

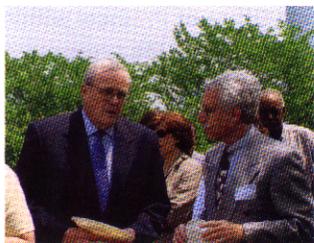
consultations

To assist and inform the diplomatic and consular communities

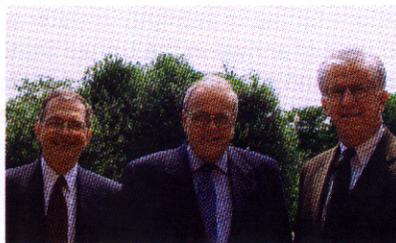
OFM Briefs Department's Incoming Under Secretary for Management

Assistant Secretary David G. Carpenter (Bureau of Diplomatic Security), joined by Deputy Assistant Secretary Theodore E. Strickler and Office of Foreign Missions senior staff, conducted a briefing for Grant S. Green, Jr., the new Under Secretary for Management, and one of the Department of State's top seven officials. Mr. Strickler discussed the mission and scope of OFM (Diplomatic Motor Vehicles, Tax and Customs, Property and Travel), stressing that OFM deals with countries throughout the world in matters of foreign affairs as well as many public organizations in the United States. Denise Duclon, Regional Director of OFM's Chicago Office, described the role of OFM's five regional offices, and Senior Adviser Thomas E. Burns, Jr. offered other important information on OFM functions.

Under Secretary Green said he was impressed by the progress OFM has made in recent years and declared himself "operationally oriented" in his management role. Following the briefing, Under Secretary Green joined Assistant Secretary Carpenter and Deputy Assistant Secretary Strickler for an official American picnic with over 200 embassy and special guests in the International Chancery Center's Central Park.



While waiting to be served, Under Secretary for Management Grant Green chats with OFM's former Managing Director for Operations Ronald Rabens.



Under Secretary Grant Green (center) arrives at OFM's SA-33 location for a briefing, accompanied by Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security David Carpenter (right) and Deputy Assistant Secretary Theodore Strickler (left).

Parking Tickets Must Be Paid!

The Office of Foreign Missions reminds Embassies, Missions, and Consulates that their status does not relieve them of their obligations to respect traffic and parking regulations. In order to minimize vehicle congestion, promote public safety, and ensure fair access to parking for all, it is essential that all persons operating motor vehicles obey laws and regulations pertaining to both parking as well as vehicle operation. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the individual or mission whose vehicles receive parking summonses to pay those summonses or to contest them in a timely manner. While most drivers and consulates abide by parking regulations, it has come to the attention of the Office of Foreign Missions that some individuals as well as missions and consulates have accumulated a substantial number of summonses or a large sum of fines for violations. Particularly egregious cases may require the Office of Foreign Missions to bring the matter to the attention of the chief of the mission involved.



OFM OFFICE SLATED TO OPEN IN FLORIDA

OFM will open a new office in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in September 2001. It will be the headquarters for the southeast U.S., a newly created OFM region that includes the consular community throughout the states of Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Puerto Rico. Foreign Service Officer Terry Daru has been assigned as Director of the new regional office; he will be supported by a small staff. The regional office will administer OFM programs including taxes, vehicles, property and travel, and customs. It will provide information and service to the consular community and local authorities.

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OFM Procedure

Reciprocity: Your Advocate Here and Abroad

OFM is on a continuing mission to achieve equitable treatment and benefits for U.S. posts abroad in the areas of diplomatic motor vehicles, property, and tax. OFM's advocacy for U.S. missions and personnel ultimately benefits foreign missions in the United States as well. Through negotiation with foreign ministries and governments for improved treatment, OFM provides perpetual support.

Diplomatic Motor Vehicles Reciprocity

Restrictive motor vehicle policies affect the overall quality of life for all U.S. mission members serving abroad. Restrictive motor vehicle practices include the following:

- taxes and duties exceeding 100% of the vehicle value
- limitations on vehicle value or engine size
- bans on certain vehicle types
- vehicle type restrictions according to diplomatic rank
- expensive and cumbersome registration procedures
- limiting vehicle sales to government offices at below market prices and applying duties and taxes on vehicle dispositions.

These restrictions consume U.S. Government and foreign government resources and impose a financial burden on diplomatic mission members.

OFM's Motor Vehicle Reciprocity Program helps to reduce expenditures which result from arbitrary host country restrictions by encouraging more favorable treatment for U.S. missions and their members around the world. OFM compares treatment afforded to foreign diplomats serving in the U.S. to that afforded to American diplomatic personnel at U.S. missions abroad. If there are imbalances, a motor vehicle policy redressing the disparities is created.

A successful reciprocity policy is crucial for U.S. missions abroad, but it is important to note that both parties benefit when equitable resolutions are reached. The goal of reciprocity is not to place hardship on a diplomatic mission or its members. Instead, these policies can provide solutions for a variety of vehicle issues. When diplomatic missions and personnel experience restrictive vehicle limits, fees, surcharges and disposition holding requirements, they are more likely to understand how prohibitive policies affect other diplomats.

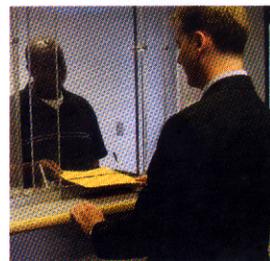
Frequently Asked Questions

Visa Office, Diplomatic Liaison Division, Answers Consular Questions

Foreign missions that have questions about renewing diplomatic or official visas or other immigration questions should be aware that the Diplomatic Liaison Division within the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Visa Office can assist with these matters. Missions and consulates have occasionally directed these questions to other offices within the Department of State. This practice has led to confusion and, in a few cases, to inappropriate guidance. In order to obtain the correct advice, please direct your questions to the Visa Office. Ideally, questions should come from the staff member at the foreign mission or international organization responsible for visa and immigration matters.

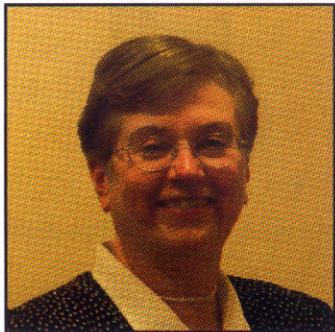
The Diplomatic Liaison Division Chief is William Bent. Working closely with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the Diplomatic Liaison Division assists foreign missions and international organizations with the renewal of A, G or NATO visas, the processing of changes of status requests into or out of A, G or NATO status, replacements for lost I-94 cards, and extensions of stay for domestic employees in A-3, G-5 or NATO-7 status. The Diplomatic Reception Desk, located at Columbia Plaza at 2401 E Street, NW, Washington, DC, is open each business day from 11 a.m. to 12 noon. Foreign missions can drop off and pick up visa and change of status applications here, as well as obtain proper application forms. A drop-box is also available for missions that wish to leave applications outside operating hours.

The most common visa and immigration problems encountered by officials and diplomats are usually the most preventable. They include failing to promptly register with the Office of Protocol within 30 days of arrival in the United States, not obtaining the proper visa abroad and entering the United States with a visitor's visa, allowing a domestic employee's authorized period of stay to expire, and not following the proper guidelines in establishing a contract for a domestic employee.



All inquiries regarding non-diplomatic and non-official visas should be addressed to our public inquiries number at 202-663-1225 or via e-mail at usvisa@state.gov.

Diplomatic Liaison Division Chief William Bent takes a diplomatic visa application to the Columbia Plaza office location. Photo courtesy of Emmett Koehler.



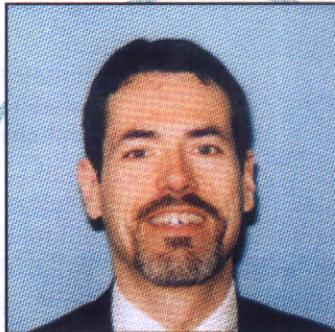
Winkle W. Nemeth

Winkle W. Nemeth is the new Director for Tax and Customs. She holds a Ph.D. from Indiana University in American Literature. Ms. Nemeth joined the Foreign Service in 1981 and served in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jamaica, and Mexico. Her most recent assignment abroad was in Mexico City as Supervisory General Services Officer. In Washington she served in the Executive Office of the Bureau of Western Hemispheric Affairs and in the Office of Foreign Buildings in the Bureau of Administration. In her role as Tax and Customs Director, Ms. Nemeth wants to ensure fair treatment within the foreign diplomatic and consular community. She succeeds Robert Hyams, who will be serving as a Pearson Fellow with Senate Foreign Relations Committee.



David Van Valkenburg

David Van Valkenburg was assigned as Director of OFM's Los Angeles Regional Office on July 3, 2001. Mr. Valkenburg previously served in consular, political and administrative positions in Managua, Nicaragua; Kingston, Jamaica; Beijing, China; Merida, Mexico; the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy; and Guatemala City, Guatemala. He hopes his experience in heading a constituent post of the American Embassy in Mexico will give him a good understanding of the challenges faced by consulates and consulates general in the Los Angeles region. Mr. Van Valkenburg succeeds Evan Press, who is assigned to Bridgetown, Barbados, as Administrative Counselor.



John R. Arndt

John R. Arndt, a career senior Foreign Service officer, is the new OFM Managing Director for Operations. In this role, he will oversee OFM operations (Diplomatic Motor Vehicles, Tax, Customs, Property and Travel) and OFM's five regional offices. Mr. Arndt joined the Foreign Service in 1984 and served in Frankfurt, Germany, and Naples, Italy. In Washington, he served first as desk officer for Guatemala followed by a one-year fellowship in Congress as foreign policy advisor for the Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell. After a year of Czech language training, he was assigned as Consul General at the American Embassy in Prague.

Faces of OFM



OFM's San Francisco Regional Office: Interlocutor in the Bay Area



San Francisco is a cultural wonderland, an ethnic treasure where custom and history are preserved, celebrated and shared. There are countless viewpoints, personalities and styles in "The City." San Francisco hosted 17.3 million visitors last year, and these visitors spent over \$7.62 billion in local businesses. Silicon Valley and the high-tech industry have their home base in the Bay Area, and San Francisco is still the banking center of the western United States. It is no wonder, then, that many foreign governments establish a presence here. An extensive network of companies in the Bay Area offers an invaluable opportunity for foreign consulates and trade offices to make contact with business leaders and key government officials. Today there are some 64 career consulates and 148 honorary consuls in the region served by the San Francisco Regional Office, an area which includes the seven northwestern states, Alaska and Guam.

REMINDER

In recent months, a number of consulates in the United States have changed locations without receiving prior authorization from the Office of Foreign Missions. Please remember that if there are plans to move your consulate, any of its offices, and staff residences (if leased in the mission's name), you must first notify OFM. Do this before you sign a lease or move. Send your request to the OFM Property section which will act on the request promptly. Also be sure to inform your real estate agent of this requirement. Ask the agent to call OFM 202 647-4554 or the OFM regional office in your area (see Phonebook on page 4) if there are any questions.

**(Reciprocity:
Your Advocate Here and Abroad
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As a direct result of OFM's reciprocity policies, duties and fees have been lowered or waived entirely both here and abroad; accompanied diplomats and staff are now allowed to have two vehicles. In addition, many countries have adopted vehicle disposition requirements more in line with the average tour of duty for mission personnel. In a few cases, the disposition requirements have been dropped completely. This change allows the mission and its members to freely sell vehicles within or outside the diplomatic community at any time. The countries that have adopted these changes have noted that reciprocity truly is a win-win proposition.

Real Property Reciprocity

In certain countries laws prohibit foreign missions from owning land. In such cases, the Office of Foreign Missions will either deny property purchase requests in the U.S. on the basis of reciprocity or propose a so-called "bundle of rights" agreement. Under such an agreement, the country may purchase land and buildings in the United States in exchange for U.S. permission to acquire property rights in that country which are a substantial equivalent to fee simple (outright) rights in the United States. OFM considers the "substantial equivalent" of fee simple to include land leases for a 99-year term with a 99-year option to extend, the right to make a one-time, up-front lump sum payment, the right to freely transfer the property, tax exemption, and the right to convert to fee simple ownership at no cost should the laws change to permit such ownership. OFM has concluded many such agreements in recent years which allow both the U.S. and other missions to enjoy the substantial financial benefits of property ownership.

Tax Reciprocity

Over the past 3 years, OFM representatives have visited 49 countries for talks on bilateral diplomatic tax privileges. OFM has also sent diplomatic notes relating to diplomatic tax privileges to the embassies of 27 other countries. These initiatives have resulted in improved diplomatic tax exemption/reimbursement privileges for the United States missions and personnel abroad as well as foreign governments and diplomats residing in the United States.

**(OFM's San Francisco Regional Office:
Interlocutor in the Bay Area
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Besides providing general information to foreign missions in its district, OFM/SF administers specialized OFM programs. These programs include the Diplomatic Motor Vehicles, Tax Exemption, Customs, Real Estate and the Travel programs. OFM also assists in emergency consular notification when a foreign national is detained or in the event of the death of a foreign national. All OFM regional offices serve as focal points for their respective consular communities.

OFM regional offices are viewed as the U.S. Government outside the District of Columbia. The San Francisco Regional Office receives a wide variety of requests for assistance. Recently, a request was received from a consulate to obtain information from law enforcement authorities regarding foreign nationals that were arrested in a large drug seizure in another state. Also, following a drowning of two foreign nationals in the Bay Area this year, OFM/SF was asked by the local consulate to expedite the families' travel to the United States. Through contacts at the overseas U.S. Embassy, all the necessary visas for travel to the San Francisco area were issued immediately.

With the arrival of a new Deputy Regional Director, OFM/SF is anticipating that its outreach programs will strengthen relationships with the foreign consular community and partnerships with local, state and federal agencies in the Bay Area.



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consultations

Produced by the Office of Foreign Missions
Four issues each year

Printed by Regional Printing Center, Manila

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