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The Knighted Special Agents of DSS

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(Left to right) Special Agent Jason Willis, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security and Director of the Diplomatic Security Service Christian J. Schurman, Special Agent Barrett Bishop, Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security Michael T. Evanoff, Special Agent Noriko Horiuchi, and Special Agent Jessica McTigue. U.S. Department of State, June 7, 2018. (U.S. Department of State photo)

In the Middle Ages, sovereigns knighted soldiers for accomplishments based on military rank, skill on horseback, and how nobly they served their king. During the last 100 years, sovereign governments have awarded individuals with knighthood to honor civilian and military excellence during war and, often, to honor peacetime achievements.

Recently, four Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) special agents received the singular honor of knighthood from their posted countries for their contributions to training, investigative assistance, capacity building, and strengthening broader bilateral relations. This select group of special agents includes Jason Willis, knighted by the government of Mali, Noriko Horiuchi, knighted by the government of Togo; Barrett Bishop, knighted by the government of Niger; and Jessica McTigue, knighted by the government of Chad.

Part 1: Jason Willis

Part 2: Noriko Horiuchi

Part 3: Barrett Bishop

Part 4: Jessica McTigue

THE KNIGHTED SPECIAL AGENTS OF DSS
SPECIAL AGENT JASON WILLIS, MALI



Malian Security Minister General Salif Traoré decorates RSO Jason Willis on behalf of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, in Bamako at the Ministry of Security's headquarters, April 17, 2018. (U.S. Department of State photo)

Jason Willis was recognized for his three years of extraordinary leadership in building the capacity of the Malian security forces to combat terrorism and for improving overall security for the Malian public.

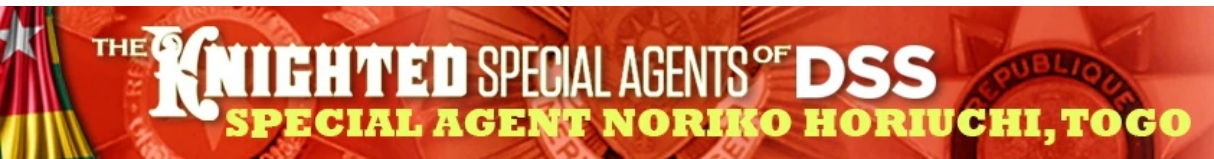
Following the deadly 2015 terrorist attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, the ATA program invested in a crisis response team program to provide training and equipment to Malian security forces, and at Willis' recommendation, DSS mentors were embedded in teams to maximize their training impact.

Willis worked closely with his RSO team and other embedded mentors to strengthen the capacity of Malian security forces and improve the effectiveness of their response to four terrorist attacks, the last of which

targeted the Kangaba Hotel in Bamako in June 2017. The Malian antiterrorism unit, with the support of their American mentors, responded successfully to the June attack and killed some of the assailants while taking minor injuries. The Kangaba Hotel marked a big improvement over previous responses and demonstrated the value of ATA investments and embedded training. (Read more of the incredible story of the Mali hotel rescue [here](#).)

“The Sahel region of West Africa is a particularly challenging environment but I had opportunities to do good work and I’m grateful for the recognition,” Willis said.

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RSO Noriko Horiuchi (center) and Togo's U.S. Ambassador Robert Whitehead (to Agent Noriko's right) attend an award ceremony on August 19, 2014. On behalf of Togo's president, Togo's Minister of Security (to Agent Noriko's left) knighted Horiuchi with the "Chevalier de L'Ordre du Mono" for successfully carrying out important bilateral law-enforcement efforts. (U.S. Department of State photo)

From securing antiterrorism equipment and training, to investigating wildlife trafficking, Special Agent Noriko Horiuchi played an important role in strengthening the U.S.-Togo bilateral security relationship during her tenure as Regional Security Officer (RSO) at U.S. Embassy Togo from 2012-2014.

Horiuchi fulfilled a request for assistance by Togo's Minister of Security by securing funding to purchase equipment and refurbish a facility to train Togolese to combat terrorism in northern Mali alongside UN troops. During her time in Togo, Horiuchi also investigated wildlife trafficking and coordinated with U.S.-based law enforcement and intelligence agencies to help the Togolese government arrest and convict Emile N'Bouke – an infamous ivory vendor in Togo – and confiscate 1,540 pounds of ivory, the second largest ivory seizure in West Africa's history.

“As DSS agents and RSOs we know that every day is going to be different whether it is combatting terrorism, trafficking, or piracy. Living in Togo was difficult but the incredible opportunities to do challenging work and find creative solutions more than made up for it,” said Horiuchi.

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In 2015, Niger's largest cities experienced widespread protests following the publication of a cartoon depicting the Prophet Mohammed. The protests resulted in loss of life and over 40 church burnings in Niamey alone—some very close to the U.S Embassy and within the American residential community.

During the violence, RSO Barrett Bishop called on his Nigerien counterparts to assist him in protecting buildings that housed American missionary children. Bishop had developed these relationships through collaboration on the U.S. Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance Program (ATA).

This type of collaboration was only one example of Bishop's contributions to Niger during his posting there from 2013-2015. Bishop used the ATA program to strengthen Niger's ability to train, equip and deploy national guardsmen, police and gendarmes; he coordinated the delivery of multi-agency initiatives to strengthen Niger's security infrastructure; and he facilitated coordination among the various U.S. military and government entities to help provide assistance to the government of Niger to counter Boko Haram, al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, and the increased terror threat.

“Niger is a partner nation committed to combatting terrorist actors like Boko Haram and the ATA program is an important capacity-building effort that serves as a force-multiplier. It was an honor to be recognized,” said Bishop.

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RSO Jessica McTigue received L'Ordre National du Tchad at an award ceremony in N'djamena, Chad, on June 7, 2017. From left to right: Director General of the National Police General Tahir Erda, RSO Jessica McTigue, Minister of Public Security and Immigration Ahmat Mahamat Bachir, and Ambassador Geeta Pasi. (U.S. Department of State photo)

RSO Jessica McTigue was recognized for the important role she played in strengthening the bilateral security relationship between the United States and Chad.

U.S. government-trained and equipped Chadian security forces executed counterterrorism missions during McTigue's assignment, and she conveyed these success stories in cables back to Washington that garnered attention and helped McTigue increase funding for Chad by approximately \$11 million by the end of her tour.

McTigue was also recognized for her leadership following a series of deadly Boko Haram suicide bombings in N'Djamena in the summer of 2015. She organized the U.S. government's immediate post-blast investigative assistance that helped identify, arrest and prosecute the suicide bombers and their accomplices. The apprehension and conviction of the suicide bombers was widely publicized as a great success story for Chadian counterterrorism efforts.

"Following the 2015 attacks, several of our ATA-trained Chadian police put hands on suicide bombers before they could cause harm and that's a big success story," said McTigue.

About the Author: Eric Weiner serves in the Diplomatic Security Service's Office of Public Affairs.

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