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## PM/WRA Director Jim Lawrence Retires, Leaves a Legacy

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# PM/WRA Director Jim Lawrence Retires, Leaves a Legacy

By integrating the public and private sectors, Jim Lawrence of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) has brought energy, innovation and passion to mine action. Through anecdotes, coworkers and friends remember Lawrence and his influence on the field as he retires.

by Lois Carter Crawford [ Center for International Stabilization and Recovery ]

After serving as acting director for two years, James (Jim) F. Lawrence officially became director of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) in May 2011. In many capacities, Lawrence was the face of U.S. Government humanitarian mine action over the past few decades.

During his retirement speech on 29 January 2013, Lawrence offered this advice: "The greatest success of a leader is to hire talented people and then watch them succeed." His influence and management style will live on in the community long after his retirement from 45 years of government service in February 2013.

"My years of watching Jim manage people were very beneficial when I switched jobs and landed in a supervisory role—I was able to use techniques I hadn't realized I had learned from him and that really built my effectiveness in my new job," says Stacy Bernard Davis, senior advisor to the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism.<sup>1</sup>

H. Murphey (Murf) McCloy, Jr., senior advisor, PM/WRA (retired), agrees: "I first met Jim Lawrence back in the late 1990s when he entered the international humanitarian mine action field with the Office of the Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State for Global Humanitarian Demining [S/GHD]. For nearly 20 years I have worked both with Jim and for him, and always with the same results: I ended up smarter and wiser as a result of our professional interaction, and expanded considerably my repertoire of jokes, funny stories and tales that generally begin with 'Now you're not going to believe this, but ...'"<sup>2</sup>

John Stevens, foreign affairs officer, PM/WRA, likes to tell a story about Lawrence's creativity and determination: "Shortly after I went to work for Jim in October 1999 when



During his retirement reception, Jim Lawrence (left) poses with Assistant Secretary of State Andrew Shapiro (right).  
*Photo courtesy of the author.*

he was the deputy director for S/GHD, we traveled to Orlando, Florida [U.S.], to staff an information booth at the annual conference of social studies teachers. The centerpiece of our participation was a landmine education curriculum that we had commissioned the Center for Teaching International Relations at the University of Denver [U.S.] to prepare for us, and which we intended to distribute to teachers from around the United States, Canada and other countries.

"Obviously, we needed compelling visuals to attract folks to our booth. So we took along some U.S. Department of Defense training boards that had realistic, full-scale replicas of various landmines protruding from them. The landmine displays were too big to pack, so Jim decided that we should carry them with us on board the aircraft. Although this was pre-9/11, I had some trepidation about traipsing through National

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Airport [Washington, D.C.] with boards bearing landmines and warning signs with skulls and cross bones.

"Don't worry," said Jim. "It's not a problem. If anyone asks, we'll just show them the mines are fake."

"When we descended from the taxi at National Airport, most travelers didn't pay attention to us, but several of the redcap porters were Eritrean immigrants. They immediately recognized the mines and the Eritrean warning signs on the boards that we had selected at random. They were thrilled! One of the men proclaimed with pride, 'I used these mines!'

"However, when we got inside the terminal, folks at the counter and the gate were less than enthusiastic, even when we flipped the signs around to show that the mines were merely extruded plastic. Fortunately, Jim's banker-like appearance and sales patter overcame their default setting of 'No way.' Jim just kept moving past them even when we were standing still. He overwhelmed them with breezy optimism: 'Aren't these great? We got them from the Department of Defense. We're going to show these to social-studies teachers, and they're going to teach kids all over the United States how the real devices are a problem around the world. Secretary of State Albright has endorsed this. We're so excited to take the message to American kids ...' Everyone just looked at him with amazement, but they let us pass. When we entered the [airplane] cabin, Jim even talked the stewardess into letting him store these big panels in the suit locker. Alas, Jim returned to D.C. early. Lacking his combination of gravitas and show-biz moxie, I elected to ship the boards back to the office, and I flew back without them."<sup>3</sup>

"Jim is a special guy," agrees retired Col. Dennis Barlow, former director of the Center for International Stabilization



Jim Lawrence and Murf McCloy with Chinese diplomats at Lake Bled during mine action meetings in Slovenia, May 2008.

*Photo courtesy of Dennis Barlow.*

and Recovery at James Madison University. "In a city [Washington, D.C.] filled with puffed-up officials and rubber-stamp bureaucrats, Jim brought dedication, energy, imagination and enthusiasm to every project every day.

"He also had a vision for increasing the effectiveness of U.S. landmine remediation efforts by somehow combining private American initiatives with U.S. Government policy," says Barlow. "While the whole initiative was fraught with bureaucratic and legal conundrums, Jim was undeterred. He would somehow find a way to leverage these two great forces, and he



As a reflection of their collegiality and shared commitment to mine action, some of the original members of the Public-Private Partnership team gather for lunch in December 2012. Left to right: Beth Schlachter, Jim Lawrence, Stacy Bernard Davis, John Stevens, Dave Rabadan.

*Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of State.*



Jim Lawrence at an August 2012 reception recognizing James Madison University fellows for the U.S. Department of State's Frasure-Kruzel-Drew Memorial Fellowship in Humanitarian Demining.  
*Photo courtesy of CISR.*

did. Jim created a vibrant coordinated program—the Public-Private Partnership Program—which integrated private and government-agency actions into coherent country plans.

“The remarkable thing was that Jim did not merely authorize this program. In a one-man diplomatic barnstorming tour, he visited scores of NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], including Rotary Clubs around the world, and agencies to personally drive this project. He was literally the godfather of the Public-Private Partnership initiative, and I believe it was made possible solely by dint of his personal involvement and passion for the cause in which he believed so deeply.”<sup>4</sup>

Jerry White, deputy assistant secretary of state, U.S. Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, says, “Jim Lawrence has been a faithful friend to landmine survivors and mine action implementers worldwide. We are grateful for his commitment to make sure humanitarian mine action incorporated all the vital elements from surveying to public awareness, victim assistance and mine risk education to clearance. Jim has been a role model of public service over the years, dedicated to advancing this humanitarian cause in very pragmatic ways. He will be deeply missed at State, but his work and legacy will go forever forward.”<sup>5</sup>

Under the leadership of Jim Lawrence a wide range of innovative programs were developed with very interesting partners—from clearance organizations like The HALO Trust

*It's public servants like Jim Lawrence who make things happen and who ensure that the U.S. Government is seen in a positive light overseas by helping people recover from conflict and creating ways for stability, security and democracy to take root. His whole career, from Peace Corps through the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration to PM/WRA, exemplifies his commitment to making a difference for people around the world through public service.*

*~ Stacy Bernard Davis,  
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to U.S. universities like JMU and Michigan State to volunteer associations such as the Association of Volunteers in International Service. He was open to new ideas and unique solutions to landmine clearance and awareness. Some of these, such as the PPP Program that he developed and headed for years, followed the for-profit business model of networking, developing symbiotic partnerships and doing business on the golf course.

The PPP Program allowed him to represent his office and the Department of State at fun events he enjoyed, “like a Freedom Fields USA gala at Clint Eastwood’s golf club or going to the U.S. Open [tennis] on PM/WRA business,” says Davis.<sup>1</sup>

“I learned much from Jim and, hopefully, he from me,” says Donald (Pat) Patierno, president of the Board of Directors of MAG America (Mines Advisory Group) and a former State Department colleague. “I continued to learn from him after I left the Humanitarian Demining Program, mostly about the significance of engaging the private sector on such



Jim Lawrence hits his second shot at the famous 16th hole at the Pasatiempo Golf Club, Santa Cruz, California (U.S.).  
*Photo courtesy of James Lawrence.*

a humanitarian effort. I learned a lot from him outside the office as well—usually on a golf course somewhere, but that is fodder for a different story.”<sup>6</sup>

“Throughout the many years I’ve known Jim, he’s become more than just a colleague; he is a friend and a mentor to me,” says Ken Rutherford, CISR director. “My most special personal memory of our friendship occurred in 2003 on the prestigious Cypress Point golf course in Carmel Valley, California [U.S.], as guests of Clint and Dina Eastwood. Jim had helped organize and support the first Freedom Fields fundraising dinner. It generated US\$150,000 for landmine removal and clearance to benefit more than 6,000 families living in the Kamrieng district of Cambodia.

“While I never golfed a full round before losing my legs to a landmine, I picked up this sport on a more or less regular

basis just two years before playing with Jim. Rather than getting frustrated with my wild shots going everywhere but the fairway, he tried to coach me on golfing strategies and course management. I appreciated his guidance. In my opinion, Jim is one of the most boring golfers that I’ve ever had the pleasure of playing with. His golf shots are all the same—long and straight down the fairway. Unlike my shots that ended up in the water or sand, Jim never made a mistake. His shots landed on the fairway or green. Boring, consistently.

“Thanks, Jim, for those times you’ve supported landmine survivor assistance efforts and for helping a survivor pick up and play the game that you so much love. Thank you for sharing your passion for both.”<sup>7</sup>

According to Davis, “It’s public servants like Jim Lawrence who make things happen and who ensure that the U.S. Government is



Jim Lawrence receives the U.S. Secretary of State's Award for Public Outreach from Colin Powell in 2004. Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of State.

seen in a positive light overseas by helping people recover from conflict and creating ways for stability, security and democracy to take root. His whole career, from Peace Corps through the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration to PM/WRA, exemplifies his commitment to making a difference for people around the world through public service."<sup>1</sup>

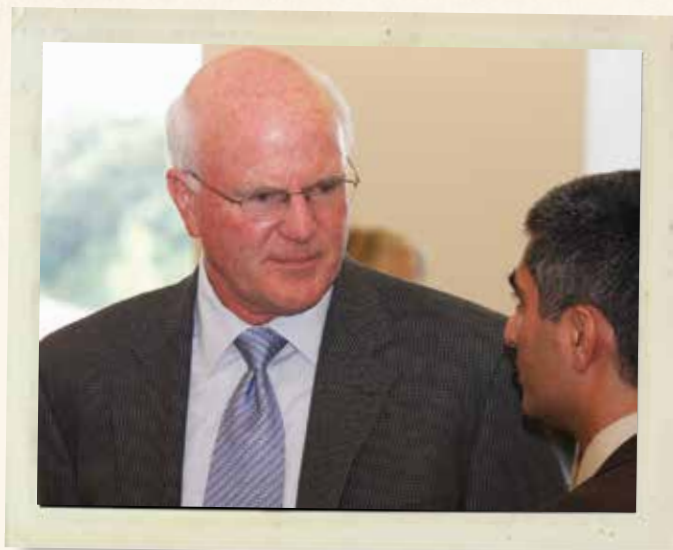
Rutherford agrees, "He is always ready to offer his support for partnering on mine action events, whether developing innovative Public-Private Partnership events in California, Florida and elsewhere, educating Americans on mines, or spending grueling hours on planes to Europe, the Middle East and South America in order to promote mine action. Jim was always there in a behind-the-scenes leadership role making everyone else look good as long as the message was on track."<sup>7</sup>

Innovation was one of the keys to Lawrence's success and the success of the programs he oversaw. Ralph Cwerman, president and cofounder of the Humpty Dumpty Institute, recalls, "I remember calling Jim from Kansas City, Missouri [U.S.], in 2005. I had just toured a U.S. Department of Agriculture storage facility—a vast underground cavern that housed, quite literally, billions of pounds of excess food like cheese, butter, lentils and powdered milk that would ultimately be

used as U.S. foreign-aid packages. During the tour a light bulb went off: NGOs like HDI could apply for some of this food and monetize [sell] it to fund foreign agricultural-development programs. After explaining to Jim how this food could benefit mine action, he readily agreed that we should do it.

"In the days that followed, Jim and I fashioned a new program, and his office provided HDI with seed money to develop special proposals for Angola, Sri Lanka and Laos. These proposals would eventually result in more than US\$15 million in new funding, nearly half of which was used for mine action. Jim's decision to invest in HDI's project development ultimately led to removing landmines and unexploded ordnance in these three countries that saved hundreds of thousands of lives, allowed farmers in Angola and Sri Lanka to grow their crops safely and bring their produce to market for the first time in 20 years, and allowed tens of thousands of young children to walk to school safely in one of the most mine-infested provinces in Laos."<sup>8</sup>

McCloy sums it up: "Jim's father was a retired Marine brigadier general, one of those legendary heroes that came out of the fighting in the South Pacific during World War II, and one of those leaders that, as a young Marine officer (circa 1963),



Jim Lawrence talks with Siraj Barzani, head of the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency, at the closing dinner of CISR's 2011 Senior Managers' Course.  
Photo courtesy of JMU Photo Services.

I was taught to emulate. As I worked with Jim over the years, I came to admire him for the same attributes that I had learned his father embodied: integrity, dedication to duty and the welfare of his people, and underpinning it all just plain old 'guts'—the desire to do the right thing no matter how hard the task or unpopular the undertaking.

“Just as Jim’s father fought so courageously for the American cause and the oppressed peoples of the South Pacific during World War II, so Jim has worked tirelessly and effectively on behalf of hundreds of thousands of disadvantaged people worldwide whose lives are

severely afflicted by explosive threats, the legacies of past wars. His quiet brand of leadership has been as effective in waging peace as his father’s efforts were in waging war; consequently, PM/WRA and the Department of State are prepared as never before to face the evolving challenges in the fields of humanitarian demining and the destruction/disposition of MANPADS [man-portable air-defense systems] and other conventional weapons.

“As Jim departs for retirement, he leaves behind untold thousands who are fortunate to have had him for an advocate; hundreds of professional as-

sociates and coworkers who have benefited from his leadership; and a father in heaven that is mighty proud of how his son picked up where [he] left off and went on to make the world a much better and safer place for us all. In my book, even without a horse (generally not allowed to attend State Department functions), that’s one heck of a way to ride off into the golden sunset,” says McCloy.<sup>2</sup>

“Jim served the State Department’s mine action program with honor and commitment. He has adhered to a high standard of conduct, clinging to an uncompromising code of personal integrity,” agrees Patierno.<sup>6</sup>

“While Jim may be retiring,” notes Cwerman, “I suspect he will still play a critical role in advancing the cause to which he has dedicated much of his career. On behalf of all of the partners of PM/WRA, I simply say thank you, Jim, for your support, advice and friendship.”<sup>8</sup>

See endnotes page 64



Lois Carter Crawford, APR, is editor-in-chief of *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* and also served as project manager on the *Adaptive Technology Catalog: Tools for Survivors of Landmines and Explosive Remnants of War* and the *To Walk the Earth in Safety* projects. Prior to joining CISR in 2005, Crawford worked in advertising and publishing for more than 25 years. She is an accredited public relations professional and holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

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*~ Ralph Cwerman, president and co-founder of the Humpty Dumpty Institute*