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May 2012

MAGAZINE

Suitcase Invaders

Introduced Species
Can Wreak Havoc

Force Multipliers

Virtual Internships
Crowdsource Solutions

Serving in the
World's Most
Challenging Posts

A

I

P



Contents



May 2012 // Issue Number 567

24

Surprising Bern

Moving past
Swiss stereotypes

Construction began on the Münsterturm of Bern in 1421. Its tower was not completed until 1893.

Fotolia photo

16



STATE MAGAZINE

Features

- 10** AIP Service
Thriving in hardship
- 16** CORDS of War
Promoting diplomacy in Vietnam
- 18** Passports for Patriots
Agency smooths family travel
- 19** Marketing College
FSI taps corporate expertise
- 20** Nixon in China
Looking back 40 years later
- 22** Virtually There
Interns tackle disaster planning
- 30** Invasive Species
Hitching a ride in FS luggage
- 33** Staffing Surge
LNAs meet the challenge
- 34** Visa Central
NVC helps overseas posts

20



Columns

- 2** Post One
- 3** Inbox
- 4** In the News
- 8** Diversity Notes
- 9** Direct from the D.G.
- 38** In Brief
- 39** Retirements
- 41** Lying in State
- 42** Active Years
- 43** Obituaries
- 44** End State

34



On the Cover

Scenes from, left to right, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan highlight the varied cultures and physical environments in the AIP countries where Department employees serve.

Creative Commons Photos by United States Marine Corps, Jeff Werner and Mariachily

Back Cover

A man scales a fish along the shores of Lagos Lagoon, Nigeria.

Photo by Zuorio



Post One

BY ISAAC D. PACHECO

Making Lemonade

In the past four decades, the United States' diplomatic relationship with China has blossomed from cold formality to proactive engagement and productive exchange. As one of East Asia's dominant economies and a member of the United Nations Security Council, China has become a major international player and one of the United States' largest trade partners.

However, this mutually beneficial bilateral relationship might not have become what it is today had it not been for former President Richard Nixon's trip to China on March 7, 1972. Breaking through a decades-long wall of silence, Nixon reached out to the Chinese people and engaged in dialogue that would bring our nations closer. Presidential Management Fellow Rennie Silva celebrates the 40th anniversary of this pivotal trip with his retrospective feature, "Nixon in China," on page 22.

Throughout this issue, we focus on how Department employees have made the best of difficult situations, and how they have learned to thrive in some of the most challenging environments. *State Magazine's* Deputy Editor Ed Warner interviewed numerous people posted in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan (AIP) for his inside look at what it takes to conduct diplomacy in some of the world's most dangerous and politically unstable locales (pg. 10).

The first-person accounts from employees at AIP posts paint a surprisingly optimistic picture about everyday life in a region where peace is often tenuous and access to even the simplest amenities can be a challenge. Instead of anxiously counting down their remaining days at post, Department employees revel in the opportunities these challenging assignments provide for personal and professional growth.

AIP tours are far from the only postings where Department employees have faced



the chaos and instability of war. In the early 1960s, a few Foreign Service Officers were tasked as political reporters in regional hubs throughout Vietnam. However, by 1966 as the war raged on, the roles that Department employees played began to evolve. As the need to reach out to an increasingly disenfranchised populace grew, so too did the Department's engagement on the ground.

Bruce Kinsey takes a look back at a group of young FSOs who served in the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program in Vietnam during the war (pg. 14). Often in harm's way, they worked to implement the U.S. government's strategy to pacify hostile regions, engender support among the people in their areas of operation and cut off the enemy's supply of new recruits.

In the face of constant enemy action and waning public support at home, officers in the CORDS program still strove to improve the lives of those they served with continuous interaction and development projects. They, like so many other State Department employees over the years, found a way to make something positive out of the worst possible situation. ■



Corrections

April 2012, pg. 34 – The last paragraph in Office of the Month should have clarified that Resolution 16/18 was U.S.-supported, not sponsored.



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Submissions

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Deadlines

The submission deadline for the July/August issue is May 30. The deadline for the September issue is July 15.

State Magazine (ISSN 1099-4165) is published monthly, except bimonthly in July and August, by the Bureau of Human Resources at the U.S. Department of State. It is intended for information only and is not authority for official action. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of State. The editorial team reserves the right to select and edit all materials for publication.

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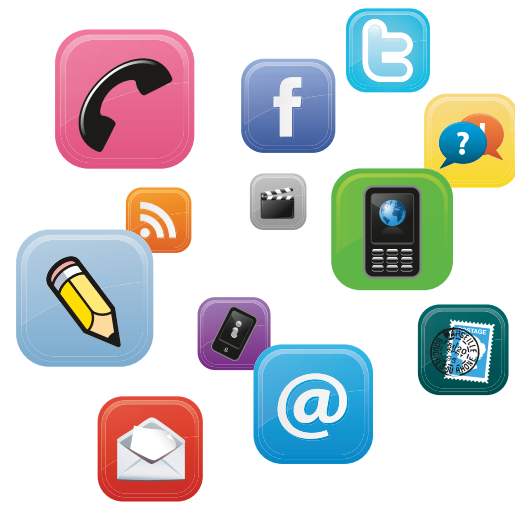
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@ Drug Expiration Dates

In your Safety Scene article on proper disposal of medications (March 2012, pg. 36) you omit an important fact. Beginning in 1978, the Food and Drug Administration required pharmaceutical companies to place expiration dates on drugs but set no specific time limits for individual drugs. Thus, drug manufacturers were able to set expiration dates. In the 1980s, at the request of the Department of Defense, the FDA began a program of testing drugs as part of the DOD's Shelf Life Extension Program (SLEP) because the DOD had a very large stockpile of drugs that it did not want to discard unnecessarily.

It would be beneficial to State Department employees to have more current information on the efficacy and safety of using expired prescription and over-the-counter drugs, especially when stationed overseas where it may be more difficult to obtain fresh prescriptions and OTC drugs. Of course, employees and their dependents should consult their physicians about any questions regarding the safe use of drugs, whether current or expired, and should also pay attention to State/MED information about foreign drugs that are not recommended for use.

Bruce K. Byers
Retired Foreign Service officer

Office of Medical Services response:

The expiration date on medications refers to a date beyond which the

manufacturer does not guarantee potency; it does not address safety of usage. MED notes that the FDA website states, "Using expired medical products is risky and possibly harmful to your health," and advises this is especially true of injectable medications, liquid preparations and vaccines. However, the opinion that properly stored consumer pharmaceuticals can be safely used, with a minimal diminution of potency, is widely held by many experts.

MED does participate in the DOD SLEP program, which covers some of the medications purchased by MED and kept at post in reserve for emergencies, such as Tamiflu, nerve agent antidotes and others. However, there is no such program for monitoring the myriad of over-the-counter or routinely prescribed prescription medications.

Dr. Diane Ballerino-Regan,
Office of Medical Services

@ Hidden Treasures

I found the "Digging History" article in the March 2012 State Magazine very interesting. I only have one suggestion for Valeria Brunori; Check the GSO files for the survey of the upper garden done around 1994. The embassy was looking at making it underground parking. It was scoped, and the first pictures did not even show the drainage pipes. But the second set of pictures show a lot of stuff buried under the upper garden.

And then there is the "bathing Venus" that sits in the Ambassador's entrance. Her story and her worth makes for interesting reading. Let's not forget the paintings in both the ambassador's and DCM's offices. There used to be a photograph of what is under these paintings. The paintings are worth quite a bit, but the ones that are covered up are worth more. And, to finish off, there are the frescos on the outer wall under the APO/GSO building.

There is a lot more one could photograph and write about the embassy in Rome. I spent seven years there and would go back yesterday if I could.

William W. Ford (Ret.)
*WAE
IRM/ITI/SI/IIB/AV*

@ Piracy and Cooperation

Having spent the past 10 years overseeing compliance issues in information technology development (and as a direct descendent of the famous Caribbean privateer), I found it refreshing to see the word "piracy" used as a matter of fact rather than metaphor. Mr. Meron's article (March 2012, pg. 14) offers hope for a future in which bilateral cooperation with other countries succeeds in other areas. The wonderful title font was a nice touch.

Rod Morgan
*Process Management
IRM/BMP/GRP/PMD*

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In the News



Capt. Shawn Duane, on ladder, works on the clinic's roof, assisted by, from left, Gunnery Sgt. Michael Rheault, Sgt. Anthony Dutton, a local chief and Kirk Donahoe.
Photo by Kris Arvind

Volunteers Build Clinic in Nigeria

A newly erected clinic on Tomaro Island, just minutes by boat from the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos, Nigeria, will provide basic medical care to the island's 30,000 residents, many of whom have not seen a health care professional for more than three years, other than through trips organized by the consulate general or from visiting U.S. Navy ships.

The consulate community built the clinic with support from Regional Medical Officer Dr. Jan Flattum-Riemers and encouragement from Mission Nigeria leadership. Foreign Service officer Kris Arvind coordinated the project along with then-Community Liaison Office Coordinator Prasanna Arvind. The project received a \$3,500 grant from the J. Kirby Simon Foreign Service Trust.

Community involvement was a key to success. Consul General Joseph Stafford met with the island's chief, who promised cooperation and allocated land for the site. Key volunteers included Martin Thomen, Pete Suhey, John Borley, AnnaMarie Capuano, Delfine Maralusha and Kris and Prasanna Arvind. They spent holidays and weekends in the scorching African sun digging the foundation, raising the walls and roof, and painting the structure. Island residents worked alongside the volunteers.

Volunteers on final construction included David Berger, Gunnery Sgt. Michael Rheault, Sgt. Anthony Dutton, Kirk Donahoe, Daniels Osaeloka, Inegbenose Egbeahie, Adrian Lanspeary and Capt. Shawn Duane.

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations team at the consulate general, including volunteer Smart Ajayi, assisted with the design and bought materials at cost from local suppliers. The management and general services sections of the consulate provided logistical support, including boat transport, and the regional security office ensured site and personnel security. When funding ran low, donations poured in from consulate staff.

When the project was finished, Ambassador Terence McCulley sent a note thanking the consulate community. He said he was "heartened by the engagement of our Lagos team and could not be prouder of the results you have achieved."

Posts Promote Employee Health and Well-Being

Posts in Mexico and Lebanon recently held health promotion events featuring screenings, presentations and wellness activities.

The March Health Fair at the U.S. Consulate General in Matamoros involved partnering with Mexico's social services agency, which provided two mobile clinics whose doctors offered free consultations, blood pressure screenings, breast cancer screenings and Pap smears. The agency's dentists were on hand for general dental consultations.

"The health and well-being of all of our employees is a high priority," said Principal Officer Michael Barkin.

A steady stream of attendees, from local guards to American officers, visited the clinics throughout the day.

"I had a dental checkup and a medical screening, all without having to leave work or worry about time away from my family," said Diana Granados, an employee in the nonimmigrant visa unit.

The doctors also gave presentations on nutrition and the effects of hypertension and high cholesterol.

Community Liaison Office (CLO) Coordinator Paula Pantoja termed the event a success. "We look forward to further events that support the health of our consulate community," she said.

At the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, a new initiative called Fit February got under way with a team of 12 embassy volunteers conducting a month of healthy, active and stress-releasing events for American and local staff. Each day started with a different email reminder, in English and Arabic, about healthy eating, reducing stress or improving overall wellness. The message included links to online resources.

The CLO organized trips to farmers' markets, ski slopes and healthy restaurants, and posted event pictures and food tips on the embassy TV channel. Chefs offered healthy cooking classes, a physical therapist gave sessions on ergonomics in the workplace and embassy staff gave introductory sessions on using the compound's gym and the spinning bikes. The employee recreation association sponsored the Biggest Loser weight-loss competition, and the embassy's restaurant offered daily healthy meal choices. The health unit sponsored free blood pressure checks and lectures on nutrition and stress reduction.

Assistant Regional Security Officer Steve Zagami created an obstacle course where teams competed against each other and the clock to leap walls, scale bunkers, hurdle barriers, swim laps in the pool, do push-ups and climb over, under or around every obstacle.



Fresh from the obstacle course, team members swim laps in the pool.
Photo by Jessica Ward

Visa Lottery Winner Becomes FS Specialist

One member of the 123rd class of Foreign Service specialists owes his connection to the State Department to the Diversity Visa (DV) lottery.

Early versions of the DV lottery reserved 40 percent of available immigrant visas for Irish nationals. In 1992, County Cork native Colin McCarthy sent in 26 DV applications (multiple entries were then allowed) and won a visa, gaining the Green Card that got him a job at McDonald's on Cape Cod, a locale where he'd been employed on work visas in the summers of 1988 and 1989.

Having studied structural engineering in junior college, he became a civil engineer with the U.S. Air Force and then worked for the Department of Transportation in Virginia (where he met his wife), Rhode Island, Missouri (where he earned an M.B.A.) and Delaware.

In 1997, he became a naturalized U.S. citizen in California.

"I wanted to continue working for the federal government, but I also wanted to travel," he said, explaining his interest in the Foreign Service. He was hired in September and is now in Lithuanian language training, preparing for a facilities management specialist job at the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius, where he'll be joined by his wife and three children.

"I absolutely love the place," McCarthy said of his new homeland.



News

Initiative Provides \$504 Million to Mexico

The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City's narcotics affairs section (NAS) has met its goal of providing \$500 million in 2011 U.S. assistance to the Mexican government for its battle against organized crime under the Merida Initiative.

"It turns out delivering \$500 million in a single year is even harder than it sounds," said NAS Deputy Director Jorgan Andrews. The initiative said it provided \$504 million, in a mix of equipment and capacity building.

"Building the team and creating the infrastructure, jointly developing the requirements, writing the purchase orders, managing the contracts, getting equipment through customs—all of that is incredibly time and effort intensive," said NAS Director Keith Mines. He noted that at the beginning of November, deliveries totaled only \$309 million, with six work weeks left in the year.

"We had this incredible crunch at the end of the year," he said. "Our final pieces of equipment, those which bumped us over the goal, literally arrived in country on December 30th after a dramatic effort by the supplier, the government of Mexico, American border inspectors and NAS program managers to bring in several nonintrusive inspection vehicles."

According to Mines, Mexican security forces can now move



Female instructors undergo training at a dedicated corrections academy established using Merida Initiative funding. The academy has trained more than 270 instructors, who have in turn trained 3,479 new corrections staff. Photo by Alejandro Calderon Buenrostro

faster and communicate better, investigators draw from some of the hemisphere's best criminal databases, prisons are more secure and humane, corruption has been vastly reduced and the movement of arms and illicit money is better detected.

There is now a budding "culture of lawfulness," enhanced programs for drug addicts and youth programs in critical cities, he added, although "It is still only the start of a long effort."

Ambassador Tony Wayne credited cooperation and the maturation of the relationships between Mexican and U.S. counterparts since the Merida Initiative's start, and said the interagency partners, including the departments of Defense and Justice and USAID, "came together to reach this goal, and came hand in glove with their Mexican counterparts. This was a true team effort and represents a great win for all of us."

Africa Bureau Conducts Energy Trade Mission

Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson and Deputy Assistant Secretary Bill Fitzgerald led the recent Bureau of African Affairs (AF) energy trade mission to Africa, the bureau's first such trade mission. The mission focused on countries with potential for U.S. energy companies, including Mozambique, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya.

Participating companies, including Anadarko Petroleum, AES Africa, Caterpillar, Chevron, General Electric, Strategic Urban Development Alliance and The Zanbato Group, were largely chosen for their potential

to make significant energy sector investments. Representatives from the Bureau of Energy Resources, the U.S. Export-Import Bank and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency also participated.

To help address anticipated bureaucratic, legal and logistical challenges associated with the mission, AF established a public-private partnership with the Corporate Council on Africa. The partnership used the council's contacts and expertise, and worked closely with the embassies and consulates hosting the mission.

The mission identified constraints faced by private investors in the power generation and fuel supply sectors, and highlighted U.S. programs, including the Partnership for Growth and the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

"Among this delegation are some of the companies that have the capacity to contribute in many good ways to get electricity to where it needs to go," said U.S. Ambassador to Ghana Donald Teitelbaum.

The delegation met with heads of state in Mozambique, Tanzania and Nigeria, and with executives of energy and power utilities, fuel suppliers, private-sector energy companies and national utility regulators. Private-sector participants praised the strong U.S. government participation, breadth of U.S. missions' knowledge and experience, and substance and quality of the meetings.

During the mission, Symbion Power announced a partnership with the Transnational Corporation of Nigeria to pursue the development of energy infrastructure, The Zanbato Group agreed to provide services to the Tanzania Investment Promotion Center and Energy International said it is exploring establishing truck-service facilities in Nigeria.



U.S. Ambassador to Tanzania Alfonso E. Lenhardt, left, and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson, middle, meet with Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, president of the United Republic of Tanzania. Photo by Rogers Cidosa

OMS Helps Find Lost Grave

American Marilee Carr Vickers was born in France in 1958, but her twin sister Melodee was stillborn and was buried there in a local cemetery. In 2011, Vickers decided she wanted to visit her twin's grave, but her parents were deceased and her older siblings had no recollection of the right cemetery.

That didn't deter Vickers. She began searching near the Dreux-Louvilliers United States Air Base, where she and her sister were delivered at the U.S. Army Hospital. Records showed only that the U.S. Air Force had released Melodee's remains to her father. Vickers identified five possible cemeteries and then turned to the American Citizen Services (ACS) unit at the U.S. Embassy in Paris for help. ACS used the little information available to narrow the search to two towns.

After unsuccessful attempts to reach the towns' city halls, Vickers wrote to ask Ambassador Charles Rivkin for assistance. He referred the matter to the consular section, and Vickers' letter was passed to Office Management Specialist Stacy Allbritton, who said she felt compelled to help.

"She was missing a piece of herself, and I felt compassion for her," said Allbritton. "If nothing else, I figured I would walk up and down the cemeteries myself to find that baby's tomb."

One of the possible towns, Dampierre-sur-Blévy, had merged its offices with those of another town, Maillebois, so Allbritton contacted the Maillebois city hall and made a key discovery.

There, she was told Marilee's birth was registered in Dampierre-sur-Blévy, and that someone from city hall would go to Dampierre-sur-Blévy to search the docket. After a couple of weeks, the Maillebois office reported finding Melodee Carr's death record, which meant she had been buried at the cemetery of Dampierre-sur-Blévy. Allbritton wrote Vickers with the news, but warned that sometimes remains are removed and deposited elsewhere.

Two days later, a woman from the Maillebois city hall again contacted Allbritton to say she had gone to the cemetery and had likely found the tomb, but it was dirty and overgrown and she couldn't read the inscription on the stone. Her husband returned the next morning and cleaned the inscription. It was, indeed, the burial site of Melodee Carr.

Vickers plans to visit her twin's grave within the next year.



Astronaut George Zamka shows a model of a Space Shuttle to a Colombian student.
Photo by James Russo

Astronaut's Visit Generates Goodwill, Potential Business

American astronaut George Zamka's visit to Colombia in mid-February generated a cover story in a leading daily newspaper and enthusiasm among students and potential business contacts for the U.S. Embassy in Bogota. More than 5,000 people came out to see Zamka, whose mother is from Colombia, as he visited six schools and a youth space congress.

Zamka's visit, cosponsored by the embassy, NASA, the Colombian Space Agency and Colombia's Agustin Codazzi Geographic Institute, was designed to highlight U.S. science and technology and promote study in those areas by young people. Zamka was also promoting a NASA program to encourage healthy lifestyles for youth, a six-week program in schools which emphasizes fitness and nutrition. Teams of students from the United States, Colombia and other nations are participating.

Zamka also met with Colombia's nascent space agency on a project to launch a \$65 million Earth-observation satellite. He is helping the embassy connect with NASA's commercial space transportation program and such commercial launch companies as Space X and Orbital Sciences Corp.

Meeting with 1,800 students at Santa Luisa School in a disadvantaged Bogota neighborhood, Zamka urged the youths to become involved in space exploration as scientists, engineers or astronauts, but first to stay in school and study hard. He also visited Colegio Nueva Granada and the Maloka Youth Science Center.

Zamka served in the United States Marine Corps as a test pilot, flying more than 30 different aircraft. He also flew 66 combat missions over Kuwait and Iraq during Operation Desert Storm, before retiring as a colonel in 2010.

With NASA, Zamka piloted Space Shuttle *Discovery* in 2007, and in 2010 commanded the crew of Space Shuttle *Endeavour*. He has logged more than 692 hours in space and is currently a research and instructor pilot at the Johnson Space Center.

Diversity Notes

BY JOHN M. ROBINSON
OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

I Never Thought I'd See the Day

When we hear the above phrase, the 2008 election of the first African-American President comes to mind, but so much more has occurred in recent years, including the World Wide Web, 1,000+ channels on TV, cars getting 40 mpg, racially integrated schools, co-ed dorms and women in combat, just to name a few.

Many of us still remember a very different America when “separate but equal” was the law. The “glass ceiling” for women was actually a locked door marked “Keep Out” except for secretaries, school teachers and nurses. Interracial marriage was illegal in southern states. TV was black and white. Persons of color—actually called “colored”—worked predominantly in service industries. AIDS was unknown.

Fast-forward to 2012. “Glass ceilings” are being shattered and barriers for persons of color are surmounted daily. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 means, at least by law, that discrimination based on race is illegal in employment, education and housing. African-Americans have served as Secretary of State and Supreme Court Justice. The Supreme Court is now also home to one Latina. Women are Cabinet secretaries, members of Congress, judges, business owners and university presidents. Three women have been Secretaries of State and four have been chosen as Supreme Court Justices. Openly gay and lesbian citizens now serve in Congress and appointed office in the Office of Personnel Management.

Not all change is viewed as progress, nor are all changes easily accepted. While some Asian-Americans, for instance, speak of a bamboo ceiling and some women still attribute delays in full gender equality to the continued “old boys’ network,” others in society might resent the change that has taken place or believe it has gone so far that they are now disadvantaged in the workplace or elsewhere. Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535 B.C.-475 B.C) posited that change is central to the universe and therefore inevitable. He was right, but many of us resist change, naturally preferring to hold on to the familiar instead of embracing the discomfort of transition.



So, in navigating the transition to greater workplace diversity, consider this advice: adopt a new personal paradigm. For African-Americans who still vividly remember the wounds inflicted by segregation, take advantage of the new social order minus the hyper-suspicion that discrimination lies behind every bush; your practiced cynicism may inhibit your ability to recognize new opportunities. For men who never expected to work with women as peers and certainly not as bosses, remember that you may not get fired for wanting to keep “girls” out of the “clubhouse,” but managers—both male and female—rarely promote subordinates whom they perceive as actively undermining their leadership. Finally, those of us who are well experienced should be able to admit that we can learn a thing or two from Millennials who can navigate the Web with ease. It doesn’t hurt to recognize that young men with earrings and women with tattoos can still be patriotic Americans, either.

Our last bit of advice: Buckle your seatbelts and put your tray tables and seat backs in the upright and locked position because the turbulence of, and opportunity for, change will only increase. Keep your minds and hearts open and be ready to adjust your paradigms to take full advantage of the greater changes about to come. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Robinson".

Direct from the D.G.

BY LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD
DIRECTOR GENERAL

A Stronger, More Capable Department of State

When I joined the Foreign Service 30 years ago, I never dreamed I would be shaping the future of the State Department and strengthening the capacity of the Foreign Service and Civil Service to advance U.S. interests overseas. I feel privileged to be chosen as Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources and fortunate to be supported by such a talented team in the HR Bureau.

The State Department has changed during the last 30 years. Both Foreign Service and Civil Service employees are now serving at unaccompanied posts in greater numbers than ever. As DG, one of my top priorities is to focus on assigning our men and women to posts and positions where they can best achieve our highest foreign policy goals.

This year, the Department is on-track to fill more than 800 positions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan (AIP). Dedicated Foreign Service and Civil Service employees and Locally Employed Staff will continue to volunteer for these tough assignments, and I'm committed to helping them and their families manage these high-stress assignments. I know that we must take a long-term view about how we staff AIP posts in the years to come, and I will look at ways to sustain our staffing.

As more and more of our colleagues serve in unaccompanied posts, this highlights the importance of HR's efforts for our family members. Juggling the demands of career and family is not a challenge just for

those serving in an unaccompanied tour, but for all employees. As a career Foreign Service Officer, a parent and part of a tandem couple during most of my career, I understand the struggle to find work-life balance. While I was Ambassador in Liberia, I saw firsthand the benefits of one of HR's more successful programs—the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP). There are additional EPAP opportunities for family members this year, and I am committed to strengthening this and other programs that help our employees successfully balance competing demands.

Another key priority is to continue to build a workforce that more accurately reflects the United States. We have made some strides in diversity recruitment, but need to continue to focus on recruiting, hiring and retaining a diverse workforce that includes the disabled, veterans and minorities.

We have been fortunate to increase the workforce over the last few years through Diplomacy 3.0. These increases in personnel coupled with a shortage of mid-level employees have led to a sizable experience gap. About 35 percent of our Foreign Service employees have less than five years of experience with the Department. Another priority will be ensuring all Department employees have strong leadership and mentoring throughout their careers.

In today's complex world, the State Department cannot stand alone. Our



success depends on productive partnerships and relationships with other agencies. So, as DG, I will work to ensure that all our employees are fully prepared to work with our interagency partners by encouraging details to other agencies, training and assignments that hone these skills and fostering a “one team, one mission” esprit de corps.

As we work to build our civilian power, we must make the best use of all our people through workforce flexibility. We will continue to create more opportunities for Civil Service employees to work overseas, so we can draw on their expertise and help fill staffing gaps. And, we will continue to develop and manage programs to fully utilize and develop our LE Staff.

As I work on these priorities, I know I can count on your support and your feedback. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on these and any other HR matters via unclassified e-mail at DG Direct. ▣

Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Overcoming Challenges

Staff at AIP Posts Cite Accomplishments

By Ed Warner, deputy editor, *State Magazine*

By serving at one of the U.S. diplomatic posts in Afghanistan, Iraq or Pakistan (AIP), members of the Foreign Service often get to take on significant tasks. During recent tours, for instance, one FSO helped create a system for resolving disputes between Iraq's Kurds and the nation's military, while another helped launch the State Department's first airfield in Iraq. These are not small accomplishments; the resolution mechanism, for instance, helps prevent regional instability.

Those who've served at these so-called "AIP posts" also say they've learned much, furthered U.S. foreign policy goals and addressed lifestyle challenges such as long hours and limited social opportunities.

David Lindwall, counselor for Political Military Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, has spent most of his career in the Western Hemisphere Bureau, and said tours in Iraq expose officers to interagency and interbureau cross-pollination, which lets FSOs "return to our home bureaus and bring new ideas, new ways of accomplishing our work, new ways to solve problems." He volunteered for an AIP tour because he wanted to be involved with the historic transition from a large U.S. military combat mission in Iraq to an embassy-led bilateral relationship. He said his biggest challenge was coordinating the transition of the highest priority U.S. military programs into civilian U.S. and Iraqi entities after the departure of U.S. combat forces.

According to Lindwall, finding ways to carry on these programs "required the utmost creativity of me and my team," plus trust between em-

bassy officers and their United States Forces-Iraq counterparts. He believes his greatest success was working to transition the U.S. military's mechanism for resolving disputes between Iraqi security forces and the local Kurds. As part of the Senior Working Group (SWG) overseeing the resolution process in the disputed boundary areas, he worked with the U.S. military and Iraqi and Kurdish SWG members to create a process he said guarantees Iraq's territorial integrity but offers a way to resolve disputes along Iraq's Arab-Kurdish fault lines before they escalate.

The downside of Lindwall's Iraq service was spending most of his time flying over the nation in Blackhawk helicopters and seeing "virtually none of the country from the ground," he said. He hopes to return someday to explore, at ground level, Iraq's archaeological sites, the oases of the Tigris River, the Hamer Mountains and the historic city of Mosul.

Another FSO who served in Iraq, Gary L. Anderson, helped launch the Department's first airfield operation, which he described as "the single most daunting task I ever had," but also "an amazing opportunity, especially when so many thought we could not do it."

Anderson's team helped build the airfield's main support facility for the embassy and its constituent posts. His team of 12 management, security and aviation professionals is "doing the same command and control functions that required 250 U.S. Air Force personnel," he said.

"We worked seven days a week and 12 hours a day, at least," said Anderson. "But it was also one

Afghanistan





Clockwise from above: Assistant RSO Courtney Glass drives toward the basket during a sports diplomacy clinic with Afghan girls; PAO Donna Welton, front left, and Lincoln Learning Center Coordinator Rebecca McDuff meet with Afghan musicians at the opening of the Lincoln Learning Center in Maimanah, Faryab Province; Cultural Affairs Officer Sarah Evans, at rear, engages with Afghan children at an outreach event; Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker helps break ground for the International Center for Women's Economic Development at the American University of Afghanistan; Sarah Evans of Embassy Kabul answers Herat University students' questions on the Fulbright Masters program. *Department of State photos*





Clockwise from above: FSO David Lindwall, center in helmet, briefs U.S. and Iraqi military. *Photo by Michael B. Riley*; Ambassador to Iraq James Jeffrey, far right, greets embassy firefighters and emergency workers. *Photo by Susan Ketchum*; Under Secretary of State for Management Patrick Kennedy, center, discusses service at Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Erbil, Iraq, with Thomas Murray and PRT Baghdad with Ann Gossett after presenting them with the Department's Expeditionary Service Award. *Photo by Marc Stewart*; Mission staff enjoy the sun on Embassy Baghdad's small corniche. *Photo by Susan Ketchum*; Cultural Affairs Officer Suzanne Bodoin, third from left, and English Language Coordinator Jessica Buchanan, second from left, join the staff of the Baghdad Boys Fine Arts School and a parent of a student, left, as they launch a Music Week festival. *Photo by Susan Ketchum*



of the most rewarding jobs I have had after almost 13 years in the Foreign Service.”

For Nahal Kazemi, staff assistant to the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, the biggest challenge during her posting was responding to a major political crisis that erupted just days after the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

“With the other staff assistant and the chief of staff out on R&R, it meant nearly 100-hour work weeks with almost constant communications with the Operations Center and the White House Situation Room to keep everyone briefed and up to date on developments,” she explained.

Her work required her to ensure that taskings were handled expeditiously, front office principals had the information they needed and all lines of communications, including those with agencies at post and with Washington, were open. Luckily, she joked, “there’s not a whole lot to distract you from work in Baghdad.”

Furthermore, she said, life on the compound is confining, and “you’re disconnected” from host-country nationals’ everyday lives. On the other hand, “People at the embassy work really hard to create a sense of community. Church services, exercise classes at the gym, barbecues, etc., are organized by people who are really busy but take time to bring people together to enjoy one another’s company,” she said, adding that Iraq service offers positions for eligible family members (EFM), which means her EFM husband is there too.

EFMs can also join their spouses in Pakistan. At the U.S. Consulate General in Lahore, EFM Abigail Hawkins works as a management assistant. She and her husband, who works as an economic officer, were “scared and excited” when he took the assignment.

“We had heard about the beauty of Lahore, its rich history and culture and the famous Pakistani hospitality,” she said.

According to Hawkins, security restrictions pose challenges, but she and her husband have learned how to care for their physical and mental well-being.

“Since we couldn’t control our security situation, we instead took control of our health with diet, exercise and sleep, creating normalcy through routine,” she said.

Meanwhile, at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad,

economic officer Jimmy Mauldin said he chose the post, in part, because he wanted to serve an unaccompanied tour at a time that was most convenient for his family. At post, he said he was mentored by senior embassy officials—junior officers typically don’t serve at AIP posts—and encountered “a strong esprit de corps [that] provided me with excellent examples of good leadership.”

He added that he developed meaningful contacts with Pakistani government and business leaders, worked on significant bilateral trade issues, gained interagency experience and traveled extensively for reporting on economic topics. On a temporary assignment to Embassy Kabul, he met Afghan officials and worked with embassy colleagues on implementing the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement.

“I now consider my Pakistan tour to be the highlight of my Foreign Service career,” he enthused.

At the U.S. Consulate General in Karachi, Assistant General Services Officer Elizabeth Keene said she chose an AIP post for professional and personal reasons. After her first tour in Merida, Mexico, as a consular/management officer, she said she wanted a larger post offering a management section where she could interact and learn from more senior officers “but not get lost in the shuffle.”

Keene, whose portfolio includes customs, shipping, motor pool and travel, faced a challenge when the Afghanistan-Pakistan border was closed on Nov. 26. This closure affected all Kabul-bound shipments coming through Pakistan. For more than three months, she has been working with key officers in Islamabad and Kabul and with Pakistani port and border officials to reopen the border and get shipments moving again. She also likes coordinating the “ever increasing number and complexity of VIP visits.”

Keen says the aspects of the Karachi assignment that she personally enjoys include its warm climate and proximity to water, its pet regulations allowing cats and the fact that she and co-workers live together in a compound, which “increases morale and the feeling of camaraderie.”

Nearly 688 miles away in Peshawar, Marcia Anglarill chose an assignment as public affairs officer to build public affairs experience and because



Iraq

she feels “there is an enormous amount of public diplomacy work being done in [AIP] countries.” She says the move has also helped her gain experience in cultural affairs and management.

In a departure from the recent trend, Anglarill has served out almost her entire assignment in Peshawar, rather than from Islamabad. As a result, she has been able to directly interact with Pakistanis from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a key region for mission engagement.

“I could not do that nearly as much if I were based in Islamabad, and those interactions do make a difference,” she observed.

Anglarill said she finds security constraints to be her biggest challenge because they limit her outreach and her movement, requiring her to “pick and choose carefully where and what to visit, which events to attend and how often.

“I’ve had to be creative and more strategic in conducting outreach,” she said.

Being largely confined to the consulate or residential compound has also challenged her socially, but she says she is “making the best of it” through activities such as helping the local Khyber Club plan social events, keeping in touch with family and friends via Skype and telephone and working out at the gym. Reflecting on how she has gotten creative socially, she recalled having in March shared a Thanksgiving-style dinner at a consulate officer’s home, complete with turkey, stuffing, yams and pies.

Why such a feast at such a time? “No particular reason,” she said. “Where else would I do that in March? It made me think: Even in Peshawar you can feel like you’re back home.”

Across the border in Afghanistan, Courtney Glass, a special agent in the regional security office at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, like others interviewed for this story, said she chose her post, in part, because her spouse could accompany her as an EFM.

Her biggest success there “has been the new relationships I have been able to forge with DOS and non-DOS personnel,” said Glass. The large

embassy community makes for “great networking opportunities,” and the large regional security office offers “a lot of opportunity for me to learn from and be mentored by my more senior colleagues within my specialty” and to network with other law enforcement agencies, she added.

The biggest challenges for her have been movement outside the embassy, which is restricted to official business, and the monotony of daily life on the compound, where “most people eat the same thing for breakfast every day and attend the same meetings every week.”

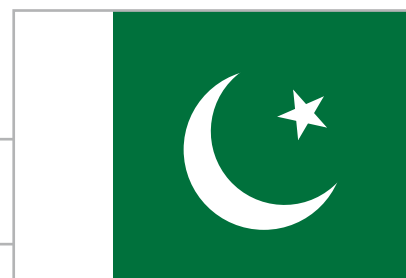
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer Sarah Evans, who works at Embassy Kabul, said she went there “ready for an adventure,” especially one that “would give me a chance to correct my own ideas of what the country and its culture are really like.” Evans, who manages academic exchange programs, said a big challenge came one day while addressing a large classroom of university seniors, most of them men.

“This group was rowdy, and they quickly became angry and distrustful. For a second I was completely frustrated and didn’t think I would be able to continue. I grabbed a chair and moved it to the center of the room next to the most boisterous of the crowd and just started to talk about my life, where I grew up, what it was like going to college in the United States, my Muslim friends back home and how I ended up in Afghanistan,” said Evans. “The vibe in the room slowly changed and, although we never really got back to discussing scholarships, we started to simply talk.”

Evans says her team has laid the groundwork to significantly expand the number of academic exchange opportunities available to Afghans and has shown “relentless dedication to change the mind-set of the students and professionals we contact by asking them to think of their jobs and academic journey in terms of a career.”

Like exchange participants, Foreign Service employees at AIP posts engage in learning in nations where, if their colleagues’ experiences are an indication, they can make major accomplishments. ■

Pakistan





Clockwise from above: Economic Officer Jimmy Mauldin and Young Entrepreneurs Forum leader Ayla Majid plan for an coming Young Entrepreneurs Conference in Pakistan. *Photo by Jonathan Wolfington*; EFM Abigail Hawkins serves with her husband, Robert Hawkins, at Consulate General Lahore; Public Affairs Officer Marcia Anglarill hosts a group of madrassa students from the Access Program who present her with the Christmas card they made; Anglarill, far left, meets in Peshawar with students participating in Consulate General Peshawar's 2012 Benjamin Franklin Summer Institute program. *Department of State photos*; Elizabeth Keene is Assistant General Services Officer at the U.S. Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan. *Photo by Rizwan Khan*



The CORDS of War

Ex-FSOs recall Vietnam pacification program

By Bruce Kinsey

For swashbuckling young Foreign Service officers in 1967, the Vietnam Training Center (VTC) was the center of things, the place where they'd gain the language and skills needed to meet a presidential directive aimed at expanding the number of U.S. civilian advisors involved in the war in Vietnam.

President Lyndon Johnson had ordered a full-court press on pacification, meaning "counterinsurgency," in Vietnam, and the Department of State, USAID, USIA, CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency and even Department of Agriculture were ordered to supply officers for the rural pacification effort. At the FSO pre-employment oral exam, male applicants were told they stood every chance of going to war if accepted.

Midcareer and senior FSOs were also sent to the front. Bill Stearman, who already had a few assignments under his belt, was headed to Hamburg when he was ordered to Vietnam.

"You had a simple option," he recalled. "If you were assigned to Vietnam and didn't take it, you resigned your commission and left the service. It was as simple as that."

He went and, like many others, enjoyed his tour.

Since the early 1960s young FSOs had been assigned to a few Vietnamese regional hubs as political reporters, but only officers of USAID and CIA worked in the provincial capitals. No American civilians worked



Hal Meinheit, who trained at the VTC, stands guard with an M-16 outside his quarters in Quang Tin.
File photo

in South Vietnam's district capitals, where the government of Vietnam's control was often shaky at best.

In 1966, USAID began assigning development officers to a few key districts, where they often worked closely with U.S. military advisors. Still, the pace of pacification was slow.

A frustrated President Johnson, therefore, ordered that all U.S. civilian and military advisors be rolled into one organization—Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), which was soon under the leadership of future CIA director William Colby. Civilian CORDS members often reported to military officers, and vice versa. Colby reported to the commander of U.S. military forces, General William Westmoreland, who had the good sense to leave him alone.

Meanwhile, Evert Bumgardner, a quiet, intense USIA officer with nearly two decades of experience in Vietnam, set up the VTC to train all civilian (and later, military) advisors headed for Vietnam. The center—in an

airless, windowless converted parking garage beneath a suburban Virginia apartment complex—graduated 1,845 CORDS officers in just over five years. All were well schooled in the details of pacification programs and field operations, and in Vietnamese history, culture and politics. They received at least some language training from some 30 Vietnamese tutors. One hundred or so officers graduated at the S-3/R-3 language level.

One graduate wrote back from Vietnam that "thanks to VTC, nothing that has happened to me since I came out here has really surprised me."

Due to arcane budget and weapons restrictions, many officers purchased their own gear and sidearms before heading to Vietnam. Gordon Bare, a U.S. Army lieutenant and military advisor, watched in awe as the first VTC grads arrived in his province.

"The assignment of the four first-tour Foreign Service officers, fresh from 10 months of language school and a bit of cultural immersion... was priceless," he recalled. "Their job title was area development officer, and three

were assigned first as deputy district senior advisors and [later] as senior advisors to the more secure districts.”

Bare recalled accompanying Art Kobler, later an economics officer in Saigon and elsewhere, on a visit to a nearby village.

“Art would pick a house at random, politely ask if he could come in and chat, and enquire about the perspective of the resident on everything from the state of the rice crop to the price of cooking oil to the honesty of local officials,” he said.

By 1971, Vietnamese-speaking CORDS officers numbering in the hundreds were advising their counterparts in the Vietnamese government on everything from attracting enemy defectors to building and running schools, helping villages defend themselves from Communist attacks and making the country’s rice fields more productive.

Civilian agency efforts in Vietnam were not without cost. Between 1955 and 1975, 35 State, USAID and CIA employees were killed. A few were captured and not released until 1972. In addition, some 70 other U.S. civilians were killed, including government contractors and Red Cross and International Voluntary Services personnel. Many American women were killed in a tragic plane crash associated with Operation Babylift during the last days of the war.

By most accounts, however, CORDS was a success. The Mekong Delta south of Saigon, home to about half of the country’s population and producer of most of its agricultural products, had been largely in Vietcong hands in 1965. By 1972, when the CORDS program ended and the VTC closed, the Vietcong could barely muster squad-sized operations in many Delta provinces, and in some further up the coast as well.

The stories of the American civilians involved in the Vietnamese pacification program are those of Americans at their very best. Bruce Kinsey has undertaken to write a book on their experiences and to date has gathered the reminiscences of more than 90 civilian and military officers, plus hundreds of photos and documents. The book is going to be called *Good Guys*. Those interested in participating can contact the author at brucekinsey@hotmail.com. ■



Top: In Long An Province, Bruce Kinsey, right rear, takes a break from rebuilding a Viet Cong–destroyed school with a rural pacification team. **Left and below:** Paul Molineaux served as an advisor to this Vietnamese armed propaganda team in Bac Lieu.

File photos



Passports for Patriots

Agency helps families visit wounded warriors

By Andres Rodriguez and Carl R. Siegmund, operations officers, Bureau of Consular Affairs

The Special Issuance Agency (SIA) in downtown Washington, D.C., is best known within the State Department for processing applications for diplomatic passports. However, its work is much larger in scope. SIA provides passport and visa services to the Executive Office of the

than 100 such passports. While the application process is emotionally draining for families, close DOD-SIA cooperation eases the process.

“It’s possible to become disconnected from an individual passport applicant when working with so many on a daily basis,” said Patience Tait, a passport supervisor with more than 10 years of experience at SIA. “But I put myself in their shoes and realize that they need our compassion and the best service possible.”

As soon as it is apparent that a service member is gravely injured, the military service branch of the State Department’s Casualty Assistance Office produces Invitational Travel Orders

(ITO) allowing a maximum of three immediate family members to travel. If passports are needed, the ITO is sent to SIA ahead of time so employees know when to expect the applicants. By the time the family members arrive at SIA for emergency passport issuance, DOD has already scheduled and approved their trip through an ITO, and SIA staff can process the passport applications expeditiously.

“The positive relationship and strong cooperation that exists

Left: SIA Director Michael Thomas examines framed statements of appreciation sent to the agency, including one from Congressman Frank Wolf of Virginia. **Below:** Special Issuance Agency Russian visa expert Ryland Jones Jr., left, confers with Jaala Seifipour, who was seeking a visa to join her husband, who is a vice consul at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

Photos by Ed Warner



President, Congress, the Supreme Court, the 15 Cabinet departments and approximately 150 independent federal agencies, boards, commissions and committees.

“All our customers have unique needs,” said SIA Director Michael Thomas. “On any given day, our staff might handle urgent passports for a Cabinet member’s last-minute trip, diplomatic passports for a Foreign Service family or official passports for White House staff.”

Some of SIA’s most important customers are the family members of wounded service members who are traveling abroad to be with their loved ones. Without warning, these family members can find themselves preparing for immediate international travel. Because of the nature of the travel, they become SIA’s highest priority.

“In many cases, the applicants are racing against the clock so they can share their family member’s final moments,” said Thomas.

Relying on its long-standing relationship with the Department of Defense (DOD), SIA produces no-fee passports for family members of wounded military personnel. In fiscal year 2011, SIA issued more



between the Special Issuance Agency, the Department of Defense Passport section and the military casualty assistance agents is a model of interagency cooperation,” said Thomas. ■



Brand Building

Acting Under Secretary Ann Stock answers a question at the opening of the Marketing College.
Photo by Michael Morrison

FSI 'Marketing College' planned for September

By John Johnson, press and media training coordinator, FSI

To allow public diplomacy (PD) professionals to tap into corporate marketing expertise and experiences as they pertain to international audiences and learn marketing strategies and messaging tactics from the private sector, a public-private partnership at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) annually holds a U.S. Marketing and Communications College (USMCC).

Begun in August 2008, the college lets public diplomacy officers work with private-sector instructors to explore successful marketing strategies from the business world and tailor them to overseas public diplomacy work. The college, a key public diplomacy training component, is actually a week-long seminar that brings top U.S. corporate marketing executives from companies such as Google and Nike to FSI to provide free instruction to PD practitioners. This year's course will be offered Sept. 17-20.

The course curriculum focuses on developing the principles, methods and techniques of strategic marketing communication for PD

officers' use in engaging with local audiences. The instructors' knowledge of corporate best practices overlaps with such State Department priorities as leveraging social media to improve youth outreach, strategic messaging and facilitating engagement with broad international audiences.

In October, the college's most recent iteration included 37 Foreign Service officers from such nations as Afghanistan and Brazil, and 12 corporate marketing professionals who presented on such topics as building and managing a brand, doing "counter-marketing" and identifying target audiences. To augment the classroom discussion, the officers developed action plans for strategic communication problems they faced at post.

On the course's last day, then-Acting Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Ann Stock spoke on the value of incorporating marketing expertise into PD training.

Participants raved about the instructors, content and course materials, with one saying the course inspired "a newfound commit-

ment to streamlining our message and increasing our two-way engagement."

Another attendee called for more such training, saying "the ability to think strategically about our target audience and how to reach it seems like a no-brainer, but it's not done that often, and it is incredibly important."

Other participants agreed that similar training should be available to all officers in PD positions. FSI's Public Diplomacy Training Division is developing a distance learning course on audience analysis for fiscal year 2013.

USMCC course trainers are developing a network of course alumni, an excellent resource for PD officers seeking examples of successful field implementation of marketing strategies or interested in future offerings of the college.

Participants for the college are selected through a nomination process. For more information, email FSIPDTraining@state.gov. ■



Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai serves President Nixon during a banquet in the President's honor. *File photo*



Nixon in China

Present, former officials recall week that changed world

By Rennie A. Silva, presidential management fellow, Office of eDiplomacy

Prominent diplomats, scholars and journalists gathered recently in Washington, D.C., for a symposium on the past, present and future of Sino-American relations. Co-hosted by the United States Institute of Peace and the Richard Nixon Foundation on March 7, the event marked the 40th anniversary of President Nixon's historic week-long visit to China, which re-initiated ties between the two countries.

Former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft described accompanying President Nixon to China in 1972. "Our cultures had been separated since 1949, and it's now hard to imagine how different it was," he said. "It was like people from Mars and people from Earth talking to each other."

Before Nixon's trip, official ties between Washington and Beijing were nonexistent. The United States officially regarded Taiwan as the sole legitimate government of China and maintained no diplomatic presence in mainland China, where a Communist regime led by Mao Zedong operated largely in international isolation.

As a result of the trip, which produced the Shanghai Communiqué, the United States and the People's Republic of China began a series of consultations and dialogues. They established official diplomatic ties in 1979, "consummating the strategic reorientation started by President Nixon," according to President Jimmy Carter's national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. Trade, foreign direct investment, science and technology cooperation, intelligence sharing and educational exchanges were the outcomes, he said.

Prior to Nixon's trip, Cold War animosities made prospects for American engagement with China appear unlikely. Sensitive to the political complexities, Nixon and his foreign policy advisor, Henry

Under Secretary Hormats Recalls China Trip

When Robert Hormats was sworn in as Under Secretary of State in 2009, he returned to the upper echelons of the Washington foreign policy establishment that he had first joined four decades earlier. Starting in 1969, Hormats served on the staff of the National Security Council as an economic advisor to Henry Kissinger, where he worked on opening relations with China before and after President Nixon's 1972 visit and on planning for that visit. He would continue to serve under national security advisors Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski, witnessing and influencing key decisions on China firsthand from inside the Nixon, Ford and Carter Administrations.

Hormats credited Nixon and Kissinger with bold and strategic thinking that was crucial to the diplomatic breakthrough that set into motion a transformation of relations between what would become the world's two largest economies.

However, in 1972 in Beijing, it was Cold War security strategy, not economics, that topped the President's agenda. "Hard as it may be to believe today, economic ties were very low on the list of our priorities," Hormats told the Asia Society in New York in March. Much else was different, too. Hormats said the entire NSC staff consisted of only 43 people.

"I felt a remarkable sense of responsibility," he said in an interview following the United States Institute of Peace symposium.

Today Hormats advises Secretary Clinton on international economic policy as under secretary for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment, and continues to contribute to the advancement of U.S.-China relations. "If we can successfully strengthen this ever more complex and important relationship," he emphasized in his speech, "both countries will be better for it, just as they were following the Nixon visit 40 years ago."

--Rennie A. Silva



Clockwise from left: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton addresses the symposium; Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger makes a point during the symposium; Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment Robert Hormats, far right, engages in a panel discussion. Photos by the U.S. Institute of Peace



Kissinger, shrouded their plans in secrecy. Kissinger told the symposium how his early messages to Chinese officials were delivered to Beijing covertly via Pakistan.

Veteran television journalist Tom Brokaw reminded the audience that negotiations remained hidden from the press and the public until July 15, 1971, when Nixon declared his intentions to go to China in a televised announcement that was simultaneously broadcast in both countries.

The following February, President Nixon was photographed disembarking from Air Force One in Beijing, his hand extended to Premier Zhou Enlai, who told Nixon that his handshake "overcame the vastest ocean in the world—25 years of no communication." Kissinger described Zhou as "thoughtful, elegant, well-prepared, subtle and infinitely patient."

During the week of the visit, Americans watched the President and First Lady on TV as they met with the Chinese and toured landmarks

such as the Forbidden City and Great Wall. "All three networks (ABC, NBC and CBS) were all Nixon, all China, all the time, and all of America was glued to the TV screen," said former chief White House advance man and current Nixon Foundation Chairman Ron Walker.

The symposium's final speaker didn't own a television in 1972, but she still watched the trip. In law school at the time but "not about to miss history being made," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton recalled renting a TV set and carrying it home with her nightly so that she could tune in. "I was riveted and proud of what we were accomplishing through our President," she said.

She also highlighted the enduring relevance of President Nixon's visit to the present and future of American foreign policy. "There is no intrinsic contradiction between supporting a rising China and advancing America's interests," she said. "A thriving China is good for America, and a thriving America is good for China. That's why we helped break China's isolation in 1972." ■



Virtually There



Online Internship Program Aids Disaster Relief

By Maurizio Visani, information program officer, U.S. Consulate General Surabaya

In 2011, I became interested in how the State Department could better utilize connective technologies to build civil society capacity with host-country partners and proposed a project to address this using the Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS) eInternship Program.

The project focused on using emerging technologies to facilitate disaster relief in East Java, Indonesia. I partnered with Caitlin Augustin, a University of Miami Ph.D. student who is also the university president of Engineers Without Borders.

Because the eInternship program allows the intern to remain at her school, Augustin did not have to travel to Asia. With help from the Department's Office of eDiplomacy, which operates VSFS, I reviewed applicants' resumes online and interviewed the top three candidates by phone before offering her the internship.

The project involved one of the largest Islamic NGOs in East Java, Indonesia. The result was a force multiplier that helps civil society achieve its goals through technology.

Initially, our goals were loosely defined: The NGO, Lakpesdam NU, just wanted to improve its existing disaster response system, consisting of paperwork, telephone calls and Short Messaging Service (SMS) texts. Augustin and I set up weekly Skype-based meetings and used Google+ as a common platform for document collaboration. As the project progressed, we had ad hoc discussions via telephone, SMS text, email, Skype and Google+, and we stored our documents on a blog site.

Lakpesdam NU wanted to add real-time data collection, dissemination, organization and analysis to improve its disaster management system. Since SMS seemed to be the lowest common denominator (a majority of the Indonesian population uses text messaging), we wanted to use that as our mainstay, so we researched SMS-based applications used in other disaster-response situations worldwide.

While Augustin researched development models and associated technologies and proposed



Celebrating their Virtual FS project's success are, from left, Akhyari Hananto, a Locally Employed Staff political and economic assistant; Abdul Quddus Salam, head of the NGO Lakpesdam NU; and the author.

Photo by Aji Wihardani

Online Interns Address Projects

By Bridget Roddy, VSFS program manager

The Office of eDiplomacy's Virtual Student Foreign Service (VSFS) program has launched a "microtasking site" that makes the program's online interns available for such projects as designing brochures or creating videos or software applications, such as an electronic calendar that can be downloaded to mobile phones.

The microtasking site is an online platform that lets Department employees post unclassified tasks, which VSFS interns may undertake without leaving the American colleges where they're studying; they complete the projects online. This platform uses "crowd sourcing," which leverages the expertise of many members of a group rather than relying on just one person. Thus, employees posting a potential assignment can review the responses they get back and pick the best one.

It can also be used for smaller tasks such as translating a speech or finding a fact for a Facebook outreach strategy. The microtasking website, launched in April, arises from the two-year-old VSFS eInternship program, which offers project-based virtual internships to American college students. Under it, 343 students have interned virtually with 125 posts and 25 domestic Department offices.

The Secretary of State's Senior Advisor for Innovation and Technology Alec Ross lauded the VSFS program as an "un-nuanced, spectacular success."

"These young people are working with our senior diplomats, not just to teach them how to use social media and such things, but to actually build networked foreign policy programs," he said.

VSFS intern Marc Sabbagh, a Rice University senior majoring in history and political science, worked online this year with the U.S. Embassy in Baku, Azerbaijan, to create and coordinate an eight-part virtual guest lecture series on conflict resolution in American history, including setting up guest lecturers via digital video conference with American studies students in Azerbaijan. U.S. professors discussed such topics as Islam in America, the Civil War, women's rights, the forced resettlement of Native Americans and civil rights.

Another VSFS intern, Lucy Vazquez Morrow, a Ph.D. student at Cardiff University's School of Welsh, is working with the consular section at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi on analyzing the Indian-American diaspora, focusing on Indian-American linguistic identity issues.

Melissa Etehad, a University of California-San Diego junior, is working with the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, to develop virtual relationships between American and Tajikistani high school students and promote awareness of Muslim and American culture via web-chats.

She liked sharing her experiences with the students and listening to their perspectives.

"This type of dialogue is the first step toward breaking down barriers and stereotypes," she said.

These are just a few examples of the nine-month eInternships, and even more options are now possible with VSFS microtasking. Department staff can post a project by visiting vsfs.sparked.com or contacting Bridget Roddy at roddybl@state.gov for more information.



several prototypes, a Locally Employed Staff colleague and I regularly met with the NGO to gain feedback for Augustin to aid her application development. After consultation with Embassy Jakarta's Information Management Office, we focused on two platforms that merged well, FrontlineSMS and CrowdMap.

FrontlineSMS is an open-source platform popular among NGOs for everything from election monitoring to vaccination programs. CrowdMap, also open-source, merges with FrontlineSMS to integrate SMS, Twitter, Facebook, email, Web forms and RSS feeds on a Web platform. Responders can use CrowdMap's overlays to graphically plot crises. Both applications are free, customizable and easy to administer and have been proven worldwide.

In late November, we introduced a custom-

ized version of FrontlineSMS to Lakpesdam NU and trained members on how to use it. They recognized its potential, so we rushed the deployment to be ready for flood season, which usually begins in November and can wreak havoc. Fortunately, the 2011 floods were light, so the application was not tested in a full-blown disaster, but Lakpesdam NU quickly started using it as its primary means of communication for disaster management.

Lakpesdam NU promoted FrontlineSMS to its subordinate and affiliate organizations throughout East Java, and now 19 of the 28 regencies in the province use the system for internal collaboration, administration and disaster-response coordination. At a recent regional conference held by Indonesia's National Board for Climate Change and Disaster

Response, Lakpesdam NU showcased the system, and the board was so impressed it invited Lakpesdam NU to explain the application to a larger audience in Jakarta.

In sum, the VSFS eInternship program helped a U.S. Ph.D. student, Foreign Service employee, LE Staff member and NGO collaborate to solve a community issue, with the latter strengthening its digital literacy (via FrontlineSMS). In the process this team effort clearly met the Department's goal of building the technical capacity of civil society organizations. ■

Contributions to this article were made by Akhyari Hananto, LE Staff political and economic assistant, U.S. Consulate General Surabaya; and Robert Popchak, information management officer, U.S. Embassy Jakarta.



Post of the Month



The modern architecture of the 1.5 million square ft. Westside Shopping Center on the outskirts of Bern stands in stark contrast to the idyllic landscape in which it resides. The multi-use complex was the largest construction project in Switzerland when it was built in 2008.

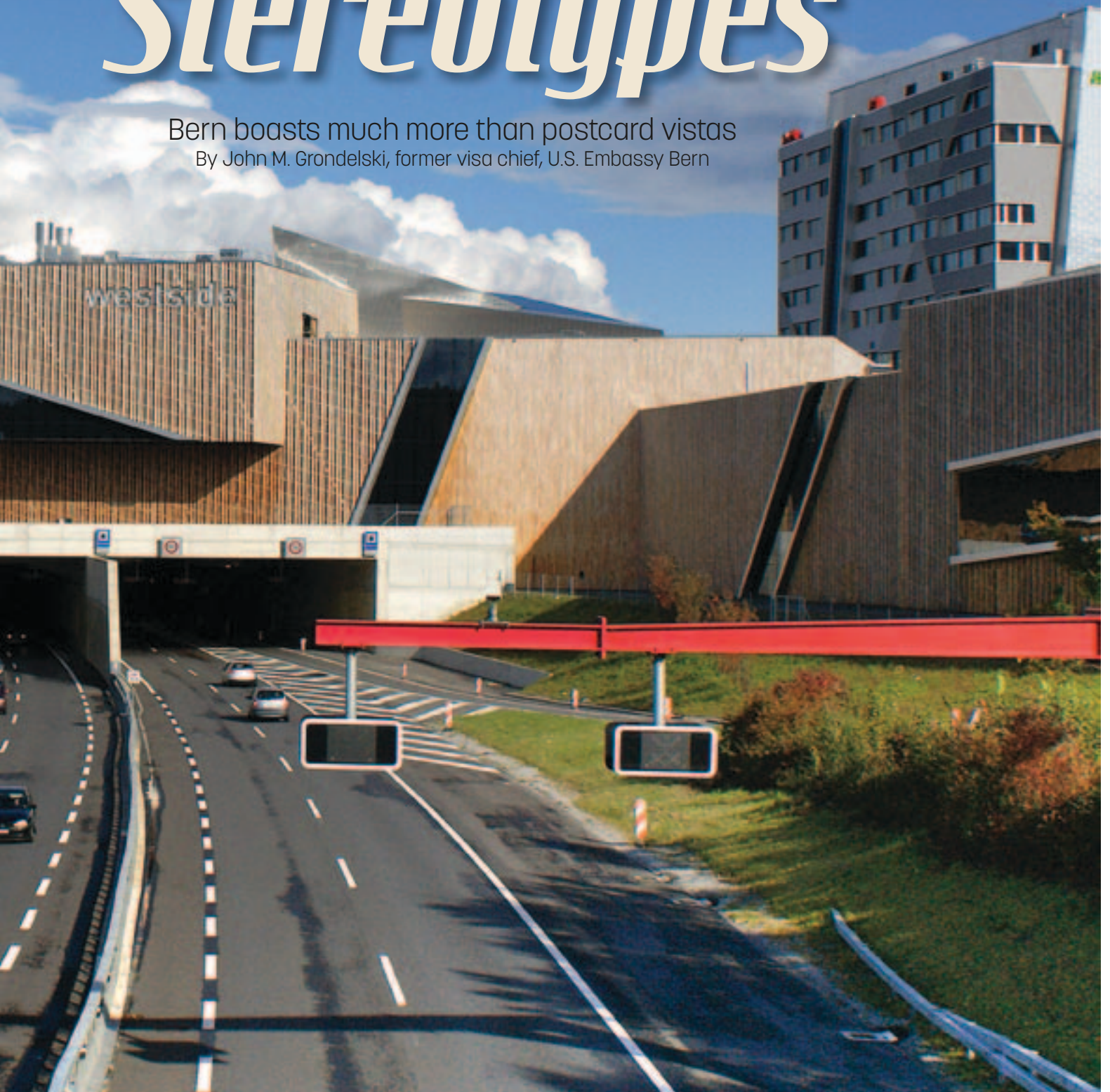


Photo by twicepix

Beyond the Stereotypes

Bern boasts much more than postcard vistas

By John M. Grondelski, former visa chief, U.S. Embassy Bern





People have lots of stereotypes about Switzerland.

Mountains? Switzerland has them. Even Bern has its own peak, the 2,814-foot Gurten, which offers fantastic views of the capital city. It's an especially nice vantage point from which to admire the fireworks on Swiss National Day, August 1. Chocolate? The sweet confection is one of the country's best known exports, and there are shops on Bern's main street, the Marktgasse, with every brand one could dream of. But don't just stick with the internationally famous brands; almost every Swiss canton, or locality, produces its own specialties. Yodeling? One Basel radio station specializes in it (along with alpenhorn music).

But Switzerland is also one of the most innovative and productive countries on the globe. It is host to one of continental Europe's best technical universities, the Zurich Federal Technical University. It is also home to high-tech and high-value industries and the world's finest mechanical watches, which account for more than two-thirds of Swiss exports. The nation is also home to more Fortune 500 companies per capita than any other country. In 2010, it was the number-one foreign investor in the United States.

And, by the way, Switzerland has more than just alpenhorn music. The International Jazz Festival in Montreux, a leading world musical event, has taken place every summer since 1967 on the shores of Lake Geneva. Bern hosts a four-day festival every July on the Gurten featuring multiple genres of music, and street performances occur all around the city during the annual Buskers Bern Festival in August.

Bern hardly fits the standard expectations of a European capital. It is neither Switzerland's largest city (it comes in fourth, after Zurich, Geneva and Basel), nor its financial center (Zurich), nor even home to the biggest diplomatic community in the country (that honor goes to Geneva, with its United Nations Office and its own diplomatic corps, including the U.S. Permanent Mission).

Top: Children of the American and local staff prepare for a three-legged sack race across the lawn of the Ambassador's residence at the embassy's "Spring Fling." *Photo by Sylvia Shephard*; **Middle:** Switzerland's capital city features a bevy of public transportation options including an extensive light rail network served by Bernmobil trams. *Photo by eGuide Travel*; **Bottom:** A mountain hut provides refuge from the Swiss winter. *Photo by Community Liaison Office*



Top: Pausing during a hike in the Alps are, from left, Consul General Randy Townsend, Stella Townsend, Erika Woodard, Office Management Specialist Sandy Jelso, Defense Attaché Officer Thomas Schaidhammer, Ambassador Beyer, Political Officer Marty Dale and Economic Officer Scott Woodard. *Photo by Randy Townsend* **Middle:** The Dailey and Vincent Bluegrass Band performs for members and alumni of the American Swiss Foundation on the lawn of the Ambassador's residence. *Photo by Alex Sigrist* **Bottom:** Ambassador Beyer communes with a Swiss cow in the Alps. *Photo by Scott Woodard*



But that doesn't mean Embassy Bern doesn't do its share of heavy lifting. From a variety of perspectives, Switzerland punches well above its size (15,940 sq. miles) and population (7.8 million). Switzerland works for peace, and as a neutral country can sometimes gain a hearing where others cannot. Switzerland is also a valued partner in a variety of multilateral forums, where it is committed to human rights and fairness, and where its status as a non-European Union country gives it the freedom to take its own positions. As the home of the Geneva Conventions and the International Committee of the Red Cross, Switzerland takes its role as protector of international humanitarian law seriously.

The World Economic Forum ranked Switzerland in 2011-2012 as the world's most competitive country. That designation reflects a Swiss tradition dating to the 1700s when, aware of its topographical challenges and limited natural resources, the country began carving out a niche in high-quality technical goods. From watches in the 18th century to pharmaceuticals in the 21st, Switzerland has consistently produced high-end goods for export.

"Just consider the makeup of Switzerland's exports to the United States in 2010," Ambassador Don Beyer noted. "Almost a third were pharmaceuticals, followed by optical and medical instruments, nuclear reactors, clocks and watches, precious stones, chemicals and electrical machinery." In 2009, Switzerland posted a \$17 billion trade surplus.

U.S.-Swiss economic and commercial ties were worth \$19.5 billion in 2010, reflecting a robust relationship. Ambassador Beyer said American direct investment in Switzerland in 2008 was greater than U.S. direct investment in Brazil, Russia, India and China combined, and that Swiss direct investment in the United States exceeds the combined total of foreign direct investment by Brazil, Russia, India and China combined. In fact, 20.2 percent of all Swiss foreign direct investment is made in the United States. Not bad for a country with slightly fewer people than the state of Virginia.

Indicating Switzerland's role in international finance, the nation hosts the World Economic Forum's summit in Davos every January. That gathering assembles presidents, prime ministers, business leaders and financial experts from around the world. It also tends to empty out Embassy Bern to provide the control officers necessary to support what are frequently very large American delegations.

On the consular side, both Switzerland and Embassy Bern do some heavy lifting. As the Protecting Power for U.S. Interests in Iran, Switzerland played a key role in helping secure the 2011 release of three American hikers, one of whom was detained for 14 months and the others for more than two years. But Switzerland's protecting power role also extends to more mundane issues like helping process American passports for U.S. citizens living in Iran or ensuring that the Social Security checks they have earned reach them. Since all such business gets passed by the Swiss Foreign Ministry to the Protecting Power in Tehran, the workload—passports, Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, loans—first passes through Embassy Bern. That, along with serving approximately 55,000 Americans who live in Switzerland, keeps the post's American Citizens Services operation jumping.

The Old City of Bern is built on a hill and surrounded on three sides by the Aare River.
Photo by Rich Fisher



Club Brings Together Bern Book Lovers

To start off 2012 in intellectual style and promote a closer embassy community, Ambassador Beyer initiated the Bern Embassy Book Club. Open to all employees, the club met for the first time on Jan. 31 at the Ambassador's residence to discuss *The Sense of an Ending* by Julian Barnes. The novel follows a middle-aged man as he is confronted with a mysterious legacy that forces him to reconsider his past and revise his understanding of his own nature and place in the world. The discussion centered on the question of how well any of us can know those around us, or even ourselves, given our limited and necessarily incomplete point of view.

On March 26, Public Affairs Officer Alex Daniels hosted the group to discuss James Joyce's semi-autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. An aspiring artist struggles against the forces of church, school and society that impede his imagination. The book's "stream of consciousness" technique was originally considered highly inventive, but the group agreed that it appears very conventional today.



Political Assistant Daphne Warlamis, right, makes a point during a book club discussion. Listening, from left, are Megan Beyer and Deputy Chief of Mission Susan Elbow. Photo by Alex Daniels

The Tiger's Wife by Téa Obreht is next on the club's list, and Deputy Chief of Mission Susan Elbow will host the discussion. Approximately 10 people have been attending the club meetings. Hosts choose the book and provide food and beverages; Daniels honored Joyce by serving Irish stew.



Embassy Bern's consular work is not limited to Switzerland and Iran. With the United Nations Office and many U.N. specialized agencies based in Geneva, many diplomats and international civil servants need to obtain their visas in Bern. Ten percent of the embassy's annual visa load involves diplomatic visas, a far greater proportion than at most posts, and they are often urgent and diplomatically sensitive.

In addition to the State Department, other organizations represented at post include the Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice, FBI and Foreign Commercial Service, which recently played a key role in helping a small U.S. aeronautical technology firm win a multimillion-dollar contract with the Swiss military.

While Embassy Bern staff members have plenty to do, the post also offers a great place to live, starting at home. In contrast to most other European countries, Bern is a Living Quarters Allowance post, meaning that Foreign Service officers locate their own lodging. The options—all within budget—include old-style apartments in Bern's Old City, ultra-modern apartments near the International School of Berne or even houses in the mountains.

A good part of Europe lies within easy driving range of Bern, including France, Germany and Italy. For those who don't want to drive, the Swiss Federal Railways provides easy connections. The one drawback of Bern used to be its small Belp Airport, which offered limited service. This limitation has been offset by the recent arrival of discount airlines that open up opportunities for good regional travel.

But why leave Switzerland? Within the confines of a country the size of Maryland, French, German and Italian cultures coexist, each with its own Swiss patina. From the slopes of the Matterhorn to the shores of Lake Geneva, there are plenty of things to see and do—especially outdoors. Just ask Ambassador Beyer, who more than once has taken embassy colleagues on hikes through Switzerland's Alps.

The United States and Switzerland are sometimes referred to as the "sister republics" and share a long history of democratic values. In 1848, the reformed Swiss Constitution took its American counterpart as a model. Federal Switzerland's two-chamber parliament looks very much like the U.S. Congress in structure and representation. But U.S.-Swiss ties go back further: The Swiss Foreign Ministry in 2011 launched a celebration of Albert Gallatin, "America's Swiss Founding Father," on the occasion of his 250th birthday. Gallatin, born in Switzerland, was America's longest-serving Secretary of the Treasury—12 years—under Presidents Jefferson and Madison.

Mountains, pharmaceuticals, chocolate, high tech—they're all aspects of Switzerland, our "sister republic," and of the country's stereotype-defying, cutting-edge post, Bern. ■



At a Glance

Switzerland

Capital: Bern

Government type: Federal state

Area: 41,285 sq. km.

Comparative area: Slightly smaller than Vermont and New Hampshire combined

Population: 7.7 million

Languages: German, French, Italian and Romansch

Ethnic groups: Mixed European

Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant and Muslim

GDP-per capita: \$67,078

Export commodities: Machinery, chemicals and metals

Export partners: Germany, U.S. and Italy

Import commodities: Machinery, chemicals and vehicles

Import partners: Germany, Italy and France

Currency: Swiss francs (CHF)

Internet country code: .ch

Source: Country Background Notes

CRAWLING... SPREADING... GROWING...



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IT CAME FROM...
THE LUGGAGE!

DON'T LET INVASIVE SPECIES HITCH A RIDE
BY MICHAEL TRULSON, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OFFICER, OFFICE OF ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION

As summer transfer season arrives, employees packing out from their current posts should be aware that they can contribute to or prevent the spread of invasive species.

Burmese pythons, kudzu and Asian carp are a few infamous examples of invasive plant and animal species causing massive damage to American agriculture, biodiversity and national parks. Invasive species are non-native animals, microorganisms and plants that cause or are likely to cause harm to the economy, the environment or human health. Invasive species do not respect borders, easily moving from cities to farms to national parks. By establishing themselves in areas where natural predators may not exist, they affect livelihoods and change ecosystems. The annual economic impact on the United States exceeds \$1 billion.

The list of invasive species affecting the United States is long and growing. The Burmese python, for instance, is changing the delicate ecosystem of the Florida Everglades. Sold as pets in the 1970s, the snakes grow to 18 feet and 200 pounds, so some owners released them into the wild. Today, there may be 180,000 of them in Florida alone. Their impact: A recent study said the population of midsized mammals may have decreased more than 90 percent.

The kudzu vine, introduced from Japan's pavilion at the 1876 Centennial Expositi-



tion in Philadelphia, is taking over southern farmers' land at the rate of 150,000 acres a year, smothering existing plants with a solid blanket of leaves. It girdles tree trunks with its woody stems, breaking off branches and

Above: Citrus canker is caused by bacteria and is highly contagious. *Photo by Timothy Schubert*
Below: A kudzu-covered field near Port Gibson, Miss. *Photo by Galen Parks Smith*





uprooting the entire tree under its massive weight. The only way to kill it is to find and kill its root crown.

The Asian carp is taking over rivers and streams in the Mississippi River basin and threatening to invade the world's largest source of fresh water, the Great Lakes. Introduced from China in the 1970s to clean commercial fish ponds, it has displaced native U.S. species. Because the carp do not feed on other fish, they evade capture by anglers. They can grow to 100 pounds and can cause considerable damage to the ecosystems of rivers, streams and lakes.

The invasive citrus canker causes unsightly lesions on lemons, limes, oranges and grapefruits in Florida, making them unfit for sale. Thought to have entered the United States on seedlings imported from Japan in 1910, the disease has been declared ineradicable by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), despite efforts to isolate infected trees by removing others around them.

Invasive species can be imported intentionally for commercial use or brought in accidentally in packaging, wooden crates, food products, plants and animals. They hitch a ride in luggage, the soil on tent stakes, bicycle tires and even on wood carvings. Insects, slugs and snails can lodge themselves in containers, crates, pallets, packing material and even household effects. That is why the USDA's Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) and the Department of State are working together to promote awareness of the risk.

Left: The emerald ash borer arrived accidentally in wood packing materials from Asia and has infected ash trees in 14 states in the Midwest and Northeast. *Photo by Daniel Herms* **Below:** The emerald ash borer larva reach a length of approximately one inch and are white or cream colored. *Photo by David Cappaert*

The simplest and most important way to fight invasive species is to prevent their introduction. Here are some tips to ensure you are not unintentionally transporting a potentially invasive species:

- Clean your boots, outdoor gear, outdoor furniture, truck bed and vehicle tires (including bikes) before moving them to your new duty station.
- Research the admissibility of plant and animal products you want to ship before packing. Visit the embassy's APHIS office or call (301) 734-0841 for questions regarding plants and (301) 734-3277 for animals.
- Check your pets to ensure they're free from fleas, ticks and other parasites prior to traveling, regardless of whether this is required by the destination nation.
- Carefully inspect plant products for signs of insects and insect damage, especially wooden furniture or souvenirs.
- Declare all food, live animals and plant or animal products (such as souvenirs and animal skins) to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection officer or agriculture specialist at the first port of entry. Remember, certain foods are restricted to protect human health, preserve the ecosystem and prevent the introduction of plant and animal pests and disease.

By knowing what you are packing, you can help protect agriculture and the environment for generations to come. More information is available from the National Invasive Species Council (invasivespecies.gov) and APHIS (aphis.usda.gov). ■





A class of new LNAs is sworn in at the Foreign Service Institute Jan. 18.

Photo by Sandra Niedzwiecki

Staffing Solutions

LNA hiring effort targets visa surge

By Margaret Dean, special advisor to the director, Office of Recruitment, Examination and Employment

The Department of State has been working to keep pace with growing demand for U.S. visas, in line with President Obama's endorsement of the twin goals of U.S. border protection and increased U.S. tourism.

Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) personnel, in fiscal year 2011, processed more than 800,000 visa applications in Brazil and one million in China, increases of 42 and 34 percent respectively. These numbers reflect the burgeoning U.S. tourism markets in those countries.

Despite increased staffing and efficiency and expanded facilities and business hours to keep pace with the increased consular workload, wait times for a visa interview have risen in China and Brazil. Combined, tourists from both countries pumped an estimated \$12 billion into the U.S. economy last year.

A solution to the increasing visa demands required a new twist on an old practice. Rather than hiring Limited Noncareer Appointees (LNA) on a one-by-one basis, CA worked with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and the Bureau of Human Resources on a creative pilot program to hire a group of LNAs as consular adjudicators for service in Brazil and China. These employees are funded by consular fees and will primarily adjudicate nonimmigrant visas.

Cara LoFaro, a new consular adjudicator en route to Brazil, said she sees herself helping the U.S. economy by enabling increased tourism, which she hopes will strengthen bilateral relationships.

Traditionally, LNAs were hired one at a time through the bureaus for jobs whose skills were not readily available within the Foreign Service and/or for one-of-a-kind jobs

overseas. The FAM limits LNAs to a maximum of five years' employment, renewable annually after an initial deployment of 13 months. These limits remain in place for the new breed of LNA.

Consular adjudicators are a hybrid of Foreign Service specialists and generalists. They work side by side with generalists on the visa line but concentrate on their specialty of visa adjudication. Their application and assessment process reflects this duality. The online application on USAJobs.gov is similar to that of specialists, and the screening of applications is the same. However, their oral assessment blends specialist and generalist elements, with online tests of situational judgment, job knowledge, English expression and understanding the regulations specific to the LNA program. (The heart of visa adjudication is accurately applying the complex rules and legislation governing visas and other consular matters.)

To ensure that LNAs have a strong command of the English language, candidates face an extended writing exercise and interview. Unlike career Foreign Service employees, consular adjudicators are not evaluated for their potential to advance in the ranks of the career service, since their appointments are time-limited.

All consular adjudicators go through the same 31-day ConGen course as do other consular-commissioned officers. FSI has designed an orientation program that teaches them about being in the Foreign Service. It is shorter but similar to the A-100 and Specialist Orientation programs.

"ConGen has been great; the teachers are knowledgeable and supportive," said LNA Charles Harrison. "The curriculum has given me a good sense of what to expect when I get to post."

Uniquely, consular adjudicators must be FSI language-qualified before they can receive a job offer. That's because these employees will work on the front lines shortly after

orientation and consular training. Applicants are language-tested twice, once by telephone and, if they pass, via the full FSI language test (after their oral assessment). FSI has also designed a short course in consular vocabulary to augment their language skills.

CA is working with supervisors in embassies and consulates to explain the new program, emphasizing that consular adjudicators are Foreign Service employees, with the same decision-making authority as entry-level FSOs. CA aims to integrate the adjudicators smoothly into the consular workforce.

Consular adjudicators will spend most of their time adjudicating visas, but like career FSOs will be called on to also act as duty officers, support high-level visits or respond to crises. They enter as FS-05s or FS-06s and have the potential to advance to FS-04. Consular adjudicators will get a chance to see if they want to pursue the life of a Foreign Service officer, but to join the career ranks they must go through the process required of other career Foreign Service and Civil Service employees.

Brian McNerney, director of FSI's Orientation Division and himself a consular officer, said he was impressed by the consular adjudicators' professionalism and flexibility.

"They have not had much exposure to the government or to the Foreign Service, but nearly all of the entering class has been in their country of assignment," he said.

The popular program has attracted hundreds of highly qualified applicants, who responded to each of the three vacancy announcements seeking Portuguese- or Chinese-speaking adjudicators. Candidates compete for approximately 10 positions per announcement. Consular adjudicator classes were convened in January and March, representing a total of 15 Portuguese speakers and 21 Mandarin speakers hired so far under the program.

Earlier this year, CA extended the program to some Spanish-speaking countries. In the two weeks that the Spanish-language vacancy announcement was open, HR received more than 1,600 applications. The first class is slated to begin in the next fiscal year.

Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Janice Jacobs encouraged a recent class of consular adjudicators with a call to action.

"We have a challenge ahead of us, but we are dedicated to meeting the tremendous visa demand from emerging economies," she said. "It will take resources and talent, [and] I see we have an abundance of that here today in this room." ■



Office of the Month

National Visa Center

The Gateway to Visa Processing

Story by Robin E. Blunt, deputy director, NVC
Photos by Kim Kelly



Tucked away in a picturesque corner of New England amid towering pines, historic buildings and seagoing vessels, the National Visa Center (NVC) is one of the first steps for most immigrant visa applications. Little known outside the Bureau of Consular Affairs, the NVC is located in a bustling commercial development on the edge of Portsmouth, N.H., on the grounds of what once was the Strategic Air Command's Pease Air Force Base. NVC's sister facility, "the CA building," is across the parking lot and dedicated to former Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Mary Ryan.

A benefit of NVC's location becomes clear every summer when the Boston-Pease Airshow and Blue Angels come to town: Windows rattle and walls shake as the planes practice acrobatics above the parking lot, which fills with enthralled lunch-time observers.

Opened in 1994 as the successor to the Transitional Immigrant Visa Processing Center in Rosslyn, Va., the NVC centralizes all immigrant visa preprocessing and appointment scheduling for overseas posts. The NVC collects paperwork and fees before forwarding a case, ready for adjudication, to the responsible post. The center also handles immigrant and fiancé visa petitions, and while it does not adjudicate visa applications, it provides technical assistance and support to visa-adjudicating consular officials overseas.

Only two Foreign Service officers, the director and deputy director, work at the center, along with just five Civil Service employees. They work with almost 500 contract employees doing preprocessing of visas, making the center one of the largest employers in the Portsmouth area. The contractor, Serco, Inc., has worked with the NVC since its inception and with the Department for almost 18 years.

The NVC houses more than 2.6 million immigrant visa files, receives almost two million pieces of mail per year and received more than half a million petitions from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) in 2011. Its file rooms' high-density shelves are stacked floor-to-ceiling with files, each a collection of someone's hopes and dreams and each requiring proper handling.



Above: Contract employee Kat Pringle reviews newly digitized files. **Right:** NVC employee Reggie Goodrow opens boxes of new immigrant visa petitions.

In recent months, the NVC has been using HOV Services, another contractor, to digitize all documents in the approximately 1.2 million noncurrent visas files stored there. The process involves disassembling files, scanning the documents and then reassembling the files in the correct order. More than 80 people, working two shifts, use machines that can scan more than 175 images per minute. A random sampling of the work is regularly subjected to quality control to make sure no images were missed.

The NVC's Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) searches incoming petitions for fraud indicators. It prescreens all fiancé and employment-based immigrant visa petitions and as many marriage-based petitions as possible before the cases are sent overseas for adjudication, saving posts thousands of work hours investigating potentially fraudulent petitions.

The FPU can access a myriad of databases to research cases and has a fraud detection national security officer from the Department of Homeland Security, who brings DHS expertise and resources to investigations.



Office of the Month



Above: Kim Barbosa of the Telephone Inquiry Unit answers one of the more than 8,000 calls received daily. **Right:** The NVC houses more than 2.3 immigrant visa files.

The FPU also has the ability to enter “lookouts” into the Immigrant Visa Information System (IVIS) database used for NVC preprocessing. Lookouts flag suspect applications to ensure appropriate prescreening. Once prescreening is completed, all information and a detailed memo are forwarded to the post with the file.

The FPU is also the main liaison between posts and USCIS. If a post does not issue a visa, the case file is returned to the NVC, which then forwards the petition to the appropriate USCIS office for revocation or reaffirmation. The FPU also assists posts by conducting validation studies or additional case research and determining fraud trends.

The NVC also preprocesses the chief of mission (COM) application required for the filing of a petition for a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV). Such visas, for foreign nationals who have performed services for the U.S. government in Iraq and Afghanistan, require COM concurrence before the applicant can file a petition with USCIS. The NVC collects the requisite documents from such applicants and, when complete, forwards the package to the U.S. embassies in Baghdad or Kabul for COM approval.

At one point, many such applicants were having difficulty acquiring the required letter of recommendation from their former U.S. Armed Forces supervisors. In response, the NVC worked within the State

Department and with the DOD and White House to develop a supervisor locator system that helps applicants obtain the needed letter, an innovation that has enabled many Iraqis and Afghans to take advantage of the SIV process.

While visas are the NVC’s bread and butter, the center can perform other services in a crisis. For instance, when the District of Columbia was hit by 2011’s “Snowmageddon,” all public visa calls to the Department were diverted to a 90-plus-person telephone inquiry unit at the NVC. In the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake, the NVC assisted the Department by responding to questions from U.S. citizens and visa petitioners and beneficiaries. The telephone inquiry unit also handles calls for consular sections at posts in crisis. The NVC is one of two Department facilities doing facial recognition for passport and visa applicants. Since February 2011, 22 reviewers have been comparing application photographs electronically with a host of resources that capture photographs. Potential matches are compiled into a review record. The facial recognition team reviewed a staggering 1,157,338 photos in January.

Whether processing immigrant visa cases, managing millions of files, communicating with clients or members of Congress, preventing visa fraud or providing support to Department bureaus and missions during crises, the NVC reflects its unofficial motto: “Not a file, a family.”



Recently, the motto was exemplified by a retiring file clerk who remonstrated with her manager to “take good care of my families when I’m gone” and pointed to row upon row of immigrant visa files under her care.

That caring attitude is also reflected in the NVC’s sense of family among staff members, who hold potlucks meals to celebrate special events and are active in the community, holding holiday toy drives for needy children and food or blood drives year round.

The NVC, the gateway to visa processing, is about people serving people. ■

Wash, Scrub, Dry

Food Safety Requires Sanitary Practices

By Daniel Vaughn-Petersen, certified industrial hygienist and safety professional, Office of Safety, Health and Environmental Management

This past year, my wife's grandfather died from listeriosis, an infection that can occur when a person eats food contaminated with bacteria. After eating an improperly washed cantaloupe, he complained of stomach pain and loss of movement in his legs. In less than a week, his legs worsened, his fever spiked and he was hospitalized. The illness was a mystery to doctors. After many tests and diagnoses, they confirmed that he had listeriosis. He died three months later of complications from the disease.

While employees living and traveling overseas know to take precautions with food and water, they tend to be less careful in the United States. Frequently assuming that food is safe, many people do not wash their fruit and vegetables before eating.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) website, "While the American food supply is among the safest in the world, the federal government estimates that there are about 48 million cases of food-borne illness annually—the equivalent of sickening 1 in 6 Americans each year. And each year these illnesses result in an estimated 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths."

A multitude of bacteria may cause food-borne illness, the most common being *E. coli*, salmonella and listeria. However, the idea of infection can seem remote until it hits close to home, as it did with my family.

These illnesses are all the result of bacteria being ingested. These bacteria can cause sickness or even death. Consumers can't assume that farmers and grocers have properly washed produce; they must do so themselves. This is even more important because much produce is shipped globally.

Here are a few FDA food safety tips for dealing with produce, whether it is from your backyard or the other side of the globe:

- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with soap and hot water between the preparation of raw meat, poultry and seafood products and produce that will not be cooked.
- Use plastic or other nonporous cutting boards and run them through the dishwasher after use.
- Cut away damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing or eating. Produce that looks rotten should be discarded.
- Wash all produce thoroughly under running

water before eating, cutting or cooking, whether the food is grown conventionally or organically or purchased from a grocery store or farmers' market. Washing fruits and vegetables with soap or detergent, or using commercial produce washes, is not recommended.

- Wash produce first, even if you plan to peel it before eating, so that dirt and bacteria aren't transferred from the knife onto the fruit or vegetable.
- Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean brush.
- Dry produce with a clean cloth or paper towel to further reduce the incidence of harmful bacteria.

Abiding by these food safety tips and instilling these habits in children will help prevent food-borne illnesses. More information is available online at fda.gov. ■



Interlist



Conference attendees with Equal Pay Day bags demonstrate their support for gender equality in front of the Swiss Federal Bernerhof.
Photo by Rich Fisher

U.S., Swiss Women Discuss Leadership

Female officials from such U.S. government organizations as the White House and such Swiss government groups as the Federal Council, as well as female leaders of NGOs and corporations, attended the recent second annual iteration of a Swiss-U.S. conference on women's leadership hosted by the U.S. Embassy in Bern on International Women's Day.

"We have the right people in the room, we have done our homework, let's get to work," said Megan Beyer, wife of U.S. Ambassador Donald S. Beyer Jr. A journalist, Megan Beyer is also chair of Embassy Bern's bilateral women leaders conference.

"Gender equality is smart economics," said another speaker, Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues Melanne Vermeer.

A study of workplace obstacles to, and opportunities for, women's leadership in the United States and Switzerland by George Washington University's Global Women's Initiative provided a road map for conference work groups. The report analyzes data and best practices on quotas, mentoring, child care structures, certification and benchmarking, and flexible work schedules.

Representatives of several companies committed to exploring and promoting gender certification programs, and participants discussed ways to encourage male participation in part-time and flexible work schedules.

NGOs Receive Innovation Award

The latest winners of the Secretary's Innovation Award for the Empowerment of Women and Girls include an organization, Chintan India, which works with "waste-pickers" who earn a living seeking salvageable items among India's trash. The NGO, founded by a woman, helps get child laborers off the trash heaps and into schools.

Another winning organization, Samasource Kenya, provides impoverished women and youth in that nation with the digital skills they need to find Internet-based jobs. In three years, the woman-founded group has paid more than \$1.5 million in wages to more than 2,000 trained workers.

The third winner, Kickstart Tanzania, developed a low-cost portable irrigation tool, the MoneyMaker Hip Pump, with which female farmers can water their crops and thus grow high-value fruits and vegetables for market, even in the dry season. The group lets farmers buy the pumps using incremental payments over time.

The awards were presented to representatives of the groups by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in Main State's Benjamin Franklin Room in March. Noting that the awards reflect the Department's emphasis on empowering women and girls, Secretary Clinton said full participation of women is essential to achieving U.S. peace and security objectives.

She lauded Chintan India for being the reason 2,000 children have been diverted from trash heaps to classrooms.



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton prepares to announce the winners of the Secretary's Innovation Award for the Empowerment of Women and Girls.

Photo by Ed Warner

Retirements

Foreign Service

Arkwood, Gary D.
Hammaker, William M.
Juras, David
Lykins, Jay A.
Mosher, Elizabeth K.
Odean, Joan B.
Phlipot, Constance A.

Civil Service

Barnes, Earnestine
Berry, Reginald A.
Brandon, Barbara J.
Fox, James E.
Latvanas, Barbara A.
Lawrence, Paul N.
Ortman, Edward
O'Shea, Gayle E.
Osorio, Fernando M.
Posey, Robert K.
Retherford Jr., Robert M.
Ruff, Eugenia B.
Scholz, Wesley S.
Tauscher, Ellen O.
Texeira, Jennifer Victoria
Wilson, Gwendolyn E.



Embassy Sofia Hosts Regional Housing Workshop

In early March, the U.S. Embassy in Sofia hosted a two-day housing workshop for 10 U.S. posts in the region. Locally Employed Staff and general services officers discussed technical matters such as the "make-ready" process and how to do market research for rental benchmarks. They also discussed damages to property, air conditioners and policies on drapes and blinds.

The workshop allowed housing staff to share best practices, address common challenges and network. One GSO plans to host a housing workshop later this year for northern posts in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.



OBO Holds Valentine's Eve Blood Drive

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) held a blood drive at its Washington, D.C., area headquarters, Feb. 13. Bureau members, donors like OBO secretary Lois Marantz (seated) and volunteers like program analyst Phil Shar, collected 28 units of blood during a time when the American Red Cross said blood was in short supply.

OBO plans another blood drive this summer and wants to organize a competition to see which Department annex can collect the most donations. Those interested in competing can contact Sarah Ennis at EnnissM@state.gov. More information on blood donation can be found online at redcrossblood.org.

OBO photo



Ambassador to Italy David H. Thorne, left, presents the USO Award to the embassy's Marine security guards.
Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy in Rome

Marine Guards in Rome Win USO Award

To honor Marine security guards at the U.S. Embassy in Rome, the USO's Meet the Parents program annually recognizes two Marines. Recently, U.S. Ambassador David Thorne presented award certificates to Marine Sgt. Donald R. Fowler and Marine Cpl. Andres Ramirez Garcia, which allowed their family members to visit Rome during the Presidents Day holiday, using vacation packages donated by members of the local business community.

"Like many others, our parents have no idea what we do as embassy guards," said Sgt. Fowler. "It's extremely special to have something like this because we all live and work overseas, and because of our jobs, family time is sometimes second on the list."

Opera Singer Kicks Off 2012 Cultural Series

The Foreign Affairs Recreation Association and State of the Arts Cultural Series began the new year with a February performance by vocalist Prince Edward Havelly in honor of Black History Month. Havelly sings with the Washington National Opera and has performed at presidential galas, including inaugural balls for Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Havelly performed the songs of Nat King Cole, Harry Belafonte and Louis Armstrong. His finale, "Bill Bailey," was a real crowd pleaser. Ro Cubé proved to be a very capable piano accompanist.

Coming Events

- 5/9 Flattop Presents - Royal Orleans Brass Band
- 5/16 TBD
- 6/20 Ventriloquist Margaret Davis and Vocalist Nancy Riggs
- 7/11 Dogwood Singers
- 7/18 Piano Prodiges

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TELEKINETICALLY CAUSE BOYD FLAXTON'S TIE TO CHOKE HIM WHEN HE USES "IMPACT" AS A VERB IN COUNTRY TEAM MEETINGS



FINALLY STAGE MY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MUSICAL: "THE COY AND CHARISMATIC CONSUL"



Language of Learning

Retired Specialist is Pen-Pal Teacher for Prisoners

By Barbara Jacquin

"I want to thank you a lot for your help and what you do for people who want to learn English. I don't like talking about myself. But it's alright; life is good. Sometimes I'm fine and at other times I feel down; it's like that."

The above statement was sent to me by one of several prisoners in French jails with whom I began exchanging letters under a program of "pen-pal tutoring" that I joined after retiring from the State Department in 2004.

After 20 years with the Department, including my last assignment as a diplomatic courier stationed in Frankfurt, Germany, I settled into my new home in a village near Nîmes in the south of France and began seeking volunteer activities. I started by teaching English to adults at a continuing education facility in nearby Uzès, then saw a newspaper ad seeking instructors for a long-distance learning association.

The group, Auxilia, provides prisoners, those with handicaps and the unemployed instruction in languages, accounting, administration, art and other subjects. In 2011, Auxilia gave 3,101 lessons to 900 prisoners.

As I had prior experience teaching English in Paris, I was welcomed into the group of 1,059 volunteers as an English teacher working with *détenus*: prisoners in jails or penitentiaries.

Auxilia's infrastructure includes regional and prison-associated representatives, a library of resources for instructors, and group leaders who are always available for advice. I was assigned my first *apprenant* or learner in April 2010, and have since helped five people improve their English by sending them homework assignments after targeting their specific needs. I correspond with them by mail using a pseudonym since Auxilia discourages giving out personal information to the prisoners. Normally, I would consider this a handicap to their progress, but except for one or two cases they work hard to improve their English and thank me profusely.

I care about the well-being of my learners, though I can't visit them in person. When someone drops out of the program, I feel concerned and attempt to find out why by contacting Auxilia's prison representative.



The author works at her desk correcting homework exercises that include a dialogue between a tour guide and a tourist.
Photo by the author

Prisoners have given me many reasons for improving their English. One said he wants to take the French baccalaureate exam at the same time as his 15-year-old daughter. Another wants to work with tourists. One prostitute (it's legal in France) said she wants to learn English so she can speak with clients. Many simply see learning English as a means to improve their chances for parole.

Working with a prisoner can be tricky. For example, I once sent a prisoner an exercise asking him to use an adverb to describe how often he goes to the theater: always, often, sometimes, seldom, rarely or never.

He replied, of course: "I never go to the theater!"

Being able to share knowledge that can improve a prisoner's chances for re-entry into society or help him or her get an early release is satisfying. I visited Americans in jail as part of my work as a consular officer in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and although I don't want to know what crimes they committed, I sympathize with the prisoners' frustration at being isolated from the real world. Who knows? Maybe one day I will be a tourist on the French island territory of La Réunion and will meet that former student who aspires to work in the tourist industry.

For more information about Auxilia, readers can contact the author at BJacquín@hotmail.com. Auxilia (in France auxilia-formation.org, in Switzerland auxilia-formation.ch) always needs teachers of English and other subjects. Their email addresses in Belgium are asblauxilia@altern.org (Brussels) and info@auxilia-vlaanderen.be (Antwerp). ■

Obituaries



Jack Bright, 90, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Feb. 27 at his home in Tucson, Ariz. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II before joining the U.S. Information Agency. In a 30-year career, he was director of binational centers in Paraguay, Mexico, Peru and the Dominican Republic, and cultural affairs officer in Argentina and Ecuador. He was an avid golfer and bridge player, and enjoyed hiking, classical music, opera and reciting poetry.



Edward J. Dolezal Sr., 91, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Feb. 8 in Scottsdale, Ariz. He served in the Army during World War II. His postings included Afghanistan, Thailand, France, Italy and numerous African locations. In retirement, he enjoyed gardening, with a special interest in roses.



Milton Freundel, 88, a retired Foreign Service officer, died March 1 of heart disease in Bethesda, Md. He served in the Army during World War II. His postings with USAID and the Department included Taiwan, Pakistan, Guatemala and Paraguay. After retiring in 1978, he consulted with the Department, was a docent at the Holocaust Museum and Air and Space Museum, and traveled extensively.



Peter Folger Frost, 82, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Dec. 10 in Vienna, Austria. He served in the Air Force before joining the Department. He was posted to Morocco. He was active in Rotary International.



Esther Lee Grant, 74, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Feb. 6. She lived in Lanham, Md. She retired from the Department in 1987. She also worked for Prince George's Community College.



Samuel Sang Hoy Lee, 81, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Feb. 10 of cancer at his home in Mililani, Hawaii. In 1955, he was one of the first Asian-Americans to enter the Foreign Service. His postings included Italy, Yugoslavia, Germany, Vietnam, Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan. After retiring to Mililani in 1981, he led a campaign to remove pesticides from the town's water supply. He later served five terms in the State House of Representatives, where he promoted Hawaii's economic development and trade with Asia.



Joseph E. Seman, 48, a Foreign Service officer, died Nov. 29 at his home in Alexandria, Va., from a pulmonary embolism. He joined the Department in 1989 and served in Seoul (twice), Prague and Frankfurt. At the time of his death, he was a State-Defense exchange officer at the Pentagon working to reduce the global threat posed by chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. He was an avid fly fisherman and participated in water conservation projects at home and abroad.



Peter D. Whitney, 68, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Feb. 9 of complications from a series of strokes in Arlington, Va. He lived in McLean, Va. He joined the Department in 1967 and was posted to Jamaica, Japan, Argentina, Chile and Brazil. After retiring in 1997, he was economist-in-residence at American University.

John P. Condon, 91, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Nov. 22 in Auxerre, France. He joined the Department in 1960 and was posted to Tunisia, Algeria, Vietnam, Lebanon and Paris before being named ambassador to Fiji, Kiribati, Vanuatu and Tonga. He retired in 1980 to Saint Florentin in the Burgundy region of France, where he encouraged the reconstruction of a Renaissance fountain destroyed during World War II and helped create a museum of the region's history.

Alan W. Ford, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Dec. 15 in Citta della Pieve, Italy, where he lived. He served in the Marine Corps during World War II. He worked at the Department in the Office of the Legal Advisor and Office of Central African Affairs before joining the Foreign Service in 1964. His postings included the Congo, Rome, Manila and Naples (NATO). After retiring in 1985, he lived in California and New Mexico before moving to Italy.

Linda Sue Muncy, 63, a Foreign Service officer, died Jan. 30 of a sudden illness in Kabul, Afghanistan, where she was serving with her husband, Don, an FSO with USAID. During her 27-year career with the Department, she was posted to Montreal, Bangladesh, South Africa and Yemen. Previously, she had worked for the U.S. Civil Service Commission and Department of Agriculture.

Mary Elizabeth von Briesen, 68, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Jan. 8 of a stroke. She lived in Arlington, Va. She served in the Peace Corps in Nepal and joined the Department in 1968. Her postings included Pretoria, Taipei (twice), Beijing and Stuttgart. After retiring in 1996, she worked for Borders Books and Washington Guide Services. Because of her language fluency, she often led tourists from China, Taiwan and Germany around Washington, D.C. She loved books and camping, and collected folk art and handmade treasures.

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Colombia



Traditionally attired Palenquera women converse in a creole language at a fruit stand in Boca Grande, Cartagena. The Palenquero ethnic group's 3,400 remaining members trace their roots to escaped African and Native American slaves who founded settlements along Colombia's remote northern coast. Their distinct Spanish dialect is influenced by the Kikongo language of Congo and Angola, and by South American Portuguese.

Photo by Luz Adriana Villa

PG. 7



Bulgaria



One of Bulgaria's important agricultural exports, sunflowers, are harvested for their seeds near Shabla. Sunflower oil is extracted from the seeds of mature plants and used for cooking and to produce margarine and biodiesel fuels.

Photo by Yovko Lambrev

PG.39





Vietnam

Vibrant paint jobs help distinguish each fishing boat and trawler in the port city of Phan Thiet on the South China Sea. Vietnam's 3,260 km (2,026 mi.) of coastline, and an extensive network of rivers and lakes, bolster the nation's fishing industry by providing access to a wealth of natural resources.

Photo by Lucas Jans



Afghanistan

A young boy stands amid a group of Burqa-clad Afghan women as they wait in line to collect rations during a food distribution program for refugees at the Charahi Qambar refugee camp in Kabul. Approximately 6,000 displaced people, the majority from Afghanistan's southern Helmand Province, live in the five-year-old settlement.

Photo by Basetrack





U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Human Resources
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