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DSS Foreign Service National Investigator takes self-improvement to the highest level – Mount Everest

DSS ARTICLES

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Tomislav Cvitanusic at Nuptse High Camp during his Mount Everest climb, May 2023. (Photo courtesy Tomislav Cvitanusic)

In regional security offices at diplomatic posts overseas, Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) special agents work with expert host-nation citizen investigators, known as foreign service national investigators (FSNIs), who maintain strong relationships with host nation law enforcement organizations and help with fugitive apprehensions, counterterrorism, and transnational criminal cases.

Tomislav “Toma” Cvitanusic is one of these immensely talented and indispensable FSNIs. He has an inspirational story that took him to some of the most challenging peaks across four different continents and culminated when he summited Mount Everest on May 17, 2023.

Cvitanusic has served in the DSS regional security office at the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo for 27 years, and he swears he has worked with at least half the agents in DSS during his career. He credits strong DSS mentors with helping to instill a desire for continuous self-improvement.



Cvitanusic describes himself as an independent and motivated person who aspires to achieve a life-work balance and takes the values promoted in the workplace and applies them to his personal life. His love of running and cycling became a lifestyle of outdoor adventure that included more than 16 world-class marathons, including six majors, six Ironman triathlons, and a Norseman Triathlon—the most extreme triathlon race in the world. However, the solitude and challenge of the mountains beckoned, and he shifted his focus to climbing.

“Once I discovered the mountains and the feeling of being alone with my thoughts, I started climbing higher and higher until Everest seemed like the next logical goal, and it became my dream,” Cvitanusic said.

Cvitanusic’s dream to summit Everest became a reality with the help of Ambassador H.E. Michael Murphy and regional security office lead Nick Pietrowicz who approved Cvitanusic’s transfer and use of 58 days of annual leave; Cvitanusic’s regional security office colleagues who jumped in and took over his responsibilities; and a few local companies that sponsored Cvitanusic’s expedition.

“Toma succeeded in summiting Everest because he is intrepid, creative, diligent, and courageous—precisely the same qualities that yield success as an FSNI. In addition, his innate affability and sense of altruism make him a wonderful representative of our Mission,” said

Pietrowicz.

Several news outlets interviewed Cvitanusic about his mountaineering feat, and the embassy featured him as Hero of the Month. Cvitanusic's humble reaction speaks volumes about the kind of person he is.

"I believe in helping other people and doing positive things for my country and my society, both as an FSNI and as a private citizen," Cvitanusic said. "If we are going to tell a story, it shouldn't be about me, it should be about persistence, not giving up, and doing the right things," he added.

Read [here](#) to learn more about how DSS works with foreign police and security counterparts to coordinate U.S. law enforcement initiatives, investigations, and training.



Tomislav Cvitanusic navigates the Khumbu Icefall during his Mount Everest climb, May 2023. (Photo courtesy Tomislav Cvitanusic)

After climbing to the summit of Mount Everest, Tomislav Cvitanusic (second from right) poses outside the United States Embassy in Kathmandu with RSO Michael Chapple (center) and three FSNIs, May 2023. (Photo courtesy Tomislav Cvitanusic)

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