POSITION DESCRIPTION

**assistant secretary for south and central asian affairs, Department of state**

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Senate Committee | Foreign Relations |
| Agency Mission | The Department of State is the lead institution for the conduct of American diplomacy, and the secretary is the president’s principal foreign policy advisor. |
| Position Overview | The assistant secretary for South and Central Asian affairs provides guidance to U.S. diplomatic missions in the region and handles foreign policy and diplomatic relations with the following countries and geographic entities: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| Position Reports to | Undersecretary for Political Affairs[[3]](#endnote-3) |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | In fiscal 2015, the Bureau for South and Central Asian Affairs had a budget of $65.174 million.[[4]](#endnote-4) The assistant secretary oversees the principal deputy assistant secretary and three deputy assistant secretaries.[[5]](#endnote-5) |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Manages the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs * Serves as the principal advisor to the secretary of state and the deputy secretaries   + Is responsible for the general conduct of U.S. foreign relations with countries in this geographical division. Regional policy issues include: terrorism, energy, narcotics, Kashmir, nonproliferation, technology and reform * Testifies before congressional subcommittees and appears in the media * Provides instructions and guidance to ambassadors, follows up on diplomatic reporting and communicates with the Washington diplomatic corps * Coordinates with the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs and the assistant administrator of the Agency for International Development as well as senior officials at other departments and agencies * Coordinates with the assistant secretary for international narcotics and law enforcement, the policy planning staff, the assistant secretary for crisis and stabilization operations, the assistant secretary for intelligence and research, and the coordinator for counterterrorism[[6]](#endnote-6) |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Experience in the region, and broad familiarity with regional leaders * Government experience * Strong relationships and stature with stakeholders on Capitol Hill and other parts of government |
| Competencies | * Strong communication skills and ability to appear before media * Ability to work well with counterparts in foreign policy positions * Excellent leadership skills * Ability to think strategically yet also accomplish the department’s operational priorities * Energy for frequent amount of travel * Strong communication and interpersonal skills * Ability to work under high pressure * Ability to handle sensitive matters * Excellent negotiation skills * Ability to work across partisan lines |
| **PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Nisha Desai Biswal (2013 to 2017): Assistant Administrator for Asia at the United States Agency for International Development; Majority Clerk for the House Appropriations Committee’s Foreign Operations Subcommittee; Professional Staff in the House Foreign Affairs Committee; International Delegate to the American Red Cross in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan[[7]](#endnote-7) | |
| Robert O. Blake, Jr. (2009 to 2013): Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary (Sri Lanka); Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary (Maldives); Deputy Chief of Mission in India[[8]](#endnote-8) | |
| Richard A. Boucher (2006 to 2009): Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs; Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Cyprus[[9]](#endnote-9); U.S. Counsel General in Hong Kong | |

1. https://www.state.gov/p/sca/ci/index.htm [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/rls/dos/99484.htm [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252179.pdf [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. https://lo.bvdep.com/OrgChart.asp?curp=1&LDIBookId=19&LDISectionId=180&LDIOrgId=157931 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. OPM [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/215789.htm [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. https://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/member/robert-o-blake-jr/ [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/boucher-richard-a [↑](#endnote-ref-9)