

Afghanistan War

"The State Department always insists that we we have to play by the rules," Representative [Tom] Malinowski, who once served in it, told me.

The department celebrates Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who forged passports to save Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust.

"But if any State Department employee tried to pull what Raoul Wallenberg did, he'd be fired in three seconds."

This was the thinking of the period before the August evacuation. "And then, for two glorious weeks, we threw out the rules."

Now the department is back to its risk-averse, pre-August thinking, with an obstacle for every human need. "Bureaucracy is killing more people than the Taliban," Mary Beth Goodman, the State Department official, told me.

George Packer, Atlantic Monthly, March 2022