Ambassador Cefkin traveled tens of thousands of miles throughout the Pacific Island region to build cooperation on approaches to shared environmental challenges, including climate change and the need to preserve ocean resources including fisheries.

Other leadership positions included service as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassies in Bangkok, Thailand and Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and as State's Senior Advisor for Burma and as Director of the Office of Nordic-Baltic Affairs. Ambassador Cefkin also served overseas in Mexico, France, and the Philippines, and in multiple Washington assignments in European Affairs, East Asia and Pacific Affairs, African Affairs, Political-Military Affairs, and on State's Board of Examiners.

In her work, Ambassador Cefkin has relished the opportunity to promote the United States' values-based diplomacy, including support for democracy, good-governance, rule-of-law, and tolerance. She has advanced development programs, and has been active in outreach efforts to support those goals. A veteran crisis-manager, she has been active in shaping the U.S. response to numerous overseas emergencies ranging from natural disasters to situations of political unrest, terrorist attacks, hostage-takings, and threatened military conflict.

Prior to her State Department career, Ambassador Cefkin worked in media, as a television news producer in Houston, Texas and Denver, Colorado. She also worked on Capitol Hill as a legislative intern in the U.S. Senate and as a researcher at Congress's Office of Technology Assessment.

Ambassador Cefkin speaks French and Thai, and has a working knowledge of Spanish and familiarity with the Bosnian languages.

Ambassador Cefkin holds a B.A. in Government from Smith College (Northampton, Massachusetts) and an M.Sc. in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science.