

Resigning officials cite feeble U.S. policies



David Badders/DN

By Neil Feldman
Staff Reporter

After eight years in the State Department, Marshall Freeman Harris, 32, had worked himself up to the position of chief of the new Bosnia desk and was viewed as an ambitious diplomat with a golden future.



As an analyst in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Jon Western, 30, had diligently cataloged the daily accounts of genocide the United States

sent to the United Nations as evidence of war crimes.

And George Kenney, who worked himself up to the position of head of the Yugoslav desk, seemed to be following in his father's footsteps, who is a retired 25-year veteran of the Foreign Service.

However, these three officials became disturbed by feeble U.S. policies that they felt did very little to quell the strife.

Starting with Kenney a year ago, the three officials publicly resigned, demonstrating they were opposed to the lack of action displayed by both the Bush and Clinton administrations.

Veteran diplomat F.A. Harris, no relation to the official who resigned, noted recently that the resignations represent a significant morale problem in the State Department comparable to the Vietnam War.

While the pain of Vietnam may have run deeper and longer, F.A. Harris added, such resignations illustrate that "something is very wrong."

When Harris quit recently, Secretary of State Warren Christopher dismissed the action in a televised briefing as the act of a "young officer."

In another briefing, State Department Spokesman Mike McCurry said Harris' leaving will not have a significant impact on the department.

Gil Kulick, director of the American Foreign Service Association, said publicly that most in the State Department are opposed to U.S. Bosnia policy.

Openly condemning U.S. policy, however, is another story.

Officials who remain at the State Department quietly say that the resignations have stirred frustration and anger in the State Department.

Kenney, who now works on behalf of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C., left his \$50,000-a-year position in an attempt to have an impact "on the outside, telling the truth."

Writing more than fifty articles in publications ranging from scholarly journals to op-ed pieces in the Washington Post, Kenney described the Bush administration's approach to the Balkan mess as "aloof" and "coward-ice."

He has used similar terms to describe President Clinton's approach.

Repeatedly, Kenney has noted that 30 to 40 Foreign Service officers working for Stephen Oxman, Marshall Harris' boss and assistant secretary for Canadian and European Affairs, formally and informally voiced their disagreement and frustration with policy during both administrations.

Part of Kenney's responsibility as a State Department official was to read wires to journalists at briefings.

Just prior to his resignation, Kenney began one statement as "U.S. officials lied today ..."

A former intern at the Pentagon, Western, whose resignation will take effect shortly, wrote in his letter that he was angered "by the failure" of the United States to take significant action in the besieged Balkans.

Christopher has not commented on this latest resignation.

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Such anger, analysts claim, recently caused Christopher to press for air strikes against European allies.

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