

Susan Falatko, Diplomat in Residence Midwest (U.S. State Department)

A member of the Senior Foreign Service, **Susan Falatko** has twenty-five years of experience with the U.S. Department of State. She is currently the Diplomat in Residence for the Midwest, responsible for recruiting in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

Prior to her current assignment, Ms. Falatko was Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) at the U.S. Embassy in Ljubljana, serving as Chargé d'Affaires for over a year. She has served as the Director of the Office of South-Central European Affairs and as DCM at the U.S. Embassy to Mauritius and Seychelles. An Economic Officer in the Foreign Service since 1999, she has also served in Geneva, Sarajevo, Havana, Rwanda, and Mali.

Originally from Chicago, Ms. Falatko has a B.S. in Psychology from the University of Iowa, an M.A. in International Relations from the George Washington University, and a Master's Degree in National Resource Strategy from the National Defense University.

Alicia Hernandez, Senior Director for North and South Asia Operations, Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA)

Alicia Hernandez assumed the role of Senior Director for South Asia Operations in June 2023 and her role expanded to include North Asia in early 2024. She manages the operations of FAS offices across Asia, including FSO assignments and evaluations, budget requests and financial management, and clarifying operational policies and procedures.

Prior to returning to FAS Washington, she served in Warsaw, Poland from August 2021 to May 2023. In Warsaw, she led the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) teams in Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria, and their coverage of the Baltic States. Before her assignment in Poland, Alicia served as the Director of the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) in Hong Kong and Macau from November 2017-June 2021. From 2014 to 2016, she served as an Agricultural Attaché in Mexico City, responsible for international trade negotiations on animal health and organics equivalency. Before that she, served as the Deputy Director of the ATO in Mexico City with simultaneous responsibility for the ATO in Monterrey.

Alicia joined FAS in 2009 as the Mexico Desk Officer and later became a grains analyst before converting to the Foreign Service in 2012. Alicia has a bachelor's degree in International Relations and Spanish from the University of Southern California and a master's degree in Latin American Political Economy from the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. She is fluent in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and an intermediate speaker of Polish and Russian.

Penelope Thomas, Development Diplomat in Residence-South (USAID)

Penelope A. Thomas has a passion for promoting diversity and strongly believes in the professional development of the USAID workforce.

Prior to joining the Office of External Outreach and Strategic Recruitment in the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (XOSR/HCTM) in January 2023 as the new Development Diplomat in Residence-South, Ms. Thomas served as a Supervisory Executive Officer in Pakistan, Nigeria, Colombia, The Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, Bangladesh, and Mali and Egypt. Her previous assignments also include serving as the Operations Chief in the Management Bureau's Overseas Management Division (M/MS/OMD) responsible for supervising, training, mentoring, coaching, and hiring new Executive Officers. She also worked for the Office of Security as the Operations Chief of the USAID Command Center in USAID/Washington.

She has experience studying, living, and working overseas since 1979. With a bachelor's degree from St. Olaf College in French and Spanish, she speaks both at native levels which gives her greater access to diverse populations.

After graduating from St. Olaf College, Ms. Thomas joined the United States Peace Corps in Gabon, Central Africa, where she taught English in a rural village from 1989 to 1991. She has worked with several international development organizations including Africare and the Service and Development Agency Inc. of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME-SADA).

Ms. Thomas is an accomplished singer and was a member of the renowned Gospel group called *The Sounds of Blackness*. She was also a backup singer for Prince.

Doug Jacobson, Career Development and Assignments Officer, Office of Global Talent Management (U.S. Department of Commerce)

Doug Jacobson is a Senior Advisor for Career Development and Assignments at the U.S. Department of Commerce's U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service. In this capacity, he advises senior leadership on strategic staffing and resourcing policies and programs worldwide.

Previously, Doug served as Senior Commercial Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Prague where he promoted and protected U.S. commercial interests in the Czech Republic. His team supported U.S. industry and economic developers via local government advocacy, trade and investment programs, and individual counseling - capturing hundreds of USD millions in exports and U.S. inward FDI. During his 23-year career at the Commerce Department, Doug also served at U.S. Missions in Osaka, Toronto, Seoul, and Ho Chi Minh City.

As a Mansfield Fellow in Tokyo, Doug worked at the Japan External Trade Office, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and Japan's bicameral legislature. Prior to his assignments overseas, Doug worked for a decade at the U.S. Commercial Service office in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He holds a Master of International Management degree from the University of St. Thomas in Saint Paul, Minnesota with a year of course-work at Osaka Gakuin University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations from the University of Iowa.