

September 21, 2019

Ambassador (ret.) Stephen G. McFarland:

Ambassador (ret.) McFarland served in the U.S. Foreign Service for over 37 years, largely in countries engaged in or emerging from conflict. He had 10 posts in Central and South America. He also served in Iraq, where he led a provincial reconstruction team in a Marine regiment conducting counterinsurgency operations in Al Anbar during the 2007 surge. Later he headed Embassy Kabul's law enforcement and rule of law efforts. After retirement, in 2015-17 he led a USAID justice project in Colombia's conflict zones.

As Ambassador to Guatemala in 2008-2011, McFarland led the Embassy in strengthening democracy and the rule of law, including partnering with the Guatemalan government and the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) on corruption prosecutions and law enforcement; increasing arrests of major narcotics traffickers and improving citizen security; reducing acute child malnutrition; supporting reconciliation, human rights, and dialogue across ethnic and class lines; and representing the U.S. to Guatemalans well outside the diplomatic "bubble."

Earlier, as political counselor at the U.S. embassy in El Salvador in 1988-1990, and as Nicaragua desk officer 1983-1985, he witnessed and reported on the devastation of the Central American civil wars. He was the first U.S. official to meet during the war with Salvadoran guerrilla commanders to assess and encourage their interest in peace talks. He was deputy chief of mission and chargé in post-conflict Guatemala from 2000 to 2003, where he secured the unconditional release of U.S. citizens held hostage by former combatants. He also served twice in Venezuela, and twice in Peru during its internal conflict. He was a cease-fire monitor in Peru's high jungle border region during the 1995 Peru-Ecuador war.

McFarland received an interagency award for his reporting and contact work on terrorism in Peru, as well as other awards from State and DoD. He is an honorary member of the indigenous municipality of Santo Tomás de Chichicastenango, Guatemala, and he is a board member of the U.S. Foundation for the Universidad del Valle in Guatemala. He is the author of "A Roadmap for New Hires: 30 Rules to Survive and Thrive" (Foreign Service Journal, July/August 2016).

The son of a Foreign Service officer, McFarland grew up in central Texas, Latin America, and the Middle East. He is a graduate of Yale University and the Air War College. Currently he is a consultant for Millicom LLC in Guatemala, and he is a graduate student in security studies at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service. He and his wife have four sons. He enjoys playing soccer, hiking, diving, and reading history.