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February 2015

MAGAZINE

Nerve Center

Operation monitors security around the globe

Brighter Future

Embassy aids children of incarcerated women



*Honoring Those
Who Serve*

Department Recognizes Outstanding Employees and Foreign Service Nationals at Annual Awards Event



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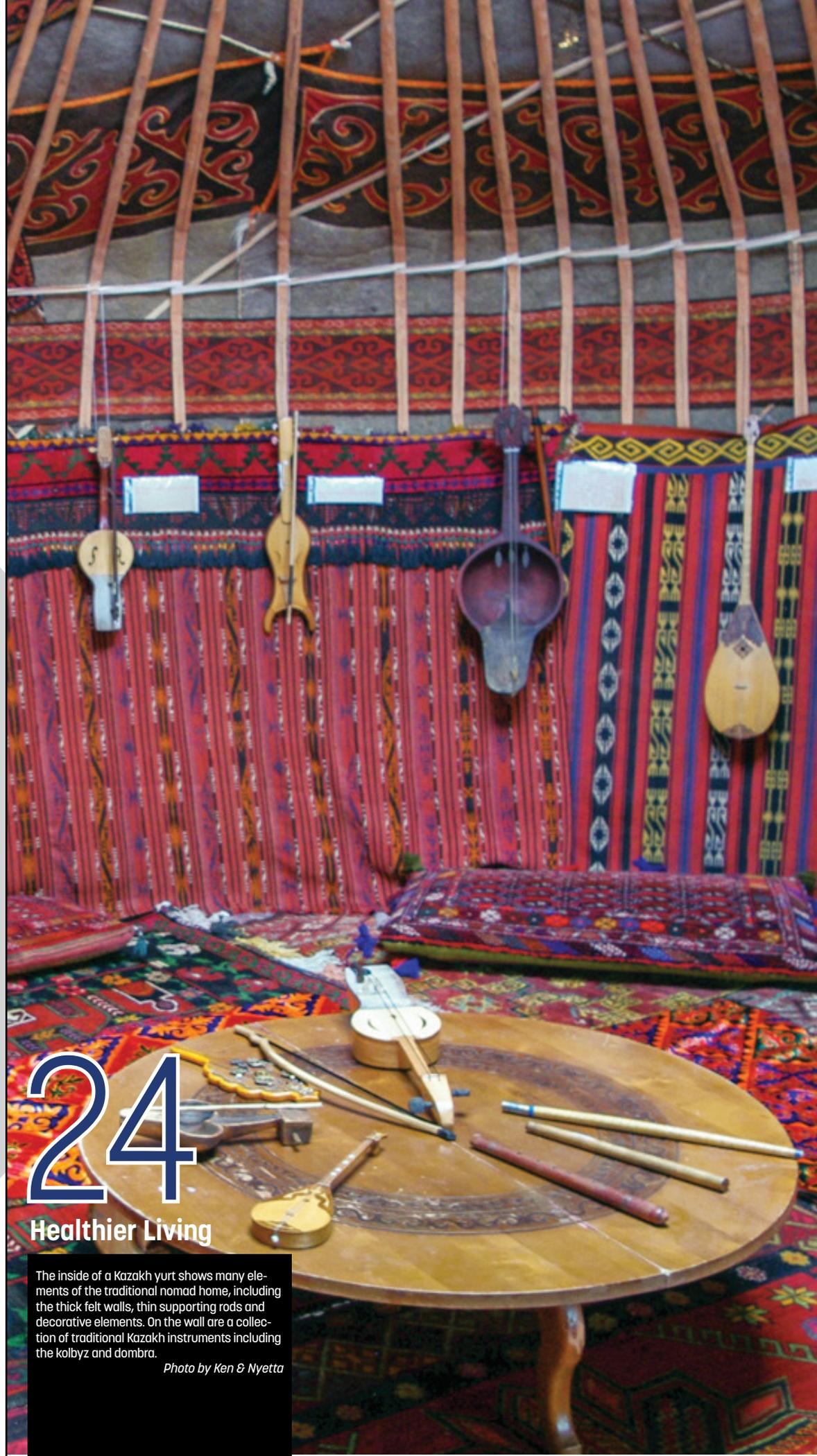
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Healthier Living

The inside of a Kazakh yurt shows many elements of the traditional nomad home, including the thick felt walls, thin supporting rods and decorative elements. On the wall are a collection of traditional Kazakh instruments including the kolbyz and dombra.

Photo by Ken & Nyetta

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Native American Employees Form Group

The Department's Native American employees are forming a group, the Native American Foreign Affairs Council (NAFAC), to advance the contributions of Native Americans to the mission of foreign affairs agencies and serve as a place to share ideas and experiences.

NAFAC, in collaboration with the Office of Civil Rights and USAID's Office of Civil Rights OCR and Diversity, hosted the 2014 Native American Heritage Month in November at a Washington, D.C. auditorium with Native American dancers. The National Museum of the American Indian's café provided such dishes as bison steak, buffalo chili, frybread and succotash.

The event's speaker, Ambassador Keith M. Harper, a member of the Cherokee Nation and the first Native American to become a U.S. ambassador, highlighted topics from indigenous law to his work as the U.S. Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

"A lot of what we do in diplomacy starts with understanding the other side," he said. "When you have a common understanding of the world around you or the relationship with other people, and when you come from a tribal background, then you can be more effective in addressing the concerns of others."

Another speaker, Juan Carlos Hunt, director at USAID's OCR/Diversity unit, emphasized the benefits of a diverse workforce, saying



Students at rear and Native Pride's Edward Colston, at podium, watch the performance of Hassan Ridgeway, left, and Elyse Jackson. *Photo by Robert Stewart*

"evidence shows that we are more effective and solve more problems when we are a diverse and inclusive group."

More information on NAFAC is available from Jack Jackson, Jr. at JacksonJ3@state.gov. ■

Secretary Hosts Holiday Event for Families

Secretary of State John Kerry hosted the annual Diplomacy at Home for the Holidays event in the Diplomatic Reception Rooms at Main State on Dec. 17. The holiday reception honors and thanks the families of U.S. government employees on assignment at unaccompanied posts, who endure long periods of separation from their loved ones, even during the holidays.

The event was started by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2009 and is organized by the Office of the Chief of Protocol in collaboration with the Family Liaison Office (FLO). This year's event included special activities, performances and guest appearances by Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and by retired professional basketball players Dikembe Mutombo and Ruth Riley. Children took pictures at the digital photo booth and made ornaments and picture frames that were put into care packages to be mailed to their loved ones.

The United States Army Jazz Combo and the U.S. Marine Corps' Brass Quintet performed. Later, children gathered to hear Secretary Kerry express his gratitude to the families. "I hope you will see it [the reception] as a sign that we understand and appreciate the sacrifices that you are making," he said. "And I hope that you know how deeply and sincerely grateful we are—and how grateful the president is, and the American people — to you and to your families."



Secretary Kerry and retired professional basketball player Dikembe Mutombo pose with children at the Diplomacy at Home for the Holidays event. *Photo by Michael Gross*

Secretary Kerry posed for a photo with the children, who went home in smiles with gift bags. More information on FLO's Unaccompanied Tours support is available from FLOAskUT@state.gov or FLO's website. ■

Bicyclists Test MCC Financed Improvements

When the U.S. Mission in Moldova sought to celebrate completion of a central part of a Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact involving rehabilitation of a 93-kilometer segment of a key northern highway, it hit upon a bike ride as an innovative way to show off this important infrastructure project.

Led by the ambassador, a biking enthusiast, more than 100 bicycle riders engaged in a daylong series of rides that brought Americans and Moldovans together and informed the public about the project's success.

The MCC, an independent U.S. agency, has a mandate of reducing poverty through promoting economic growth in low- and lower-middle-income countries. It focuses on large-scale projects, called "compacts," having five-year timelines. To participate, countries must meet strict eligibility requirements for projects that are chosen through consultation with the host government. In this case, a Millennium Challenge Account served as the implementing partner for Moldova's road construction.

Since the compact began in 2010, MCC's efforts in Moldova have centered on repairing and upgrading the M2 highway, which serves an important agricultural area, and promoting Moldova's transition to high-value agriculture by refurbishing 10 large-scale irrigation systems. As an agency under Chief of Mission authority, MCC directly contributes to the key embassy goal of bolstering Moldova's modern agricultural future.

The idea for the bike ride originated in April 2012, when newly arrived Ambassador William Moser and the Moldovan prime minister took a short bike ride on the existing M2 to personally experience its dilapidated state. They agreed to return to see the results, and this led to a grassroots outreach project that two years later enticed cyclists out to cruise 74 kilometers of the rebuilt highway. During the day, there was a 47-km race for professionals—the first time Moldovan professional cyclists had an international-caliber road on which to train.

The day concluded with a community ride that brought out American and Moldovan families, and in which the nation's prime minister joined the



At center, Ambassador William H. Moser, in a yellow shirt over a blue hoodie, and beside him, Moldovan Prime Minister Iurie Leancă, in a white jacket and blue T-shirt, pose with the winners of a 47-kilometer professional bike race that helped mark completion of the highway project.

Photo by Millennium Challenge Account

ambassador for the ride's last 10 kilometers. The media came out in force to mark the completion of this development assistance project. Local produce was showcased at rest stops as part of U.S. support for expanded Moldovan agricultural exports. One woman in attendance told the ambassador that, thanks to the new highway, she had gone from living in "the Soviet Union to the European Union" in a matter of months.

The rebuilt highway traverses 14 villages, and the bike ride enabled everyone to see the road's new safety features, such as guard rails, reflectors and sidewalks, as well as the many local roads rebuilt to give access to schools, village halls, medical centers and markets.

The road's \$112 million rehabilitation strengthens Moldova's agricultural status by reducing costs for transporting agricultural goods and providing better access to markets. The celebration bike ride underscored the road's impact on Moldovans' lives by involving communities benefitting from its completion. ■

Embassy Yerevan Uses Video Chat to Brief NGOs

The U.S. Embassy in Yerevan launched its FY2015 call for proposals for Democracy Commission grants on Dec. 9, International Anti-Corruption Day. The outreach used online technology and the post's five American Corners to advise Armenian NGOs about the Commission's application process and guidelines for this fiscal year.

The online workshops entailed video chats in which the grants manager in Yerevan delivered presentations to target audiences and media representatives assembled at Corners in smaller cities. More than 100 organizations received information on the application procedure and writing tips during the two virtual workshops.

DCM Clark Price praised the initiative as a model outreach program to remote regions, which are largely inaccessible during winter months, and also noted the importance of Democracy Commission grants in furthering key mission priorities of anti-corruption; women's empowerment; youth, civic and political participation; and the development of partnerships between Armenia and Turkey.



Grants Manager Liana Sahakyan leads an online workshop to announce the Dem Com grants process for fiscal 2015. *Photo by Rinnet Isajyan*

The Democracy Commission Small Grants program draws on Economic Support Funds and is administered by U.S. embassies in Central and Eastern Europe in support of local democratic initiatives. ■

Comics Convention Sparks Student Exchanges

Hundreds of young people, some of them dressed in elaborate costumes, or engaged in what's known as "cosplay," lined up at the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa's booth at the annual Honduran comic book convention, MegaCon. Though many sought drawings of their favorite comic book heroes, many gained information about U.S. study and learning English—plus signed sketches of Spiderman or Batman.

MegaCon brought more than 5,000 young Hondurans together for Central America's largest comic book/video game convention. For the embassy, it was a target audience not to be missed. "Youth engagement is one of our highest priorities, and so you go where the audience is," said Public Affairs Officer Eric Turner. "We have had great success over the last two years engaging with the young fans here."

Through a public affairs section grant, the embassy was able to get Tom Lyle and Rashad Doucet, professional comic book artists from the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), to participate at MegaCon. Lyle is known for drawing such Marvel Comics characters as Spiderman and DC Comics' Batman and Robin.

SCAD's admissions office also sent representatives who handed out information about the school and helped more than 30 prospective students with their applications each day. Many MegaCon attendees were ideal candidates for U.S. study, having English language fluency and an interest in American society.

At MegaCon, the embassy promoted study of English by working with recent Global Undergraduate Exchange Program alumni to demonstrate Trace Effects, the interactive video game developed by the Department to augment English language classroom study. Over two days, embassy staff handed out more than 300 Trace Effects DVDs to attendees and provided a link to download the program for free to hundreds more.

Following MegaCon, Lyle and Doucet remained in Honduras to take part in a week-long embassy program in which they talked to youths



A comic book convention attendee wears the cosplay personality of Star Wars' Darth Maul and displays Trace Effects, the video game for use with English language classroom study. Photo by Alexander Jallil

about their experiences in managing visual arts careers and highlighted the importance of a formal arts education.

After workshops with more than 120 students from private and public art schools, more than 40 students began the SCAD application process. It was just one example of U.S. Embassy Tegucigalpa's mission-wide support for President Obama's 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative to increase student mobility and cross-cultural exchange in the hemisphere.

Post consular officers and student advisers regularly support embassy-promoted college fairs in the host nation to explain the student visa process to prospective applicants and their families. EducationUSA, the Department's network of advising centers in 170 countries, promotes U.S. higher education and encourages students to choose from more than 4,000 accredited U.S. institutions of higher education. According to the most recent figures released by the Institute of International Education, Honduras sent 1,756 students to the United States in the 2013-14 academic year, a one-year increase of 16 percent.

"The increase in students going to the U.S. for their higher education reflects the strong bonds between our countries and goes hand in glove with the push in Honduras for bilingual education," said Ambassador James D. Nealon. "Just as English language competency is vital to a 21st-century education, international experience is an important component at the university level in helping develop future leaders who will guide Honduras into the future." ■

Doctor Discusses U.S. Ebola Response

At the request of the Secretary's Office of Global Health Diplomacy (S/GHD), Dr. Anthony Fauci spoke to the Washington-based diplomatic corps about the U.S. response to the Ebola crisis. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health, detailed U.S. government contributions to controlling the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and addressed medical protocols and proper treatment of U.S. health workers returning from affected areas.

He also emphasized the importance of working with countries to strengthen their health systems by building up surveillance and diagnostic capabilities, and increasing education about the disease.

The discussion moderator was Dr. Fauci's longtime colleague, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Ambassador Deborah L. Birx, M.D., who compared the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the early 1990s to the current Ebola crisis. She said the U.S. and foreign governments, and the global health community, must remain vigilant and engaged.

More than 200 diplomats, global health community representatives



Dr. Fauci answers an audience question. At left is the event's moderator Ambassador Birx. Photo by James Pan

and representatives of other U.S. agencies attended the event, which was also broadcast over BNET. Fauci's presentation was part of S/GHD's Global Health Speaker Series, which brings experts to the Department to explore the relationship between global health and foreign policy. ■

Embassy Promotes STEM with Scientist's Speech

More than 850 people crowded into Barbados' Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre to listen to astrophysicist Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson deliver a free public lecture in November.

The lecture by the host of the TV series "Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey" was sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown and also presented as a Google+ Hangout at American Corners in neighboring islands Antigua and Dominica. In the video chat format, university students, space enthusiasts and climate change practitioners discussed Tyson's talk, helping the embassy showcase his appeal and attract new audiences interested in scientific topics.

Tyson wove together pop culture and science as he spoke for nearly two hours about the future of space exploration and how the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) drive innovation and economies. He also discussed the viability of Mars as an alternate planet for human habitation and Pluto's reclassification as a dwarf planet. The live audience in Bridgetown, including members of the diplomatic and consular corps, ministers of government, students and amateur astronomers posed questions on such topics as the relationship of religion and science and how to deflect asteroids and meteorites headed toward Earth. Tyson used everyday examples to illustrate complex concepts, aiming to have listeners think critically and scientifically.

In preparation for Tyson's lecture, Embassy Bridgetown mounted several peripheral events to promote STEM education. Partnering with the Barbados Astronomical Society, the embassy screened four episodes of Tyson's TV series at Barbados' Harry Bayley Observatory.



At the STEM event, Ambassador Larry Palmer, right, and Dr. Tyson admire each other's science-themed ties. Photo by Matthew Tull

The embassy also promoted STEM education among youth through its Science Superhero Design competition.

Tyson's lecture underscored how citizens of countries that place a special emphasis on STEM education will be better positioned to meet the increasingly complex, technology-driven challenges of our world. It also allowed the embassy to promote the hemisphere-wide study abroad program, 100,000 Strong in the Americas. ■

Direct from the D.G.

ARNOLD CHACON,
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE



Working Together to Strengthen our Workforce

It is my great honor to have the opportunity to serve as your new Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources.

In March, I returned to Washington, D.C. from our embassy in Guatemala where I served as U.S. Ambassador along with my wife, Alida, who is also a career member of the Foreign Service, and our three children. As a family, we've had the privilege of serving together throughout Latin America, as well as in Washington and New York. We care deeply and passionately about our beloved organization, its people, and our ability to promote U.S. interests abroad.

We have talented, loyal, hard-working employees and continue to be highly regarded as one of the best places to work in the federal government. In fact as reported elsewhere in this issue, the NGO Partnership for Public Service recently placed the State Department among the Top 3 large Federal agencies in its Best Places to Work rankings for 2014.

My goal is to make the Department an even better employer for everyone—Civil Service and Foreign Service employees, Locally Employed (LE) Staff, family members, and the entire workforce. I also want to make sure we represent every corner of the United States and every face of our great nation, recruiting, retaining and sustaining an exemplary workforce to anticipate and offer solutions to 21st century foreign policy challenges.

In this task, we enjoy the unconditional support of our leadership from the top down, from Secretary Kerry to Deputy Secretary Blinken and Deputy for Resources and Management Higginbottom, to Under Secretaries Kennedy and Sherman, indeed the whole team.

I will be guided by the Secretary's leadership and management principles, which focus on mission first, people always. We will fight for resources, and we will reduce complexity so that we can return value and time to you, and together we will focus on our top priorities. For me, these priorities include reasserting the Department's pre-eminence in the foreign policy process, empowering a diverse workforce, achieving work life wellness and enhancing communication.

We want good ideas from you as we strengthen our capacity to act around the world. As Secretary Kerry has stated: "Global leadership is a strategic imperative for America. It amplifies our voice, it extends our reach. It is key to jobs, the fulcrum of our influence, and it matters to the daily lives of Americans. It matters that we get this moment right for America, and it matters that we get it right for the world."

It's an honor and privilege to serve with you; more than that, it's an inspiration for me to work with you on behalf of the Department and the United States of America. ■

Arnold A. Chacon



You're a "Witness"- Now what?

Suppose you are at your desk one day, working through your seemingly endless to-do list, when you receive an email requesting your participation as a witness in an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) investigation or the Harassment Inquiry process. Your heart races as you sink in your chair and wonder: "What in the world does this have to do with me?"

Before you panic, take a deep breath. Being named as a witness simply means that you've been identified as someone who can provide pertinent information during the course of EEO counseling and/or a formal EEO investigation, harassment inquiry or other administrative proceeding. This information usually relates to the circumstances surrounding allegation(s) of discrimination or harassment. Perhaps you were in a meeting where tense words were exchanged or at an office-sponsored function where the alleged inappropriate behavior occurred. This makes you a witness and any information you have about these events is evidence.

Witnesses are essential during various stages of the EEO process. During the informal process, an EEO counselor may seek information from witnesses as he/she conducts a limited inquiry to gather facts needed to resolve the complaint. During the formal process, an investigator compiles sufficient evidence to enable a neutral third party to determine whether unlawful discrimination occurred. During the investigation, the investigator gathers sworn testimony from witnesses or written statements given under penalty of perjury. Witnesses may also be asked to provide documentation or other forms of evidence relevant to the issue(s) under investigation. If a complainant requests an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission hearing, witnesses may also be required to testify during the proceeding.

Likewise, when the Office of Civil Rights (S/OCR) receives a report of sexual or discriminatory harassment, pursuant to 3 FAM 1525 and 1526, it acts to ensure the matter is promptly investigated and addressed. In the Harassment Inquiry process, S/OCR often calls upon witnesses to provide testimony or documentation with evidentiary value.

As a federal employee, serving as a witness is not optional — it's your obligation. If S/OCR identifies you as a witness, your participation and cooperation in a timely manner is mandatory according to federal regulations and Department policies. If a witness refuses to cooperate during either process, S/OCR may refer the matter to an appropriate authority for disciplinary action.

In the end, the role and responsibility of a witness is vital to reaching resolution and/or helping to discern whether unlawful discrimination or harassment occurred. We count on our employees to do their best to provide accurate, detailed information. For the Department to fulfill its mission, it is important that employees participate as witnesses when asked to do so, to ensure we have a fair and just workplace for all.

So, in the event that you receive an email requesting your participation as a witness, we hope that you will not find yourself confused or distressed by the request, but rather calm and assured of your role and responsibility in the EEO complaint or Harassment Inquiry process. Should you have questions at any point in the process, please visit our website or email us at SOOCR_Direct@state.gov. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.





AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

A 20-minute exposure captures star trails above Balanced Rock, one of numerous sandstone formations found in Arches National Park near Moab, Utah.

Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco



The Matchmaker

Office promotes public-private partnering

By Natalie Alm, communications associate, Secretary's Office of Global Partnerships

The Secretary's Office of Global Partnerships (S/GP) is the entry point for collaboration between the Department, the public and private sectors, and civil society. In that role, the office serves as a knowledge management center for public-private partnerships—what they are, how to set them up and how to maintain them—and the coordinator of several active partnerships that address the Department's diplomacy and development priorities.

The Secretary's Office of Global Partnerships was founded by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2007 as the Global Partnerships Center (GPC) to advance the use of results-based public-private partnerships as a tool for U.S. diplomacy. In 2009, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced a "new generation of public-private partnerships" through the Global Partnership Initiative (GPI). From then on, the GPC transitioned into GPI and

was placed under the Secretary's Office (S). In 2014, under Secretary Kerry, the office became permanent as the Secretary's Office of Global Partnerships (S/GP).

The premise behind S/GP is that uncovering the best ideas requires coordination and collaboration across industries, communities and ideologies. Embracing holistic problem-solving approaches can help us create better solutions. The challenges we face as a global community are of such magnitude that efforts to solve them must be pooled. Building stakeholder interest and participation is a way to provide more meaningful, self-sustaining paths to success.

That's why Secretary Kerry has prioritized results-based public-private partnerships, called P3s, as a foreign policy tool, leveraging the best both sectors offer to help promote shared prosperity and values, strengthen well-being and security, and uphold governance and the rule of law. In turn, diplomats can

leverage these resources to advance policy goals at posts.

In less than five years, S/GP has built partnerships with more than 1,600 organizations and has leveraged approximately \$829 million in public and private resources for U.S. foreign policy and diplomacy efforts.

Official development assistance was once the primary driver of economic growth in developing countries, but now private sector investment greatly outpaces aid. Official development assistance is now only 13 percent of the U.S. resources provided to developing countries; U.S. private sector investment accounts for the remaining 87 percent. The U.S. government has recognized the worldwide shift from a development model based on aid to one moving much more into the investment sphere.

To promote partnering, S/GP acts in a variety of capacities: as a convener, bringing together stakeholders from across regions and



S/GP staff members show off their "Keep Calm and Partner On" t-shirts. Photo by Office of Global Partnerships



Special Representative O'Brien announces the winner of the inaugural P3 Impact Award at the Concordia Summit in New York City in September 2014. *Photo by Concordia*

sectors to work together on areas of common interest; as a catalyst, launching new projects and actively seeking new solutions; as a collaborator, working closely with partners to plan and implement projects and maximize impact by looking for best practices; and as a cultivator, nurturing innovative, new partnerships by providing resources, access to networks and capital, and mentoring.

The office is a resource for Department staff interested in learning more about P3s or seeking advice on how to engage partners. S/GP currently offers an online partnerships course through FSI, online tools for creating partnerships, assistance in outreach to the private sector and more.

Special Representative Andrew O'Brien, who leads S/GP, likes to say the office is a "matchmaker" of sorts. "We connect stakeholders across sectors, industries and borders to work on projects of mutual interest, accomplishing more together than we can alone," he said. O'Brien has been a public servant for more than 20 years, starting out in Boston in Mayor Thomas Menino's office, and then serving as then-Senator Kerry's Massachusetts state director. O'Brien sees his work with political constituents as helping him appreciate the value of creative collaboration across sectors.

S/GP's successes over the last five years reflect how P3s are changing the way the U.S. government, private companies, and organizations address global challenges faster and more efficiently than ever. "Issues like climate change, poverty, disease and inequality rank among the most pressing global issues today, and they are often too complex to be met by any one government or company," observed Deputy Special Representative Thomas Debass. "Creating solutions requires innovation and collaboration across diverse sectors of society."

The office's current partnerships focus on long-term Department policy priorities, such as

entrepreneurship and economic diplomacy, and react to new developments and challenges that require partnership and collaboration to address.

For example, the LIONS@FRICA partnership, launched in 2012 at the World Economic Forum in Africa, aims to enhance and deepen the startup and innovation ecosystems of targeted fast-growing African economies through capacity building and expanding networks for African startups, entrepreneurs and innovators. This partnership has already reached nearly 3,000 technology entrepreneurs and is expected to reach 100,000 by 2020.

S/GP has also developed a strong partnership focused on diaspora engagement. The International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdeA) was launched in 2011 to harness the resources of "diaspora communities," those made up of people who have emigrated from their homeland. The alliance aims to promote development and diplomacy in diaspora members' countries of heritage. The tactics include programming focused on entrepreneurship and investment, and promoting volunteerism, philanthropy and innovation.

Last fall, Special Representative O'Brien led a Diaspora Tour to U.S. university campuses to build awareness of the partnership and encourage collaboration among diaspora communities and organizations. The tour culminated in Global Diaspora Week in October, which involved more than 70 events around the world organized by universities, community organizations and government.

Last year, S/GP launched a new initiative called Partnership Opportunity Delegations, or PODs, which brings together investors, academics, entrepreneurs, diaspora leaders, philanthropists and corporations around a topic of mutual interest. So far, the office has led delegations to Colombia, Burma, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Tanzania (State Magazine, January 2015). The PODs focus on such topics as entrepreneurship; tech innovation; and science, technology and mathematics education. 2015 PODs are planned for Ethiopia, Ghana, Cyprus and



Secretary of State Kerry greets Special Representative O'Brien at O'Brien's swearing in ceremony in 2013. *State Department photo*

Armenia, and S/GP always welcomes ideas and suggestions on new delegation opportunities.

In addition to these ongoing partnerships, the office also responds to issues as they arise. For example, S/GP is helping coordinate the Department's response to the Ebola crisis by facilitating outreach to the private sector. S/GP also created and launched a new partnership called mFish for the Secretary's Our Oceans conference this summer. The partnership will harness the use of mobile technology in the developing world to promote sustainable fishing practices. Last year, in response to the Secretary's request to support the nation's veterans, S/GP announced the Veterans Innovation Partnership, which provides one-year fellowships to veterans to increase their career opportunities in foreign affairs. In January, the Department welcomed the inaugural class of 28 VIP fellows.

S/GP is already looking ahead to its signature Global Partnerships Week (GPW), from March 9-15. The week will kick off with a partnership-focused practitioners' forum in Washington, D.C., and feature self-organized events all over the world, all celebrating partnership successes and providing opportunities to network and develop new collaborations. During the week, S/GP will also unveil its second annual State of Global Partnerships report, featuring exemplary partnerships from around the Department, in Washington and at post. (The first report can be viewed online: <http://www.state.gov/s/partnerships/releases/reports/2014/224096.htm>)

Despite being a young office, S/GP has accomplished much, and remains excited about the challenges and opportunities ahead. As Special Representative O'Brien says, "Looking back at how much S/GP has achieved in its first five years, I have only optimism for what we can do in the next five." ■



Bringing Nations Together

Overseas Volunteers Honored for their Efforts

By Patricia Linderman, president, Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide

“No matter what culture, race or ethnicity, we all need love and a helping hand,” says José Ramirez Dorce, spouse of a Foreign Service officer in Mexico City. Troubled by the plight of families at a special-needs school near his home, he and fellow embassy family members Liana Maria Alvarez and Fernando Marcelo Alvarez founded the organization Zapatos Rotos (Broken Shoes) to solicit such assistance as hearing aids and equestrian therapy from businesses and individuals in Mexico.

“I have experienced firsthand how little acts of kindness bring hope to those who have lost it,” Alvarez said.

The trio’s efforts, along with those of three other Foreign Service volunteers in other parts of the world, were honored in November with the 2014 Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad (SOSA). Zapatos Rotos has already put the SOSA’s \$2,500 award to good use, buying a special-needs stroller for a young woman who suffers from cerebral palsy and whose mother travels a long distance with her to therapy.

The awards, presented in November by Deputy Secretary of State Heather Higginbottom, are administered by the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW), the nonprofit, volunteer organization for the Foreign Service community.

“Getting involved is one of the primary reasons why we are out there,” observed another awardee, Marine Security Guard Sgt. Kyle Romero. While posted in Accra, he contributed much off-duty time to two local orphanages. He also organized a Toys for Tots drive for the children, provided tutoring and raised funds for the construction of a school, among other activities.

Another winner, Kerry Carswell, spouse of the army attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Sofia, led a charity that supported a school and boarding house for disadvantaged school-age children, mainly of Roma origin. An occupational therapist, Carswell recognized that the children’s learning was hindered by a lack of basic supplies such as clothing and medicine. In addition to embassy donation drives, her charity approached local businesses, including a shoe company.

“At first we just asked for a discount on soccer shoes,” she recalled, “but each year their generosity grew, and last year the company donated



Jose Dorce passes out balls to special education children in Mexico City.

Photo by Fernando Alvarez



Marine Security Guard Sgt. Kyle Romero speaks at the SOSA ceremony.

Photo by Ed Warner



Kerry Carswell poses with youths from the school and boarding house her charity supports.

Photo by Robert Carswell



Shilpa Gadde tells SOSA ceremony attendees of how she founded a group that rehabilitates abandoned and injured dogs.

Photo by Ed Warner

and delivered new shoes for all of the students.”

The final SOSA winner was honored for her work while on a tour in New Delhi. There, Shilpa Gadde, spouse of a Department of Homeland Security officer, founded Rescue Without Borders, which rehabilitates abandoned and injured dogs. During the past four years, the group has rescued more than 200 animals, provided them with medical care, including equipment such as canine wheelchairs, and placed them in adoptive homes in the U.S. and Canada. Some have become therapy dogs and are taken on visits to patients in hospitals or to work with special-needs children.

Constantly seeking opportunities to help more animals, Gadde brought seven dogs as cargo on the flight to participate in the award ceremony. The \$2,500 award will help Gadde fund transportation for a new group of needy dogs.

The honorees all stressed the importance of involving local citizens. “We need to listen and learn from them and work collaboratively to solve problems in a way that makes sense to everyone and respects everyone’s culture and values,” noted Carswell.

“Volunteering brings nations together,” agreed Dorce. “Taking the time to lend a hand also helps better understand others.”

Established in 1990 on the initiative of then-Secretary James Baker and Susan Baker, the SOSA awards are supported by former secretaries of state, ambassadors and other donors.

Winners are selected by representatives from AAFSW, the regional bureaus and the Family Liaison Office, who judge nominees on the scope and reach of volunteer activities, sustainability, ingenuity and leadership.

At the ceremony, Ann La Porta, spouse of a retired FSO, received the Eleanor Dodson Tragen Award, administered by DACOR, for longtime advocacy and personal support for Foreign Service families experiencing evacuation and other crises. Human Resources Officer Jamie Armstrong was honored for promoting family member employment, and Lara Center, AAFSW’s first vice president, was recognized for volunteer contributions to the Foreign Service community through AAFSW.

More information about the SOSA program and this year’s winning activities is available online at aafsw.org.

Hanukkah Express

Embassy rushes menorahs to D.C.

By Mary Knight, newsletter editor, Community Liaison Office, U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv



President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama watch as students from Hand in Hand participate in the menorah lighting ceremony at the White House. Photo by Pete Souza

The U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv in December helped the White House hold its annual Hanukkah ceremony by providing it with four handmade menorahs, which hold nine candles and symbolize the Hanukkah celebration.

With Scott Lasensky coordinating the search, and with assistance from Yael Feldboy, the embassy delivered the menorahs to Washington, D.C., less than a month after receiving the request, but the operation, which promoted interfaith ties, faced challenges along the way. One of the menorahs was made by students of the Max Rayne Hand in Hand Jerusalem School, which has 640 students from Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities. However, after the school had agreed to help, it was attacked in November by an arsonist who burned classrooms and a library, and who defaced the walls with anti-Arab graffiti.

Israeli volunteers rebuilt the school with donated funds, and more than 2,500 supporters marched through the streets of Jerusalem for peaceful coexistence among Jews and Arabs. U.S. Ambassador Dan Shapiro and his wife Julie Fisher, along with Consul General in Jerusalem Michael Ratney, publicly expressed their support for the school, which receives U.S. government assistance through USAID.

But no one expected Hand in Hand to deliver a menorah in time for the celebration.

So, the embassy found three other significant menorahs. One was the Yemin Orde Menorah, made of clay, wood and iron, and built by Jewish youth from Yemin Orde, a village founded as a safe haven for Holocaust orphans in the 1950s. Another was the Sderot Menorah, made from pieces of expended rockets gathered near the Israeli border with Gaza. The third, made of glass, was lent by an organization that promotes Israeli-Palestinian cooperation. Students from another Hand in Hand school, in the city of Jaffa, hand painted that menorah.

But the Max Rayne Hand in Hand school was not to be deterred. Its students persisted and constructed a wooden menorah in which each candle mount was painted in a different color, and inscribed, in Arabic and Hebrew, with the school's values—friendship, solidarity, equality, peace, human dignity, freedom, education and community.



Palestinian and Jewish youths wave signs calling for No More Racism during a rally at the Max Rayne Hand in Hand Jerusalem School in December.

Photo by Mary Knight

With only days to spare, the primary challenge was getting the menorahs to Washington on time. The Hand in Hand menorah went via air courier service, until it was blocked at the service's facility in Germany, spurring Embassy Supervisory GSO Andy Sisk and White House staff to untangle the problem, and get it to D.C. just before the reception. (Although it arrived damaged, a White House employee quickly repaired it.)

Another menorah was hand carried by an embassy Marine security guard, who was heading home. It arrived just a day before the reception.

At the ceremony, with the president and first lady in attendance, the menorah was lit by Hand in Hand ninth graders Inbar Shaked Vardi, who is Jewish, and Mouran Ibrahim, a Muslim. The president then spoke on the meaning of Hanukkah and Hand in Hand's mission.

The story of the celebration and the menorahs at its center was, thanks to the embassy's press office, covered extensively by Israeli TV, radio, print and social media.

The story also touched hearts. Rebecca Bardach, director of resource development at the school and mother of two students, thanked those who supported the school after the attack, including the U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv, U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem and USAID. She said she hopes "the message of equality and inclusion will continue to light our path." ■

LE LEARNING

Embassy Astana offers translation course

By Joseph P. Mazza, chief, Translating Division, Office of Language Services

Employees asked to translate written documents in the diplomatic arena know that facility with languages is just the beginning. It takes specialized training and years of practice to hone the research, terminology and writing skills needed to produce successful translations of such documents as dipnotes, official biographies or treaties. The time pressure is often acute, and the potential fallout from a mistranslation can be huge.

For Locally Employed (LE) Staff at U.S. embassies interested in applying their translation abilities, opportunities abound. Some were hired as interpreters and others may hold altogether different job titles, yet when it comes to translating the written word, even on occasion, most wish there were a way to perfect the required skills.

At the U.S. Embassy in Astana, former Ambassador John Ordway recognized this challenge and found a novel solution. At sessions of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty's (START) Bilateral Consultative Commission, he saw two senior diplomatic translators from the Office of Language Services (LS) at the Bureau of Administration at work, Julia LaVilla-Nossova and Bruce Collins, and came up with the idea. A native speaker of Russian, LaVilla-Nossova generally translates into her mother tongue. Collins specializes in translation from Russian to his

native English. Both have worked in Geneva to support the START talks, intense assignments generally occurring for up to three weeks twice annually.

Impressed by the two employees' skills, Ordway invited them to Embassy Astana to provide an intensive two-week course in diplomatic translation.

Ordway said the U.S.-Kazakhstan relationship is increasingly important, with both sides seeking out new areas of cooperation. "We want to create the best conditions to take advantage of the new opportunities emerging in that bilateral relationship," he continued, "and in its own way, our mission's ability to do excellent translation of the growing number of documents flowing back and forth with the Kazakhstani, and to do it in timely fashion, will play an important role."

Ultimately, 28 LE Staff members of the U.S. Embassy Astana and U.S. Consulate General Almaty signed up for the course. Their job titles ranged from senior protocol assistant to security investigator. With just two weeks to prepare, LaVilla-Nossova and Collins feverishly assembled a syllabus and teaching materials, helped by colleagues who had taught shorter seminars at professional gatherings.

Course topics included diplomatic parlance, dealing with idioms and the translation of tweets and emails.

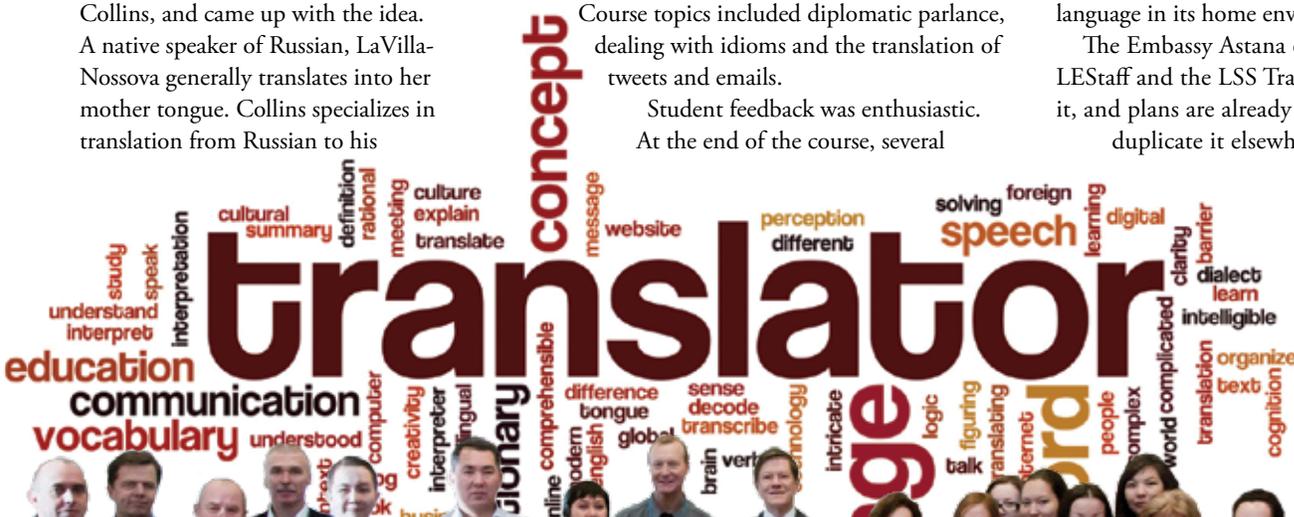
Student feedback was enthusiastic. At the end of the course, several

students told LS the course was a beneficial and motivating experience, and their only regret was that it was too short. One said, "It's just incredible what's being done here, the information that's being shared."

LS translators will also profit from teaching such a course, if the two instructors' views are reflective. They will gain from exposure to embassy life and learning the workflows of diplomats at post, and hearing a foreign language used in its natural setting. Because they typically work behind the scenes, from office cubicles or home offices, LS translators can feel cut off from the living languages with which they work, and they know they must keep up with jargon—even the nuances of "diplomatese"—as it evolves. There's a benefit, too, in the professional relationships it forged and the collaboration among translators.

Diplomatic translators, too, can profit, since they must keep up with political buzzwords, technical jargon and the latest slang. To be top-notch, translators must be aware of a language's cultural context, how a commercial jingle can morph into a newspaper's caption or a sports victory can be alluded to in a VIP's speech. While the Internet can help them, nothing beats first-hand contact with the language in its home environment.

The Embassy Astana course enriched LE Staff and the LSS Translators who taught it, and plans are already underway to duplicate it elsewhere. □



Translator class students pose with Ambassador John Ordway, back row center (in jacket), who is flanked by LS Russian Translators Bruce Collins, left, and Julia LaVilla-Nossova. Photo by Ilya Cherednichenko



Family Matters

FLO helps families cope with separation

By Ramona Sandoval, communications and outreach officer, Family Liaison Office

In 2011, when Melanie Black and her spouse were separated due to an unaccompanied tour, they took advantage of the Department's many services for those undergoing separation from family members, including participating in the annual Parenting During Times of Separation workshop. Held most recently in October, the workshop is hosted by the Family Liaison Office (FLO) and MHN, a company specializing in behavioral health.

Black said the workshop helped her contact others who also were in her situation. "It is nice to make connections and talk about issues that are real to you," she said.

Foreign Service employees face a high probability of being separated from their families at some point during their careers, whether due to evacuations, sickness or medical clearance limitations. Voluntary reasons, such as participating in an unaccompanied tour, needing to stay behind to attend to a child's educational needs or care for elderly relatives, can also lead to a temporary separation.

FLO's parenting workshop is just one of several sources of support for Foreign Affairs community members, whether single, married or divorced, said Sherri Rhoades, FLO's Unaccompanied Tours Officer. "FLO is here to guide employees and their families through the labyrinth of rules and regulations and to connect them to various offices in the Department," Rhoades continued. She urged employees to plan for separations when choosing a home location or arranging for allowances.

The services offered by FLO for separated employees and their families include providing certificates and medals for children experiencing an unaccompanied tour and age-appropriate workbooks that help children deal with separation from a parent. Bertram Braun, counselor for political-military affairs in Afghanistan, said he nominated his son for an unaccompanied tour medal and was glad FLO offers his family somewhere they can turn to for answers and support while he is away. "FLO provides an invaluable service to those of us in

the field, providing us the peace of mind that someone is actively looking out for the interests of our families back home," he observed.

Another source of support is FSI's Transition Center, which has long partnered with FLO on a range of services focused on life in the Foreign Service. Its resources include such courses as Maintaining Long-Distance Relationships, Pre-Deployment Preparation for High-Stress Assignments, High-Stress Assignment Outbrief, Resilience Strategies for Success Overseas and Encouraging Resilience in the Foreign Service Child.

"We owe ourselves, our family members and each other the benefits of a caring, supportive organizational environment to make any assignment, particularly a separated assignment, succeed," said Transition Center Director Ray Leki.

Daisy Bachmann, a community liaison office coordinator on ordered departure from Sana'a, and thus separated from her husband, said the big challenge for her was "loss of control." Bachmann said she appreciates support and resources she has received from FLO and FSI. She still works as the CLO coordinator for her post, but now from space in the FLO office, where she provides support to other evacuated family members.

Another employee affected by separation is Susanne Turner, whose husband served in Baghdad while she and her youngest daughter remained in Washington, D.C., but without family members close by for emotional or practical support. "Experiencing an unaccompanied tour is to a large extent a very individual experience," Turner observed. To help her through the separation, she completed FLO's unaccompanied tour contact information form, which helped her stay connected to FLO and other families separated by an unaccompanied tour. She also attended several Transition Center courses and said the tips and ideas she received helped her stay in touch with family and prepare her for the separation. "I realized that I needed to figure

out what would help me cope emotionally" for the coming separation, she said.

To deal with the stress of a separation, Dr. Kenneth Dekleva, director of the Office of Medical Services/Mental Health Services, said employees should buttress their already high levels of resilience with a variety of psycho-social supports that are of great value for separated families, both domestically and those sheltering in place at overseas locations.

The support offered by the Office of Medical Services (MED) includes the Employee Consultation Service/Employee Assistance Program, which provides confidential individual, marital and group support, and the Deployment Stress Management Program, which assists State Department and USAID personnel deployed to high-threat and priority staffing posts. MED's Child and Family Program has a team of child and adolescent psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers that serves as a valuable resource for parents having questions about their children's development and emotional and special education needs.

Separations can take on many forms. For example, Marybeth Hunter experienced a different kind of separation while she and her husband were posted to Islamabad: She sent her children to a boarding school. Although the decision to separate from her daughters was difficult, Hunter said she felt comfortable with the daily guidance they received and believed that boarding school boosted their self-esteem and sense of contribution to the community.

With all of the services the Department offers, finding where to start is often the first hurdle. The key to a successful separation is a combination of advance preparation and readiness to learn about and access available resources. FLO Director Susan Frost encourages employees and family members to contact FLO for help since FLO "can help identify and locate the resources and tools best suited for each person's specific situation." ■



Brighter Future

Embassy aids children of incarcerated women

By Joe Bertini, financial management analyst, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, U.S. Embassy in Kabul
Photos by Tracey Swan



An Afghan girl plays outside at the Kabul Children's Support Center.

In many ways, the story of the Afghan girl named Zuhul is similar to that of teenage girls worldwide. She's bright and energetic, has a tight group of friends, excels in school and looks out for her younger sister, Robinha. Zuhul's story, however, demonstrates her own incredible strength and one of the many success stories for the U.S. government's assistance to Afghanistan.

Five years ago, Zuhul's mother was arrested for "adultery" and sentenced to three and a half years in prison. Unable to stay in her family home, Zuhul had no choice but to live with her mother in prison, where she stayed for three months.

Fortunately, Zuhul encountered staff from the local Children's Support Center (CSC), one of four facilities funded by the Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) to house the children of incarcerated women in Afghanistan. Women for Afghan Women (WAW), an American-Afghan NGO, runs all four facilities as part of the Colombo Plan for International Development's Afghan Children's Support Center Fund.

Each CSC is a regional hub, offering a safe haven for children in surrounding provinces' prisons. Currently, 322 children, ranging in age from 5 to 18, live in the centers. The CSCs meet residents' basic needs—food, shelter and clothing—but also have counselors to provide psychosocial therapy and a 24-hour caretaker staff to give the daily attention, support and love normally given by parents. Tutors lead classes in math, English, computer skills and the Dari language. Vans transport kids to and from local schools every day, and WAW brings the children on at least monthly visits to their mothers in prison.

Without the CSCs, Zuhul, Robinha and most of their friends would be living with their mothers in prison. In Afghanistan, children can live with their incarcerated mothers until the age of 7. Before the creation of the CSCs many children, particularly girls, stayed well past that age. Aside from the austere conditions and lack of educational and social development, the children were burdened with a heavy stigma that put their futures at risk.

Despite the great gains Afghan women have made since 2001, many challenges remain. Like Zuhul's mother, more than 60

percent of imprisoned women in Afghanistan face charges for committing so-called moral crimes. These charges are frequently applied to women who fled forced marriages or domestic violence. Families may disown or threaten women charged with moral crimes, with the denunciation often carrying over to their children. In a society where women have limited independent economic opportunities, convicted women and their children face a difficult struggle. For these children in particular, educational opportunities, a loving home environment and psychosocial support are critical.

The U.S. government began funding the CSCs in 2011; INL does so to keep the children from potentially entering a life of crime or insurgency. Just as importantly, the program improves the quality of Afghanistan's rule of law system by giving incarcerated women and their children access to a rehabilitative correctional system.

Already under resourced and overcrowded, Afghan prisons can hardly accommodate the basic needs of a large population of children and adolescents, much less provide them needed services. Thus, the CSCs are



The CSC children sing the Afghan national anthem in October.



James DeHart, director of INL's Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Programs, meets with the CSC children.

part of the U.S. government's effort to help Afghanistan create a secure, safe and humane corrections system. Fewer children living with their incarcerated mothers means a safer and healthier environment for mother and child alike.

As the implementer for the project, WAW began by visiting prisons to establish a relationship with prison staff and incarcerated women, and to explain the purpose and benefits of the CSCs. "Many of the women were initially reluctant to entrust us with their children," recalled Manizha Naderi, WAW's executive director. "Our first group was fairly small. But as we brought those first kids back to the prison for visits, the other mothers saw how happy and healthy they were, and how much they loved going to classes and having space to play. After that, we didn't have to do much convincing."

And the children do thrive in the CSCs. Of the 211 CSC residents attending public or private school, 71 were ranked either first, second or third in their classes. Report cards filed at each CSC show that most children are ahead of their peers in their schoolwork, and tutors work daily with students who are too

far below their grade level to attend public school. Zuhul, for example, was well below her grade level when she entered the CSC, but her appetite for learning was evident. She excelled in the tutoring program and is now one of the top students in her eighth-grade class.

Several of the other CSC children have gone on to particularly distinguished futures. One young woman is currently enrolled in a U.S. college after WAW helped her earn a scholarship to an American private secondary school. Another is at a boarding school in India, while a third young man living in the CSC in Mazar-e Sharif entered a local residential vocational training school.

The CSC network is one of the many ways that INL is supporting U.S. government rule of law and women's rights objectives in Afghanistan. Whether it be training and advising Afghan government and civil society actors, supporting women's shelters and family guidance centers, or funding educational and vocational training for incarcerated women, INL is helping to create a more stable and democratic Afghanistan that recognizes the rights of Afghan women.

Progress for women in Afghanistan has

been hard-fought, and gains in education and health remain fragile, despite Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's vow to bring women and youth into the center of political, social and economic affairs. If the Afghan government, civil society and the donor community can follow through on that, women will have increasing chances to contribute to Afghanistan's future.

Meanwhile, Zuhul has made the most of her opportunity. Her mother finished her sentence a few months ago, and after leaving the CSC to live with her mother, Zuhul opened a literacy and Quran class for adult women in her home, with tuition that helps support her family. Zuhul speaks warmly of her CSC experience and is optimistic about her future.

"When I came to the CSC I was a small child and illiterate, but with their help I've learned a lot of things—English, how to use a computer, the Holy Quran and how to behave," she said. "I want to continue my studies and enter university. I would like to be an educated person, a successful woman and I want to support my family financially." ■



Nerve Center

Operation monitors Department's Security around the globe

By Jan Quade, writer, Bureau of Diplomatic Security

Watch officers monitor information at the Command Center in April.
Department of State Photo

Warned that the U.S. Consulate Herat, Afghanistan, was under attack on Sept. 13, 2013 and more attackers might be on the way, the senior watch officer at the Bureau of Diplomatic Security Command Center (DSCC) in Rosslyn, Va., swung the center into action.

The 9 p.m. call from post advised the center that the initial attack involved a large truck that had charged the perimeter gate and, unable to break through, had detonated explosives. Four minutes later, seven armed attackers tried to enter the compound, also unsuccessfully, then exploded their minivan. U.S. and Afghan security personnel immediately responded in a sustained firefight to repel the attackers.

On receiving the call, the DSCC “jumped into action,” said its director, Diplomatic Security Service Special Agent Todd Zicarelli. As with any attack or major event, the center first gathered as much information as possible, asking the team in Herat for real-time information and notifying senior DS leadership and the Department’s Operations Center.

“The first visual reports from post showed lingering smoke and a fire still burning from the initial explosions,” said Zicarelli. “The biggest unknown at the time was whether or not additional attackers were waiting in the wings.”

Because Herat is a high-threat post, all personnel both work and live on the compound. It was barely daybreak when the insurgents attempted to crash the perimeter gate, so many consulate staff were still in their quarters. In spite of the blast setback of the gate where the bomb went off, the explosions rocked the entire consulate. Herat is a very secure compound with multiple barriers against attackers. If the insurgents had breached the gate, additional barriers laid ahead of them. Responding to the Herat

attack, the center began collecting post’s video footage of the incoming insurgents, and prepared a clip for senior leadership.

At the Command Center, the emphasis is on readiness and the procedures needed for a fast response. “We have official procedures we go through in any type of event, starting with notifications and setting into motion the critical incident process and checklist,” said Deputy Director Nathan Al-Khazraji. “We document the event by keeping a log with minute-by-minute timelines so senior leaders can review the log and see who was notified when, what actions were taken and generally report anything of significance.”

Regardless of the hour, these protocols are standard practice during a crisis. “The center serves as the bureau’s command-and-control hub simply because we have the most comprehensive and redundant communication capacities and because we can communicate with multiple parties simultaneously,” Zicarelli explained.

A challenge for the center, especially when handling such a big attack, is being ready to respond to any other crisis occurring simultaneously. “Managing resources becomes imperative, because we can’t use 100 percent of our resources to devote to a single event,” Zicarelli said.

The center has responded to multiple security events happening simultaneously, he said, but the staff’s “knowledge, dedication and attention to detail allow us to maintain operations at a high level, regardless of workload.”

In the Herat response, after the notifications went out, DS leadership quickly mobilized at the Command Center, where about 15 additional personnel arrived. These included the assistant secretary for Diplomatic Security, deputy assistant secretaries and the desk officers who manage the Afghanistan portfolio. The Department’s Operations Center was already patched in.

“Our communication assets at the DSCC let us stay in constant and continual communications with leadership and decision makers,” said Zicarelli. “As information became available, we could update everyone simultaneously.”

Within 30 minutes of the attack, Herat’s regional security office staff and local guards had secured the compound perimeter and repelled the insurgents. The driver of the explosive-laden truck died when his vehicle blew up ramming the gate. The attack’s second wave was taken out as the attackers tried to charge onto the compound. No one under chief of mission authority was killed, but eight heroic local guards died in defense of the consulate.

The Command Center was on high alert responding to the Herat attack, but normally it is a relatively quiet place where high-tech equipment hums and specially trained staff monitor their screens, including wall-size videos that fill one side of the room. As the eyes and ears of DS, the center is a 24/7 watch office providing real-time information to decision makers. For instance, it provided valuable, timely information to Department leadership during personnel reductions at U.S. Embassies in Sanaa, Yemen, and Juba, South Sudan, and during evacuations, such as the one at U.S. Embassy Tripoli.

The center’s technical capabilities let staff track disparate missions, such as protective details, U.S. motorcades in potentially hostile locations overseas and even the movement of materials by diplomatic couriers in remote areas. Watch officers are also stationed in the Department’s Operations Center, White House Situation Room and DHS National Operations Center. With links to watch centers at U.S. Combatant Commands, DSCC staff engage in active interagency collaboration and information sharing. ■

Fantastic Fellows

Three former Pickerings Become Senior FSOs

By Kathy Davis, senior advisor, Pickering and Rangel Programs,
Bureau of Human Resources

The 2014 promotion boards recently recommended for promotion to the Senior Foreign Service three FSOs who are former Thomas R. Pickering Fellows, the first Pickerings to cross the senior FSO threshold. They are all DCMs: Julie Chung in Cambodia, Dereck Hogan in Azerbaijan and Joey Hood in Kuwait.

All three officially started on their paths to FSOs once they became Pickering Fellows. The 23-year-old Thomas R. Pickering and the 13-year-old Charles B. Rangel Foreign Affairs Fellowships are the Foreign Service's premier diversity recruitment programs and provide financial assistance toward a master's degree, plus internships and FSO mentoring. Upon completion of the program, fellows enter the Department as entry-level FSOs.

Hogan, as a high school student in 1990, heard an FSO speak on the Department of State's mission and decided to pursue a Foreign Service career. At the University of California-San Diego, Chung was similarly inspired by a Diplomat in Residence.

"As fellows, we were thinking about, writing about and participating in Foreign Service life...well before entering the profession," Hogan said, adding that the early exposure helped ensure a seamless transition to professional success in the Department.

The new Senior Foreign Service officers say embracing new experiences and having open minds, and families that support their careers, keep them motivated. After 14 years as an FSO, "my career feels fresh to me," said Hood, praising his family for keeping him going through all the assignments. Chung said the anticipation of new experiences always kept her "looking forward to the next adventure."

Hogan has served most of his 17-year career in Eastern Europe, a region, he adds, that is not accustomed to seeing African-American diplomats. He has often been the only African-American diplomat with whom many of his counterparts have ever worked. Though they acknowledge the existence of a diverse U.S. society, they shared that it was not evident within our diplomatic service. The fellowships help promote a diverse U.S. diplomatic corps to foreign audiences, one more reflective of America's diversity.

All endorse Foreign Service diversity, with Hood recalling an example from his posting in Yemen. Confronted with a traumatized group of Jewish families displaced as a result of a local skirmish, he said he enlisted help from a fellow officer who was Jewish, another who was not Jewish but was fluent in Hebrew and a female officer who spoke fluent Arabic. As a result, they were able to connect with all parties and help calm and support the families.

"I'm confident that no other nation's embassy could bring to bear as many diverse backgrounds as the United States does all over the world," said Hood.

Chung, meanwhile, recalled how she has over her career shared her family's story of emigrating to the U.S. from Korea, the hardships her family encountered and her path to becoming a U.S. diplomat. "I find more often than not, people are shocked and pleasantly surprised that it's not through family connections, or money or bribery that we enter and advance in the Foreign Service," she said.

All three also remain committed to their FSO careers. As Chung put it: "In no other career do you have the option to become an expert in so many areas."

In 2010, program alumni formed the Pickering and Rangel Fellowship Association (PRFA) to create opportunities for alumni worldwide to connect, network and engage in professional development and community service. PRFA Executive Chairman Jeff Salaiz, currently on detail at the National Security Council, said that the "PRFA cannot be prouder of these three senior officers, and of the Department in recognizing their demonstrated leadership abilities and accomplishments." More information on PRFA is available from prfa_officers@googlegroups.com. ■



Former Pickering Fellow U.S. Embassy Kuwait DCM Joey Hood, second from right at rear, stands beside his wife, Anne Lompo, as they gather with family, friends and, at front right, former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Jim Smith and his spouse, at front left, Dr. Janet Breslin-Smith.

Photo by Henry J. Hood



U.S. Embassy Baku Charge d'Affaires Derek Hogan answers press questions at the U.S. Education Fair in the city of Sumqayit.

Photo by Mehdi Huseynquliyev



U.S. Embassy Phnom Penh DCM Julie Chung meets with Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sok An at a National Museum exhibit of returned Khmer statues from the United States.

Photo by Sok Saray of Koh Santepheap newspaper



ASTANA

Embassy Navigates Geopolitics in Capital of Eurasia's Emerging Powerhouse

By Drew N. Peterson, assistant cultural affairs officer, U.S. Embassy in Astana





Astana's central promenade is perfect for strolling the "Left Bank," with a singing fountain, sculptures, and parks. Many residences, restaurants, offices and shops line the pedestrian Nurzholy Avenue.

Photo by Robin Shaffer

Ninety-seven meters tall, the monumental Bayterek observation tower in the center of Astana celebrates the birth year (1997) of Kazakhstan's modern capital. With newness comes vibrancy and the drive for change, qualities felt in every endeavor Kazakhstanis embrace. NASA's astronauts destined for the International Space Station launch from and return here, a source of pride for Kazakhstan as a nation that reaches for the stars.

Kazakhstan sits astride Asia and Europe, commanding a vast territory (it is the ninth largest country in the world), abundant natural resources and a growing but sparsely distributed population. With a GDP per capita close to \$14,000, Kazakhstan is on par with Poland and not far behind Russia. Of the Central Asian republics, and indeed of all the post-Soviet states, Kazakhstan has stood out for investing heavily in education, with more than 2,000 Kazakhstanis studying or participating in exchange programs in the United States each year. By participating and leading in multilateral diplomatic initiatives and endorsing tolerant, pluralistic values, Kazakhstan continues its emergence and growth onto the world stage. Mission Kazakhstan's overarching goal is to strengthen the bilateral partnership across a broad range of issues, assisting Kazakhstan in becoming an important player in current global challenges combatting terrorism and narco-trafficking, and promoting regional stability.

For diplomats, Astana is an increasingly desirable choice for raising families, as evidenced by the dramatic rise in the number of American staff with children at post. Spacious apartments and a rising number

of houses in the residential pool help create a comfortable standard of living. Travel to breathtaking natural sites and enchanting Silk Road cities and exciting recreational opportunities, especially in wintertime, hold special charm. As the temperature drops, local staff ingenuity turns the embassy's sports field into an ice skating rink. The hometown hockey team, Barys Astana, plays competitors from all over the world, and residents ski, skate, snowshoe and go ice fishing on the frozen Esil River. The Astana Outdoor Adventures club, which counts among its members many embassy personnel, organizes hikes across the steppe and over picturesque mountains. Their year-round exploits are featured regularly in Kazakhstani news outlets and have even surfaced on local reality television shows. For those less inclined to scale mountains in snowshoes, Astana offers

modern shopping malls, restaurants, fitness centers, parks and museums.

With nearly 80 American staff members, Embassy Astana is a medium-sized embassy with large-embassy work. The Consulate General in Almaty, similar in size to the embassy, supports a wide variety of functions, principally the regional USAID mission in Central Asia, as well as consular, commercial, public affairs and reporting duties. Visits to Almaty for work and leisure provide opportunities for embassy staff members to explore Kazakhstan's cultured, vibrant and fashionable former capital, "the little apple" of Central Asia.

Astana will host Expo 2017, the International Exhibitions Bureau-sanctioned world's fair with a focus on renewable energy that is expected to attract several million visitors. A tribute to the past and renewed



Kazakhstani students participate in the American Dream Education Fair. Post's education fairs, Web chats and discussion clubs are popular with students as interest in U.S. colleges and university continues to increase.

Photo by Zauresh Amanzholova



Post of the Month



Traditional yurts are raised for a celebration in Boravoya, a recreation area north of Astana. The yurt is a powerful national symbol seen in many festivals throughout the country.

Photo by Robin Shaffer

commitment to a new energy future, the site is adjacent to Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan's flagship institution of higher learning. The Chicago-based design firm Adrian Smith+Gordon Gill planned the site using innovative architecture and urban planning concepts, including site-specific indicators: weather conditions, cultural context and land accessibility. The goal of the design is to minimize energy use, while maximizing energy generated from building-mounted photovoltaics to create a carbon-neutral environment.

In an effort to further increase foreign interest in Kazakhstan in the run-up to Expo 2017, Kazakhstan implemented a visa-waiver pilot program that allows short-term travelers from certain countries, including the United States, to enter Kazakhstan visa-free for up to 15 days. In addition, to strengthen ties and expand travel opportunities, both countries extended the maximum length of non-immigrant visas to five years. "The five-year visas and Kazakhstan's visa-waiver pilot program have significantly simplified travel opportunities for U.S. and Kazakhstani citizens," notes Consular Country Coordinator Ian Turner. "We have seen a 21 percent increase in visa demand as the United States has become a very attractive destination for Kazakhstanis who are eager to see the world. And more and more Americans are aware

of Kazakhstan's strategic importance, culture and economic opportunities."

Astana has reinvented itself many times, most recently as a planned capital in the proud tradition of Ankara, Canberra, Brasília and Washington, D.C. The site of an ancient settlement known as Bozok, it later became Akmola during the period of the Kazakh khanate. This name was Russified to Akmolinsk during the Russian Empire. In the 1950s, the city became the center of Khrushchev's Virgin Lands campaign and was renamed Tselinograd. In 1997, Kazakhstan's capital was moved to Astana — the Kazakh word for "capital." Since then, the city's population has grown from 200,000 to more than 900,000 and is expected to reach 2 million by 2030.

Much like Washington, Astana draws many residents from elsewhere in Kazakhstan. In 2007, when LES Maira Tungatarova learned that her position would move from the comfortable, sophisticated metropolis of Almaty to a new capital city emerging in the midst of the steppe, she initially worried about her future. "Leaving family behind was the hardest part," she says, "and not knowing what hardships lay ahead." In fact, many local employees opted to stay in Almaty and continue to work at the consulate. Eight years later, Maira lives happily in Astana, regularly attending world-class performances at the new and lavish Opera and Ballet Theater, riding the city's well-developed network of buses to work and enjoying the growing number of excellent cafés on weekends.

Astana's meticulous urban planning and grandiose ambitions shine with experimental buildings that are a veritable feast for



Former Ambassador John Ordway congratulates students after a performance of traditional Kazakh dances at a CLO-organized event.

Photo by Maira Tungatarova

architecture enthusiasts. British celebrity architect Sir Norman Foster's Khan Shatyr is the largest single tent structure in the world. Almost like a 21st-century re-imagining of Coleridge's "stately pleasure dome," the Khan Shatyr contains well-known shops, restaurants, amusement rides, a monorail, cinema and beach club complete with views of the city, with a waterpark, bar and sand blown in from the Maldives. Another extraordinary building by Foster, the pyramid-shaped Palace of Peace and Reconciliation, contains a 1,700-seat theater, a conference center for periodic congresses of representatives of the world's religions, a museum, shops, an art gallery and cafés. The Nazarbayev Center, designed by Ralph Appelbaum Associates (who designed the Bill Clinton Presidential Library, Capitol Visitors Center, Holocaust Museum and Newseum), joins dozens of other iconic buildings by internationally renowned architects in this city defined—or left undefined—by post-modernist extravagance.

Kazakhstanis view their new capital city as an essential part of the re-emergence of Kazakh national culture after independence in 1991. Though Kazakhstan retains close economic ties to Russia and was very cautious to proclaim



its independence, it now fosters a more sober collective memory of Russian colonization and Soviet tyranny. Indeed, there are many opportunities to learn about the difficult legacy of Soviet oppression at historical gulag sites around Astana, including ALZHIR, the Akmolinsk Camp for Wives of Traitors to the Motherland. At the state-of-the-art National Museum, opened in June 2014 to great fanfare, visitors can appreciate exhibitions on all aspects of Kazakhstan's history, most poignantly on the Nevada-Semey anti-nuclear movement that represented one of the first glasnost-era challenges to Soviet rule.

In addition to hosting Expo 2017 and having served as chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010, Kazakhstan has announced its candidacy for a nonpermanent seat on the U.N. Security Council starting in 2017. Furthermore, Almaty is one of the final two contenders to host the 2022 Winter Olympics with some events scheduled for Astana. The only Central Asian country wealthy enough to emerge as a net donor of foreign assistance, Kazakhstan recently founded an official development assistance agency, known colloquially as KazAID. Situated where Central Asia meets Russia, Europe, and the West, Astana is successfully vying for a spot as the most modern, livable city on the New Silk Road of the 21st century.

Kazakhstan's warm, welcoming, and proud culture adds to the fulfilling work environment and high quality of life in Astana. A nomadic heritage is central to its history and practice of hospitality. Diplomats and tourists alike are offered a place of honor at the dinner table to receive the traditional Kazakh feast of *bashbarmak*—deliciously aromatic spiced and boiled horsemeat. Folkloric dances and songs, the angelic sound of the *dombra*, precise horseback riding, and exquisite craftsmanship passed through generations all continue to captivate foreign guests. ■



At a Glance Astana

- Capital:** Astana
- Government type:** Presidential Republic
- Area:** 2,724,900 sq km
- Population:** 17,948,816
- Languages:** Kazakh, Russian
- Religions:** Muslim, Orthodox, other
- GDP per capita:** \$14,100
- Export partners:** China, Italy, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Austria
- Import partners:** China, Ukraine, Germany, U.S.
- Currency:** Tenge
- Internet country code:** .kz

Sources: The World Factbook



Healthier Living

Embassy promotes enhancements to traditional Ger housing

By Daniel Foster, facility manager, U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia Photos by Department of State

Early in the 1800s, what is now known as Ulaanbaatar was called the Felt City, based on the fact that the majority of dwellings were “gers”, tent-like structures whose walls are made from sheets of felted wool. Even today, more than 340,000 Mongolians, many of them recent migrants from depressed rural areas, live in gers, in the periphery of this rapidly expanding city.

Without adequate city infrastructure, ger dwellers fend for themselves, heating and cooking with inefficient coal-burning stoves that contribute to some of the worst



The embassy's Facilities and Procurement staff helped select, purchase and construct the gers.

air pollution in the world, according to the World Health Organization. Residents share community wells and pit latrines that often freeze in the harsh winters. It's a primitive way of life, ceding slowly to modernizing forces including affordable, government-subsidized apartments. But gers also contribute to Mongolian culture and to an understanding of this historically nomadic people.

To help Mongolia find solutions to some of the problems associated with urban gers and to build cultural bridges, the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar launched the A Ger for the Future project to test and demonstrate environmentally sustainable designs that may benefit ger dwellers. The venue has three gers: two Mongolian (one set up in a traditional way, the other introducing experimental features) and one American-manufactured, which offers a contrast and is a setting for environmental presentations.

The project, which I proposed in collaboration with colleagues, was funded by the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. It began Oct. 1 with a ger-raising ceremony conducted by Ambassador Piper Campbell. Mongolian and American staff together built the two Mongolian

gers, learning the intricacies of ger construction and the associated nomadic traditions.

Their positioning was determined according to tradition: evenly spaced in a line and built with all the doors facing south toward the winter sun. The soil was leveled and wood foundations were laid. Then the wall lattice and dome were erected and stabilized by a roof framework of evenly spaced wood poles secured by carved notches and horsehair ties. Rolls of heavy felt were hoisted into place to complete the ger walls and roof. Traditionally painted wood doors were set in place, adding color to the all-white structures. Rain coverings decorated with red and blue Mongolian designs were draped over the felt roofs for protection. (Red symbolizes progress, and blue characterizes Mongolia as “The Land of Eternal Blue Sky.”)

Once the gers were enclosed, wall coverings were hung, area rugs were placed and traditional furnishings were installed to replicate a typical Mongolian home. Coal-burning stoves were placed in the middle of each ger with the exhaust stack extending through the roof. The traditional ger was equipped with a traditional stove, while an efficient coal-burning stove (the same type introduced by a Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact) was installed in the experimental ger. The end of construction was celebrated by lighting the stoves and tying a blue silk scarf to the dome of each roof—which, according to tradition, blesses the household.

The American-manufactured ger is still en route, so the A Ger for the Future project



Facility Manager Dan Foster, Ambassador Piper Campbell and Foreign Service Health Practitioner Laura Ingrum open the ger-raising ceremony in October.

during these winter months will focus on practical means for reducing the risk of exposure to unhealthy air for ger dwellers. The post's Foreign Services Health Practitioner, Laura Ingrum, collaborates with agencies

outside the mission to heighten awareness about the health hazards associated with coal-burning stoves. Air quality measurements taken inside and outside of the project's gers will help evaluate the health effects of the ger lifestyle. Local audiences will be invited to the project site for health awareness presentations and to learn how to avoid pollutants, such as via alternative sustainable heating sources that can replace traditional stoves. The extreme cold weather will enable testing of various insulating techniques too, which may reduce the heating demand.

As the weather warms, the project will shift focus to environmentally sustainable landscaping and water conservation. Mongolia experiences long, cold winters and short,



Purchased and donated traditional Mongolian furnishings were used to simulate a typical family dwelling.

temperate summers with minimal rain. Since water conservation is critical, the site's landscaping will use drought-tolerant, disease-resistant, native vegetation that thrives in this extreme environment. The trees chosen will bear fruit and offer shade and wind protection. Rainwater collection and storage will be part of the ger design.

The A Ger for the Future project also has Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant pathways made of recycled rubber mulch from the United States, offering barrier free access to the gers for visitors who are mobility challenged.

Once it arrives, the American ger will be the primary venue for public outreach activities and will serve as a contrast to the Mongolian gers, demonstrating a westernized interpretation of the traditional design.

In sum, the project is a two-way exchange that will help Mongolians and Americans learn from each other and share solutions to some of the environmental issues affecting this otherwise pristine country. ■

Photo by Mansi Indrages

SKILL BOOSTER

Returned volunteers laud Peace Corps

By Kourtnei Gonzalez, communications director, and Amanda Pascal, publications director, RPCVs@State

After Peace Corps volunteers complete two years working in developing countries, many look to State Department careers to stay in public service and indulge their interest in foreign cultures. Returned Peace Corps volunteers (RPCVs) have gained leadership, management and language skills, as well as resourcefulness and cultural adaptability, qualities useful in Civil Service or Foreign Service careers. Thus, hundreds of RPCVs work throughout the Department, from entry-level positions to the senior ranks.

For instance, Steve Murphy transitioned from being a high school English teacher with the Peace Corps on the island of São Nicolau in Cabo Verde to becoming an FSO. He has since served as a political officer in São Paulo, Kabul and Khartoum. While in the Peace Corps, he initiated a youth group on HIV/AIDS prevention, developing a passion for public health. As Murphy neared the end of his tour, Timor-Leste was gaining its independence and looking to help, he extended his Peace Corps tour for a third year to assist with Timor's reconstruction. His big accomplishment, he said, was establishing a district-wide health promotion program with Timorese nurses.

He's now working to incorporate global health in U.S. foreign policy as a policy advisor in the Secretary's Office of Global Health Diplomacy.

Murphy said his experience in the Peace Corps has been fundamental to his Department role: "As a Peace Corps volunteer, I gained both subject matter expertise and leadership skills that have contributed to my success as a global health policy advisor at State," he observed.

At the Department, Murphy said he's seen RPCVs excel at many of the 13 factors used to judge the competence of FSOs and has been impressed with RPCVs' "leadership, judgment and resourcefulness.

"There is no better training ground for the Foreign Service than the Peace Corps," he asserted, crediting it with helping develop project management and multitasking abilities he uses daily.

Ambassador Stephanie Sullivan, who taught English as a Peace Corps volunteer in the

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), credits the Peace Corps for helping her succeed at the Department. In her village in the DRC, she shared a house with several Congolese teachers. Through her experience, she said, she learned "to be a close observer before acting, developing patience for a different operational tempo and consciously choosing the most effective way to communicate a message, [that] has been enormously helpful to me as a diplomat."

She, too, extended her tour for a year, to serve as a Peace Corps volunteer leader and regional representative in the province of Katanga, before joining the Foreign Service.

Now she's the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Congo, right across the Congo River from the DRC. In the role, she says she uses daily the language and cultural skills she honed in the Peace Corps.

A third RPCV, Ray Limón, is director of the Office of Civil Service Human Resource Management and a member of the Senior Executive Service. Before becoming a lawyer, he was a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras, working as a health promoter with a focus on water and sanitation.

Honduras was Limón's first opportunity to travel outside the United States. On the flight to Honduras, he recalled, he could only bring 80 pounds of gear, so "I brought the basics: basketball, football, Frisbees, hacky sacks, volleyball, six-foot inflatable Gumby (long story), Sony Walkman, 60 mix tapes and an LSAT prep book.

"Interestingly enough, none of those items came back with me," he added.

Because community members inevitably look to PCVs as role models and leaders, they must be on their toes, monitoring their own behavior and attitudes, an experience Limón likens to that of senior Department leaders whose composure and self-awareness are keys to success.

"Workforce success and resiliency starts with leaders and



Steve Murphy poses during his Peace Corps tour in Bazarate, an Timor-Leste village.

Photo courtesy of Steve Murphy

how they treat their people," he said.

Each of these RPCVs has mastered different skills and followed a unique professional path, but all say the life event that has most significantly affected their effectiveness at the Department was being in the Peace Corps.

They also all belong to the employee affinity group RPCVs@State. The group, which has more than 600 members, advocates for the recruitment and retention of RPCVs and builds an RPCV community through career development and community service.

RPCVs@State recently welcomed 30 newly returned volunteers to visit the Department for "Take an RPCV to Work Day." The event included panel discussions on the Foreign Service and Civil Service and a speed networking event. RPCVs from across the Department provided advice on how to get hired and excel at the Department.

After completing their Peace Corps service, volunteers gain up to three years of noncompetitive eligibility (NCE), which means they can be hired by federal agencies without going through the competitive hiring process. Those interested in joining RPCVs@State or who have questions about hiring RPCVs can contact RPCVs@state.gov. ■



The board of RPCVs@State gathers in the courtyard of Main State. From left are Angel Nawrot, Amanda Pascal, Michael McGuire, Jennifer Amos, Joshua Johnson, John Fer, Kourtnei Gonzalez and Ray Limon. Not shown are Cara Conley, Alicia Pelto and Steve Murphy.

Photo by RPCVs@State

Recognizing Excellence

Employees honored for exceptional performance

Deputy Secretary for Management and Resources Heather Higginbottom, flanked by Acting Director General Hans Klemm, presided over this year's employee award ceremony in the Benjamin Franklin Room Nov. 10. The emotion-packed event, attended by more than 200 employees, family members and colleagues, was both solemn and festive—an occasion to hail those who have demonstrated initiative and courage in the performance of their duties. Recognizing that war zones and humanitarian disasters often bring out the best in employees, Deputy Secretary Higginbottom also noted that to meet one's daily responsibilities successfully there is no substitute for training, skills and good judgment.

"Our success ... depends on how well we are organized and managed," she said. "It depends on whether we have access to the information we need when we need it. Perhaps most important, it depends on whether we meet a standard of excellence in all that we do. We can't settle for a 'good enough' foreign policy. We demand the very best from ourselves, and we work to bring out the best in others." The award winners below meet these high standards, and we salute them.



2014 Bureau Award Winners Citations



Mary C. Phee

**The James A. Baker, III -
C. Howard Wilkins, Jr.,
Award for Outstanding Deputy
Chief of Mission**

In recognition of her
"outstanding contributions
to U.S. national security
and foreign policy interests
in Ethiopia and the Horn of
Africa."



Peter A. Hogan

**(domestic) Chief Financial
Officer's Award for Distinction
in Public Finance**

For "exceptional contributions
to the flexibility, accuracy and
transparency of ICASS as a
budgeting and cost distribution
system that now tops \$3 billion
annually."



Jennifer L. Williams

**Warren Christopher Award for
Outstanding Achievement in
Civilian Security**

For "expert policy guidance
on expanding humanitarian
access in besieged areas
of Syria, and for effective
stewardship of \$700 million
in humanitarian assistance in
response to the Syria crisis."



Susan D. Page

**Sue M. Cobb Award for
Exemplary Diplomatic Service**

For "leading the U.S. Mission to
South Sudan under extremely
challenging circumstances"
and advancing the president's
goal of a South Sudan "as a
viable state at peace with itself
and its neighbors."



Paul H. Davies

**Robert C. Bannerman DS
Employee of the Year Award**

For leadership and initiative
at the U.S. Consulate in
Herat and for "improving the
efficiency and effectiveness
of the Regional Security Office,
defending the facility and its
staff during the Sept. 13, 2013,
terrorist attack and advancing
U.S. diplomacy throughout
western Afghanistan."



Jill J. Thompson

**(overseas) Chief Financial
Officer's Award for Distinction
in Public Finance**

For "superlative financial skills
and for keeping the human
element at the forefront of
management decisions."



Douglas M. Griffiths

**Charles E. Cobb Award for
Initiative and Success in
Trade Development**

For success in opening doors
for American businesses in
Mozambique that "resulted
in billions in U.S. investments,
supporting over 1,500 U.S.
jobs and promoting American
values through corporate
social responsibility programs."



Laura A. Bolte

**Mary L. Dubose Civil Service
Secretary of the Year**

For "extraordinary initiative,
customer service and dedica-
tion to the highest level of
professionalism in supporting
the work of the Grievance
Staff and the entire Bureau of
Human Resources."



Michael J. Dodman

Ryan C. Crocker Award for Outstanding Leadership in Expeditionary Diplomacy

For leadership at the U.S. Consul General in Karachi, "where he advanced U.S. goals in Pakistan while ensuring the safety and morale of his team."



Kristin K. Hawkins

Director General's Award for Impact and Originality in Reporting

For "groundbreaking, authoritative contributions to the U.S. government's understanding of Russian domestic politics, especially relating to the development of national identity, political campaigning and opinion polling."



Hedy M. Sarria

Foreign Service National Financial Management Award

For "sustained exceptional performance" as subject matter expert for the Department's next generation of financial software.



Kerry Ann O'Brien

L. Nicholas Ruwe Eligible Family Member of the Year Award

For "advancing the status of Afghan women and other disenfranchised groups in Afghanistan through exceptional management of the Embassy's grants programs and for courage in frequently meeting with some of Afghanistan's most threatened groups."



Alexander J. Kasanof

James Clement Dunn Award for Excellence

For "exceptional leadership and courage in advancing U.S. foreign policy interests in Ukraine and in supporting the Ukrainian people's right to determine their own future."



Carmen J. Cantor

Equal Employment Opportunity of the Year Award

For advancing the noble causes of Equal Employment Opportunity and diversity. Her "compassionate and successful efforts have demonstrably helped create an inclusive environment in which respect for all people is encouraged, expected and practiced."



Michael F. Bailey

Robert C. Frasure Memorial Award

For demonstrating "outstanding initiative, leadership and perseverance in designing and standing up cessation of hostilities and monitoring mechanisms" that helped save lives in South Sudan.



Jason S. Evans

Leamon R. Hunt Award for Management Excellence

For actions "during and after the terrorist attack against U.S. Consulate Herat on Sept. 13th, 2013, and his work throughout the year, including the implementation of an effective management platform in a remote warzone environment."



Ann McEDA

Award for Excellence in Labor Diplomacy

For "outstanding accomplishments in driving transformative change in labor rights and labor-management relations in Morocco, including leveraging the U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement as a framework to increase engagement on combatting child labor, mediating labor conflicts and improving gender equality in the workforce."



Mallory Stewart

Secretary's Award for Excellence in International Security Affairs

For "extraordinary legal accomplishments and indispensable contributions in advancing the international effort to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons programs and thus remove a significant threat to international peace and security."



Elizabeth Kim

Frank E. Loy Award for Environmental Diplomacy

For "outstanding commitment and creativity in bringing ocean conservation issues into the heart of U.S. environmental diplomacy, and extraordinary leadership in delivering concrete results at the June 2014 'Our Ocean' conference."



William B. Stevens

Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Public Diplomacy

For "outstanding leadership and unwavering commitment in leading the Department's Ukraine Communications Task Force to stem the tide of Russian propaganda."



Robert P. Mkulak

Secretary's Award for Excellence in International Security Affairs

For "extraordinary efforts and achievements in advancing the international effort to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons program, thereby taking a major step toward a world free of chemical weapons."



Sarah K. Grow

Linguist of the Year Award

For "exemplary efforts to gain and maintain proficiency in several demanding and incentive languages and the successful use of the Farsi language" to advance the Department's public diplomacy and strategic objectives.



Perry M. Romeo

Thomas Morrison Information Management Award

For "extraordinary efforts in implementing improvements to IRM customer engagement and communications and building new tracking and project management assistance strategies."



Eric T. Brassil

Mary L. Dubose Office Management Specialist of the Year

For "exceptional service in meeting the information technology needs of the global Foreign Service Office Management Specialist community and for creativity, management ability and leadership" in promoting understanding of online knowledge management and collaboration tools.



Susan L. Ziadeh

Arnold L. Raphel Memorial Award

For "sustained excellence in developing and inspiring the Department of State's next generation of leaders."



Debra P. Heien

Mary A. Ryan Award for Outstanding Public Service

For "extraordinary services to U.S. citizens abroad and at home as the Consul General of U.S. Embassy Kabul from August 2013 to May 2014."



Leslie D. Freriksen

Rockwell Anthony Schnabel Award for Advancing U.S.-EU Relations

For her contribution to "advancing U.S. privacy policy through cooperation with the European Union," and her vision to "seek common ground to sustain transatlantic data transfer agreements which underpin the U.S.-EU economic and political relationship."



Elizabeth E. Shackelford

Barbara Watson Award for Consular Excellence

For "extraordinary dedication to protecting American citizens during the South Sudan Crisis in 2013 and 2014." Her leadership and knowledge of consular policy and crisis planning helped "locate and evacuate over 790 endangered American citizens, legal permanent residents and others spread throughout South Sudan."



Jessica P. Long

Luther I. Replogle Award for Management Improvement

For "building and managing a critical foreign affairs program that transformed the way Naval Special Warfare trains and operates in foreign environments."



Tobias H. Glucksmann

Herbert Salzman Award for Excellence in International Performance

For "outstanding accomplishments in elevating economic and commercial cooperation, spearheading an ambitious response to trade sanctions and international outcry for improved worker rights and safety, and driving path-breaking initiatives in Bangladesh."



Zennia D. Paganini

Sean Smith Technology Innovation Award

For "creating the innovative smartphone application, Visa Guide, which teaches non immigrant visa applicants about the visa application process, and also serves as an anti-fraud tool."



George A. Robb

David E. Foy Memorial Award for Excellence in Facility Management

For "extraordinary initiative, performance and leadership" while serving as the senior facility manager in New Delhi. His "strong management skills, positive attitude, passion and adaptability had a positive impact on operations and helped Mission India achieve many of its most critical goals."



Stephen P. Shinnick

**Contracting Officer
Representative of the
Year Award**

For "exemplary and tireless application of subject matter expertise and counsel in the acquisition and contract management support of Vanguard 2.2.1, IRM's largest performance based IT support contract."



Thomas J. Fitzpatrick

**Foreign Service Construction
Engineer of the Year Award**

For sustained distinguished service and "exemplary performance, superior leadership, attention to detail, innovative practices and proactive security management of the Helsinki and Tallinn projects."



Michael P. Casey

**Dennis W. Keogh
Memorial Award**

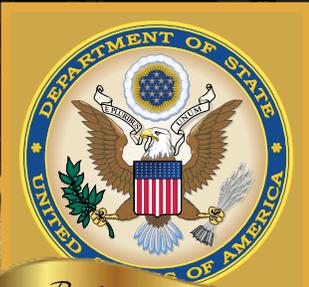
For "exemplifying the ideal of professional competence as recognized by his peers during the year."



Richmond P. Blake

**The Human Rights Award and
Democracy Achievement Award**

For "innovative use of social media and public diplomacy to advance U.S. human rights priorities while facing Bolivian government hostility"



Roland Dixon

**General Services
Officer of the Year**

For "sustained outstanding performance as GSO and Acting Management Officer at U.S. Embassy Luanda, Angola and turning the toughest challenges completely on their head."



Nancy M. Stafford

**Director General's Award for
Excellence in Human Resources**

For "excellence in the management of the human resources program of the mission and the advancement of management initiatives supporting Key national security priorities for Pakistan"



Phillip B. Hayes

**Post Occupation Safety and
Health Officer of the Year**

For "exceptional performance in managing a highly effective and innovative safety program under challenging conditions, as the Post Occupational Safety and Health Officer at Embassy Ouagadougou."



Charles Flynn

**Special Agent Daniel E. O'Connor
Memorial Award**

For "sustained distinguished service and exemplary performance, superior leadership, pre-emptive intervention, innovative practices and proactive security management of the Embassy Cotonou project."



Jobs Well Done

FSNs of the Year recognized for their efforts

By Michael Hahn, associate editor, *State Magazine*

This year's award-winning FSNs have in common teamwork, dedication and strong people skills, plus the ability to combine work with devotion to family and country. Juggling the demands of busy lives, raising children or taking care of a parent, and setting values to live by, in and outside the office, show how a great performance comes with great self-discipline and high standards. Balancing careers with homefront priorities is never easy, although this year's winners make it seem so.

Another trait they hold in common is being able to tackle any work challenge, applying ingenuity, networking skills and a positive disposition to tackle it. At heart, they are problem solvers, with more than a sprinkle of passion for what they do. "All we did was do our jobs," they will say, but it's clear what they've done was often accomplished under extraordinary circumstances and with extraordinary skill.



AF and Department-wide - Phillip Makendebou,
Pol/Econ specialist, Bangui, Central African Republic

“For exemplary and courageous service as the de facto chargé d'affaires during the most turbulent 15 months in the history of the Central African Republic (CAR). He assisted with the evacuation of Americans and liaised effectively with Washington throughout the crisis...enabling continuity of an active U.S. diplomatic presence.”

Makendebou acknowledges his country has suffered enormously, with periods of political strife and uncertainty coupled with economic underdevelopment. He began at the U.S. Embassy in Bangui, Central African Republic, in the 1980s working for USAID, seeking to put his economics background to good use. When a mutiny in the CAR's military gave way to political upheaval, the embassy was shut down. Makendebou used his more than 10 years of experience at the mission to rally his fellow FSNs to keep the chancery open, informally, and safeguard U.S. property.

Twice again over the next two decades, Makendebou performed the same caretaker duties, including a nearly three-year stretch from 2002 to 2005. In the most recent iteration, Makendebou and his team kept communication open with Washington and with local officials, summoning enormous resolve and ingenuity. When he reflects back on these periods in charge of mission operations and serving as Washington's eyes and ears on the ground, he admits that it takes a special kind of resilience to navigate through the turbulence. More than 30 FSNs remained at the embassy during its closure to carry out whatever limited functions available technologies and resources allowed. The greatest challenge was to ensure the safety of American citizens, missionaries and NGOs living and working in the conflicted countryside.

Makendebou said his family's support made his success possible. “I have six children, who despite every hardship imaginable facing our country pursued their educational dreams and now lead successful lives. Their example set the bar very high for me,” he said. “I am thankful the embassy never really closed. We came to work every day, and every day we looked forward to a brighter future. I knew Washington could count on us, just like my daughter has always counted on me.”

His daughter is training to be a military medical doctor in the service of her country, and Makendebou could not be prouder.



EUR - Laura C. Salihu,
political assistant, Pristina, Kosovo

“For her work with local and international officials to find solutions which enabled successful 2013 municipal elections and integrated northern municipalities into Kosovo's national institutions.”

As rule-of-law advisor in the embassy's political section, Salihu is involved with some of the most pressing issues facing her country. The EU-facilitated dialogue to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia is a key U.S. policy priority, but remains a work in progress. A major test of this effort was last year's municipal elections, throughout which Salihu served as U.S. Embassy Pristina's resident expert. When it seemed that four Serb-majority municipalities, which had not participated in elections since Kosovo's 2008 independence, might again opt out, she engaged with the electoral commission on behalf of the embassy to seek compromises that would facilitate nationwide participation. She proved invaluable in coordinating with representatives from the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe during election time and lobbying U.S. embassies in the region to help staff Mission Pristina's election observer mission. She knew which hot spots to target and was able to gain precise information on contentious polling centers.

Ultimately, Kosovo citizens' exercise of civic duty was a great success, in no small measure the result of Salihu's dogged efforts. “These were the best elections we ever had,” she said. Her mastery of every aspect of the election process and her involvement in it were widely hailed. “Her problem solving, persuasion and negotiation are hallmarks of her work,” said embassy Political Officer R. Bryan Marcus. Beyond her role in elections, Salihu is a key interlocutor with national political parties to help them reach consensus on rule-of-law issues. “I want my country to set an example of trustworthiness and dignity,” she said, adding that she hopes to see her daughters grow up in a Kosovo that is part of the EU and NATO. “This would be the fulfillment of our dreams, and theirs.”



WHA - Mabel Stampf,
GSO Assistant, U.S. Embassy Asunción, Paraguay

“For outstanding achievement during more than 25 years of loyal, dedicated and exemplary service. Her professionalism and leadership have significantly contributed to U.S. Embassy Asuncion’s mission readiness.”

Dedication and exemplary service are the hallmark of Stampf’s work at the U.S. Embassy in Asunción. Her award acknowledges “behind-the-curtain wizardry” for her uncanny ability to navigate Paraguay’s swirling bureaucratic waters. As the post’s expediter, she is involved quite literally in all mission comings and goings, and at all hours. This past year witnessed significant perimeter, security, communications and generator upgrades, each with its own shipment and delivery challenges, including the unloading of sensitive, containerized equipment. Stampf handled all customs forms and oversaw all aspects of the consignments. Just as flawlessly, she ensures that all official visitors and newcomers receive trouble-free immigration clearance; whether incoming or outgoing movements involve the ambassador, congressional delegations, a public diplomacy arts group or special technical teams, she is there to help and set the tone for each and every visit’s success.

Stampf’s secret is her Rolodex, experience, resourcefulness and determination. She knows whom to contact and how to unravel any administrative knot—always with a smile and gentle persuasion. Because of the complex and technical nature of shipping, import and export, her broad and relevant experience provides invaluable insight and expertise to ensure that U.S. interests are well addressed and prosecuted. Stampf brings a positive approach and passion for helping others to everything she does, and she has taken upon herself a leadership role in the post’s local employee association, advocating to management that their concerns over wage freezes and health insurance be aired and addressed.

Stampf said her greatest joy is taking care of her family, especially her beloved mother.

“We are all in this together,” she said. “I owe my successes to colleagues, officers and FSNs, who have shown confidence in me, set clear goals and allowed me to exercise my judgment.”



NEA - Souad Lehtihet,
Pol/Econ specialist, Algiers, Algeria

“In recognition of her outstanding dedication and contributions to the protection of American citizens, the mission of the U.S. Embassy in Algiers and support of USG foreign policy objectives, including the strengthening of the U.S.-Algeria relationship and the promotion of human rights.”

“Politics runs in my veins,” says Lehtihet, speaking about her motivation as political specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Algiers. Her father was a notable figure in the country’s independence movement in the 1960s. He also helped establish its first post-colonial diplomatic corps and served as a diplomat to France, Germany and South Africa. Lehtihet grew up learning lessons from her father’s trade mastering English, and developing a commitment to civic duty and democratic values her family and country stood for. Like many Algerian citizens, her affinity for America is projected through one man: John F. Kennedy, who spoke in favor of Algerian self-determination even before he became president. Lehtihet says his idealism still resonates today.

Lehtihet brings a wealth of experience to her job, from her prior work on political campaigns to championing women’s issues for an NGO and reporting on politics for Radio Algeria International. Her FSN of the Year award recognizes the energy and creativity she devotes to her portfolio in the pol/econ section, reaching out to political parties and civil society and, in particular, promoting human rights, a key embassy objective. “Souad is a leader within the mission,” said former DCM Elizabeth Moore Aubin, adding that Lehtihet is frequently consulted for her insights into Algerian society.

Lehtihet was instrumental in helping craft a quota law guaranteeing women’s access to the workplace and is proud to note that Algeria now has the highest percentage of female representatives in parliament in the Arab world. Her position at the embassy allows her to be fully engaged with political changes that are affecting her country. The work also compels her, she said, to instill humane values, such as tolerance, respect and solidarity, in her two children, and she remains committed to protecting women and children. “It is the youth we must reach out to urgently,” she said. “If we cannot give them hope for the future, all our gains will be for naught.”



EAP - Thea A. Tolentino,
Investigator, Regional Security Office, Manila, Philippines

“For outstanding professionalism in the investigation of one of the largest human trafficking cases. Tolentino’s findings provided invaluable evidence to convict the perpetrator.”

In college, Tolentino trained to become a pre school teacher, but when the opportunity arose to work at the U.S. Embassy in Manila, she said she could not pass it up. That was 13 years ago, and her first job was as a surveillance detection analyst. In that position, it didn’t take long to realize that security analysis and investigations were her passion.

Her recent focus has been on the black market of fake documents, including U.S. visas, a thriving business in the Philippines. Many victims fall prey to scams and unscrupulous criminals out of desperation, she explained, and find themselves on the wrong side of the law, often robbed of their life savings. Tolentino said she has a second sense about people and their motives but mainly follows leads through careful analysis. In the case that earned her the FSN of the Year award, beginning in 2008, she was hot on the trail of forged documents to fill nursing positions in Colorado. Through interviews with victims, she helped assemble 75,000 pages of evidence leading to a 132-count indictment, a four-week trial and the conviction of the trafficking bosses. Her research, persistence and professionalism were extraordinary. Her contribution in fighting TIP crimes was deemed “invaluable,” as were her team-building skills in the joint Manila-Colorado investigations.

Throughout the process, Tolentino said she felt empathy for the victims. Projecting understanding and trustworthiness during interviews, they opened up to her. That she rescued them is minor consolation; she knows they may face more hardships. But then, she remembers her children and realizes that righting even one wrong can deter another. As a result, she said, people will think twice before embarking on the shadowy path of illegality.

She added that she hopes her country’s judicial authorities will pursue more cases like this one. “Victory comes in knowing that when a ring is dismantled and the perpetrators are put away, someone has been saved from falling deeper into helplessness,” she said.



SCA - Yelena Kogay,
Consular Assistant, Astana, Kazakhstan

“For her “perseverance, superb judgment and diplomatic skills in establishing a simplified visa reciprocity schedule that promotes travel to the United States.”

When Kogay moved to the United States’ new embassy in Kazakhstan’s newly designated capital city, Astana, far from family and friends and the FSN job she was accustomed to in Almaty, she said it was a leap into the unknown. Fortunately, she added, her husband also worked at the old embassy and was willing to take the chance.

The decision ended up being good for both of them, she now says. With two beautiful, Astana-born children who fill their world, the challenges of child care and settling into a home away from home have been surmounted. In the same spirit, and as the most senior consular section employee, she said she feels a responsibility to her team in tackling any challenge and seeking the best possible outcome. When one of her supervisors proposed extending validity of visas from one year to five years, Kogay was convinced this change would generate a large wave of goodwill toward the United States and be a great benefit for Kazakhstani travelers. Convincing the Kazakhstani government was another matter.

Nonetheless, Kogay went to work, calling on her network of contacts at the ministry who could back the measure politically and trusted her expertise. She arranged meetings for her superiors, including the ambassador, and sat in to help flesh out the newly envisioned visa reciprocity regime, which would also simplify Americans’ travel to Kazakhstan. Both sides relied upon Yelena to bridge the technical challenges, which required the Kazakhstani parliament to make changes to visa legislation.

Ultimately, the new visa regime went into effect, boosting travel between the United States and Kazakhstan, and Kogay and her consular team could take pride in advancing bilateral relations. She says she feels her biggest privilege was being part of discussions between the ambassador and ministry officials, and witnessing progress being made. The encouragement from her chiefs was a key ingredient, she readily acknowledges. “I wanted the doors between our countries to open a little wider, and I am proud that our team accomplished that.”

Life of Pie



Athens Hosts Bazaar

Information Specialist Prodromos Triantafyllou and Claire Laine, daughter of DCM Suzanne Lawrence, harvest olives from the more than 40 trees on the grounds of the U.S. Embassy in Athens during a celebration of Greek culture hosted there in November. The Community Liaison Office also held a bazaar that brought in more than 30 local vendors, and a Greek cultural group performed traditional Greek dances.

Photo by Andy Laine

American staff and family members of the U.S. Consulate General in Chennai, India display some of the more than 30 pies shared at the post's "Pie in Chennai" celebration. They included Texan chocolate-pecan pie, apple pie, pumpkin pie, sweet potato pie, California lemon meringue pie, Maine cranberry pie and a mango pie that used local fruit. Several officers shared their regional American customs and stories of family Thanksgiving celebrations, including touch football exploits and cooking mishaps.

Photo by T. G. Venkatesh



Best Workplace

At left, Under Secretary of State for Management Pat Kennedy represents the Department at the 2014 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® awards breakfast in December. The rankings, produced by the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, and Deloitte, placed State Department third this year among 19 large federal agencies, up from fourth in 2013.

Photo by Sam Kittner/Kittner.com



Embassy Madrid Celebrates Marine Corps Birthday

Guests enjoy the Marine Corps Ball at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, where the Marine Security Guard Detachment held its 239th birthday at Ambassador James Costos' residence, which features art from the Art in Embassies collection. The ambassador noted that his father, a Marine, would be particularly proud of his role as guest of honor at the ball.

Photo by Bruce Wheeler

Lighting Up Lima

The exterior of the U.S. Embassy in Lima, Peru, is bathed in a green glow from LED lights, part of an environmental initiative in which local U.S.-Peru binational centers participated. Peru in December hosted the 2014 U.N. Conference of Parties, involving talks on climate change. *Photo by Edward Sanchez*



Volunteers Improve Children's Shelter

Volunteers were all smiles in October, when 49 employees, families and friends of the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires participated in two days of cleaning and painting to improve the play space for the 30 children at a local children's shelter. The project, funded by the J. Kirby Simon Foreign Service Trust and volunteers, prompted Consul General Brendan O'Brien to praise volunteers' energy and how Argentine and American staff planned the event and worked side by side. *Photo by Nicolas Turro*

Retirements

Civil Service

Allen, Nelson C.
Beam, Mary H.
Brooks, Michael
Lankford, Colette R.
Palcher, Kathleen Shaw
Smith, Eddie A.
Spearl Jr., Charles F.
Tellis, Roland

Foreign Service

Andrew, Bruce M.
Bellegarde, Daniel P.
Burkholder, Lew A.
Burns, Jillian L.
Burns, William J.
Burton, Fletcher M.
Claussen, Peter R.
Cockburn, Carl S.
Coles, Ronald
Crouch, Gregory D.
Eicher, Stephanie
Engels, Ellen Connor
Fayen, Molly
Feldman, Roberta A.
Gabler, Bradley D.
Gutman, Bonnie S.
Haas, Martha J.
Hart, Paula J.

Jackson, Jeanine Elizabeth
Kaska Jr., Edward Wesley
Kay, James D.
Keegan, Howard Lee
Knudsen, Kenneth P.
Mc Ghee, Patrick D.
Moffatt, Michael A.
Montgomery, Neala D.
Montgomery, Steven A.
Nelson, Bruce R.
Nichols, Vonda G.
Noyes Jr., Nicholas
Pabst, Alma Rebeca
Palmer, Thomas M.
Pollard, Robert A.
Pratt, Elizabeth
Quick, Philana K.
Randall, Christopher J.
Robbins, Gary D.
Rodearmel, David
Smith, Virginia
Statts, Stephen R.
Swanson, Suzanne
Taylor, Pamela E.
Veghte, Joyce Luise
Wells, Douglas W.
Wilbur, Richard Morgan
Witt, Mary Hillers
Wolfson, Elizabeth M.
Wray, Eugenia Leola

Ethics Answers

Q: What is an appropriate way to celebrate a supervisor's birthday? The director of our office is turning 50, and we would like to bring a cake and some light refreshments to celebrate in the office. We would also like to buy her something special. We know that individually we are limited to the \$10-or-under rule for gifts to supervisors, but could we all get together and each donate \$10 toward one large gift, such as a briefcase or expensive pen?

A: Items such as food and refreshments to be shared in the office among several Department employees are permitted, so bringing a cake and some light refreshments to share would be fine. Other than that, however, the \$10 limit applies. Subordinates in the office cannot pool their funds to give their supervisor a tangible gift in excess of that amount, even if each employee donates less than \$10. Another rule would let you exceed the \$10 limit for an appropriate gift for an uncommon occasion of personal significance, such as marriage. However, a birthday does not qualify as an "uncommon occasion of personal significance."

Ethics Answers presents hypothetical ethical scenarios Department employees might face. For help with real ethics questions, email ethicsattorneymailbox@state.gov.

Education & Training

Area Studies

FSI adds new technologies, dynamism

By the FSI/SPAS/Area Studies Division

Whether they are going to a region for the first time or returning after a few years elsewhere, foreign affairs professionals look to FSI's Area Studies program to set them up for success. Area Studies brings students up to speed on countries of assignment and all elements that affect their jobs. That mission hasn't changed, but for students to get the most out of the study program, FSI has made classes smaller. Area Studies courses are now student-centered, graduate-level seminars, and course topics target specific job functions. Both FSOs and Civil Service employees will find the seminars to be even more indispensable.

Every two-week course now includes a regional overview to provide contextual understanding of the history, culture, politics and current events shaping the region, plus subregional and individual country segments featuring in-depth analyses that have a direct bearing on participants' portfolios at post.

The new teaching techniques that are now integral to Area Studies include virtual sessions with experts in the field and role-based exercises. Once students are at post, they can engage in follow-up webinars. The individual projects required by courses will be keyed to job responsibilities, challenging students to think creatively about problems and solutions. The goal is to tee up employees for success on the job by providing them the best substantive expertise to meet real-time challenges. The course is demanding and promises to deliver even more in return.

Recent graduates laud the courses, citing the:

- "Excellent breadth and depth of lectures; seems equally useful for those with extensive experiences as well as newcomers."
- The splitting of courses into regional, subregional and country-specific classes "and making it more interactive is great and a very positive step."

• In-depth analysis in the subregion and "the links to other countries not in the region and the commonalities or differences between countries."

• The program's uniqueness, since "no [other] place in the U.S., or really the world, could you bring together these views and people."

Area Studies is about professionalism and excellence, drawing on the most relevant and up-to-date knowledge to perform optimally overseas. Mark Pekala, dean of FSI's School of Professional and Area Studies, and most recently the U.S. Ambassador to Latvia, praised the depth of the new program. "As professionals, we all want, and we have an obligation, to arrive at post fully prepared to excel at our duties," he said. "The new Area Studies will help officers and specialists of all grades do just that. This is a major step forward."

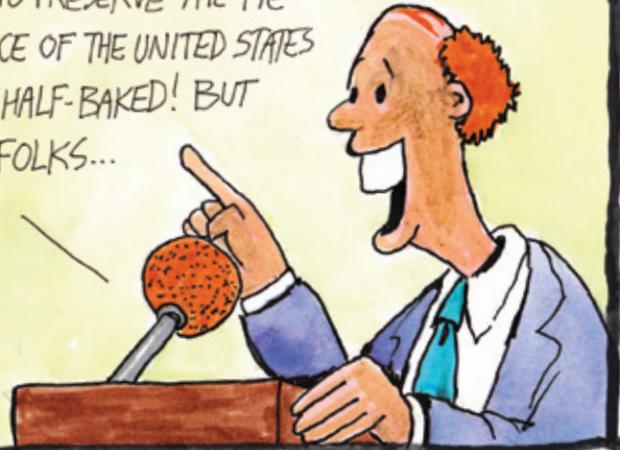
The next Area Studies seminars are scheduled for Feb. 23-March 6, 2015. For additional information, visit <http://reg.fsi.state.gov/>. 

NEW FROM THE BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL PIES AND PIE-EATING AFFAIRS



ACTING DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR APPLE PIE LINUS ZIPPLE LAUNCHES THIS YEAR'S STRATEGIC PIE PERFORMANCE PLAN

OUR PLAN TO PRESERVE THE PIE PREDOMINANCE OF THE UNITED STATES CANNOT BE HALF-BAKED! BUT SERIOUSLY, FOLKS...



A REMINDER: HAVE YOU INCLUDED MANDATORY MENTION OF THE DELICIOUSNESS OF PIE IN YOUR AMBASSADOR'S TALKING POINTS?

... SO SANCTIONS AGAINST YOUR REGIME WILL BE TIGHTENED - BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, DON'T YOU JUST LOVE CHERRY PIE?



AS A PROVEN TEAM-BUILDING EXERCISE COUNTRY TEAM "EXTREME PIE-EATING CONTESTS ARE ENCOURAGED - REMEMBER TO AGREE ON A SAFEWORD BEFOREHAND...

(GAK!) NO MORE BANANA CREAM! VOUCHER! VOUCHER!



"PIE AWARENESS MONTH" WILL BE OBSERVED WITH THE RANDOM SUBSTITUTION OF THE WORD "PIE" IN ALL STATE DEPARTMENT CABLES.

IT SAYS: "POST IS INSTRUCTED TO PIE HOST GOVERNMENT AT PIE APPROPRIATE LEVEL TO PIE PIE PIE URGENT PIE IMMINENT DISASTER PIE..."

NOT SURE WHAT IT MEANS, BUT SURE GETS YOU THINKING ABOUT PIE, DOESN'T IT?



QUESTIONS ABOUT PIE PROMOTION PREPAREDNESS? CONTACT YOUR POST PIE LIAISON OFFICER!

PIE - IT'S NOT JUST FOR DESSERT ANY MORE. IT'S IN YOUR WORK REQUIREMENTS!



AGGELER 2014

Appointments

Arnold A. Chacon
Director General of the
Foreign Service and Director
of Human Resources



Brent Robert Hartley
U.S. Ambassador to
Slovenia



Jess L. Baily
U.S. Ambassador
to Macedonia



**Erica J. Barks-
Ruggles**
U.S. Ambassador
to Rwanda



Virginia E. Palmer
U.S. Ambassador to
Malawi



Craig B. Allen
U.S. Ambassador
to Brunei



Craig B. Allen (SFS) of Virginia is the new U.S. Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam. Previously, he was the deputy assistant secretary for China and for Asia at the Department of Commerce. His overseas posts as commercial officer include Johannesburg, Beijing (twice), Tokyo and Taipei. He also served as commercial officer at the National Center for the Asia-Pacific Economic Corporation. Before joining the Foreign Commercial Service, he taught English in Japan and Taiwan.

Jess L. Baily (SFS) of Ohio is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia. Most recently, he was DCM in Ankara. Prior to that, he was the director of the Office of Southeast European Affairs. His other domestic assignments include director of the Office of United Nations Political Affairs and director of the Washington Foreign Press Center. He led the Regional Reconstruction Team in Erbil, Iraq. His overseas postings as a public diplomacy officer include The Hague, Ankara, Bangkok, Dakar and Dhaka.

Erica J. Barks-Ruggles (SFS) of Minnesota is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Rwanda. Previously, she was consul general in Cape Town and, before that, served as deputy to the U.S. permanent representative to the U.N. She also served as deputy assistant secretary of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and director of African affairs at the National Security Council. Her other overseas posts include Oslo and Chennai (Madras).

Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat (SFS) of New Jersey is the new U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Most recently, she was deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Human Resources. She was previously ambassador to Senegal and Guinea-Bissau and, before that, office director for India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan in the Bureau of South Asian Affairs. She also served as DCM in both Bridgetown and Lilongwe. Other posts include Casablanca, New Delhi, Marseille and Bamako.

Robert Francis Cekuta (SFS) of New York is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Azerbaijan. Most recently, he was principal deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Energy Resources. He previously served as deputy assistant secretary for energy, sanctions, and commodities in the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs. In addition to other jobs in Washington working trade, development, energy and stabilization/growth issues, he served overseas in Kabul, Tokyo, Berlin, Vienna, Baghdad, Johannesburg, Sanaa, and Tirana, where he was DCM.

Arnold A. Chacon (SFS) of Virginia is the new Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources. He has been U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala, DCM in Madrid and DCM in Quito. He also served in Washington as director of the Office of Andean Affairs and deputy executive secretary, and in New York at USUN. His assignments overseas include Honduras, Italy, Chile, Peru, Mexico.



George Albert Krol
U.S. Ambassador
to Kazakhstan



P. Michael McKinley
U.S. Ambassador
to Afghanistan



Pamela Leora Spratlen
U.S. Ambassador
to Uzbekistan



Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat
U.S. Ambassador
to Bangladesh



Richard Rahul Verma
U.S. Ambassador
to India



Robert Francis Cekuta
U.S. Ambassador
to Azerbaijan



Brent Robert Hartley (SFS) of Oregon is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Slovenia. Most recently, he was deputy assistant secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs. Prior to that, he was director for European Security and Political Affairs, country director for Pakistan and senior advisor at the National Counterterrorism Center. His overseas postings include Kabul, Brussels (NATO), Rome and Cairo.

George Albert Krol (SFS) of New Jersey is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan. Previously, he was ambassador to Uzbekistan and, before that, deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. He also was ambassador to Belarus, faculty advisor at the National War College and director of the Office of Russian Affairs. His overseas postings include Minsk (as DCM), Kyiv, Moscow, St. Petersburg, New Delhi and Warsaw.

P. Michael McKinley (SFS) of Virginia is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Most recently, he was deputy ambassador in Kabul. He served as ambassador to Colombia and, earlier, as ambassador to Peru and DCM at the U.S. Mission to the EU in Brussels. He has been deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. His overseas postings include Kampala, Maputo, London and La Paz.

Virginia E. Palmer (SFS) of Virginia is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi. She previously held DCM positions in Pretoria and Hanoi. In Washington, she was deputy coordinator for counter terrorism and director for economic policy in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Her overseas posts include Nairobi, Hong Kong, Harare, Beijing and Calgary.

Pamela Leora Spratlen (SFS) of California is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Uzbekistan. Previously, she was ambassador to the Kyrgyzstan and DCM in Kazakhstan. Before that, she was director of the Office for Western European Affairs and director of the Office for Central Asian Affairs. Her overseas postings include Vladivostok, Moscow, Paris (OECD) and Guatemala City. Earlier in her career, she worked for the California State Legislature.

Richard Rahul Verma of Maryland is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of India. He is a former assistant secretary for Legislative Affairs in the Department and served as a principal advisor to Secretary of State Clinton. Most recently he was senior counselor at Stepoe & Johnson LLP and the Albright Stonebridge Group. Earlier in his career, he worked in the Senate as senior national security advisor to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. He served on active duty in the U.S. Air Force from 1994 to 1998.

Appointments



Frank A. Rose
Assistant Secretary
for Verification and
Compliance



Judith Beth Cefkin
U.S. Ambassador
to Fiji



James D. Pettit
U.S. Ambassador to
Moldova



Mark Gilbert
U.S. Ambassador to
New Zealand



Judith Beth Cefkin (SFS) of Colorado is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Fiji, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Tuvalu. Previously, she was senior advisor for Burma in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. She has also served as DCM in Bangkok and in Sarajevo, and before that was director of the Office of Nordic-Baltic Affairs. Her overseas postings include Manila, Paris, Bangkok and Mexico City.

Mark Gilbert of Florida is the new U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand and Independent State of Samoa. He formerly served as a managing director of UBS, culminating a three-decade career in finance, including positions at Barclays and Goldman Sachs. He worked for the Democratic National Committee and served on the Obama for America National Finance Committee. Before beginning his business career, he was a professional baseball player. He is the first former major leaguer to become a U.S. Ambassador.

James D. Pettit (SFS) of Virginia is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova. Previously, he served as deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. He also was director of the Office of the Post Liaison/Visa Office and director of the Washington Processing Center in the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. Overseas, he served as DCM in Kyiv and Consul General in Moscow and in Vienna. His other posts include Taipei, Guadalajara, and two earlier tours in Moscow.

Frank A. Rose of Massachusetts is the new Assistant Secretary for Verification and Compliance. He was deputy assistant secretary for space and defense policy. Before that, he was a staff member of the House Armed Services Committee and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. He has held several positions at the Department of Defense and served as a national security analyst at the Science Applications International Corporation and as a legislative correspondent for then-U.S. Senator John Kerry.

Obituaries



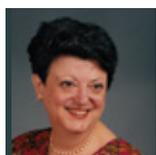
John Ellis Bean, 88, a retired USAID employee, died of pneumonia and heart failure Nov. 18 in Bellevue, Wash. He served in the Army during World War II before joining USAID. He worked as an education administrator in Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen and

Lesotho. In retirement he was a faculty member for Alaska Pacific University and Xi'an International Studies University in China. His more than 50,000 hours of volunteerism included missionary work in Australia and teacher training in India.



Natale "Nat" H. Bellocchi, 87, a retired FSO and former ambassador to Botswana, died Nov. 16 in Bethesda, Md. An Asia expert, he served in India, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam and Laos. At the time of retirement in 1995, he was chairman of the American

Institute in Taiwan. He continued to play an important part in the Taiwan-U.S. relationship and frequently published articles in the Taipei Times and Liberty Times in Taiwan. He was a Korean War veteran.



Mary Ann Birdas, 83, a Civil Service employee, died June 9 in Bethesda, Md. after 63 years of federal government service. She began her career with the Civil Service Commission and joined the Department in 1954. She was attached to the office of the legal

advisor in Washington and held assignments at the U.S. Mission in New York and Geneva. She enjoyed and supported the theater and museums and singing in her church choir.



Robert Williamson Boteler, 81, a retired Civil Service employee, died peacefully in his sleep Dec. 23 in Laurel, Md. He was in the U.S. Army for 10 years before joining the Department in 1967 as a diplomatic security officer until his retirement in 1986. He enjoyed

fishing, hunting and bowling.



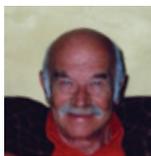
Thomas F. Conlon, 90, a retired FSO, died of complications from pneumonia Dec. 31 in Sterling, Va. He served in the U.S. Army-Air Force in New Guinea during World War II and joined the Department in 1949. His overseas postings included Havana, Surabaya, Singapore,

Saigon, Le Havre, Manila, Nice, Canberra and Bangkok. After retiring in 1981, he was a translator and lecturer. He loved his family and enjoyed travel, photography, and bookbinding.



Phillip L. Goodwin, 74, of Odenton and Ocean City, Md., died in his sleep Dec. 30. He was retired from Voice of America where he worked as a radio engineer for more than 30 years, beginning in 1964. From 1968 to 1972 he was stationed in Beirut, Lebanon. In

retirement, he continued to consult for VOA. He loved boating, shooting, home cooking and spending time with his family. He was a proud member of the Prince George's County Trap and Skest Club.



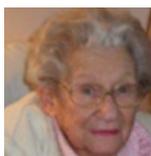
Ken Keller, 78, a retired FSO and Civil Service employee, died Dec. 22 at his ranch in Santander de Quilichao, Colombia. He was in Army counterintelligence during the Korean War and joined the Department in 1961. His postings included Ankara, Budapest, Berlin, Guayaquil, Ottawa, Bogotá and

Seoul during a career that spanned 45 years. His last assignment was as NAS director at U.S. Embassy Quito. Among other job forays, he was executive officer of the Kootenai Tribal Government in Idaho.



John J. La Mazza, 80, a retired FSO, died Oct. 4 in Chandler, Ariz. He served in Italy, Jordan, Libya, El Salvador, Bolivia, South Korea, Spain, Argentina and Japan. Prior to his State career, he served four years in the Army in Germany. He retired in 1998 and managed the local Meals on Wheels program.

He moved to Arizona in 2008 to be closer to family. He enjoyed hiking, public and foreign policy, reading Arabic, translating Japanese haiku and the New York Yankees.



Constance McCready Rush, 93, a retired FSO, died Sept. 11 in Cranston, R.I. Commissioned as a Navy officer during World War II, she worked on the top-secret project ULTRA, which decoded German radio traffic. She joined the Department in 1945 and was posted to London where she met and

married FSO James T. Rush. Forced to resign, she accompanied her husband until his retirement in 1969. Several years later, she rejoined the Foreign Service and served until 1985 at posts in Haiti, Panama, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and Mexico. She gave generously to charities, especially those affecting the American Indians.



Astrid Margrethe Ravenholt, 83, a retired Foreign Service nurse, died Nov. 25 at her home in Seattle, Wash. She served in Bamako, Seoul, Rio de Janeiro, Vientiane, Saigon, Lagos, Rome, Colombo, Tokyo and Kuwait City. In retirement she became

involved in the practice of reiki and stayed active with Danish-American activities in the Seattle area.



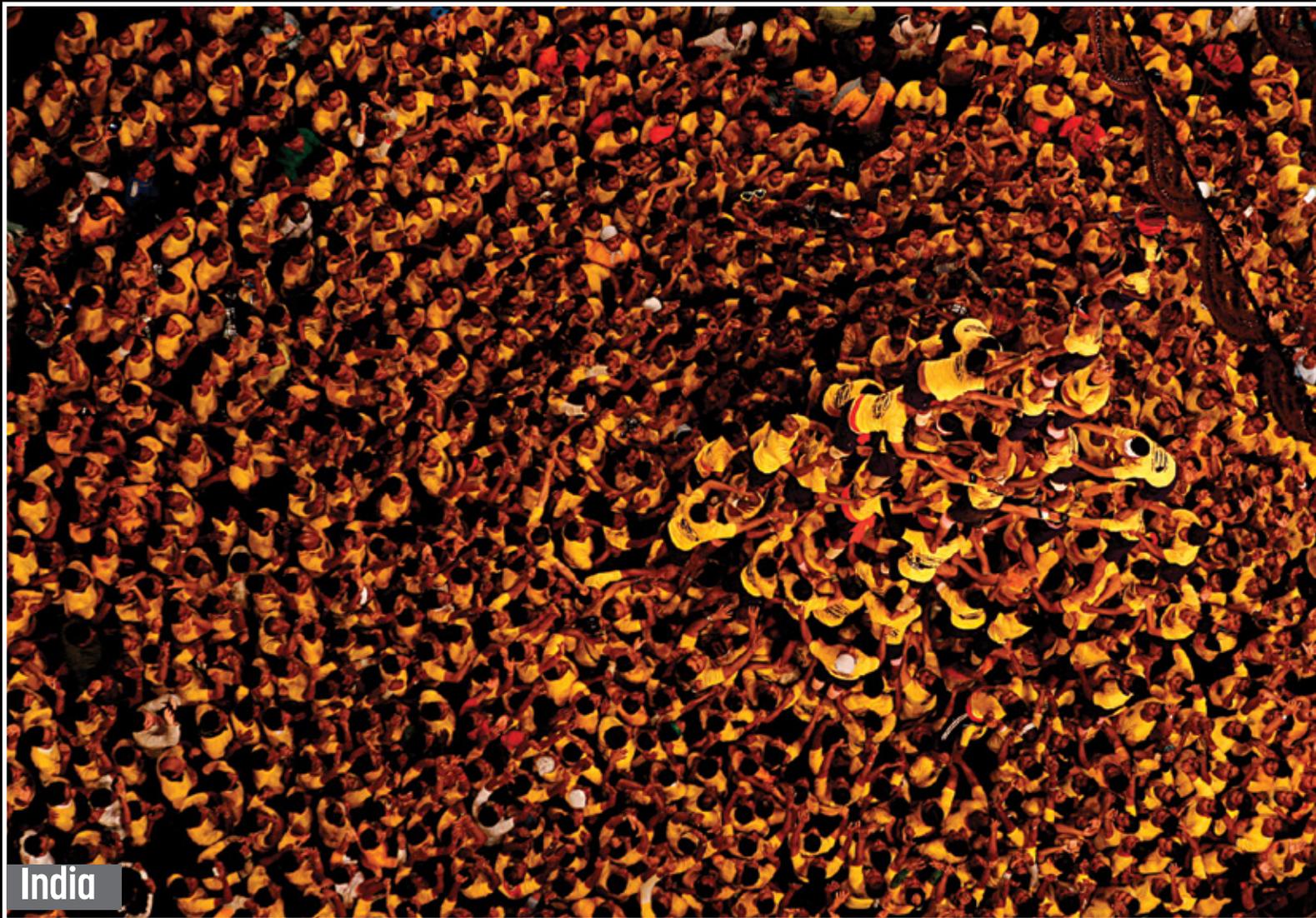
Alice Regan, 64, died Dec. 19 in Arlington, Va., after a year-long battle with lung cancer. She joined the Department in 1998 in the information technology office at the Consulate General in Ciudad Juárez. After working for the Department of Defense, she worked at Embassy Beijing as an

eligible family member and later in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. Upon retirement in 2011, she moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she enjoyed outdoor activities, especially biking and hiking. Before her Civil Service career, she accompanied her husband, retired Foreign Service officer Michael Regan, to postings in Barranquilla, Guadalajara, Taipei and London.

Questions concerning employee deaths should be directed to the Office of Casualty Assistance at (202) 736-4302. Inquiries concerning deaths of retired employees should be directed to the Office of Retirement at (202) 261-8960. For specific questions on submitting an obituary, please contact Michael Hahn at hahnmg@state.gov or (202) 663-2230.



Peru



India

End State

Peru Pg. 37

Machu Picchu, a 15th-century Inca village located on a mountain ridge 2,430 m (7,970 ft.) above sea level in Urubamba Province is considered one of the New Seven Wonders of the World.

Photo by Pedro Szekely



Kazakhstan Pg. 9

A high dynamic range photo highlights beautiful landscape surrounding Big Almaty Lake, which is located just south of Almaty.

Photo by Mariusz Kluzniak



India Pg. 36

Festival attendees mass together to create a giant human pyramid during Janmashtami celebrations in Mumbai.

Photo by Sandeepachetan.com Travel Photography



Afghanistan Pg. 2

An Afghan woman waits to be processed through a medical entry control point at Bagram Air Field southwest of Kabul.

Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Christopher Willis



Kazakhstan



Afghanistan



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