STATE MAGAZINE

state.gov/statemag
September 2015

STATE MAGAZINE

Isaac D. Pacheco
Editor-in-Chief
pachecoi2@state.gov

Ed Warner
Deputy Editor
warneres@state.gov

Luis A. Jimenez, Jr.
Art Director
jimenezla@state.gov

Michael Hahn
Associate Editor
hahnmg@state.gov

Contacting Us
2401 E Street NW, Room H236
Washington DC 20522
statemagazine@state.gov
Phone: (202) 261-8163
Fax: (202) 663-1769

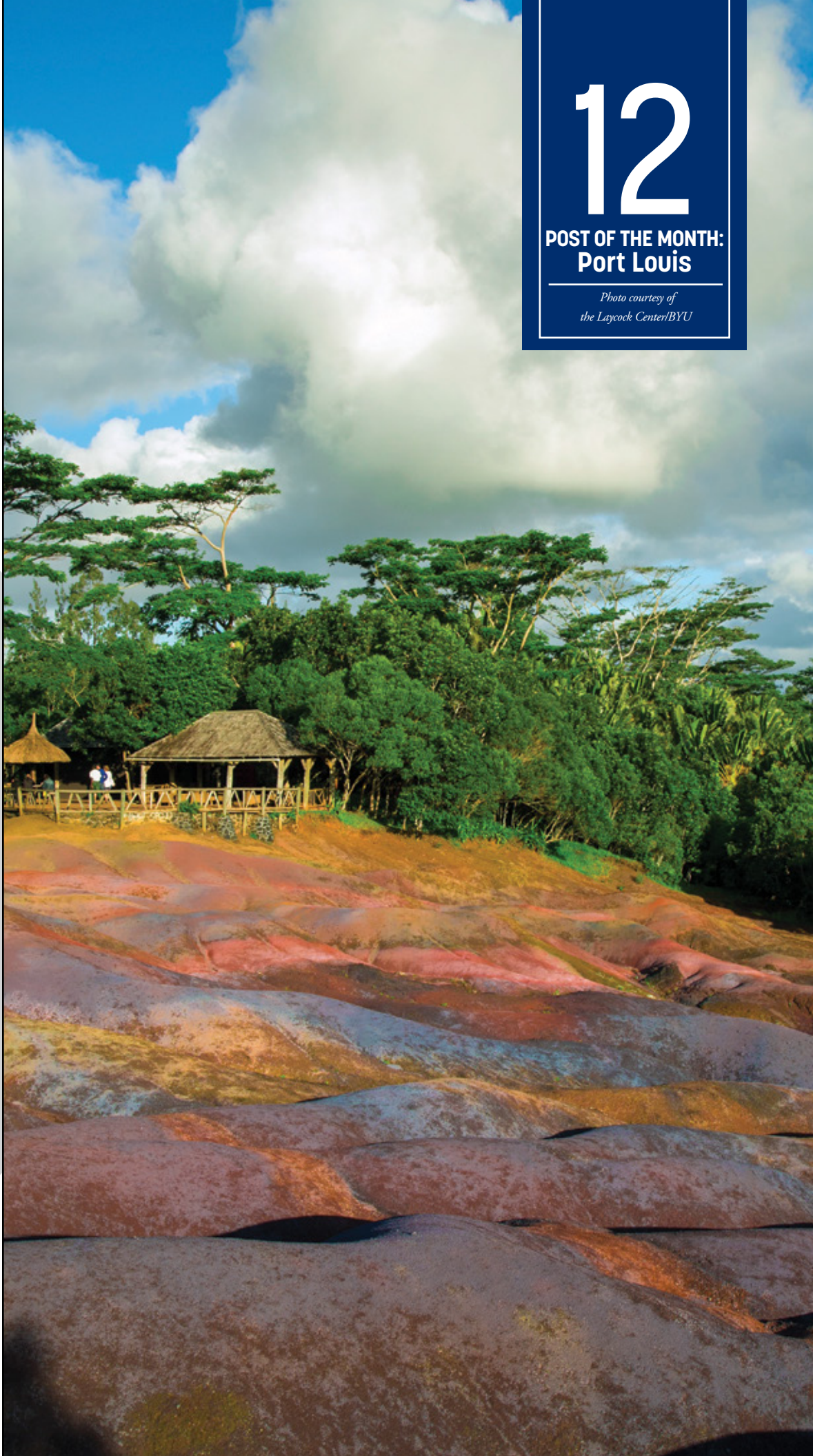
Change of Address
Send changes of addresses to our staff using the contact information above. Please include your previous mailing address.

Submissions
For details on submitting articles to *State Magazine*, request our guidelines by email at statemagazine@state.gov or download them from http://www.state.gov/statemag. *State Magazine* does not purchase freelance material.

Deadlines
The submission deadline for the November issue is September 25. The deadline for the December issue is October 25.

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

state.gov/statemag
facebook.com/statemagazine
Twitter.com/statemag
flickr.com/statemagazine
state.gov/rss/channels/statemag.xml



12
POST OF THE MONTH:
Port Louis

Photo courtesy of the Laycock Center/BYU

Contents

Features

8 Children's Issues
Office addresses abductions and adoptions

10 Doing Time in Tijuana
Consulate helps imprisoned Americans

18 Mountain Ghost
Staffer aids in search of missing WWII aircraft

20 Watchful Eyes
Election observers track democracy

22 East Meets West
Center promotes understanding

24 Earthquake Aftermath
Embassy Kathmandu provides support

27 Work-Life Balance
HR division addresses family needs

28 Stop the Presses
State Magazine print era comes to an end

30 Navigating Digital
Tutorial explains magazine's new interactive layout

38 Entrepreneurs' Summit
Nurturing innovation and startups in SE Asia

Columns

2 Direct from the D.G.

3 Diversity Notes

4 In the News

7 America The Beautiful

32 After Hours

34 In Brief

34 Appointments

35 Retirements

36 Safety Scene

37 Lying in State

39 Obituaries

40 End State

Photo by cAmelia Shaw

Photo by Robert Lindell

State Department photo

Direct from the D.G.

ARNOLD CHACON,
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE

The Long View: A Workforce to Shape the Future

It's been a busy eight months since I came on board as your Director General. The secretary gave the Department clear strategic direction, and the Bureau of Human Resources (HR) held an offsite meeting to operationalize that vision. There, it set realizable goals that advance our mission—to recruit, retain and sustain a diverse and capable workforce equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities we will face.

We are also taking action on things that immediately affect employees. We celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and plan to create an Office of Accommodations and Accessibility to intensify the Department's ADA efforts. Under Deputy Secretary Higginbottom's leadership, the Department launched the WorkLife Wellness Leadership Council to advance employee and family wellness. I meet regularly with affinity groups and welcome continued collaboration with AFSA's new leadership.

But we must do more. Here are some examples of HR's priority initiatives:

• Diversity: Promoting diversity and inclusion is the right and smart thing to do, as those objectives drive innovation. Employees with broad experiences add value and make us stronger. Several Department programs serve as effective recruitment tools to bring in top-notch, diverse talent. But we must step up our outreach efforts to continue to recruit the best people.

• Overseas Comparability Pay: We continue to engage Congress for permanent authority to ensure American employees serving overseas—often in dangerous places or away from their families—receive full comparability pay.

• Flexible Hiring Authorities—Matching People, Skills, Positions and Needs: To recruit and retain the best, and meet shifting requirements and sudden needs for additional staff, we must tap into and, with Congressional approval, expand our hiring authorities.

• Expanded Employment Opportunities for Family Members: Families are the unsung heroes of the Department and have their own challenges and needs. Many seek meaningful work and have much needed skills. Hiring them when we can is good for everyone.

• Locally Employed (LE) Staff Retirement: The variable contribution plan provides a lump-sum payment to LE Staff at posts with limited options for end-of-service benefits, ensuring our colleagues' financial security.

• Streamlined Foreign Service Employee Evaluation System and Improved Civil Service Performance Reviews: Our employee evaluation system will focus on goals, outcomes and employee impact on policy, programs and people. The reforms emphasize professional development and leadership capacity.

• Improvements to Bidding and Assignment Process: We increased detail assignments and training opportunities, and are now looking at options to modernize FSBid (the FS bidding system) to ensure it offers more reliable, accurate and real-time information.

• Better Communication and Customer Service: Communication and customer service are critical to everything we do. We therefore established a strategic communications unit to improve internal and external communication.

Many of these initiatives will be accomplished quickly, others will take sustained effort. But I'm confident we'll succeed. With innovation and continued commitment to our people, we will develop and support a workforce able to shape the future. ◻

Arnold A. Chacon

Diversity Notes

JOHN M. ROBINSON
OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

The 2015 Diversity Reader is Now Available

The Office of Civil Rights (S/OCR) is pleased to present the 2015 Diversity Reader, a collection of 10 highly rated Diversity Notes columns, serving as our signature stand-alone training tool for Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and diversity.

The titles of columns in the 2015 Diversity Reader include:

- Critical Conversations (Effective Feedback)
- Millennials and Boomers Converse (Intergenerational Diversity)
- Look Before You Tweet (Social Media Dos and Don'ts)
- The Speed of Trust (Good Leadership)
- What Does it Take to Get Promoted Around Here? (Career Advancement)
- I Never Thought I'd See the Day (Evolution of Civil Rights)
- Diversity: An Essential Tenet for Emerging Leaders (More Good Leadership)
- What to Wear: Diversity and Fashion at State (Unwritten Rules on Dress Code)
- What is a Minority? Let Us Count the Ways (Changing Terminology)
- Managing Up for Diversity and Success (Career Advancement)

In 2008, the S/OCR began publishing Diversity Notes, a monthly column in State Magazine. With Department of State personnel dispersed around the world, S/OCR hoped that the column's provocative titles and lively topics would engage Department employees more positively in issues of equity, fairness and inclusion. And frankly, we in S/OCR wanted to transform our image in the minds of the Department's workforce.

Many viewed S/OCR as a complaint-driven, reactive bureaucracy. In reality, our office mission is to fully engage in proactive diversity and inclusion initiatives while also maintaining a just and fair workplace for all. S/OCR serves as a resource to managers and employees by providing information and guidance to reduce conflict and enhance professional success.

These monthly columns are immensely popular, and many managers have informed S/OCR staff that the advice in them is quite helpful. S/OCR believes, now even more firmly, that the timely provision of accurate policy information and sage advice will help reduce workplace conflict. Further, if gentle reminders from Diversity Notes can prevent civil rights violations or career-ending bad moves, so much the better.

For the first Diversity Reader, S/OCR asked senior leaders from the Bureau of Human Resources (HR), the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to rate the top 10 best Diversity Notes published before April 2011. The reviewers used their own criteria, such as which articles were most helpful, most informative or best written. The unaltered results of their ratings were published as the 2011 Diversity Reader.

We used the same process and format for the 2015 version and again thank raters from HR, FSI, the EEOC and USAID for their time and energy in selecting the 2015 entries. We trust that you will find these columns similarly thought-provoking, helpful and illuminating.

This publication wouldn't have been possible without the dedication of my staff. I extend my thanks to the current and former S/OCR staff members who served as first drafters, including Tsehaitu (Tubi) Retta, editor of the Diversity Notes monthly column and the 2015 Diversity Reader.

The Diversity Reader is a multipurpose training and reference tool that may be obtained by downloading it from our website or by contacting our office (diversity@state.gov) for a hard copy. ◻

In the News

July 4th Celebrations

U.S. posts abroad, including the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and the U.S. Consulate General in Guayaquil, held Independence Day events this year, as did several offices in Washington, D.C., including the Office of Protocol.

Consulate General Guayaquil's reception featured an exhibit of American handicrafts, including pieces handmade by the mother of Consul General Tricia Fietz. For the exhibit, Ecuador's Museum of Modern Art and Anthropology dedicated a large hall to eight full-size quilts, seven wall hangings and a quilted tablecloth, all made by Toni Fietz, an avid quilter from New York who passed away in 2012.

One framed quilt displayed a project Toni Fietz had begun, with a sign saying "please touch this" to give visitors a better understanding of the quilting process. The public affairs section provided a tape loop of a slideshow that showed the importance of quilting in U.S. culture. The consulate also donated to the museum a collection of books on quilting. After the reception, attended by Ambassador Adam Namm and 300 guests, the quilt show was opened to the public for three weeks.

The U.S. Embassy in Beirut, meanwhile, celebrated Independence Day on June 15, due to the impending holiday of Ramadan and other factors. The event was attended by more than 2,000 guests, including Deputy Prime Minister Samir Mokbel and member of parliament Ali Bazzi, and featured the presentation of colors by post's Marine security guards, the first time they'd done so since September 6, 1989, when the post was evacuated for security reasons.

At the event, Ambassador David Hale spoke of the bilateral relationship, noting that it dates to "before the independence of my country, when merchant ships from Boston, Massachusetts, visited Beirut port to do business."

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., at the Harry S Truman Building, the Office of the Chief of Protocol invited Washington's diplomatic community to a July 4th celebration reminicient of the Washington Nationals ballpark. Ambassador Peter Selfridge welcomed nearly 400 foreign dignitaries and their families, while Nationals manager Matt Williams led the diplomatic corps in a rousing rendition of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," accompanied by the Nationals Park organist.

At the Independence Day reception, Consul General Fietz poses with one of her mother's quilts. *Photo by Shayna Cram*

The ballpark-themed event featured batting simulators, popcorn and a rendition of the Nationals' famous Presidents Race. Guests were escorted down a "green carpet," reminiscent of a carefully mowed infield. They ate Cracker Jacks, ice cream, soft pretzels, apple pie and hot dogs with regional twists.

Attendees loved the virtual reality batting game, and there was a line throughout the event for the photo booth, where the photos became the ambassadors' personal baseball cards. Since no Fourth of July party is complete without fireworks, attendees had the best view in town—the HST balcony overlooking the National Mall. ◘

Volunteers Assist in São Paulo

During the Department's worldwide visa systems outage, consular staff at the U.S. Consulate General in São Paulo volunteered for a day at Casa Liberdade ("Freedom House"), which when it opens in November will be a safe house catering exclusively to girls rescued from sexual exploitation or sex trafficking. Staffers painted the girls' bedrooms or did gardening.

The effort was prompted by Visa Chief Antonia Cassarino, who had found section staff "kind of down" during the outage, and so suggested they do something positive for the community. Therefore, on June 25, three FSOs and five Locally Employed staff went to work, using paint brushes, rakes and hedge clippers. "Giving the girls a nice place to live is good for the heart," said Marisa Payne, a Brazilian visa section employee.

The volunteers did jobs that needed doing and inspired shelter staff. "It gives us encouragement that we all can do this, that we are supported and that we are not in this alone," said Becky Anderson, the coordinator of Casa Liberdade.

The shelter was once a home for at-risk youth, and a youth who had lived there then is now a member of the post's local guard force. "It's awesome to think that the very house where we are volunteering was the beginning of such a great success story, and one that hits so close to home," said Aaron Barnard-Luce, a first-tour vice consul. ◘

After volunteering at the shelter, members of the Consulate General São Paulo staff posed for a photo. They are, from left, Foreign Service officer Aaron Barnard-Luce, Locally Employed staff member Marisa Payne and Foreign Service officers Todd Jurkowski and Kofi Gwira. *Photo by Arthur Costa*

FS Youth Recognized at Awards Ceremony

In July, Director General Arnold Chacon, the Family Liaison Office (FLO) and the Foreign Service Youth Foundation (FSYF) presented Foreign Service children with awards for their art, essay writing, video production, community service and scholarly achievements. Children whose parents are serving or have served at an unaccompanied post were recognized, as were awardees of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) Scholarship Merit Award program.

Ambassador Chacon reminded awardees that, as Foreign Service youth, they are "growing up with remarkable experiences, perspectives and challenges" that will shape the adults they become.

This year's FSYF art contest theme was "The World Before Me." Winners in each of three age categories received cash prizes from the State Department Federal Credit Union.

The essay contest challenged Foreign Service youth to describe a scene from a current or prior post that taught them something important about themselves. In it, they identified the post and what was familiar and different to them. Six winners, three in each age category, received cash prizes sponsored by McGrath Real Estate Services.

The annual worldwide kid vid contest, sponsored by FSYF and FSI's Overseas Briefing Center (OBC), asked students ages 10–18 to produce a DVD about life at an overseas post from a young person's perspective. Winners received cash prizes from Peake Management. The videos become part of the OBC's permanent audiovisual collection.

Each year, FSYF's community service contest recognizes Foreign Service youth who demonstrate outstanding volunteer efforts for their communities or peers. This year, two winners received prize money. In addition, one honorable mention was granted. Clements Worldwide sponsors these awards.

After receiving their awards, the FS awardees pose for a photo with Director General Arnold Chacon, third from right at front. They are, at front from left, Adriana Singh, Moses Smith, Caroline Toyryla, Cora Deininger and Ari Albalak. At back from left are Gregor Chisholm, Erik Enstrom Schofer, Patrick Odlum and FLO Director Susan Frost. *Photo by James Pan*

The FSYF also awarded two high school students academic merit awards. These awards were co-sponsored by FSYF and GEICO Federal Insurance.

Information about the FSYF and AAFSW awards programs can be found on the organizations' websites.

Since 2006, the Department has distributed medals and certificates of recognition to the children of parents serving overseas on unaccompanied assignments. Additional information about FLO's Unaccompanied Tours program is available online. ◘

Missions in Africa Host FMCS Official

To encourage harmonious labor relations in Botswana and South Africa, the Regional Labor Office at the U.S. Consulate in Johannesburg and the Bureau of International Information Programs' U.S. Speaker Program teamed up on the visit of Scot Beckenbaugh, deputy director of the U.S. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS).

Embassy Botswana's political/economic and public affairs sections coordinated a radio interview, university presentation and workshops that Beckenbaugh led. The workshops dealt with mediation and involved private and public sector union representatives, Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs mediators, and the government of Botswana's public sector negotiators. They addressed alternative dispute resolution for managing labor negotiations and focused on mutually beneficial outcomes. Political Officer Forrest Graham said participants left the sessions "prepared to resume public sector wage negotiations equipped with a sense of comity previously absent from their talks."

The Regional Labor Office and Mission South Africa's public affairs section organized separate sessions with the South African Department of Labor, employers' associations, labor unions and other groups, including the American and South African chambers of commerce. The FMCS speaker shared U.S. information on such topics as centralized bargaining, establishing and enforcing a national minimum wage, and labor mediation and arbitration. Regional Labor Officer Brandi James found that Beckenbaugh was especially effective in showing participants how to spread the responsibility of managing labor relations and conflict among stakeholders. As James noted, "Our South African counterparts walked away from the sessions understanding that relationship-building is the only sustainable way to calm South Africa's labor environment."

Regional Labor Officer Brandi James and FMCS Deputy Director Beckenbaugh, first and second from left, respectively, pose with University of Johannesburg law faculty. *Photo by Pamela Mfobo*

The FMCS' engagement in Botswana and South Africa has helped the U.S. Embassy in Gaborone and Mission South Africa promote healthy labor relations and made clear to their host-nation counterparts that their labor relations challenges are not unique, and that employer-worker conflict is manageable. ◘

In the News

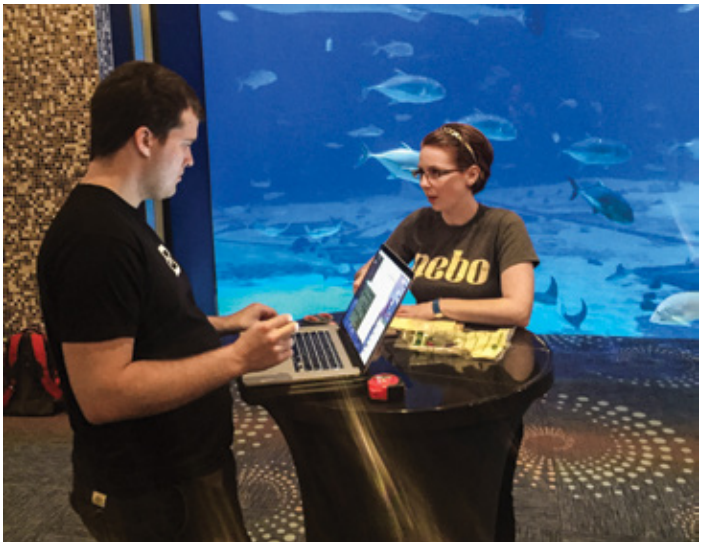
Fishackathon Promotes Sustainable Fishing

High-tech and sustainable fishing came together at the second annual Fishackathon held in June around World Oceans Day by the Secretary's Office of Global Partnerships (S/GP). The event brings together volunteer computer programmers for a weekend to create tools to address challenges in sustainable fishing around the world.

Since its launch last year, Fishackathon has grown from events in five cities around the United States to a dozen cities worldwide, including in Asia, Europe and Latin America. Welcoming receptions were held on a Friday in each city, and over the next two days, participants developed solutions to problem statements solicited from fisheries experts around the world. At the end of the weekend, teams presented their work and an expert panel of judges nominated a winner for each site.

The more than 40 solutions created by this year's teams included an app that records and logs measurements of fish as they're caught, an interactive game to teach children about sustainable fishing and a platform that displays fish laws and regulations based on detecting the user's location.

After the Fishackathon, with S/GP's support, a global panel of mobile technology and fisheries experts reviewed the winning solutions from each site and selected two grand prize-winning teams. The "people's choice" grand prize was a paid trip for two team members to showcase their solution at the Our Ocean conference in Valparaíso, Chile, in October. The second grand prize, for the team with the best mobile app, was a paid trip for two team members to the 2016 Groupe Speciale Mobile Association's Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, next spring.



Volunteer computer coders from the Atlanta Fishackathon work on their solution at the Georgia Aquarium. *Photo by Bale Dalton*

"By tapping into the passion, curiosity, creativity and skills of coders and technologists, Fishackathon can cultivate new advocates and create new tools for small, scalable and sustainable fisheries," said S/GP's Deputy Special Representative Thomas Debass.

Representatives from S/GP were present at all of the event's domestic sites to encourage and support participants. More information is available online or by contacting S/GP at partnerships@state.gov.

Bike Ride in KL Covers 250 Miles

U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia Joseph Y. Yun and 15 members of the embassy community bicycled more than 250 miles from May 31 to June 5, traveling from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore in heat often topping 100 degrees to promote environmental awareness and green technologies, while fostering good relations with Malaysians outside of the capital city. This effort included six scheduled outreach events and local conservation efforts, and included tree plantings, pouring beneficial bacteria into a river and environmental-themed events at two American Spaces.

There were also stops to take photos with students, eat local fruits and enjoy local culinary delights such as coconut milkshakes. In Melaka and during the daylong ride from Pontian to Johor Bahru, members of local cycling groups accompanied the team for group rides.

The ride received broad, positive media coverage. Local print and online media outlets published 39 articles about the journey. The stories emphasized environmental awareness and highlighted the U.S.-Malaysia relationship. The post's social media team posted 31 separate items on Facebook, which gained 246,000 views, 18,350 clicks and 6,470 likes and comments.

Throughout the ride, the ambassador and members of the embassy group talked to hundreds of people, even helping a vendor make satay, a favorite local dish, and took selfies with students at schools. Malaysians along the route expressed disbelief that anyone, much less the U.S. ambassador—would ride all the way to Singapore to promote environmental awareness. The embassy riders made a lasting impression on Malaysians, many of whom do not speak English and have never seen a Westerner.

U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia Joseph Y. Yun, first from left, stops to take a selfie with students outside of the town of Pontian on June 3 during the embassy's #GoGreen-Lah bike ride from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore. *Photo by Kreisler Buy*

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

Millions of gallons of water spill over the Yellowstone River's Lower Falls in Yellowstone National Park, Canyon Junction, Wyoming.
Photo by Gord McKenna

Children's Issues

Office addresses abductions, adoptions and prevention

By Carolee Belkin Walker, branch chief,
Office of Children's Issues, Bureau of Consular Affairs

The Bureau of Consular Affairs' (CA) Office of Children's Issues (CI) focuses on international issues relating to children, including intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction. "Our work is incredibly complex," said CI Director Henry Hand. "We have 100 employees dealing with two issues—adoptions and abductions."

"There is strong interest in what we do in the media, within the Department and in Congress," Hand added. "And this makes for a very dynamic office culture."

Even in the darkest moments in our relations with other countries, everyone is willing to talk about children, said former Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Maura Harty. In 1994, Harty helped CA create the office for just that reason. CI's issues hit fundamentally at the most visceral level, and how a country treats children says a lot about its society, Harty said.

Now CI is one of CA's largest offices, with divisions covering intercountry adoptions, incoming and outgoing abductions, and abduction prevention. Since its founding, the office has grown to encompass prevention and engagement with other countries on fulfilling treaty obligations relating to children. CI serves as the U.S. Central Authority for the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and the 1993 Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption.

CI Division Chief Mary Avery poses in her office.
Photo by Ed Warner

Abductions

Cases involving parental child abduction often pose difficult challenges for U.S. missions. Regardless of whether a country is partnered with the United States under the Convention, CI promotes Convention principles, namely that in all cases custody matters are best determined in a child's country of habitual residence. For cases involving one of the 73 countries the United States is partnered with under the Convention, CI officers manage parents' Convention applications and engage with foreign government counterparts on implementing the Convention. CI officers provide guidance to U.S. missions on how and when to request both partner and nonpartner countries' assistance with these cases, and serve as liaisons with U.S. law enforcement.

CI's own implementation of the Convention regarding cases in the United States helps build strong relationships with foreign counterparts. In the past five years, for instance, more than 900 children have been returned from Mexico. Beth Cooper, the incoming abductions branch chief, said the unit processes cases in the United States efficiently, and "this is important if we want other countries to perform in a similar manner."

For both incoming and outgoing abductions officers, engaging with foreign government officials is an integral part of what CI does every day. CI is often in the position of trying to persuade foreign governments to take action and do the right thing, which is at the core of effective diplomacy.

"Consular work is not and should not be limited to casework, which of course is extremely important and is what consular officers are excellent at," said Adam Center, an outgoing abductions branch chief.

"This job transcends the casework and also gives me ample opportunity for exciting and invigorating government-to-government engagement on a routine basis."

Abduction cases are particularly difficult because, once a parent and child cross an international border, they are subject to the laws of another country. Thus, preventing abductions has been a priority for CI since the prevention branch was expanded in 2011. Prevention has 11 officers with mixed backgrounds in law enforcement, including experience with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and passport adjudications.

Since 2011, CI has used its interagency contacts to prevent more than 360 abductions. Following implementation of the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction and Prevention and Return Act of 2014, CI now has an effective way of helping parents who have a court order with minor child travel restrictions to prevent a child's removal from the United States. As a result of the law, within the last six months, CI has prevented 64 abductions.

Prevention's officers' portfolios include the Department's domestic passport agencies, plus assigned geographic regions. Prevention offers 24/7 coverage, including weekends. "We have a good working relationship with Customs and Border Protection, which allows us to reach out around the clock," said Patti Walker, a prevention officer.

"If we get everything in place correctly we have a good chance of stopping a child from being removed from the United States," said J. Rush Marburg, CI's prevention branch chief. "And that's very rewarding."

Adoptions

CI's Adoption Division formulates and coordinates policy, and provides direction to U.S. embassies and consulates on intercountry adoptions. In fiscal year 2014, U.S. citizens adopted 6,441 children from 99 countries.

The Prevention branch begins a meeting. From left are: Rebekah Petronella, Rush Marburg, Isis Rawlins, Marco P. Tedesco, Daniel Githens, Patti Walker and Saul Leyva.
Photo by Ed Warner

Intercountry adoption "creates incredible opportunities to build families where children and youth can flourish," said Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Michele T. Bond, who as former U.S. Ambassador to Lesotho, worked with the Lesotho government to ensure the country's transition to the Hague Adoption Convention.

Intercountry adoption, she continued, helps children find loving and permanent families, and is a CA priority that "would not be possible without the engagement and commitment of adoptive families, advocates, adoption service providers, members of Congress and the Department's many, many partner agencies."

CI promotes intercountry adoptions as a viable option for children in need of permanent homes in every country. The children of the world, Hand said, are our shared future, and that makes it in their best interests and ours for them to grow up in permanent families.

Adoption officers work to help nations align their procedures with the principles of the Convention, engaging with prospective adoptive parents, adoption service providers, and adoption and child welfare advocacy organizations. Officers can also provide information on how to complete the adoption process in a specific country or speak with groups of parents affected by larger policy issues, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo's suspension of exit permits for adopted children.

Assistant Secretary Michele T. Bond, left, and Special Advisor for Children's Issues Susan S. Jacobs pose at the Department's Annual 6k Walk for Water in April 2014.
Photo by Kathleen Sacco

CI also oversees Convention implementation and monitors the accreditation of U.S. adoption service providers, which must meet federal standards of ethical and transparent behavior. CI officers provide support and guidance to U.S. missions on engaging with host nations to promote improved adoption systems.

Trish Maskew, the adoption division chief, said the division works frequently with nongovernmental organizations, academic groups and international organizations, and coordinates with the Visa Office, Fraud Prevention Programs, U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, the departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, state authorities, and foreign adoption authorities. These interactions help ensure there is a total U.S. government approach to adoptions proceeding to and from the United States and help protect all parties involved.

Maskew and the adoption division are working to advance CA's new intercountry adoption strategy to further strengthen the intercountry adoption process and to promote its availability as one option for children in need. The core components of the strategy include an ongoing, comprehensive assessment to identify countries with the potential for increased cooperation on intercountry adoption and developing and implementing new initiatives and tools.

Among these initiatives and tools are increasing engagement with foreign counterparts to address concerns in the intercountry adoption process, and providing additional adoption support to U.S. embassies and consulates, technical assistance to countries to help strengthen their permanency programs for children, and potential new or revised U.S. regulations on intercountry adoptions.

Like abductions officers, adoptions officers enjoy strong working relationships with congressional offices. Tish Hickey, an eight-year veteran of the office, said the United States is "the number one adopting country in the world, so I particularly enjoy our natural alliance with Congress as we find common ground to work cooperatively."

Special Advisor

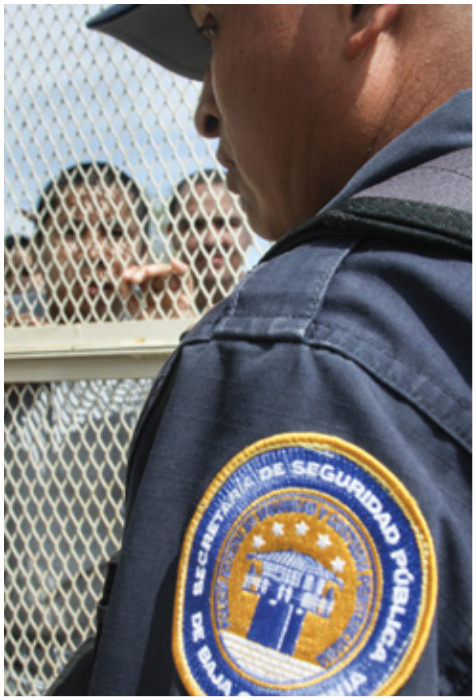
Ambassador Susan S. Jacobs has served as the Secretary's Special Advisor for Children's Issues for the past five years. A career foreign service officer and former ambassador to Papua New Guinea who has also served in El Salvador, Israel, Venezuela and Romania, Ambassador Jacobs is committed to engaging foreign government officials to protect the welfare and interests of children.

The abduction and adoption conventions give governments the framework and guidelines to define and support child well-being across international boundaries, Ambassador Jacobs said. "I am honored every day to lead this team as we seek to uphold the principles of the Conventions to give children and families the protections and support they deserve."

DOING TIME IN TIJUANA

Consulate helps Americans in Mexican prisons

By Amelia Shaw, consular officer, U.S. Consulate General in Tijuana



Current reforms in the justice system in Mexico could spell significant changes for Baja California's overcrowded prisons.
State Department photo

In a dim hallway of the district attorney's office in Tijuana, two Mexican detectives stand over a large car tire with a razor blade and start cutting. In a holding cell upstairs, a U.S. citizen sits handcuffed on drug charges, waiting to find out if he'll be able to get bail.

After several minutes, the detectives pry up a flap of rubber, and then turn the tire on its side. Out comes a pungent green cloud. "That's got to be a dozen kilos of marijuana in there at least—not a bail-able offense," the DA tells Beto Laurent, a Mexican who has worked at the U.S. Consulate General in Tijuana in the American Citizen Services section for the last 18 years.

The consular district encompassing the Mexican state of Baja California—and the city of Tijuana—has by far the world's largest arrests portfolio. By some estimates, up to 50 percent of all arrests of U.S. citizens abroad occur in this border region, with its history of volatility, violence and drug trafficking. As many as three U.S. citizens get booked daily, some for such serious charges as drug trafficking, which can mean months or years in prison. On any given day, there are 350 Americans behind bars in Baja—out of approximately 1,200 total Americans in jail in all of Mexico.

For Laurent, the day begins with calls to the local police chiefs to ask, "Any arrested Americans today?"

Handling the daily arrests caseloads is labor intensive. Two consular officers and three Locally Employed (LE) staff members, such as Laurent, work daily with more than 20 prisons, jails and district attorneys' offices in such major cities as Tijuana, Mexicali and Ensenada. The consular arrests team provides two kinds of services to arrested U.S. citizens: initial interviews within 48 hours of the arrest and regular visits to long-term prisoners. These visits help Americans better understand the Mexican legal system, ensure they have not been abused or mistreated and facilitate contact with their families and legal counsel. The assistance to long-term prisoners involves monitoring the conditions of detention and facilitating prisoners' transfers to a U.S. prison, if they request it.

Consular officers are required to visit prisoners monthly during their pre-sentencing period, but due to the high volume and resource constraints, many posts in Mexico have waivers so that officers need only visit quarterly. However, with the spike in abuse of prisoners in Mexican jails in recent years, Minister Counselor for Consular and Consulate Affairs Donald Jacobson reinstituted monthly visits beginning in late 2014. "We need to be more present in the prisons, not less," said Jacobson.

Managing a program for hundreds of visits monthly presents myriad logistical and administrative challenges, including time-consuming travel and, in the case of U.S. Consulate General Tijuana, manually updating 350 case records each month. The biggest challenge has been to build a relationship of trust and collaboration with the prison directors.

"For any prison director, moving hundreds of prisoners to the prison yard so we can interview them poses significant security risks," said ACS Chief Brian Simmons. "It's also just a lot of work. Some prison directors would balk at doing this every month. But we've been very pleased with the support."

Simmons said the consulate has gained collaboration from Mexican authorities over the years through diplomacy, diligence and the depth of knowledge of longtime local staff like Laurent. "It's because we approach the Mexican prison authorities as members of the same team," he said. "We work together as colleagues, not adversaries."

The close relationship has paid off. After mistreatment of prisoners in Mexico was reported in an alarming 28 percent of cases in 2011, the consulate used tactful diplomacy and frequent consular outreach with district attorneys to help reduce the level to just 3.2 percent in 2014. Furthermore, DAs are now much more proactive about notifying the consulate when an American is arrested, resulting in a 30 percent jump in such notifications since 2011.

On a visit to prisoners at Tijuana's state

Beto Laurent visits with inmates in tightly packed cells in La Mesa, Tijuana.
State Department photo

Female inmates line up to use the pay phones in the prison yard at the state penitentiary in Tijuana. On any given day, there are 350 Americans behind bars in Baja California. *State Department photo*

penitentiary, known locally as "La Mesa," Laurent came with a stack of folders a foot high, a bottle of hand sanitizer and a pile of granola bars. Accompanying him were LE Staff members Alma Jimenez and Jorge Reyes, and two consular officers. With their help, he hoped to get through 100 interviews that day—there are currently 190 Americans in La Mesa.

A sprawling facility built for 2,500 inmates, the prison has more than 7,000 prisoners in varying stages of processing. Cells built for six prisoners are strained with 20 in confines so tight they sleep on cots in shifts.

While many of the inmates in La Mesa have been sentenced, more than half have never been to court. They are in what is known as "pre-trial detention," where they have been charged with a crime but have not yet been sentenced. They thus might sit in prison for months or years awaiting their day in court—sometimes to be found not guilty. Pre-trial detention is one of the biggest contributors to the overcrowding in prisons across Mexico.

Consular Assistant Alma Jimenez speaks with detainees as part of the consulate's monthly check on inmates in pre-trial detention. *State Department photo*

While far from ideal, La Mesa has come a long way. Formerly called "El Pueblito" (little village), La Mesa was for many years a prisoner's paradise where gangs controlled a shantytown of drugs and prostitution, and inmates lived with their families inside the prison walls. (El Pueblito was the fictionalized backdrop for Mel Gibson's escape from a Mexican jail in the film "Get the Gringo.") In 2002, prison authorities launched a surprise raid, razing the shantytown, transferring 2,000 inmates to another prison and firing scores of corrupt prison guards.

Today, while still not ideal, prisoners' conditions are better; they can get an education, go through rehab, attend job training and even get married in quarterly, communal wedding ceremonies. Administrators strive to foster a feeling of community, but without the anarchy and insecurity of El Pueblito.

"In the last decade, we've gone through a significant cultural shift in Mexico," explained Jesus Grijalva Tapia, subdirector of Mexico's state penitentiary system. "There was a feeling of 'those prisoners are garbage, why invest in them?' But now the approach is all about rehabilitation and reinsertion in society."

The changes at La Mesa reflect the reforms currently underway throughout Mexico's judicial system. Under the bilateral Merida Initiative, the U.S. government has supported Mexico in an historic collaboration to develop more effective, transparent security infrastructure and institutions by 2016. One of the biggest reforms is moving the court system to "oral trials," which should streamline court proceedings and lead to more out-of-court settlements—and hence fewer people behind bars. The reforms also include revamping Mexico's prison system to help rehabilitate inmates and raising it to modern-day, international standards. Since 2011, 19 prisons across Mexico, including one in Baja California, have received accreditation by the American Correctional Association, which promotes safer, more humane and secure prisons.

Mexico's judicial reforms may speed up court proceedings, reduce the number of people stuck in legal limbo and reduce prisoners' time in pre-trial detention.

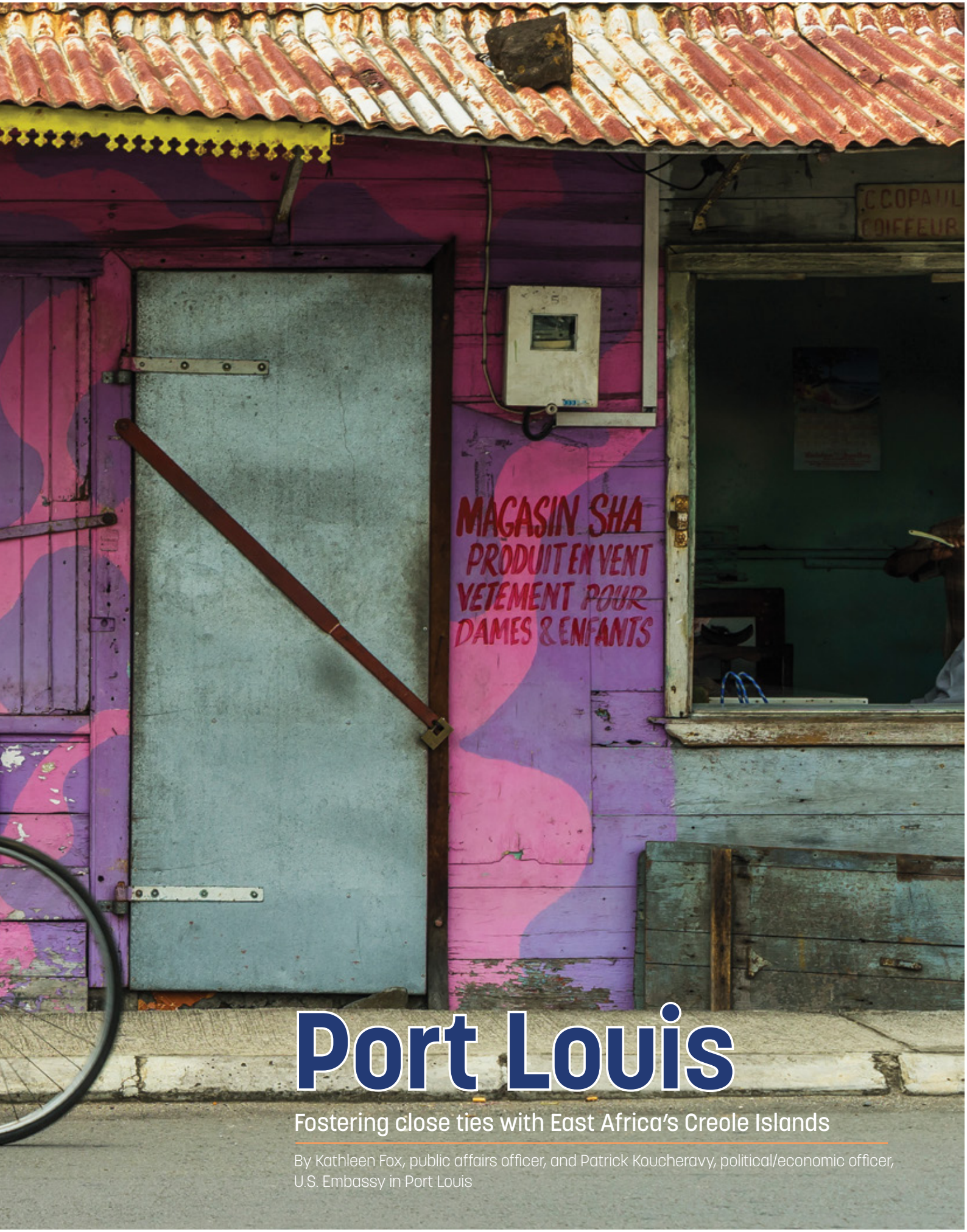
At the arrest team's level, the concern remains on each American prisoner's case, and some are complex. For instance, Laurent has one involving a U.S. citizen who has been in jail about two weeks and just learned she is pregnant. Based on her crime, she could be facing a jail term of up to 15 years.

"We'll want to watch her health while she's in prison, make sure she is okay. And who knows, down the line she might want to register her baby as a U.S. citizen," he said.

If she does, Laurent and the rest of the team at Consulate General Tijuana will be there to help. ■

The ACS team crosses the prison yard to visit with American citizen detainees. More Americans are arrested in Baja California than in any other consular district worldwide. *State Department photo*

Post of the Month



Port Louis

Fostering close ties with East Africa's Creole Islands

By Kathleen Fox, public affairs officer, and Patrick Koucheravy, political/economic officer, U.S. Embassy in Port Louis

Like the bustling metropolis it calls home, the U.S. Embassy in Port Louis is a hive of activity in a small package. Perched in a high-rise building overlooking the port and humming traffic of the Mauritian capital's main shopping thoroughfare, 15 direct-hire Americans and more than 60 Locally Employed (LE) staff maintain the United States' longstanding good relations with Africa's two easternmost nations, Mauritius and Seychelles.

"I have never served in two countries that view Americans and the United States so positively," says Ambassador Shari Villarosa. "Despite their small sizes, the two nations play important roles regionally and internationally working with us on climate change and human rights, supporting free trade and helping us improve maritime security in the Indian Ocean."

Both Mauritius and Seychelles control vast U.N.-sanctioned economic zones, have diverse populations of African, Asian and European origin, and share a common historical heritage, Creole language and music.

Located 500 miles east of Madagascar and more than 2,000 miles southwest of India, Mauritius is a nation of small islands with big aspirations. The main island is just 40 miles long by 30 miles wide, with 110 miles of beautiful coastline, but with vast revenue-producing potential across nearly 890,000 square miles of Indian Ocean that the Mauritians are keen to develop.

The country's population of less than 1.3 million is a rich ethno-religious mix that coexists peacefully through a delicate balance of competing interests. Mauritian Creole is the common linguistic thread in all the islands' ethnic communities. Like its people, the Mauritian landscape is diverse, featuring shrines, pagodas, temples, mosques and churches scattered across white sand beaches, vast rolling sugarcane fields, dense pockets of forest and dramatic lava rock peaks.

Embassy staff members enjoy getaways to luxury resorts or catamaran trips to popular snorkeling spots. Embassy homes are divided between the verdant central plateau towns where the majority of Mauritians live and northern beach towns where tourists flock. When walking along the tranquil, clear waters of Blue Bay or past the overflowing shops of Port Louis' Chinatown, one can hear the sounds of Bollywood or western pop along with Mauritian reggae and the native sega beat of the local ravanne drum. Restaurants and street stalls sell fried noodles, biryani, puffed pastries and Creole fish curries from every corner on the island.

"We don't have bad weekends here," says Information Management Officer Kasey Snyder. Adds Management Officer Jonathan Earle: "There is such a variety of natural beauty and culture, there's no time for island fever."

Mauritius was uninhabited when Portuguese sailors found it on their way east in the early 16th century. The Dutch made two failed attempts at establishing a colony on the island, which they named Mauritius in the 17th century. They stayed long enough on their second attempt to introduce sugarcane, import African and Indian slaves and eradicate the once ubiquitous dodo bird.

The French moved in shortly thereafter in 1715, renamed the island Île de France, expanded the sugar industry and built the capital, Port Louis, into a regional center for maritime trade, attracting a small Chinese community of traders and merchants. When the British won control of Mauritius and most of France's Indian Ocean possessions in 1810, the Creole culture of the island was already well entrenched. After changing the island's name back to Mauritius and abolishing slavery, the British began importing Hindu and Muslim indentured servants from India.

The first U.S. consul to Île de France in 1794 helped promote American trade in the region and advocated on behalf of the increasing number of U.S. sailors. One hundred years later, a visiting Mark Twain quipped that justly proud locals had "the idea that Mauritius was made first, and then heaven."

Unlike some of its African neighbors, Mauritius has been generally peaceful and politically stable since gaining independence from the U.K. in 1968. The first U.S. embassy was established the same year and has since focused efforts on strengthening democratic institutions and values, increasing U.S. trade and investment, protecting the environment, and advancing

Opening Spread: A man rides his bicycle in front of colorful storefronts in Mahebourg, Mauritius.
Photo by Mark Fischer

Tamil temple covered in colorful paintings of gods, goddesses and other symbols of the faith.
Photo courtesy of the Laycock Center/BYU

security in the region. In that time, Mauritians have increased their per capita income from less than $400 to more than $10,000 today, thanks in part to the hundreds of embassy-sponsored exchange programs conducted throughout the years, which have sparked professional growth nationwide.

While small by Washington, D.C., standards, Embassy Port Louis offers entry- and mid-level officers wide-ranging responsibilities and the ability to work on a variety of substantive issues aligned closely with the Department's goals. The post's seven sections and agencies work closely together, backing each other up and coordinating efforts to carry out programs.

"A huge advantage to working in a small place like Port Louis is that nearly every officer has the chance to cross-train and learn how other parts of the embassy work," says Deputy Chief of Mission Susan Falatko. "All officers and specialists participate regularly in outreach and mission programming, sit on embassy committees and are active on boards, all the while maintaining a reasonable work schedule."

The mission engages with local civil society groups, businesses and the national government to encourage greater inclusion of disadvantaged groups in this relatively traditional, conservative country, especially women, youth and the LGBT community. "In spite of our prosperity, or maybe because of it, there is a real appetite for improved education, new technology and career opportunities among young Mauritians," says Cultural Affairs Specialist Priya Beegun. "Recruiting for high-profile initiatives like President Obama's Mandela Washington Fellowship and Global Entrepreneurship Summit gives us the platforms to identify and support future leaders in business, government and civil society."

Mauritius has successfully diversified from a sugar monoculture into manufacturing and services over the past several decades. Renewable energy, information technology and financial services are becoming increasingly important as young university graduates vie for new openings in these sectors. "The Mauritian economy has been tied to Europe for its entire history, but they really want to become a bridge for east-west investments," says former Political Officer Maroof Ahmed. "The Mauritians are friendly to U.S. business, respect our entrepreneurial culture and truly appreciate any expertise or collaboration we can bring to new business sectors." Mauritius has been one of Africa's biggest beneficiaries and boosters of the African Growth and

Heavily pierced devotees participate in the annual Hindu Cavadee processions.
Photo by Tolga Mahlke

Early morning fruit and vegetable sellers prepare their goods for daytime crowds in Port Louis' sparkling clean central market, a lunchtime shopping spot for embassy staff just two blocks away. *Photo courtesy of the Laycock Center/BYU*

Opportunity Act, having quadrupled its exports to the United States, mostly textiles and apparel, since the act's passage in 2000. Recently, the Department's U.S. Diplomacy Center commissioned a multimedia crew from the Laycock Center at Brigham Young University (BYU) to record the successful impact of AGOA on Mauritius, highlighting the importance of this regional diplomatic and trade initiative.

A thousand miles and a two-hour flight north of Mauritius is the embassy's second host country, Seychelles, a 115-island archipelago of stunning natural beauty and biodiversity. Only a handful of these tropical islands are permanently populated, with most of the country's 90,000 inhabitants living on Mahé or nearby Praslin and La Digue. The U.S. Consular Agency Seychelles, located in a small office in the capital of Victoria, is staffed by an American citizen consular agent and one LE staff member, working on political, economic and public affairs matters.

The U.S. Embassy in Seychelles once oversaw a U.S. Air Force Tracking Station and Peace Corps program, but closed its doors in 1996. However, officers still visit frequently to ensure that a very visible presence promotes democratic values, U.S. businesses and regional security. "We often collaborate with the Seychelles police, coast guard and special defense force," reports Special Agent Jennifer C. Cartaino of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service based in Port Louis. "Regular intelligence exchanges and trainings help to strengthen our relationship and build their capacity to fight maritime piracy, transnational crime and illegal trafficking in the Indian Ocean region."

PAO Kathleen Fox hands out Mardi Gras beads from the U.S. Embassy float at Seychelles' annual International Carnival parade. The government estimates that nearly 20,000 people attended–or almost a quarter of the country's population.

Photo by Neddy Chanpin

On Mahé, wooden Creole houses cling to the densely forested peaks that rise dramatically from the world-famous white sand beaches and clear waters of the lagoon, the inspiration for Ian Fleming's classic 1960 James Bond novel, "For Your Eyes Only." An hour's ferry ride away, the luxury villas on the coast of Praslin contrast with its Vallée de Mai nature reserve palm forest, where massive coco-de-mer palms, black parrots and other species unique to Seychelles abound. "Seychelles is a global leader in environmental conservation. A whopping 50 percent of its land and 30 percent of its waters are protected—one of the highest proportions in the world," says Consular Officer Seth Schleicher. "For me, each visit to this strikingly beautiful country is a vivid reminder of what can happen when governments and communities work together to protect the environment."

A pristine white sand beach beckons visitors at La Digue, Petite Anse, in Seychelles.

Photo by Didier Baertschiger

Ambassador Shari Villarosa joins a GSO and guard force team and their families on a weekend hike up Le Pouce, one of the many sharp peaks overlooking the capital city of Port Louis.

Photo courtesy of Embassy Port Louis

The Seychellois are fiercely proud of their shared Creole heritage, their local version of sega and their natural environment. Seychelles gained independence in 1976, but a coup d'état in 1977 began a 15-year period of one-party rule. A foreign exchange crisis in the late 1990s and a default on its sovereign debt in 2008 finally ushered in a five-year, market-based reform program with the help of the International Monetary Fund. A small nation with big aspirations, Seychelles joined the World Trade Organization in 2015, and today the nation's government ministers actively speak on behalf of Small Island Developing States at international forums around the world.

For both Mauritius and Seychelles, the future looks bright, as do opportunities for continued strengthening of ties to the United States. ■

Mauritius At a Glance

Mauritius

Capital: Port Louis

Government Type: Parliamentary democracy

Area: 2,040 sq km

Population: 1,339,827

Languages: Creole, Bhojpuri, French, English

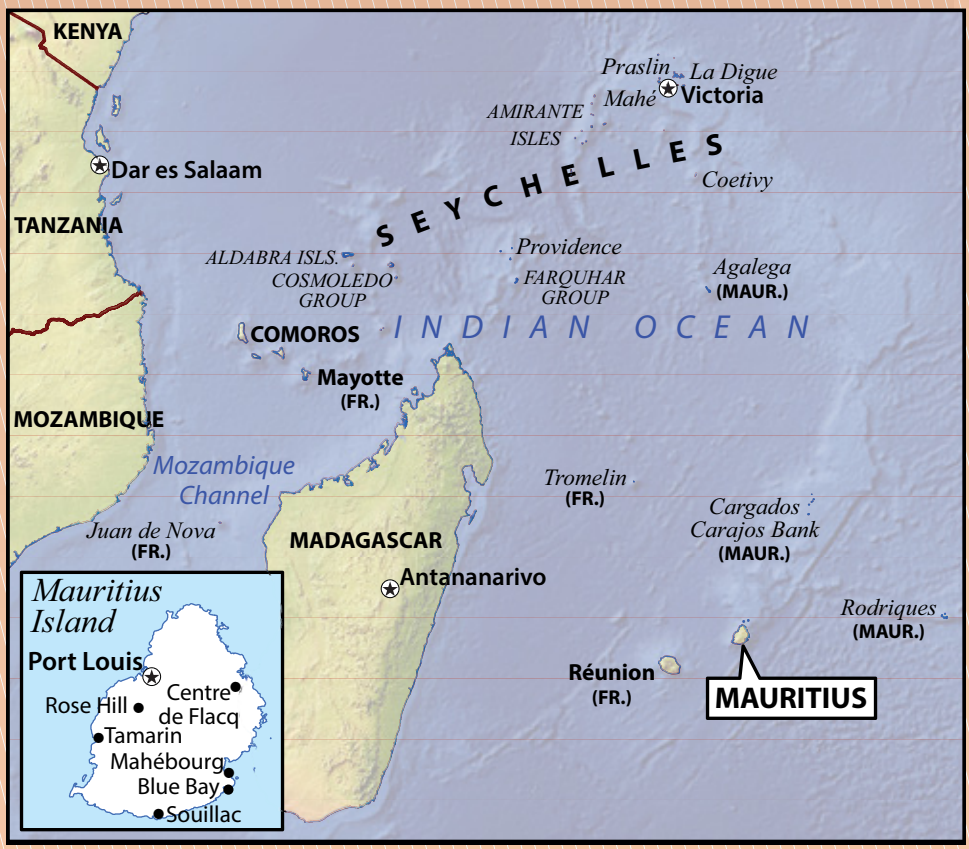
Religions: Hindu 49%, Roman Catholic 26%, Muslim 17%, other Christian 6%

Export partners: U.K., France, U.S., Italy, South Africa, Madagascar, Spain

Import partners: India, China, France, South Africa

Currency: Mauritian rupee

Internet country code: .mu



Seychelles At a Glance

Seychelles

Capital: Victoria

Government Type: Republic

Area: 455 sq km

Population: 92,430

Languages: Seychellois Creole, English, French

Religions: Roman Catholic 76%, Protestant 11%, other Christian 2.4%, Hindu 2.4%, Muslim 1.6%, other non-Christian and unspecified 6%

Export partners: France, U.K., Italy, Japan, Mauritius, Spain

Import partners: Saudi Arabia, Spain, France, India

Currency: Seychellois rupee

Internet country code: .sc

Mountain Ghost

Embassy staffer identifies lost WWII aircraft

By Chris Casey, Foreign Service medical provider, U.S. Embassy Tirana, Albania

On what seemed like a typical morning in the Health Unit at Embassy Tirana, I got a call telling me someone at the front gate had some plane wreckage and human remains I should examine. So, I joined the caller, Master Sgt. Robert Newlin, the assistant defense attaché, stopping to grab a biohazard bag and gloves. Somehow lost in translation from Albanian to English, what we actually found at the gate was a woman who had Polaroid photos showing some rusty metal parts and what looked suspiciously like a human arm bone. Apparently her husband, a medicinal plant collector, had found this debris high in the mountains east of Tirana and thought it might be from an American World War II-era plane.

The story might have stopped there, except that Newlin had been asked to look out for news of a specific lost U.S. B-24 bomber. So a field investigation team was assembled, with me included. Two weeks later, after two hours of rugged off-road driving and three more of steep hiking in the rocky limestone mountains, the team came to a remote ravine high on a mountainside. Descending carefully, we came across traces of wreckage from what was clearly a large plane. Though there was no obvious fuselage, located around the site were the parts of four engines, the heavy hubs for the propellers, plus scattered shards of flap hinges, twisted engine mounts and wheel struts. Locals had apparently removed anything useful over the years.

We photographed everything we could, including any serial numbers, so we could submit them to the specialists at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, who could figure out if the aircraft was of U.S. origin. However, being a bit of an aviation enthusiast, I continued to ponder the photographs. With some research, I realized from the orientation of the pistons that they could not be from a U.S. bomber. Instead these were photos of a V-12 Rolls-Royce Merlin engine, as used in the famous Spitfire fighters of the RAF, and could only have come from a British Handley Page Halifax bomber. The twist was that there was no historical record of such a plane being lost anywhere near this location. We had uncovered an unknown crash site of a lost World War II British bomber, a "mountain ghost" with unknown stories to tell.

But why was it here?

More research added some historical perspective. In 1940, the Nazis had the British against the wall; the Allies were outgunned and out-maneuvered. Prime Minister Winston Churchill directed the British military to promote and support any foreign forces that would fight the Germans, thereby distracting them in their bid to invade England. Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE) supported the resistance in France and the Balkans, where top secret RAF squadrons flew modified bombers on "lone wolf" missions, alone and very low through steep terrain under cover

The crew of Halifax JP244FS-S pose, in Brindisi, Italy, in the summer of 1944. Standing from left are Navigator Sgt. Charles Mabbs, Air Bomber F. Sgt. Ed Brown, Air Gunner Sgt. Austin Donnelly, F. Engineer Sgt. Alf Coote, Wireless Operator Sgt. Richard Knee and Pilot Officer Edwin Stubley. In front is Air Gunner Sgt. John Thompson. *Photo courtesy of the family of Edwin Stubley;* A British Handley Page Halifax bomber flies over the countryside in this historical photo. *Photo courtesy of the British Royal Airforce*

of darkness. The bombers brought military advisors, weapons, ammunition and supplies to the resistance in remote mountainsides and valleys. The region of "our" site had been a hotbed of resistance activity during 1943–1944, and squadron records show there had been numerous SOE supply drops to the resistance in that area during that time.

Given the difficulty of the task, many planes were lost, some to enemy night fighters or flak batteries, and others simply vanished. Occasionally, survivor reports or debris would allow identification of the final resting place of the plane, but all too frequently planes left on missions and were never seen again. Even today, few records remain of these secret missions or of the brave men who flew them.

Now we had the type of plane and a reasonable idea of what it was doing there. But which plane and which crew had we found?

The clue that solved this mystery came from a chance conversation with the defense staff at the British embassy in Tirana. While discussing my research with Gerd Kacelli, the British assistant defense attaché in Tirana, he recalled that a few years previously an Albanian man had brought a wedding ring to the embassy, saying his father had found it right after the war "at the site of a British bomber crash near a town called Bizë." The village was the same one near where we had found the debris.

Albanian culture traditionally holds that making a promise is a very solemn act, and one's honor depends on keeping it. The man who had come to the British Embassy, had made a promise to his deceased father to see that the ring was returned to the flyer's family. Kacelli noted that the ring had the names Joyce and John inscribed inside, but with no plane, there was little the British could do with the information at the time.

But now we had a plane and a couple of names.

Over the next few weeks I combed the records of every plane of this type that was lost in SOE missions during the war, looking for any crew by the name of John married to a person named Joyce. Out of 600 pages of lost aircraft information, there was only one close match involving this type of aircraft, a Flight Sgt. John Thompson, listed as FTR on October 29, 1944. His next of kin was listed simply as "J."

Thompson's plane was a MkII Halifax Bomber, number JP244FS-S. (Photos of a Handley Page Halifax MkII Series I Special, which is similar to JP244FS-S, are available online.) On a supply mission from Brindisi in Italy to the small village of Shengjergj, east of Tirana, it dropped its payload but never returned to the airfield. (Interestingly, the drop was only a few weeks before the resistance liberated Tirana from the occupying German forces.)

With assistance from some genealogy experts, I tracked down wedding records for John Thompson and the name of his spouse. It was Ruby Joyce. I confirmed this after I placed an article about the search in the local paper of the English town where John Thompson had lived. Within several hours of the article being published, there were several phone calls from members of the Thompson family, confirming that it was indeed their family member and that his wife went by Joyce. They explained that the two married just two days before John returned to his unit in the summer of 1944. His plane, together with its crew, was lost two months later. Joyce went on to remarry but, according to John's nephew, Alan Thompson, she never got over the loss of her first husband. Unfortunately she died in 1995.

The Thompson family was ecstatic to have news of the lost aircraft. They'd wondered about what happened to "Uncle John," and still told of how John's parents had left their back door unlocked for years afterwards, "… in case he came home." Many times John's father had traveled to London to ask about news of his son's whereabouts, but without luck, until now.

In March, the British Embassy in Albania arranged for John's sister Dorothy, now 92, to come to Albania so that John's ring could be returned to his family. Accompanied by 12 members of the Thompson family, Dorothy flew to Tirana to receive the ring at a ceremony at the Albanian Ministry of Defense, hosted by Albanian Minister of Defense Mimi Khodelli and British Ambassador Nicholas Cannon. The visit ended with a small service at the Commonwealth cemetery in Tirana, where Newlin played the "Last Post"—England's version of "Taps." There was not a dry eye left in the crowd. The BBC covered the ceremony and the story was carried by more than 180 media outlets worldwide.

Since the ceremony, John Thompson's family has tracked down the families of five of the other six crew members, resulting in more stories of loss and courage, as well as photos of the crew. The families now hope that the British government will transfer the crew's names from the Commonwealth Memorial in Malta to the Commonwealth Cemetery in Tirana and officially recognize this as the final resting place of JP244 FS-S and its crew.

The view across the debris field from the crash near Bizë, Albania. *Photo by Chris Casey*

John Thompson's wedding ring, found at scene of a British plane crash near the village of Bizë in the 1950s. *Photo by Lt. Col. Phil Osmont*

As medical officers, we don't often have an opportunity to affect host nations or global partners, but this story goes to prove that sometimes chances to make a difference come from unexpected directions. The efforts to identify this mountain ghost made a huge difference to the families of its crew, who have been in the dark for 70 years about the fate of their loved ones. Having grown up in England, this investigation was of compelling personal interest, and being able to put the pieces together was extremely gratifying. I also had the privilege of working closely with the British embassy and with our Albanian hosts on a little known episode of history that showcased the Albanian people and reflected positively on U.S. Embassy Tirana. ◘

Watchful Eyes

FSOs promote democracy one election at a time

By Colleen Traughber, political officer, Office of European Union and Regional Affairs (EUR/ERA), and short-term observer in the October 2014 parliamentary election in Ukraine

American citizens, including several FSOs, participate in the election-observation missions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), helping support free and fair elections in OSCE participating states. When an OSCE state requests election observers, they're sent by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

The observers may be from the United States or any of the other 56 OSCE participating states. For an election, the United States aims to provide the OSCE with 7 to 10 percent of the needed short-term observers. The government's contractor, Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE), recruits most American election observers through online applications. Candidates who have worked in U.S. elections and have relevant language skills and experience in the region are particularly competitive.

Some Department employees have also participated. In the past year alone, State representatives have served in election monitoring missions to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine, among other places.

"The OSCE's procedures are considered the gold standard when it comes to election observation methodology throughout the world," said the Department's OSCE desk officer, David Swalley. "This is largely due to ODIHR's long experience in deploying election observation missions coupled with rigorous preparation and attention to well-established principles and procedures of free and fair elections."

When a participating state requests an election observation mission, ODIHR initially sends an assessment team to lay the groundwork and determine how many long-term and short-term observers are necessary. Long-term observers, who typically spend four to six weeks in the country, examine many issues, including composition of a country's central election commission, implementation of its election law, political landscape, media environment and the extent of its civil society participation.

By contrast, short-term observers, while more numerous, deploy a few days before election day and stay a few days afterward. Their numbers in an election can range from 100 to 1,000. On election day, they are the "eyes and ears" of the international community, observing polling stations, witnessing voting tabulation and reporting results independently to the OSCE. Reporting from both types of observers provides the basis for conclusions and recommendations in ODIHR's final election report.

Women vote in Zaporizhia Oblast during the October 2014 parliamentary election in Ukraine.

Photo by Lubomyr Rakowsky

OSCE short-term observers are sometimes the only international presence at polling stations. "I ran into an election monitoring team from the U.S. embassy but no other international observers on election day," recalled NATO operations officer Rob Thompson, an election observer in Albania in June. In other cases, OSCE observers are joined by parliamentary observers, including those from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and other international and domestic election observers.

Short-term observers typically only physically observe a fraction of the polling stations in any election. Of the more than 200 polling stations on his list, Thompson said he and his partner made it to 11. On average, short-term observers make it to 10 polling stations on an election day, but together with hundreds of other observers throughout a country, these observations provide an accurate picture of the election's conduct.

Short-term observers acquire a unique hands-on view of elections. Yaro Kulchychyj, a short-term observer in Ukraine in October 2014, said, "The experience was fascinating and allowed me to experience it from the ground up for the first time. My previous experience with the Ukrainian electoral system was from the top down."

Ukrainians participate in the October 2014 parliamentary election. *Photo by URCT*

Prior to joining the Department, Kulchychyj, former deputy director of the Ukraine-Russia coordination team in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, helped modernize election systems in post-Soviet Ukraine with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), an NGO, and USAID.

Observing elections is not for the faint of heart. The OSCE sends short-term observers to all corners of a country in teams that must cover wide swaths of territory, often in rural areas with limited infrastructure and poor roads.

While in the field, short-term observers are exposed to regions and communities that they would otherwise not see. David Meyer, an FSO in the Bureau of Democracy, Rights, and Labor, visited a Roma community while working as a short-term observer in Moldova in November 2014. "It was valuable to dig into issues you are interested in, such as minority communities, while doing your work as an election observer," he said.

The hardest part of being an election observer may be the hours. On election days, observer teams must observe the opening of a polling station, visit 10 to 20 stations and be present for the closing of a station at the end of the day.

But their work is still not done. They then travel to the district election commissions where local officials collect the ballots from the district's polling stations, tabulate the results and report them to the central election commission in the capital. Tabulating the results can last all night and extend into the next day, or even the day after.

After the election, ODIHR publishes a final report, highlighting successes, identifying areas for improvement and offering recommendations for OSCE nations to use to improve electoral processes. These reports also inform assistance organizations, such as USAID, when they fund programs on electoral processes prior to the next elections. Since 1995, the OSCE has observed hundreds of elections and contributed to the gradual modernization of electoral processes in OSCE participating states and elsewhere.

And, when necessary, the OSCE has been quick to point out election irregularities. OSCE election observers are often the first to witness prestamped ballots, manipulated voters' logs or block voting, in which members of a group are pressured to vote one way based on their affiliation with the group. In some cases, observers may even experience intimidation when their presence is unwelcome.

Besides sending observation missions to OSCE participating states, the OSCE also conducts limited observation missions that are more restricted in scope. Past limited observation missions include one conducted in the United States in November 2012. For countries not in the OSCE, the organization can nonetheless deploy election support teams, when requested. For instance, the OSCE deployed such teams to Afghanistan five times between 2004 and 2014.

According to participants, being an observer can be incredibly rewarding. Michael Rosenthal of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, a short-term observer in Kazakhstan in April 2015, said, "It's a chance to contribute in person to the OSCE's mission of upholding commitments to human rights and fundamental freedoms. It's also a chance to learn about a new country and its election procedures and to work with colleagues from other countries. You are doing good and having fun." ◻

Polling station officials count ballots in Zaporizhzhya Oblast during the October 2014 parliamentary election in Ukraine. *Photo by Lubomyr Rakowsky*

East Meets West

Center promotes understanding, regional ties

By Nicholas J. Manring, former senior Department of State East-West Center trainee and currently political advisor to the U.S. Army in Wiesbaden, Germany

The East-West Center (EWC) in Honolulu holds a unique position in the Department of State: It's an independent national public diplomacy institution, yet its ties to the Department are so deep that FSOs serve one-year assignments there.

As its name implies, the center is a platform for East-West dialogue. FSOs might meet an Asian minister-level official, there to discuss policy with his or her U.S. counterparts, or encounter a new U.S. ambassador heading to post. Or, they might meet a foreign university professor leading a brown bag discussion on climate change or a group of young civic leaders from a dozen countries attending a seminar.

The center, adjacent to the University of Hawai'i campus, was founded by Congress in 1960 to strengthen U.S.-Asia/Pacific relationships through cooperative study, training and research. It advances U.S. interests by improving Asia/Pacific understanding and appreciation of American values and society, while increasing Americans' knowledge of Asia and augmenting U.S. interagency capacity to interface with and lead in the rapidly growing Asia/Pacific region.

To do this, the EWC spearheads a variety of programs that focus on youth, emerging leaders and regional opinion leaders such as journalists, political leaders, policy analysts and educators. Most EWC programs are regionwide, and this makes it a base for multilateral discussions, research and networking.

Throughout the past 55 years, more than 62,000 people from across the nations of the Pacific region have participated in EWC programs, some going on to become prime ministers (India, Japan, Malaysia, Australia and Fiji) or cabinet members, parliamentarians and leaders of universities and NGOs. One program, the EWC's longstanding Jefferson Fellowships, is a three-week professional seminar, study and travel experience for U.S. journalists and those from the nations of Asia and the Pacific. The program seeks to broaden participants' understanding of issues affecting Asia, the Pacific and United States, and provides on-the-ground perspectives and an international network of contacts.

This year's program occurred in May and involved 15 accomplished journalists from 12 countries and territories, including China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Singapore and India. The participants came from such news organizations as the Associated Press, Washington Post, PBS NewsHour, Times of India, Straits Times and Kyodo News. Participants studied territorial conflicts, resource issues and environmental concerns in the South China Sea region.

According to one recent participant, a print and television correspondent from Lahore, Pakistan, time spent at the EWC improved his journalistic skills, provided information on the U.S. and the Asia/Pacific region, and "was a transformational experience … as it exposed me to such a comprehensive approach towards an issue before reporting or commenting on it."

In Siem Reap, Cambodia, in 2007, a Cambodian monk speaks to American teachers as part of EWC's AsiaPacificEd educational exchange program.

Photo courtesy of the East-West Center

Highlights of the EWC's grounds include the Hawai'i Imin International Conference Center and a Japanese garden.

Photo courtesy of the East-West Center

An aerial photo off the coast of Honolulu shows Waikiki's famous beach. *Photo by Edmund Garman*

Other EWC programs focus on leadership development for the myriad of smaller countries of the Pacific. The Pacific Islands Women in Leadership Program, for example, aims to create a network of female leaders across the region who can learn from each other and provide mutual support as they seek positive changes in their societies. The program involves eight months of applied leadership activities sandwiched between two intensive workshops. The 14-year old Asia Pacific Leadership Program, meanwhile, has 517 alumni from 53 countries. Alumni—many of whom are now key leaders in the United States and the nations of Asia and the Pacific—stay in touch: More than 65 percent have contacted EWC staff for updates and ideas in the past year alone.

EWC is also unique for its extensive use of partnerships to leverage U.S. funding and expand its reach. In any one year, the center uses collaborative research projects, its public speakers programs or regionwide training to partner with more than 700 organizations throughout the United States, Asia and the Pacific to deliver its programs and messaging. For example, the Pacific Islands Report, a daily emailed news summary, is the product of the EWC partnership with the University of Hawaii's Center for Pacific Island Studies.

Another EWC offering, the Asia Matters for America project, is an online, interactive resource for nonpartisan information, graphics and analysis on U.S.-Asia/Pacific relations. It too arises from a partnership, involving grants from the Henry Luce Foundation, the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council and the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, among others. The project's website provides information on U.S. links to Asia, such as numbers and economic impact of foreign students from Asia, and the value of exports to Asia—all arranged by U.S. state and congressional district.

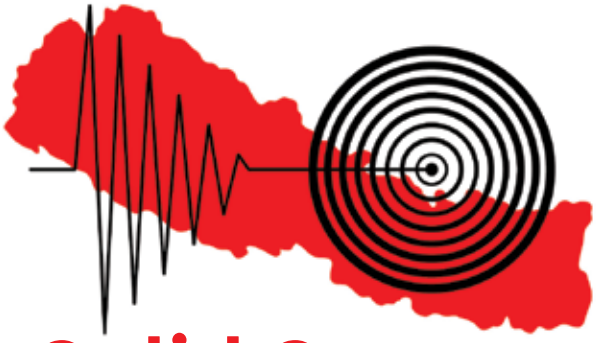
Although an independent, nonprofit entity, the EWC has many links to the Department. The secretary of state, for instance, appoints five of the center's 18-member international board of governors. In addition, the assistant secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) is an ex-officio EWC board member, and approximately 55 percent of EWC's budget comes as a separate appropriation from Congress through ECA.

The center also has regularly won grant competitions to administer ECA-funded exchanges and has worked with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor on election monitoring in the Asia/Pacific region. In addition, the center administers a number of programs for U.S. embassies, such as the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad's program for deepening democracy in Pakistan through media and the U.S. Embassy in Wellington's Future Leaders of the Pacific projects. Additionally, several secretaries of state have used the center and its I.M. Pei-designed auditorium building as a venue for Asia- and Pacific-related speeches; Secretary Kerry spoke there in 2014, as did Secretary Hillary Clinton in 2010 and 2011.

For FSOs at the FS-01 level, the Department has one, long-term, senior training position available annually at the EWC. The assignment encompasses one academic year of unstructured training involving interaction with EWC scholars and experts, and programs the participants design themselves. Throughout the past 20 years, FSOs at EWC have researched topics related to their careers and the Asia/Pacific region, completed master's degrees at the University of Hawai'i (UH), assisted with Department recruiting and taken courses at UH and the Department of Defense's nearby Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies.

Reflecting on her 2004–2005 EWC assignment, Ambassador Pamela Spratlen, one of six current or former U.S. ambassadors who are EWC alumni, praised EWC for its "outstanding academics" and said the center "draws senior policy leaders from throughout Asia, so the year spent there opened my eyes to the crucial importance of that region."

More information on gaining an EWC assignment is available from the Office of Career Development and Training in the Bureau of Human Resources (HR), and is also in the current edition of HR's publication Foreign Service and Civil Service Long-Term Training Opportunities. ◻



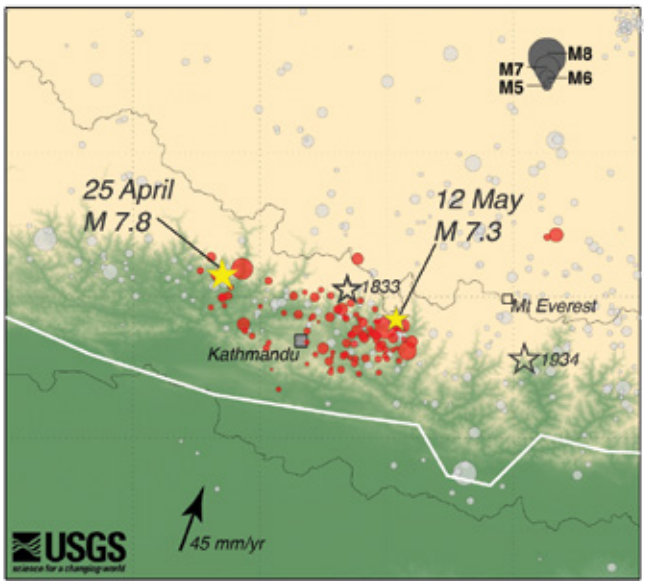
Solid Support

Embassy Kathmandu unites after Nepal earthquake

By Marissa Polnerow, former cultural affairs officer, and Ineke Stoneham, information officer, U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu

A family beside a damaged house near Naglebhare, Nepal. *Photo by Asian Development Bank*

Saturday, April 25 is a day that the people of Nepal and the staff of the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu will never forget. The magnitude 7.8 earthquake that damaged much of Nepal's capital city, Kathmandu, and 14 districts across the country, tragically killed almost 9,000 people and put 2.8 million people in need of assistance. Families who lost their homes sought shelter under tarps and tents, and many of the more than 20,000 injured fled to jam-packed hospitals for care. The country endured hundreds of aftershocks, including a subsequent magnitude 7.3 earthquake on May 12, in addition to avalanches, landslides and other secondary disasters.



A USGS map depicts more than 100 aftershocks that occurred since the magnitude 7.8 earthquake in Nepal on April 25, 2015. To date, the largest aftershock is a magnitude 7.3 on May 12. The 1833 and 1934 stars represent the most recent large historical earthquakes on this portion of the plate boundary. *Photo courtesy of USGS*

The afternoon of the earthquake, Embassy Kathmandu mobilized to account for mission personnel and ensure the safety of U.S. citizens, while beginning preparations to provide rescue and relief to Nepalis in need. A recognized leader in disaster preparedness, Embassy Kathmandu had been preparing for the long-anticipated "big one" for several years. The mission was equipped, for instance, with the only full-time U.S. Embassy Interagency Disaster Risk Reduction Office, and both Americans and Nepali Locally Employed (LE) staff trained regularly in medical and disaster response drills. In the four years leading up to the big quake, management had transitioned all American officers to seismically resilient housing. Both Americans and Nepalis were organized into groups around "rally houses," which contained emergency supply depots and space where they could convene in the event of an emergency. On April 24, embassy volunteers had set up emergency tents outside the chancery as a drill.

The fateful Saturday of the earthquake, chaos rippled through Kathmandu streets as people scrambled to locate loved ones and seek safety in open areas. Rubble from collapsed buildings closed off many roads, and cell phone and Internet coverage shut down. Mission leadership gathered at the embassy to account for staff whereabouts. Concerned over the likelihood of substantial aftershocks, Ambassador Peter W. Bodde called all American officers and their families to the embassy to shelter for the foreseeable future. He then initiated twice-daily meetings with section heads and a nightly situation report to keep everyone in the mission and in Washington fully informed on the rapidly emerging realities and challenges.

All U.S. embassy personnel survived the earthquake and were accounted for within hours. All Peace Corps volunteers, trainees, and staff on temporary assignment were accounted for by April 26. The lack of electricity and cell coverage delayed efforts to account for all LE staff. American and LE staff and their families prepared to stay the night in the embassy. Many staff stayed for a week or longer due to frequent and fierce aftershocks. The "stay-bags"

A USAID Urban Search and Rescue unit searches for survivors. *State Department photo*

The U.S. military delivers relief, shelter and medical supplies to hard-hit districts. *State Department photo*

and "go-bags" issued to American staff were used to set up bedding on office floors, and first aid kits and other essentials were widely distributed to LE staff and their families. Although there were no fatalities among LE staff, many lost their homes and are still in the difficult process of rebuilding. Despite the difficult conditions, 40 percent of LE staff reported to work on the Monday after the earthquake. By Friday, that number had risen to 70 percent.

At the height of the crisis, the mission hosted hundreds of private Americans and third-country nationals until they could get safely home or make other arrangements. Altogether, approximately 600 people sheltered at the chancery and more than 200 individuals at the nearby "Phora Durbar" American compound, including local staff and their families. Staff and citizens slept on floors in open areas of the chancery or under tents, and volunteers helped prepare food reserves and distribute MREs for stranded citizens.

The mission helped hundreds of U.S. citizens leave Nepal via commercial flights and on evacuation flights arranged by other diplomatic missions to nearby destinations. Eligible family members, Peace Corps volunteers, Fulbright fellows, and others volunteered to assist with the embassy's around-the-clock response. The medical unit cared for more than 220 patients and provided various stress management sessions to more than 370 embassy employees. State Department regional psychiatrists offered vital in-person counseling in the days and months that followed. Many Nepali residents took shelter in designated "open spaces," many of which were already identified, prepared and protected in 2013 with assistance from USAID.

Two Army Special Forces teams with high altitude rescue and recovery expertise and extensive medical trauma training were in country with the U.S. Pacific Command's Augmentation Team when the quake hit. They responded immediately, rescuing numerous U.S. citizens, assisting the consular section with the recovery of deceased U.S. citizens and providing USAID with on-the-ground assessments.

The consular section sprang into immediate action, responding to more than 2,300 welfare and whereabouts cases. Tragically, several U.S. citizens died as a result of the earthquake, including four trekkers in an avalanche at Everest Base Camp. At the same time, the mission directly rescued 17 U.S. citizens and 55 third-country nationals from remote regions via chartered helicopters and facilitated the departure of hundreds more.

Within 72 hours of the April 25 earthquake, the U.S. government deployed a USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), including humanitarian disaster experts and two urban search-and-rescue teams from Fairfax and Los Angeles counties. The DART teams helped rescue people from collapsed buildings and conducted structural damage assessments in Kathmandu. They surveyed more than 125 structures, including two UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

More than 320 U.S. military service members mobilized to provide emergency relief to hard-hit communities throughout Nepal and worked closely with the Nepalese army to provide emergency airlifts to those in need in remote districts. Three C-17 and four V-22 Osprey aircraft and three UH-1 "Huey" helicopters were flown in from Okinawa by III Marine Expeditionary Force to provide support to rescue and relief operations.

On May 12, the same afternoon that a massive 7.3-magnitude aftershock

Assistant Secretary of State Nisha Biswal and Ambassador Bodde, left, survey damage to Kathmandu's Durbar Square. *State Department photo*

A photo from an aerial survey flight conducted by members of Joint Task Force 505, May 7, shows earthquake-damaged buildings near Kathmandu. U.S. military services came together to form JTF 505, which worked in conjunction with USAID and the international community, to assist the Nepalese people.

Photo by Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Jeffrey D. Anderson

From Left: A conference room in the chancery was one of the many spaces used to shelter American citizens. *State Department photo*; Organized activities kept the post's children calm and occupied while their parents worked. *State Department photo*

retraumatized the nation, a U.S. Huey helicopter crashed after attempting to rescue five injured civilians from the hard-hit Himalayan town of Charikot. Six U.S. Marines, two Nepalese army officers and the civilians all tragically perished. Despite the loss, the U.S. military's Joint Task Force continued to provide relief. The mission's Memorial Day Facebook post honoring their sacrifice drew hundreds of messages of condolence and gratitude from Nepalis.

The U.S. government's commitment to Nepal has stood the test of time. Our pledge at the June 25 International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction increased the total amount of U.S. emergency relief and early recovery assistance to $130 million, and is only the beginning of our contribution to Nepal's earthquake recovery, which will span multiple years. USAID and other partners immediately mobilized to reach vulnerable people in earthquake-affected areas with emergency shelter materials, medical supplies, safe drinking water and hygiene kits, particularly in remote regions outside the Kathmandu Valley. For more than two decades, the U.S. mission had supported disaster risk reduction efforts to mitigate the impact of natural disasters in Nepal. These efforts included major and, as events would prove, highly effective investments in the seismic strengthening of some of Nepal's most important and treasured cultural heritage sites. As the post-earthquake humanitarian situation evolves, Embassy Kathmandu is focused on shelter and infrastructure, livelihoods and food security, strengthened health and educational institutions, protection for vulnerable groups, airport improvement and more robust disaster risk management infrastructure.

Nepal faces a long road ahead as it rebuilds. However, the disaster mobilized youth and others across the country and the world to extend united hands to support Nepal's recovery. In the same way, Embassy Kathmandu united to courageously respond to the needs of citizens and communities in need, and their formidable contributions will be remembered. Looking back, Ambassador Bodde noted that the most positive takeaway from this otherwise tragic situation was seeing the "spirit of the Foreign Service" in action. The entire staff, their families and LE staff rose to the occasion, taking care of each other first and then leading the international community in rescue, relief and reconstruction efforts. As President Obama said, "When our friends are in need, America helps."

If you would like to donate to the Foreign Service National Emergency Relief Fund to help staff rebuild their homes, please visit their website. ◻

Secretary Kerry's Statement on Mission Nepal's efforts

Nothing makes me prouder than seeing our brave diplomats rise to the challenge and protect those in need. When the devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal on April 25, Embassy Kathmandu didn't just take care of its own. The mission opened its doors to hundreds of U.S. citizens, Nepalis, and others seeking safety, while contributing to broader recovery efforts from search and rescue to assistance coordination.

The embassy's extraordinary performance was no accident, but rather the result of years of preparation. Ambassador Peter Bodde and his team's accomplishments, both before and after the earthquake, were a model for all diplomats serving in disaster-prone countries. Embassy Kathmandu staff built on the work of its predecessors to ensure mission personnel homes were seismically safe, conducted rigorous drills, and constantly evaluated preparedness. Thousands of lives were saved on that tragic day as a result of this prescience.

We, in Washington, also need to be ready when disaster strikes. During the Nepal disaster, everyone from the desk officer to SCA [South and Central Asian Affairs] Assistant Secretary Nisha Biswal communicated with their counterparts at USAID, Crisis Management Services, and the Department of Defense, to lead and coordinate the U.S. government response as soon as the earthquake struck. Their cooperation is a reminder of how much we can achieve when we work in unison with our fellow agencies.

The rebuilding process has only just begun in Nepal, and there is still a lot of work to do. As we look ahead to helping Nepal get back on its feet, let us take a moment to reflect and express our gratitude to our team at Embassy Kathmandu for its leadership, courage, and tenacity during a time of crippling crisis.

Bringing Balance

Work/Life Division addresses family needs

By Michelle Bernier-Toth, director, Office of Overseas Citizens Services

Cutting the ribbon at the 2014 opening of a new Diplotots childcare center, part of the Department's work/life program, are GSA Regional Administrator Julia Hudson, Diplotots alumnus Madison Cocchiaro, Diplotots student Zoe DeGarmo, Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Heather Higginbottom and Assistant Secretary of State for Administration Joyce Barr. *State Department photo*

Department of State employee Vicky Bonasera started the week with a dilemma common to working parents—a schedule packed with critical meetings and needing to find alternate day care for her son the next day.

Fortunately, she knew about a particular program offered by the Bureau of Human Resources' Work/Life Division (HR/ER/WLD). Called Infoquest (IQ) Backup Care, the program offers emergency child care coverage. Within a few hours of her call to IQ, the consulting company had scheduled a qualified caregiver to arrive at Bonasera's doorstep the next day.

Another IQ success story is Anne Coleman-Honn of the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm. "When our child care arrangements fell through on a day that neither I nor my husband could miss work, I felt very lucky to have backup care as an option," she recalled. "The InfoQuest staff has always been extremely responsive and helpful, and the child care providers they have sent us have always been professional and great with our kids."

Even State Magazine's own art director, Luis Jimenez, has used the IQ service. As a new Department employee with three children under the age of two, Jimenez struggled to find suitable day care. Using IQ, Luis and his wife located a day care with immediate openings only a few minutes from their home—every parent's dream.

Another employee, Jeremy Beer, took advantage of a different program the Department offers to help balance jobs and home life: He job-shares in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA). Under this arrangement, two employees split one full-time position. Beer began job-sharing in 2011 while completing an MBA at Georgetown. Juggling schoolwork with a demanding job was a challenge, but the two experiences complemented each other, he said.

Beer credits the success of his job-share to his work partner and SCA, which recognized the value of hiring two experienced officers to fill a single job, to which they give the same high performance as expected of the rest of the SCA team. "As the Department continues to allow for and promote job sharing," Beer said, "I think we'll begin to see more successful and high-caliber officers exercising this option at different points in their careers. If that's the case, I have no doubt the Department will be better for it."

Another job-share alumnus is Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Sue Saarnio, who shared a position while working on the Mexico desk. Their office director at the time, WHA Assistant Secretary Roberta Jacobson, said the two workers "were a supervisor's dream—I have no doubt I got more than 50 percent out of each of them because of their dedication and coordination, and the position was covered beautifully."

IQ and job-shares are just two programs WLD offers to enhance work/life balance, a matter of such importance to Secretary Kerry that the Quadrennial Development and Diplomacy Review (QDDR) lists it as a strategic objective. Speaking at an October 2013 event co-sponsored by WLD and the employee group Balancing Act@State, Kerry said work/life balance is important to the Department's productivity. "It's important to the quality of life," he continued. "It's important to the type of people we can attract. It's important to our longevity and our loyalty to the Department and to the happiness and good feelings that people have about being here."

Work/life balance is essential to an organization's productivity and resiliency, said Judy Ikels, WLD's director. Achieving this goal, she continued, often requires a significant cultural change—something WLD faces daily as it works to implement policies and programs that foster greater work/life balance.

WLD provides information, technical assistance, policy direction and guidance to Department managers and employees around the world. Its work has also led to the creation of the Voluntary Leave Bank, FlexConnect (see related story), telework and Alternate Work Schedules (AWS), better lactation policies and additional lactation rooms, and the Department's forthcoming new guide to pregnancy and parenthood in the Foreign Service.

Other WLD roles include:

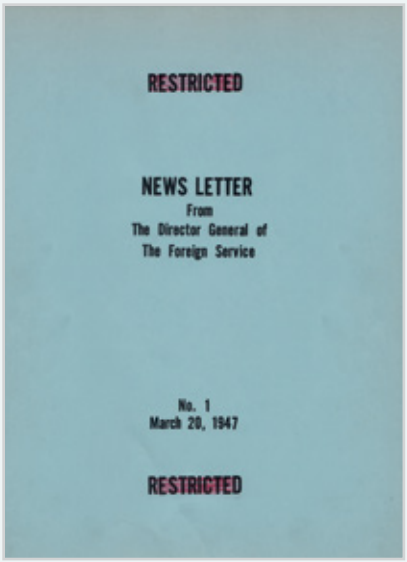
- Liaison on child care for the Department and to Diplotots, the Department's on-site child care center at Columbia Plaza, SA17, and FSI.
- Seeker of ideas and feedback from employee organizations, including the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA), Executive Women@State, the Civil Service Association and Balancing Act@State, which advocate for policies and programs that promote work/life balance.
- Consultant for offices struggling to adopt work/life balance programs and policies; for instance, by suggesting Alternative Work Schedules to an office where employees can't telework.

In March, the Department launched the Work/Life/Wellness Leadership Council, which gives senior and mid-level managers a mechanism for supporting employees' participation in work/life programs. The council, chaired by Higginbottom and composed of senior Department leaders, provides guidance on the Department's work/life and wellness programs and has directed WLD to work with FSI to incorporate work/life balance training into leadership and management courses. Ikels said the efforts of the council and WLD will simultaneously educate supervisors and employees on the benefits of work/life programs as management tools. ◻

Stop the Presses

After 68 years in print, *State Magazine* is going all-digital

By Isaac D. Pacheco



March 1947 – First Issue
A small team of FSOs publishes Issue 1 of the *News Letter from The Director General of The Foreign Service.*

January 1948 – First Cartoon
A pen and ink drawing by Dan Nichols depicting FSOs ordering Foreign Service Institute courses off a restaurant-style menu appears in Issue 11.

March 1949 – First Photo
Foreign Service Inspectors pose for a group photo with then-Assistant Secretary of State John Peurifoy and Director General Christian Ravndal in Issue 23.

In 1947, a team of Department employees, under the watchful eye of then-Director General Selden Chapin, published a 12-page mimeographed newsletter that detailed Department initiatives and topics of interest for officers deployed abroad. This humble newsletter grew in size and scope over the years, eventually becoming the Department's flagship periodical, *State Magazine*. Today, the publication highlights the vital work of both Foreign and Civil Service employees domestically and internationally, and is read by active and retired employees throughout the world, as well as by government leaders and members of the general public.

As environmental and communication considerations have combined to reshape the publishing landscape in the past decade, the magazine has evolved, increasing its online and social media presence and moving toward greener publishing practices. Now we are preparing to begin a new chapter in the publication's illustrious history.

In keeping with the secretary of state's continued push for sound environmental stewardship and effective communication, the Director General of the Foreign Service has authorized *State Magazine* to discontinue its print production and distribution in favor of a dynamic digital-only multimedia publication available online and via mobile app on Web-enabled mobile devices, beginning with the October 2015 issue.

The environmental impact of transitioning to an all-digital publication is notable, considering that the average single issue of *State Magazine* uses 22 individual pages of 8.5-by-11-inch paper. With 11 issues per year, a single annual subscription requires approximately 242 pages of paper per year. *State Magazine* printed more than 5 million pages last year alone.

December 1960 – First Color Cover
On the cover of Issue 166, red lettering and a trio of wise men riding green camels mark the first use of halftone color in the publication.

Using Environmental Paper Network figures, annual production of *State Magazine*'s print product fells 927 trees, uses 1,750 million BTUs of electricity and consumes 1,065,557 gallons of water. It also results in the release of 322,941 pounds of greenhouse gases; 123,675 pounds of solid waste; 573 pounds of nitrogen oxides; 1,648 pounds of sulfur dioxide and 301 pounds of particulate matter. These figures do not include the additional environmental impact of air shipments of the magazine around the world.

In addition to dramatically reducing the publication's environmental footprint, transitioning to an all-digital product will cost a fraction of the current print and distribution

January 1980 – First Post of the Month
The U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, Yemen, is featured as the first Post of the Month in Issue 219.

June/July 1996 – First Color Layout
Along with the cover art, Issue 397 features red ink in headline text and as an accent throughout the magazine's internal layout.

January 2012 – First Multimedia Feature
A fundraising bake sale article in Issue 563 becomes the first of many subsequent features to incorporate video into layouts.

November 2013 – First All-Digital Issue
The government shutdown prevents GPO from processing print orders, making Issue 583 *State Magazine*'s first digital-only publication.

budget, and allow staff to focus on making every issue a multimedia experience that fully utilizes current and emerging digital media. With access to the online version available to anyone, anytime and from anywhere, there will be no worries about missed issues.

Unlike print, the interactive digital version of the magazine will be dynamic, allowing integration of moving design elements, video and audio. Page number and font-size restrictions are things of the past with customizable interfaces and scalable displays that resize the publication based on the device a subscriber is using to read it. Articles in the digital version can be shared with friends, family and colleagues via email and social media, and even printed by individual subscribers.

We look forward to fully utilizing the vast potential of digital media to communicate the Department's priorities to *State Magazine*'s audiences around the world. Readers may contact us with questions about the transition to digital at statemagazine@state.gov. The digital publication will be accessible on our existing website (www.state.gov/statemag) and through the Apple App Store. Readers can sign up to receive email notifications every month when the new issue is published by visiting https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/USSTATEBPA/subscriber/new. ◻

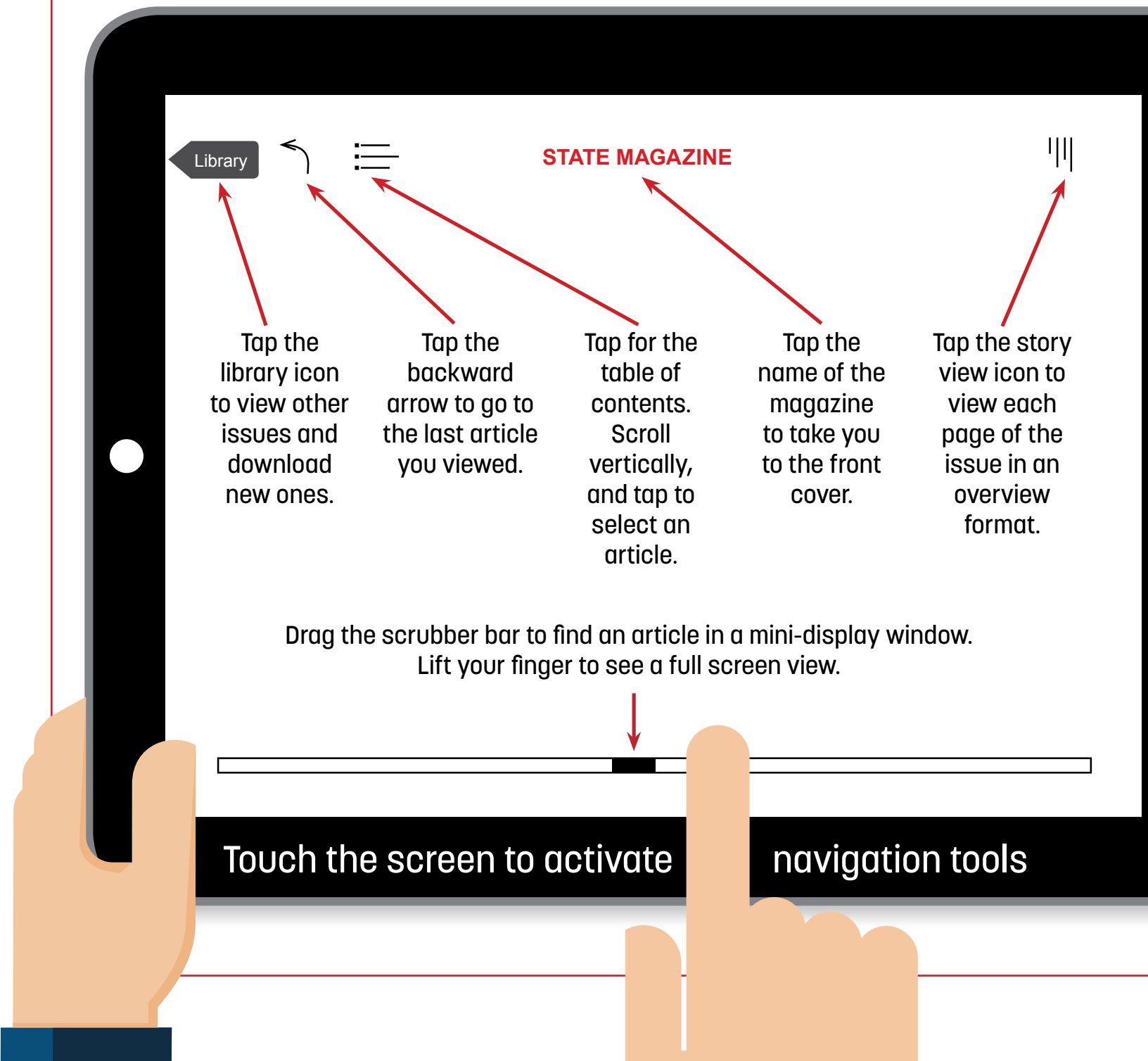
May 2015 – 600th Issue
After nearly seven decades of sharing the State Department story with readers around the world, the magazine publishes Issue 600.

March 1999 – First Full Color Magazine
Issue 423 becomes the publication's first foray into four color process, featuring high-resolution photos and a vibrant "Lying in State" cartoon.

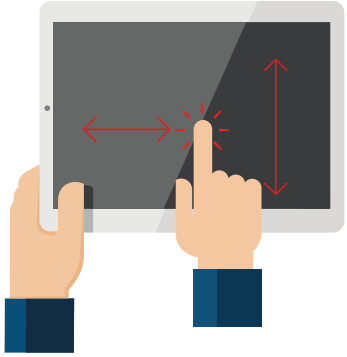
July/August 2009 – First Online Issue
Along with print, Issue 536 is published in an interactive online format optimized for reading on Web browsers and available to the general public.

October 2015 – First Enhanced Digital Issue
Issue 604 will be the first all-digital, multimedia publication featuring a landscape layout tailored for computer displays and mobile device screens.

Navigating *State Magazine*'s Digital Publication



At launch, the interactive version of *State Magazine* will be accessible online via Web browsers (Internet Explorer 7 or later, Safari 5 or later, Firefox 3.5 or later, or Chrome) and on iOS mobile devices via the Apple App Store. Non-iOS devices will still be able to display the publication through their Web browsers as long as they have an active data connection. We will release a dedicated app for Android devices in the next several months, which will allow users to download entire publications to their Android devices and browse through them while offline.The basic navigation features detailed below will not change from issue to issue, though the appearance of individual icons may vary as the publication's digital format evolves.

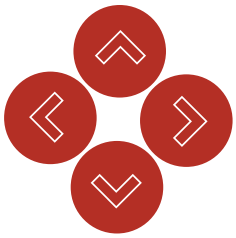


BROWSE - forward or backward in the magazine by swiping

PLAY - videos clips by tapping the play button

OPEN - to see additional info

AUDIO - tap button to listen to audio clips



SCROLL - to view more content

TAP - images on the screen to view additional information

Wayfaring EFM

An epic American journey by motorcycle

By Jorge M. Serpa

The author sits aboard his motorcycle at the famous "End of the World" sign in Ushuaia (Tierra del Fuego), Argentina, in February.

Photo by Bruno Andrez

Therapy sessions, that's what I call them. Journeys—preferably on alternative modes of transportation—that take me far and wide around the world. I may be a "stay-at-home" eligible family member (EFM), but that doesn't mean that I have to actually stay at home! Early on I learned: Find something to do, or else you—and others around you—will lose their sanity.

My most recent therapy session involved taking the "long way around" to Tierra del Fuego, the southernmost point in the Western Hemisphere. And I did it on my motorcycle.

It all started last summer. My wife Lucy was very busy with her work in the Bureau of African Affairs, so I grabbed "the Mule," a 2013 BMW R1200 GS Adventure motorcycle, and went for a spin—make that a nearly 28,000-mile spin around both North and South America.

My plan was to go from our home in Chevy Chase, Md., to Alaska, and then south all the way down to Ushuaia, the southern tip of Argentina's Tierra del Fuego. Eventually the plan evolved into two big loops. The first took me across the country to Alaska, via as many national parks as I could visit. From Alaska, I took the ferry down to Washington state, where I helped an old friend-turned-vintner press the season's grapes (a 14 Viognier from Celaeno Winery). I then rode south, mostly along the scenic Pacific coast, to San Diego (with a little detour inland toward the end, to visit Death Valley and the Grand Canyon). Next, I zigzagged across the South to New Orleans, before eventually returning to D.C. By mid-October, after two and a half months and 15,846 miles on the road, I was sleeping at home again.

The second loop started in early December. Giving my gas tank a good-luck pat, I loaded the Mule on a cargo ship in Baltimore and sent it off to Chile. I followed by plane in mid-January, exchanging Washington's snow for the Austral summer. We were reunited in the Chilean port town of Valparaíso. From there, I went south, by the Pacific side, down to Ushuaia, aka the "end of the world."

Having gazed upon the mythical Strait of Magellan, I turned around and headed north by the Atlantic side, up through Uruguay and southern Brazil. Here I realized that the "land of samba and soccer" was going to drain my piggy bank faster than planned, so I took a "hard left," to Argentina's Gran Chaco region. I continued west to Salta, and then by the Cordillera (as the Andes range is known down there), through Bolivia and southern Peru.

By late March I was in Lima, and really low on funds. I decided that it was time to start bringing down the curtain on my trip. Two weeks later, the Mule was on a big ship again, now on its way to Miami. The second loop—and the whole trip—ended in mid-April, when I flew to Miami, picked the Mule up at the port there and drove home. By the time I got back to D.C., I had ridden another 11,862 miles through seven countries in three-and-a-half months.

One of the many great things about traveling on a motorcycle is the people you encounter along the way. This trip was no exception: No matter where I was, once I'd parked the Mule, someone would drop by, curious. "You came all the way from Maryland on that?" I was often asked. I also had the opportunity to enjoy incredible hospitality from Foreign Service friends and colleagues throughout the continent. Also, I got to ride with some fantastic people, such as former Peace Corps volunteer Lou Guarino; Harry Haninger (an Austrian buddy who has ridden more than 50,000 miles through four continents); and Joel, João and Nico (all true motorcycle legends in Brazil).

At the end of these epic journeys, I am often asked either of two questions: what was my favorite place, and did I ever feel threatened. As far as my favorite place for this trip, the truth of the matter is … I liked them all! Alaska and southern Patagonia (Chile and Argentina) may have been a bit special for their wide-open spaces, sheer beauty and frontier hospitality. The Uyuni Salt Flats in Bolivia was also memorable for the exhilaration of riding a big bike like mine with a wide open throttle across an endless "sea" of white salt. And then there's Lake Titicaca—and its floating reed island hotel where I stayed—what an experience! Lastly,

The author rides his motorcycle near São Domingos, Guinea-Bissau, during his trip from Paris to Bissau in 2010.

Photo by Luis Lourenco

I would have to mention the Red Rock Country of southern Utah and northern Arizona—my off-road detour to the Grand Canyon by the Toroweap Overlook was absolutely memorable.

On the other question, did I ever feel threatened on this trip? No. Not that things were always anxiety free. Waking up in the settlement of Liard River, Canada, with my tent surrounded by a herd of animals led to some stressful moments (eventually I realized that they were "only" bison, not bears). And leaving La Paz in Bolivia during trade union protests through barricades of rocks, tree branches and an occasional burning tire was equally interesting. ◻

The author at the Arctic Circle in Alaska in August 2014.

Photo by Jorge Serpa

Background: Salar de Uyuni is part of the Altiplano of Bolivia in South America. The Altiplano is a high plateau, which was formed during uplift of the Andes mountains. The plateau includes fresh and saltwater lakes as well as salt flats and is surrounded by mountains with no drainage outlets.

Photo by Dimitry B.

The U.S. Embassy Rome Sailing Team sails at the IMS Worlds in Capri in May 2002.

Photo by James Robison Taylor

Lively life involves much travel

My motorcycle ride through the Americas was not my first foray into this type of thing. I had ridden extensively through Europe: Brittany, Normandy, the Alps, Italy, the usual tourist routes … Then, in 2010, I rode with five friends from Europe to Guinea-Bissau in West Africa.

I don't always travel by motorcycle. For example, in 2013, I took Pooh (my faithful '99 Nissan Patrol 4WD) on a drive from Lisbon to the Adriatic and the Balkans. On my way, I stopped in Pristina to visit an old friend, Ambassador Chris Dell. One of my memories from this trip was seeing firsthand how much he was admired by the Kosovars. You would think he was a rock star!

Sometimes I am just a passenger. In 2009, I went around the world on "alternative means of transportation." Starting in Washington, D.C., I crossed the States on Amtrak. I then crossed the Pacific on a container vessel. In Shanghai, I switched back to trains, continuing on to Beijing, then Ulaanbaatar, Lake Baikal, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Helsinki, Stockholm, Copenhagen and onward.

Travels aside, probably the most remarkable and most fun of any of my adventures was putting together the U.S. Embassy Rome Sailing Team. At the time I owned a 40-foot racing sailboat that I raced semiprofessionally in the Mediterranean circuit. Shortly after 9/11, I quit the circuit and brought the boat home to Rome. I had barely gotten there when ISAF (the international governing body for competitive sailing) announced that the 2002 World Championship for my class of boat would be held in Capri. I couldn't resist doing one more race, but there was a problem: I had dismissed my "pro" crew.

I decided to run an ad in the embassy's newsletter asking for volunteers. Four months later, I was on the starting line of the Rolex IMS World Championship in Capri with a crew of FSOs, FSN, and EFMs–the newly minted U.S. Embassy Rome Sailing Team.

Getting there took many weekends of "sailing boot camp," as most of my new crew had never sailed before. In our earlier training sessions, you could hear me saying things like, "This is the red line; until you know what it does, just pull on it when I tell you to." The FSOs on the boat crew included Kelly Degnan, Elizabeth Richard, Kathleen Doherty and Jan Abbott. The shore crew included Chris Richard and my wife, Lucy. I was proud that our boat alone had nearly half of all the women sailing in the Championship. I was also proud that we ran respectable races, never coming in last!

The moral of the story? EFMs, get out of the house, do stuff, have fun; just put your imaginations to work, and in no time you will soon find the right therapy to fill your sails or keep your wheels humming! ◻

in brief...

Former Student Thanks FSI Instructors

Last year, Peter G. Kaestner, consular section chief at the U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt, stopped by FSI to thank two of his former teachers, German language instructor Nina Fritz, right, who had him for a seven-week familiarization and short-term training course, and Sudarshan Goel, left, his Hindi teacher from 1981. He has since twice lived and worked in India and is using his basic German at Consulate General Frankfurt. German was the seventh language he studied at FSI during his 35-year Foreign Service career. *Photo by Kimberly Kaestner*

Embassy Ottawa Holds Open House

Ambassador Bruce Heyman greets visitors for an open house in his office at the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa as part of Ottawa's Doors Open event, where many of the city's buildings and facilities allow the public to enter and explore their interiors. Since 2010, Embassy Ottawa has been one of the most popular of the more than 120 event venues. Over the course of six hours, 50 volunteers from the embassy community oversaw and led tours for approximately 500 preregistered visitors. *Photo by Chris Tejirian*

Appointments

Gentry O. Smith (SFS) of North Carolina is the new director of the Office of Foreign Missions, with the rank of Ambassador. Most recently, he was deputy assistant secretary and assistant director for countermeasures in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. Previously, he was director of the Office of Physical Security Programs. He has served as regional security officer at U.S. embassies in Tokyo and Rangoon, and as RSO and deputy RSO during two separate tours at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo. Before joining the Department, he was a police officer with the Raleigh (N.C.) Police Department.

Nancy Bikoff Pettit (SFS) of Virginia is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia. For the past two years, she was director of the Office of Western European Affairs in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs and, before that, director of the Office of Policy Planning and Coordination in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. Her overseas postings include Kyiv, three tours in Moscow, Vienna and Taipei. In Washington, she worked in the Office of Newly Independent States, Board of Examiners, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

AIT Holds Youth Camp

Youths from a summer camp hosted by the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong and Macau pose for a group photo. The camp brought together 50 youth leaders from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau in Tainan, Taiwan, from July 24–26. One event allowed them to help Tainan's elderly community through a July 25 activity at the Yin Tung Village, where they and residents created decorations from recycled plastic bottles and aluminum cans that were given to the village for public use.

Photo by Wei Hung Shen

Retirements

Civil Service

Allen, Florence D.
Barrett, Kathleen M.
Buchanan, James Eldon
Coleman, Ellen A.
Coonley, Nancy R.
Edillon, Joel A.
Eisenhardt, Kenneth A.
Finkle, James J.
Hatem, Debra L.
Helm, Kathleen A.
Hoover, Sherri S.
Hubbard, Gloria K.
Imamura, Anne E.
Ives, Donna A.
Koh, Deborah H.
Kolarevic, Darjana
Langfitt, David V.
Lynch, Josephine
Martinez, Mary F.
McNamara, Patrick J.
McPhail, Donald L.
Morgan,Linda F.
Murchison, Ann R.
Oliver, Margaret A.
Pitts Jr., Cornelius
Pleasant, Christine
Whitmer, Samuel
Wiecking, John C.
Wright, Redell H.

Foreign Service

Behnke, Richard D.
Chu, Martin M.
Claud, Raul M.
Coronado, Robert P.
David, Panakkal
Delare, Thomas Lawrence
Diop, Papayoro Tapa
Feuerstein, Gary R.
Gelderman, Sandra L.
Gray III, Gordon
Greene, Douglas C.
Hauser, Nickolaus
Holtzman, Teresa Marie
Howard, Sheridan D.
Jandorf, Bryan D.
Kane, Avery E.
Kramer, William K.
Manley, Jan Alan
Manley, Nancy Y.
Matsuya, Margaret L.
Miller, Christine L.
Nuwanyakpa, Patricia A.
Perry, L. Stephen
Portmann, Kirk S.
Rathke, Jeffrey Dean
Warren, Bruce F.

Ethics Answers

Q: A local businessman I work with at post has offered me a weeklong guest pass to use at a local beach club, where he is a member. The summers here are really hot and humid, and I would like to use the pass. May I?

A: Probably not. Ethics rules prohibit federal employees from accepting gifts valued at greater than $20 if the gift is given to the employee by a "prohibited source" (such as an entity doing business with the Department) or because of the employee's official position. If this pass exceeds $20 in value, you may not accept it, unless another exception to the gift rules applies. (None seem to apply here). While there is an exception for gifts based on personal friendships, new friendships formed in the course of performing official Department business will generally not meet this standard. If you would like to use the pass to escape the heat, however, you may pay fair market value for it.

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

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

Safety Scene

After Disaster Strikes, Safety Still Matters!

By Joyce Brewer, certified industrial hygienist, Office of Safety, Health, and Environmental Management

How ready are you for an emergency? September is National Preparedness Month in the United States. What better way to prepare than to consider safety concerns common to many disaster situations. Disasters can be caused by many factors. They can be climate- or health-related, the result of terrorist violence, or technological and accidental hazards involving entire communities. They generally encompass more than the initial hurricane or earthquake. There are also physical, chemical and biological hazards that surface during the recovery process. Being aware of some of these typical emergencies helps you be prepared, should anyone in your family live or work in a disaster environment.

Initially, finding a safer location in a disaster zone may be very dangerous. High winds, tremors or flood damage may block your path with debris, make structures unstable and block emergency exits. When walking through or over debris, move slowly and pay close attention to where you step. Identify downed power lines and keep a safe distance until you are certain that the lines have been de-energized. Don't touch any object or water that's in contact with lines that may be energized, since the object or the water could also be energized. Don't enter or stay in damaged structures until they've been evaluated by an expert (e.g. structural engineer) and deemed safe.

Once you've reached a safer location, or are allowed to return home, you probably won't have power. Under these circumstances, having generators on hand is always a good idea. However, a silent but deadly byproduct from gas-powered generators is carbon monoxide (CO), an odorless and colorless gas that can quickly build up indoors. Unaware occupants may be overcome, resulting in sudden illness, unconsciousness or death. Gas-powered generators, power washers and other devices powered by gasoline, propane, natural gas, wood or charcoal are common sources of CO poisoning. Most carbon monoxide-generating equipment is kept outside the home far away from open windows, doors, vents and other occupied areas. Make sure that the equipment is installed and operated according to the manufacturer's instructions and local building codes to avoid carbon monoxide exposure.

When it's time to start repairs and cleanup, watch for overhead and underground power lines, especially if you are working on ladders or with moving equipment. If you suspect damage to an electrical system, or if the system is submerged in water or smells of burned insulation, do not turn the power back on until the electrical equipment has been inspected by an electrician. Only use undamaged, grounded and double-insulated electrical equipment. Electrical power tools and appliances being used in wet areas need to be protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters – GFCIs – to reduce the chance of electrical shock. Also, practice starting your portable generator before a disaster hits to avoid electrocution and other electrical issues.

Water damage or excessive moisture often accompanies natural disasters. Water damage may encourage mold growth and damage building materials, furniture and porous belongings. Remove and discard items that cannot be washed and disinfected, such as carpeting, upholstered furniture, toys and paper products. You can use laundry or dish detergent to clean hard surfaces, such as flooring and wood furniture.

Pets, wild animals and insects may present unknown hazards that are often overlooked. When traumatized, injured or displaced, such creatures are more likely to attack and spread disease. Wild or stray animals should only be handled by personnel trained in handling and caring for them. Insects that harbor diseases, such as mosquitos, easily find new habitats in disaster zones among trash, rotting vegetation and in standing water. You should use insect repellant containing DEET, or picaridin, to protect from bug bites. Remove insect habitats as soon as possible to prevent insects from gathering and reproducing, and drain standing water from areas where it accumulates, such as flower pots.

Seeking immediate medical attention for routine injuries or illnesses decreases the likelihood that they will become severe, especially since post-disaster medical resources are often limited. Find out where medical assistance is available before and after disaster hits, and keep a first aid kit and clean water readily available for basic medical treatment. Frequent hand washing with soap and water goes a long way to protect you from disease, especially after conducting cleanup tasks, before eating or drinking, or after coming in contact with hazardous materials. Contaminated clothes and linens should be kept separate from uncontaminated materials.

Being aware of and prepared for typical disaster-related hazards may allow for an easier recovery for you and your family. Health departments, media outlets and public service agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency can update you on disaster-related concerns and protective measures. For more details about the annual national preparedness campaign, visit http://www.ready.gov/ready2015.

Resources regarding international disasters can be found on the Department's Emergencies Abroad website. ◻

LYING IN STATE: DEAL WITH THE DEVIL
I'D SELL MY SOUL FOR A POSTING TO EMBASSY RITZOVIA!
THAT SEEMS LIKE A REASONABLE DEAL.
SO THIS WOULD BE A LINKED ASSIGNMENT, RIGHT?
EMBASSY RITZOVIA AND ETERNAL DAMNATION? I GUESS THAT'S FINE...
IT WOULD BE VIA A YEAR OF LANGUAGE TRAINING.
WELL, IT IS FOR YOUR IMMORTAL SOUL SO THAT'S FAIR...
AGHELEK 2015
ALSO, I'LL NEED TO SPLIT MY HOME LEAVE SO I'D NEED THAT AUTHORIZED BY THE ASSIGNMENT SUPPORT UNIT.
THAT'S SORT OF GETTING MORE INTO H.R. ISSUES THAN I USUALLY GO.
AND AS FAR AS MY FAIR SHARE BIDDING REQUIREMENTS - WAIT! AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE IN THE DETAILS?
THE DEVIL'S GOT A LOT OF PLACES TO BE...

Entrepreneurs' Summit

Three-day event aimed to boost region's economies

By Derek Pham, intern, Office of Multilateral Affairs, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs

The first Mekong Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Summit, in Ho Chi Minh City in June, featured first-time and seasoned entrepreneurs and innovators from all of the Lower Mekong countries—Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam—to help jumpstart the region's entrepreneurial environment and assist entrepreneurs in connecting with existing networks and leveraging resources to build their capacity.

Participants learned from stakeholders familiar with the region's startup climate and discussed ideas for accelerating the Mekong technology ecosystem. The event culminated in a session in which startup teams pitched ideas, competing for $20,000 in secure startup capital.

The event was sponsored by the Department's Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) and organized by LMI's TIGERS@Mekong, with support from the Office of Global Partnerships. It brought together early-stage investors, leaders of technology incubators, and organizers of co-working spaces and startup competitions, as well as universities, training providers and other groups, plus government officials. They sought to develop innovations to nurture startups and promote cross-border entrepreneurship and people-to-people linkages.

TIGERS organizes events such as the summit to provide entrepreneurs access to larger markets and more options for private partners, investors and talent. TIGERS partners with mentors and organizations to facilitate the growth of tech-based innovation and entrepreneurship. It also provides guidance on starting a business, hosts and supports local and regional startup competitions, and brokers meetings between Mekong startups and investors.

Much of the region's workforce currently lacks the skills for success in Asia's business environments. In one analysis, only 16.4 percent of businesses surveyed thought Lower Mekong schools had sufficiently prepared students with the needed work skills.

Young entrepreneurs, meanwhile, decry the lack of support, funding and guidance they receive. Pyae Sone Oo of the Myanmar Young Entrepreneurs Association told a summit panel discussion that traditional family prejudices against failure impede entrepreneurship in Burma. Likewise, the founder of a Laotian workforce development company lamented the difficulty in getting Lao youth excited about entrepreneurship. The summit's eight delegates from Laos, he said, were the entire entrepreneurship community in his country.

Summit participants engage in a panel discussion on the perspectives of startups, investors, governments, universities and other aspects of the LMI region's entrepreneurial ecosystem. *Photo by Aldrinana Leung*

Since 2009, LMI has promoted reducing the gap between development in the five countries of the Lower Mekong and in the rest of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. LMI emphasizes improving connectivity, health, education, water and environment, energy security, agriculture and food security. It does so by organizing senior officials' meetings and holding workshops—more than 200 so far—as well as trainings, conferences and other programs. The connectivity theme, under which TIGERS programming falls, focuses on people-to-people, infrastructural and technological linkages.

Participants' pitches ranged from scaling up promising activities in one country to creating a regionwide platform that startups planning to sell mobile apps can use to seek investor funding. Audience members then voted on the top 10 ideas to be developed and refined in project teams during the remainder of the summit. The participants associated with each proposal next recruited team members, who were drawn from at least three of the Lower Mekong countries. The teams then defined their needed activities and their partners' roles and expected contributions, and assessed the impact and feasibility of their projects.

The summit's activities emphasized its regional nature. Participants from countries with less-developed infrastructures, resources and mentorship programs worked ably alongside those from countries with existing, developed entrepreneurial communities. The event provided participants with spaces to interact and network, facilitating deeper interest in the Mekong technology startup ecosystem.

Finally, teams for each startup idea presented their pitches to a panel of judges, who chose three proposals to receive funding. One team won $7,500 for proposing a form of crowdsourced innovation that would occur through a series of community events and bring together four or five startups needing capital. Local community members would pay $5 to hear the startup pitches, with $1 going to the idea's team to cover the organizing of the event and $4 going to whichever idea was voted by audience members as their favorite pitches. Participating startup companies would walk away with whatever funds they had won from the audience. Thus was born an innovative fundraising model that could connect startups to potential investors, customers and collaborators.

Participants overwhelmingly agreed the summit helped them build networks and establish relationships across the region, as well as gain new ideas and help accomplish their startup aims. More than half of the participants said they wanted to sustain this collaboration after the event, since even teams that did not win the summit's fund prizes came away with well thought out business plans and partners.

The TIGERS team is already planning next year's summit, which will focus on developing angel investors and building a network of them across the region. In the long run, TIGERS will seek to make the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem move from one that is small and focused to one that's more expansive and integrated. ◘

Obituaries

Thomas Russell Barnes, 69, a retired Foreign Service information management specialist, died April 27 in Gadsden, Ala. He was a Vietnam War veteran and served eight years in the Air Force. He joined the Department in 1983, and his overseas postings included Mexico, La Paz, Ottawa and Kyiv. While in Mexico, his TDY assignments took him to Central America, the Caribbean and parts of South America. He loved to travel, meet new people and experience their cultures and cuisines. In retirement since 2004, he enjoyed bicycling, electronics and working on his house.

James Davis Burns Jr., 72, a retired FSO, died May 13 from diabetes complications at his home in San Antonio, Texas. He joined USIA in 1967 and served in Thailand, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Guyana and Pakistan. In 1995, he retired and settled in San Antonio. He loved baseball, reading, politics, an energetic debate and a good cigar. He volunteered for a few years for the Alamo Bowl and got to dance at his children's weddings. He will be remembered for his sense of humor, great stories and special spaghetti sauce.

Edmund T. DeJarnette Jr., 77, a retired FSO and former ambassador, died April 6 in his hometown of Ashland, Va. He joined the Department after law school in 1964 and served in Niger, Gabon and Senegal. He was also Peace Corps director in Ecuador. His ambassadorships included the Central African Republic, Tanzania and Angola, where he helped broker the 1994 peace agreement. After retiring from the service in 1995, he joined a Richmond law firm and became an international business and energy adviser, focusing on Latin America and Africa. His latest project was restoring his family plantation, Spring Grove.

Jay Phillip Freres, 81, a retired FSO, was struck and killed by lightning in Clearwater, Fla., on June 19. After completing university and military service, he joined the Department in 1960. His postings included Kabul, Guatemala City, Beirut, Bonn, Tel Aviv, Cairo, Dhaka, Managua, Bombay, Ankara, Jeddah and Manama. He retired in 1991, continuing to work at State intermittently on FOIA policy issues and as liaison at U.S. Central Command in Tampa. He was also active in his local parish.

Charles Jones, Jr., 75, a retired Foreign Service communications specialist, died May 8 in Sequim, Wash. He served in the Air Force before joining the Department in 1965. He was posted to Egypt, Zaire, Germany, Israel, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, France, Iran, Canada, Antigua, Senegal, Grenada and Ireland. He was among the Americans held hostage in Iran in 1979. Upon returning home to Detroit in 1981, he was given a hero's welcome by Mayor Coleman Young and hundreds of well-wishers. After his Foreign Service career, he worked as an actor in Canada and appeared in many TV shows and films.

Thomas Brock Killeen, 74, a retired FSO, died June 11 in Selbyville, Del., following a long illness. After serving in the Marine Corps and as a Peace Corps volunteer in Chile, his first posting at State was in Hue, Vietnam, at the time of the 1968 Tet offensive. He also served in Thailand, Somalia, Israel, Canada, Australia, Bolivia, Ghana and China. As a consular officer, he derived great satisfaction from helping fellow citizens abroad. After retiring, he split his time between Nevada and the Delaware seashore. He spent his final months at Brandywine Senior Living at Fenwick Island.

Joseph Alfred (Al) LaFrèniere, 96, a retired FSO, died May 19 in West Yarmouth, Mass. He joined the Department in 1942 and was sent to Rio, then was recalled for Navy service, returning to Rio in 1945. There followed assignments in Ireland, the Azores, India, Washington, D.C., Portugal, Mozambique and Brasília. After retirement in 1967, he and his wife Marguerite settled in Acton, Mass., and later moved to Cape Cod. He loved all sports, especially golf, which he played into his 90s, and had many hobbies, including a passionate interest in world affairs.

Wayne Florian Ubrich, 76, a retired Foreign Service specialist, died Jan. 18 at home in North Greenbush, N.Y. He served in the Army before joining the Department in 1960. His postings included Nairobi, Paris, Canberra, Brussels (NATO), St. Petersburg, Jerusalem and Bonn. In retirement, he enjoyed caring for his cherished dogs, collecting military insignias and spending time with his friends at the Bailey Mountain Fish and Game Club in upstate New York.

Stanley A. Zuckerman, 81, a retired FSO, died June 7 in McLean, Va. He began his career as a journalist for the Columbus (Ga.) Enquirer and the Milwaukee Journal before joining USIA in 1965. He served in the Belgian Congo, Belgium, Korea, Mexico, Canada and Brazil. A recipient of the Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Public Diplomacy, Zuckerman, after retirement in 1993, pursued his passion for TV documentaries, producing a number of specials for PBS that chronicled the lives of such luminaries as I.M. Pei, Elie Wiesel and John Hope Franklin.

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.

Malaysia

Albania

End State

Malaysia Pg. 4

Two girls inspect a bicycle in an alleyway while a third watches them from her window in Kuala Terengganu.

Photo by Haifeez

Canada Pg. 34

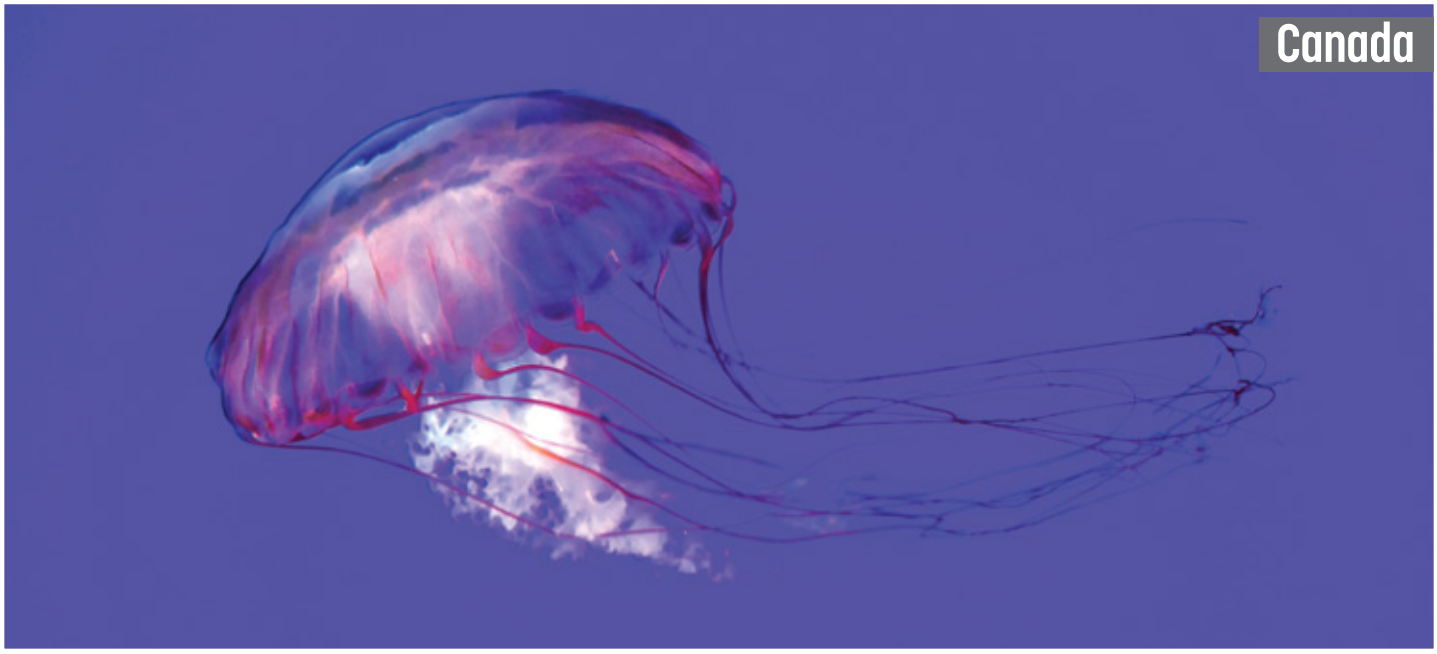
A jellyfish floats tranquilly against a blue background in its tank at Ripley's Aquarium located in downtown Toronto.

Photo by Dennis Jarvis

Albania Pg. 18

The coastal municipailty of Vlorë in southern Albania glows at dusk. The city is the country's second largest port.

Photo by Muharem Bendo



U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Human Resources
Washington, DC 20520

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ISSN 1099-4165

If address is incorrect,
please indicate change.
Do not cover or destroy
this address.

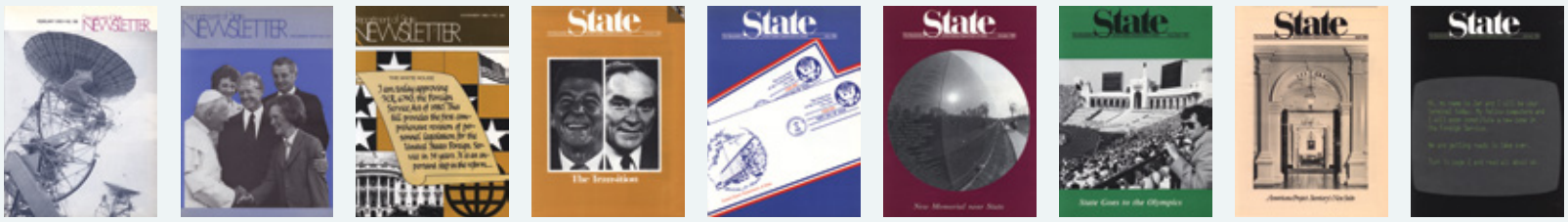
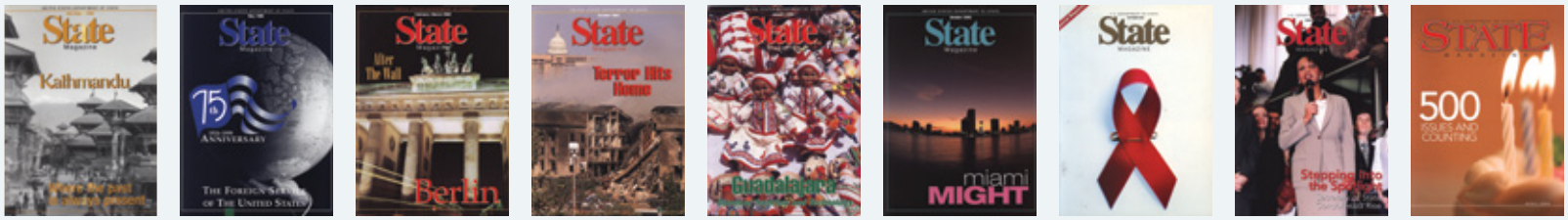
POSTMASTER:
Send changes of address to:

State Magazine
Department of State
2401 E Street N.W.
SA-1, Room H-236
Washington, DC 20522

Please Recycle This Magazine

STATE MAGAZINE

Telling the State Department Story



for Seven Decades