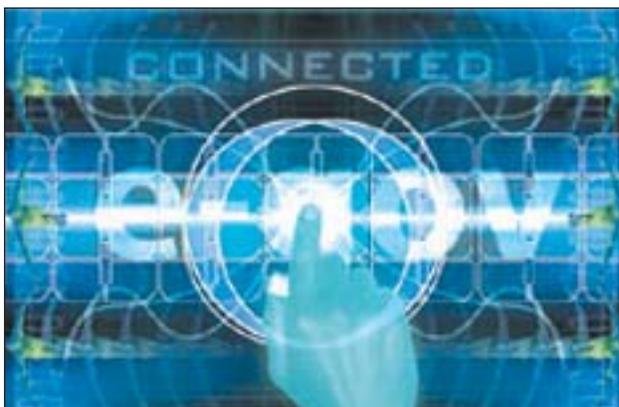


# Consultations

a newsletter for the diplomatic and consular communities

## e-gov ... Better, Faster Service

The Office of Foreign Missions (OFM) is currently developing an Internet-based system that will allow members of the foreign diplomatic and consular community and missions to apply for OFM as well as Protocol Services via the



Internet. The three-month pilot phase will begin in late July. Upon successful completion of the pilot phase, the following services will be among those available online: registration and termination of personnel, registration and titling of vehicles, application for tax exemption cards and driver licenses, and the renewal of protocol immunity cards.

The new program will eliminate the need to submit paper applications and will also reduce the number of supporting documents required

for each application. This is just the first phase of our three phased E-Government initiative to develop new and innovative solutions. OFM's goal is to reduce further the administrative burden on individuals and missions by improving our level of service to the diplomatic and consular communities, while reducing costs

to the US Government.

To apply for OFM and Protocol services via the Internet, each mission will need to identify two members of their Administrative Section at each embassy and consulate, and ensure that Internet access is available. These new services will soon be available via the Web at <http://WWW.STATE.GOV/OFM>. Meanwhile, check the site for certain tax and customs forms and the Escort Screening Courtesies Request form already posted. ■

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**\*Consultations has gone electronic!**

## An Office on the Move

As of May, OFM San Francisco Regional Director Leroy Dal Porto and his staff have enjoyed occupancy of their new quarters in the Spear Street Tower. The new office offers significantly more space, allowing OFM San Francisco to expand both in staff size and in the scope of services offered.

Concurrent with the move, the office has added a new staff member, Program Specialist Alicia Marshall. Ms Marshall, a State Department veteran of several tours of duty at overseas postings, joins Director Dal Porto, and Deputy Director Evan Reade along with Program Manager David DiDomizio. With the additional space, the office also now able to provide part-time intern opportunities to local students.

*continued on page 4*



*Before and after.* San Francisco's customer service lobby is looking good and is ready for business.



David DiDomizio, program specialist, assists a member of the consular community during her first visit to the new office.



OFFICE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS  
US DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Vol. 5, Number 2  
Summer 2004

## Miami Celebrates 1st Year

OFM's Miami Regional Office recently marked its one-year anniversary in permanent quarters by beginning on-site production of driver licenses, vehicle registrations and sales tax exemption cards for foreign missions located in the southeast United States. At the same time, the region's duty-free customs clearance and utility tax exemption programs also began to be administered locally.

"It's amazing how far we have come in such little time," says Deputy Director Carolyn Parker who remembers a year ago overseeing the installation of a phone system, purchasing furniture, choosing the paint, and making innumerable trips to the office supply store. "With our expanded staff, and a year of experience, we are now able to be much more effective in the region we serve."

In one short year, OFM Miami has met the challenge of providing services to nearly 80 career consulates and conducting liaison with over 200 honorary consuls, as well as local, state, and Federal government authorities. The Miami Regional Office is now fully operational and accepts all applications for OFM services.

Consular personnel in the region are also pleased with the expansion of OFM's services ... and with its convenience. About half of the career consulates of the region are located within a 20-minute drive of OFM's Coral Gables office, some as close as one or two blocks away. The office strives to offer a friendly, personal atmosphere along with expedited service to newly arrived officials in the region. ■



Program Specialist Jeff Chase (left) hands out one of the first locally processed tax exemption cards.

OFM Miami's Kelsey Vaughn welcomes a new consular officer to the region.



# Q & A

## Frequently Asked Questions

*The how's and whys of property ownership are of concern to the diplomatic community across the country. The questions and answers below should be able to relieve some of those concerns.*

### Property Acquisition

**Q.** Our Embassy wants to purchase or lease apartments in its own name for staff use. Do we have to obtain prior authorization from OFM?

**A.** Yes. In addition to property for office use, OFM must approve in advance the purchase or lease of residential property by diplomatic missions and consular posts. Requests may be submitted via diplomatic note to the Property Section of OFM in Washington or by letter to the appropriate OFM Regional Office. Correspondence should be mailed or delivered by courier. It may also be faxed in order to expedite processing. Contact information is at the end of this column.

Requests should include the full address and an explanation of the proposed use of the property. For more information, refer to Diplomatic Note 02-01 (<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/29922.pdf>).

**Q.** How long does the approval process take?

**A.** The law allows OFM to take up to 60 days. However, in practice the process usually takes approximately 10 business days.

**Q.** What are some of the reasons OFM might disapprove a mission's request to acquire property?

**A.** Generally requests may be disapproved for reciprocity or national security reasons. Zoning and land use issues can also be the basis for disapproval.

**Q.** Can the OFM assist in identifying properties available for purchase or lease, either residential or office?

**A.** No. OFM does not maintain a listing of available properties. Contacting a local real estate agent specializing in property for diplomatic missions may be useful.

**Q.** Prior to receiving OFM approval, can we sign a contract or a lease "contingent on Department of State approval"?

**A.** Yes. The mission may enter into a contractual or lease agreement prior to OFM's approval, so long as the it contains an explicit contingency clause stating that the execution is contingent on Department of State approval.

**Q.** The Embassy wants to open a new consulate in the United States. What is the process?

**A.** First contact the Department of State's Office of the Chief of Protocol. Once the Embassy receives authorization from Protocol to establish a consular post, the Embassy needs to contact OFM for approval of a particular location.

*continued on page 3*

### Where are You @ ...

**Consultations has gone electronic!** Now simply click "forward" for distribution throughout your mission. Take advantage of this informative tool — if you have not done so, email your updated internet address to [Consultations@state.gov](mailto:Consultations@state.gov) today.

# Foreign Mission: To Serve

Jeff Seely, OFM's Regional Deputy Director in Los Angeles, has taken temporary leave of that post to serve his country in another way— as a Major in the U.S. Army serving in Afghanistan. There his principal responsibility is to provide support for Afghanistan's first-ever popular election, part of a process in which Coalition nations, the United Nations and non-governmental voluntary groups are assisting Afghanistan's interim government.

The Afghan government lacks any experience in conducting elections with no precedents upon which to build. Consequently, the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) has been given the elections mandate. It in turn has requested the aid of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the American Combined Forces Command, Afghanistan (CFC-A). Jeff speaks none of the languages of Afghanistan, but uses his fluent French and German daily with United Nations and NATO personnel.

Afghanistan's elections remain a civilian affair. The coalition helps develop logistics and security programs for Afghanistan's

wide territory — on election day, now set for September, Afghans will vote in a secure environment provided by the military.



The Travel Warning for Afghanistan put out by the United States Department of State warns that “Travel in all of Afghanistan ... is unsafe due to military operations, landmines, banditry, armed rivalry among

political and tribal groups, and the possibility of terrorist attacks.” Despite these conditions, Jeff tells his OFM co-workers back home that what he misses most, apart from family, are hot showers. Although his work schedule runs 14 hours a day, six days a week, the austere but secure living and working quarters and adequate rations provided by the U.S. Army are things to be thankful for in a nation where many make do with less. ■

Q&A, continued from page 2

## Taxation

**Q.** Are foreign government-owned diplomatic or consular residences exempt from property taxes?

**A.** It depends. The Ambassador's residence and the residence of the head of a consular post are exempt based on international law. In addition, subject to reciprocal treatment of comparable property belonging to the U.S., other diplomatic staff residences may also be exempted. Absent a bilateral agreement, consular staff residences are not tax exempt.

In the Washington metropolitan area, property tax exemption is obtainable through OFM. For more information, refer to the latest circular diplomatic note on property tax issues (*Diplomatic Note 02-01*).

**Q.** Our Embassy recently purchased a property in the Washington metro area with OFM approval. How do we obtain a tax exemption? How are tax exemptions obtained for other locations?

**A.** The District of Columbia requires completion of the Foreign Government Information Request Form obtainable from the OFM Property Section. If OFM approves the request, it will forward the form to the District of Columbia's Office of Tax and Revenue, with a request that exemption be granted.

For Virginia and Maryland properties, the Embassy must write to the OFM Property Section requesting the exemption. OFM will contact the appropriate state taxing authority and will inform the missions when and if exemption is granted.

**Q.** We received a tax bill from Montgomery County, Maryland. Isn't this property exempt from property taxes?

**A.** First, check the bill to see if the charge is actually the FFBC fee. This “Front Foot Benefit Charge” is separately stated on property tax bills in Montgomery County, Maryland, and is a fee for service that is charged foreign missions. If you still think the bill is for the property taxes, and you have obtained a tax exemption, please fax a copy of the tax bill to OFM at 202-647-1919. OFM will contact the local jurisdiction.

## Renovation and Permits

**Q.** We want to perform renovations to the interior of our chancery. Do we need approval?

**A.** Generally yes. If the project requires a building permit from the local government, it will also need prior authorization of OFM. If in doubt, call OFM.

**Q.** Are applications for local permits available online?

**A.** Yes. In addition, the application for D.C.'s property tax exemption (the Foreign Government Information Request Form) will be online soon. Links to forms of interest include:

### Construction Permit/Application

<http://dcra.dc.gov/services/permits/index.shtm>

### Certificate of Occupancy

[http://www.dcra.dc.gov/services/permits/cert\\_occu.shtm](http://www.dcra.dc.gov/services/permits/cert_occu.shtm)

### Public Space Permit

[http://dcra.dc.gov/services/permits/public\\_space.shtm](http://dcra.dc.gov/services/permits/public_space.shtm)

**Q.** Are there fees for the required building permits?

**A.** Based on reciprocity, OFM may request the District of Columbia to exempt a mission from construction permit fees. Other jurisdictions may allow for such exemption.

**Q.** The Embassy is undergoing renovation. Can an exemption from the taxes associated with the construction materials be obtained?

**A.** Such tax relief, referred to as Purchasing Agent Arrangement or “PAA,” is granted to missions on the basis of reciprocity. The mission should contact the Property Section of the Office of Foreign Missions at 202-647-4554 for assistance.

## OFM Contact Information

You can reach OFM's Property Section via *telephone at 202-647-4554* or by *fax at 202-647-1919*. Mail may be couriered or sent to: **U.S. Department of State, Office of Foreign Missions, Property Section, Rm. 2238, 2201 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20520.** ■



OFM Miami student intern *Kelsey Vaughan* has received the prestigious Harry S. Truman Scholarship Award and a grant of \$26,000 for graduate studies in her field. Kelsey came to the OFM Miami office in September 2003 after interning at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz. She graduates from Florida International University with an undergraduate degree in international relations, and plans to continue with OFM while she pursues her graduate program. Kelsey is proficient in Spanish, a helpful skill when assisting consulate personnel in Miami, Atlanta and San Juan apply for OFM services. ■

*Move, continued from page 1*

The addition of Ms. Marshall and the interns will allow the office to take on many duties and responsibilities formerly handled in OFM's Washington, D.C., office. This means faster service for our consular friends and clients.

In the near future, this Regional Office will begin to issue driver's licenses and tax exemption cards, rather than sending the applications on to Washington, significantly cutting down the processing time for such transactions. Accreditation and customs clearance will also be handled more expeditiously.

This most recent move is OFM San Francisco's second. The office originally opened in December 1987 under the directorship of Mr. Pierre Fournier in the old Customs Building at 555 Battery Street. In 1993, the office moved to a new high-rise in the Financial District. The continued growth of the office necessitated this current move to One Market, only a block away from its old home on Mission Street.

Regional Director Dal Porto and his staff look forward to receiving members of the consular corps at their new address:

Office of Foreign Missions  
One Market, Spear Street Tower, Suite 1375  
San Francisco, CA 94105.  
phone: (415) 744-2910



### Consultations

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## OFM Direct Hires

As part of its on-going re-engineering effort, the Office of Foreign Missions is in the process of converting many of its contractor positions throughout the country to civil service positions. While a number of these new direct hires may be familiar to our clients, we here officially welcome them as members of the OFM staff family. Among them are:



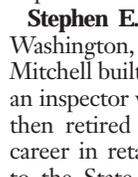
### Sharon A. Powers.

While foreign mission members in the Chicago Region already know Sharon having worked with her since 2000, it is our pleasure to announce her appointment as Foreign Missions Program Officer. She shares program responsibility for Chicago's Diplomatic Motor Vehicle and Tax Programs, as well as its Travel and Customs Programs.

**David P. Garcia.** Prior to joining OFM in 1990, Garcia served 24 years in the U. S. Army, assigned to positions worldwide. As a government contractor, he has held positions as a Quality Control Specialist, and as a Program Officer in the Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office. He is currently assigned to the Washington Office of Diplomatic Tax and Customs.



**Sherman Wright.** Wright comes to OFM, Washington, after 20 years in the U. S. Air Force. He retired from the 89th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Andrews Air Force Base, in 2003 after serving in key positions in the Vehicle Operations Flight. Along with his other skills, Wright brings enthusiasm and decorum to his new position with OFM's Office of Accreditation and Diplomatic Motor Vehicles.



**Stephen E. Mitchell.** A Washington, D.C., native, Mitchell built his career as an inspector with Amtrak, then retired to a second career in retail. He came to the State Department as a contractor in 1996, converting to civil service last October. He is assigned to OFM's Office of Accreditation and Diplomatic Motor Vehicles. ■



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### Managing Director, Operations

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Winkle Nemeth  
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To contact any one of the above, email to their attention at [OFMquestions@state.gov](mailto:OFMquestions@state.gov)



# U.S. Department of State

# Senior Officials Directory

*Produced by the Office of Foreign Missions. Information current as of June 2004.*

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- Undersecretary for Political Affairs (P)
- Undersecretary For Economic Business, and Agricultural Affairs (E)
- Undersecretary for Global Affairs (G)
- Undersecretary for Management (M)
- Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (R)
- Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security; Senior Adviser to the President and the Secretary of State For Arms Control Non-proliferation and Disarmament (T)

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  - Operations (A/Opr)
  - Logistics Management (A/Lm)
  - Records And Publishing (A/RPS)
- Executive Director

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- Executive Director

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 Pamela E. Bridgewater 202-647-4485  
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 Elizabeth J. Agnew 202-647-1298

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- Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
- Deputy Assistant Secretaries:
  - Visas
  - Citizen Services
  - Passports
- Executive Director

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- Deputy Assistant Secretary

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- Deputy Assistant Secretary for Countermeasures and Information Security
- Deputy Assistant Secretary and Senior Coordinator for Security Infrastructure
- Deputy Assistant Secretary Office of Foreign Missions

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Director (Deputy Assistant Secretary Equivalent)	Jay Anania	202-647-0093
Deputy Director	Margueritte Coffey	202-647-0768
<b>• Office of the Inspector General (OIG)</b>		
Deputy Inspector (Deputy Assistant Secretary Equivalent)	Anne W. Patterson	202-647-9450
Executive Director	Warrington Brown	703-284-2372
<b>• Office of the Policy Planning Staff (S/P)</b>		
Director (Assistant Secretary Equivalent)	Mitchell B. Reiss	202-647-2972
Principal Deputy Director (Deputy Assistant Secretary Equivalent)	Barry Lowenkron	202-647-2372
<b>• Office of Overseas Building Operations (OBO)</b>		
Chief Operating Officer (Assistant Secretary Equivalent)	Charles E. Williams	703-875-4114
Managing Director for Real Estate and Property Management	Jay A. Hicks	703-875-7198
Managing Director for Project Execution	Joe Toussaint	703-875-6585
Managing Director for Planning and Development	Terrence Wilmer	703-516-1996
Managing Director for Operations and Maintenance	Richard H. Smyth	703-875-6350
Managing Director for Resource Management	Jurg Hochuli	703-875-6355
<b>• Executive Secretariat (S/ES)</b>		
Executive Secretary (Assistant Secretary Equivalent)	Karl Hofmann	202-647-5301
Deputy Assistant Secretaries (Deputy Assistant Secretary Equivalent)	Elizabeth Whitaker	202-647-8448
	Douglas Greene	202-647-5302
	Marcia Wong	202-647-5302
Executive Director	Carol Perez	202-647-7457