

Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies announces lecture on “U.S. Diplomacy, Civil Society, and Democracy in the Middle East and Europe”**

Ann Arbor, MI – The Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies announces a public lecture on U.S. diplomacy, civil society, and democracy in the Middle East and Europe featuring former Ambassadors Francis J. Ricciardone, Jr. and Ronald N. Weiser on Thursday, February 12 at 4 pm in 1636 International Institute, 1080 South University, Ann Arbor. They will discuss how U.S. ambassadors express and inform U.S. policies in relation to the countries in which they serve, with particular attention to the ways these activities engage civil society and affect the conditions for extending democracy in those nations.

Ambassador Ricciardone is currently on leave from the U.S. Department of State where he most recently served as Ambassador to Egypt (2005-2008) and to the Philippines and Palau (2002-2005). A member of the Senior Foreign Service, he has received numerous awards for his work in foreign policy, political reporting, analysis, and peacekeeping. Given his extensive experience working on two multinational military deployments in Egypt’s Sinai Desert and as a political adviser to the U.S. and Turkish commanding generals of Operation Provide Comfort in Turkey and Iraq, Ambassador Ricciardone was chosen to direct the Department of State’s 9/11 Task Force on the Coalition Against Terrorism and served as the Secretary of State’s special coordinator for the Transition of Iraq. He began his international career in 1978 as a Fulbright Scholar and teacher in Italy.

Ambassador Weiser was appointed by President George Bush as U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia from 2001-2004. In addition to his diplomatic responsibilities he organized three international investment conferences attended by investors from hundreds of companies. In 2004, he received the White Double Cross from Slovak President Rudolph Schuster, the highest award given to non-Slovaks, and the Cultural Pluralism Award from the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad for his work in the restoration of the Jewish cemetery in Zakopane, Poland, and one of Slovakia’s most cherished historical sites, the medieval Trencin Castle. In 2007 Ambassador Weiser was honored by the Woodrow Wilson International Center of the Smithsonian with the “Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service”. He has chaired or co-chaired numerous non-profits over many years including the University’s National Board of the Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning. In 1968, he founded McKinley Associates, a national real estate investment company, and served as its chairman and chief executive officer until 2001. In 2008, he and his wife, Eileen Lappin Weiser, donated \$10 million to the International Institute in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. The gift established the Ronald and Eileen Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia that serves as the umbrella organization for the Center for Russian and European Studies, the Center for European Studies-European Union Center, and the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies.

For more information about this event, go to: <[www.ii.umich.edu/wced](http://www.ii.umich.edu/wced)>.