AMBASSADOR WILLIAM D. CLARKE, SR.

Ambassador William Davis Clarke, Sr., was born in 1941. In 1963, Ambassador Clarke earned his bachelor’s degree at Howard University. Years later, in 1995, he attended the College of the Armed Forces in Washington, D.C., and received the U.S. Department of State’s Equal Opportunity Award.

Ambassador Clarke began his career in the U.S. Foreign Service in 1967. For over 30 years, he worked in different parts of the world for the Department of State’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) as a Diplomatic Security Service special agent. As such, he served as a regional security officer (RSO) in Japan, France, Germany, Côte d’Ivoire, and Egypt. As an RSO, Ambassador Clarke served as the senior law enforcement and security advisor to the U.S. ambassador, and managed all the security programs at the above-mentioned diplomatic posts. RSOs also serve as the U.S. embassy’s law enforcement liaison to the host nation, arranging training for foreign police and security officers and advising American citizens about safety and security abroad. After several RSO tours, Ambassador Clarke moved to Panama where he served as the Department’s regional associate director for security for all U.S. embassies in South America.

In 1992, Ambassador Clarke returned to the United States and worked as the DS deputy assistant secretary for countermeasures and information security. In this position, he helped develop security policy and plans for countermeasures for the U.S. Department of State’s overseas and domestic operations and facilities. Ambassador Clarke held this position until 1997.

On June 23, 1998, President Bill Clinton nominated Clarke to serve as the U.S. ambassador to Eritrea. That nomination made him the first member of DS to be named as an ambassador. After confirmation by the U.S. Senate on June 26, 1998, Ambassador Clarke arrived in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, on June 29, 1998.

As Ambassador, Clarke led the Department’s efforts to enhance diplomatic and economic relations with Eritrea. For instance, in 1999, Clarke participated in Eritrea’s National Immunization Day where he had the opportunities to see mothers and their children receive polio vaccines for the first time. Clarke also helped arrange U.S. aid in the form of low-interest loans, development assistance, and food and medical programs.

Clarke resigned as U.S. Ambassador on August 12, 2001, returned to the United States, and retired from the U.S. Foreign Service.

Ambassador Clarke passed away in 2021. He is survived by his wife, Katsuko M. Clarke, his sons William Clarke Jr., and Robert Clarke, and his daughter Christina Armstrong.