

Post of the Month

A vibrant display of fresh produce including radishes, green onions, carrots, and other vegetables. The produce is arranged in several wooden crates and baskets, set against a red background. The lighting is warm, highlighting the textures and colors of the food.

# Poshōwār

Old city sits on the frontier | *By Merry Miller and Lynne Tracy*

A teenage boy sells vegetables at a market in Peshawar.



*When springtime flushes the desert grass,  
Our kafilas wind through the Khyber Pass.  
Lean are the camels but fat the frails,  
Light are the purses but heavy the bales,  
As the snowbound trade of the North comes down  
To the market square of Peshawar town.*

— *The Ballad of the King's Jest* (1890)  
Rudyard Kipling

## Peshawar,

capital of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, has been known by many names, including "City of Flowers" and "The High Fort," but perhaps most apt is "The Place at the Frontier." Throughout Peshawar's 2,000 years, the city has stood as a gateway between east and west.

Located at the foot of the rugged Spin Ghar mountain range's Khyber Pass, Peshawar has seen waves of invaders from many empires. Persians, Greeks, Buddhist Kushans, Huns, Mughals, Sikhs and the British passed through Peshawar in a bid to control the Indian subcontinent. The Northwest Frontier has long been the scene of intrigue and a source of inspiration for diplomats, soldiers and journalists. "Every rock, every hill has its story," Winston Churchill wrote in 1897 while posted as an army officer north of

Peshawar during the "Great Game," when the British and Russian empires contested for influence in the region.

The legacies of these civilizations mark modern Peshawar, a city of nearly three million people. The "Old City" has winding, narrow streets and bazaars crammed with copper, gold, textiles and spices. At its heart is the 16th-century Mughal Muhabbat Khan Mosque. This popular shopping district sits in the shadow of Bala Hisar Fort, whose foundations are as old as Peshawar and whose imposing brick walls are as recent as the British Raj. Nearby is the Peshawar Museum and its extensive collection of Gandharan art, reflecting the glory of the Buddhist kingdom that ruled in the Peshawar valley from the 6th century B.C. until the 11th century A.D.

Next are the wide and orderly avenues of Peshawar's cantonment, established by the British and home to provincial government and military offices. Further west are contemporary residences and a refugee camp—an enduring reminder of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. At the far western edge of the Peshawar district on the border with Khyber Agency, part of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, is a sign marked "No Foreigners Beyond This Point."

The region's 23 million Pathans, the predominant ethnic group of this corner of Pakistan, are intensely independent. A popular local proverb says, "Order a Pashtun to go to heaven, and he will fight you to the death. Invite him to accompany you to hell, and he will go gladly." *Pukhtunwali*, the code

of the Pashtuns, imposes three obligations. *Nanawatai* is the right of asylum and compels one to provide shelter and protection even to an enemy if he asks for it. *Mailmastai* requires hospitality to all who demand it, even a non-Muslim. *Badal*, the necessity for revenge by retaliation, may be the strongest obligation in Pashtun culture. A Pashtun must exact revenge, at any risk or cost, for an insult or injury to himself or his family, clan or tribe. Women, gold and land are the source of most blood feuds, and the enmity often continues long after the origin of the feud is forgotten.

### 50 years on the frontier

Against this rich tapestry of history and culture, the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2008. The U.S. diplomatic presence in the province grew out of the Badaber airbase near Peshawar, which supported U-2 flights during the Cold War, including that of Francis Gary Powers,



**Clockwise from above:** Bala Hisar Fort, headquarters of the paramilitary Frontier Corps, sits on the highest point in Peshawar. It was used as a garrison by invaders from Central Asia. Its current walls were built by the British in 1849, but its foundations are 2,000 years old; Principal Officer Lynne Tracy poses with Col. Khushwaqt ul Mulk, 97, the first Foreign Service National employee of the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar, in front of a plaque of the consulate's principal officers; Ambassador Anne W. Patterson shakes the hand of a child from the tribal areas during her visit to a camp for internally displaced persons outside of Peshawar; When jingle buses also called rocket buses get too full, passengers climb up on the roof. The paintings, poetry and slogans reflect the drivers' attitudes and make each bus unique.





**Clockwise from above:** Khashayar Ghashghai, public diplomacy officer at the consulate, talks with graduate students about the U.S. elections at the Lincoln Corner, Peshawar University; Horse drawn carts are popular as an inexpensive means of transportation; Management Officer JoEllen Gorg, Office of Transition Initiatives Deputy Country Representative Leah Werchick and Public Diplomacy Officer Ryia Miller look over some brass works at a bazaar on the consulate grounds; Built in the 1670s, Mughal Muhabbat Khan Mosque is a rare specimen of Mughal architecture. In 2001 2002, the Ambassador s Fund for Cultural Preservation funded a restoration of part of the mosque; Frontier Corps soldiers perform a martial dance at the Khyber Rifles Mess in Landi Kotal, the border town between Pakistan and Afghanistan.



who was shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960.

Gordon King, the first of the consulate's 19 principal officers to date, hired Colonel Khush Waqt-ul Mulk, a member of the ruling family from the former princely state of Chitral, north of Peshawar, as the first local staff member and political advisor. King penned *Ameri-Khan* in 2006, a lightly fictionalized account of the first years of the consulate.

Only a flagpole remains from the consulate's original Old City office, which fronted on the New Delhi-Kabul Grand Trunk road. In the 1960s, the consulate moved to its present location in the cantonment.

The consulate's size has waxed and waned. Its role in support of the Afghan mujahideen in the 1980s was a boom time in consulate staffing, but in the following decade a worldwide

round of post closings nearly brought the consulate's history to an end. Only the lack of an embassy in Kabul, which had closed in 1988, preserved the consulate, which became an observer post for developments in Afghanistan. The post contracted to a 10-officer State and Drug Enforcement Agency presence—until September 11, 2001.

Today, the consulate has more than 60 Americans and 125 Locally Employed Staff and continues to grow. U.S. Agency for International Development and Department of Defense colleagues have joined the consulate, which has re-oriented its focus on the Northwest Frontier Province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas. A growing staff and deteriorating security have led to a search for new office and residential facilities. Long gone are the days when the principal officer's unwall'd front lawn

beckoned friends of the consulate to drop by for a cup of tea in the shade of a chinar tree.

## Wide-ranging interests

Despite the physical limitations and an increasingly dangerous environment, the post's American and Pakistani employees actively represent a wide range of U.S. interests in a region that is the focal point of the fight against al Qaeda and its supporters. USAID, the U.S. military and the Department are jointly implementing a five-year, \$750-million package of assistance programs to strengthen Pakistani efforts to counter a growing insurgency in the province and tribal areas.

USAID's Office of Transitional Initiatives provides development assistance in the tribal areas that is linked to good governance practices such as sealed bidding for contracts.

Pashtu-speaking Foreign Service officers are expanding contacts with tribal leaders, adding more texture to reporting on an incredibly complex political landscape. The Defense Department is training the Frontier Corps, the Northwest Frontier's historic Pashtun border force, and the Department's bureaus of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and Diplomatic Security are helping the civilian police. The public affairs section and USAID have a partnership to reach Pakistan's next generation through an "Experience America" exchange program.

At age 50, the consulate is taking U.S. diplomacy in Peshawar into the 21st century. ■

*Merry Miller is the public affairs officer and Lynne Tracy is the principal officer at the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar.*

# At a Glance



**Country name:** Pakistan

**Capital:** Islamabad

**Government type:** parliamentary democracy

**Area:** 803,943 sq. km.

**Area - comparative:** almost twice the size of California

**Population:** 167 million

**Languages:** Although Urdu and English are official languages, Punjabi is the most commonly spoken.

**GDP - per capita:** \$2,600

**Religions:** mainly Muslim (Sunni and Shia)

**Export commodities:** textiles, rice and leather goods

**Import commodities:** petroleum, machinery and plastics

**Major trading partners:** United States, United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan

**Currency (code):** Pakistani rupee (PKR)

**Internet country code:** .pk

*Source: Country Background Notes*