STATE MAGAZINE

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December 2014

Ready to Go
Offices Support Department's Evacuees

Money Matters
Office Administers more than $457 Million in Grants

A Taste of Home

Department chefs use American ingredients to craft meals for official functions

STATE MAGAZINE

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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 February issue is December 10. The deadline for the March issue is January 15.

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

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Reemployed Annuitants assist Embassy Libreville

A cleared trail allows visitors to explore Akanda National Park near Libreville, Gabon.
Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco

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Executive chef and event manager Jason L. Larkin samples fresh greens in the eighth floor kitchen at HST.
Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco

In the News

Vice-Consul Monica Davis speaks to U.S.- and Mexican-citizen students at a school for disadvantaged and lower-income children in Nuevo Laredo.

Photo by Ethel Gonzalez

Program Aids U.S.-Born Children in Mexico

Representatives from the Mexican federal, state and local governments recently joined Mission Mexico to launch a new program called Administrative and Psychological Support for Young Migrants and Children of Migrants. The program now operates in U.S. consular districts in Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, Mérida, Monterrey and Nogales, and at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City.

An estimated 600,000 U.S. citizen children live in Mexico, having been born in the United States to Mexican parents who returned to Mexico. Mission Mexico does outreach to their families throughout Mexico and is collaborating with the government of Mexico to provide services to this group of American citizens.

The program will fund counselling for the migrant children to help them adjust to life in Mexico. Many of these children have lived in the United States all their lives and find it hard to adjust to their new lives without assistance.

The program will also help with the legal process of registering U.S. citizen migrant children as dual U.S.-Mexican citizens. U.S. citizen migrant children in Mexico are considered vulnerable, as their families face difficulties registering them as Mexican citizens who were born abroad. (Registering them as Mexican citizens makes them eligible for the social services and educational benefits otherwise only available to Mexican citizens.)

Mission Mexico will also use the program to emphasize the importance of documenting such children as U.S. citizens. The mission's consular officers are aware that most of the children have returned to Mexico without a U.S. passport or other identification.

Parents like the new program, although some fear registering their children in Mexico will affect their child's U.S. citizenship or vice versa. Consular outreach teams are working with their Mexican government counterparts to educate families and children about the importance of having a U.S. passport and to help answer questions related to dual nationality.

Lucky Break Unearths Painting's History

In April, the U.S. Embassy in Athens' Consular Section worked with the city of Athens to have cleaned a statue of Harry S Truman done by the sculptor who also did the Iwo Jima Memorial in Arlington, Va. The city then asked if the embassy could find a U.S. partner to preserve the statue. While the Harry S Truman National Historic Site in Independence, Mo. couldn't take up the task, it had a request of its own: Identify an oil painting of the Acropolis that had hung in President Truman's home for 60 years. The painting's plaque read, "To President Truman from his Faithful Friend, G.N. Drakos, Athens, Greece, 1954."

Unable to track down the Drakos family, embassy officials mentioned the search at the post's 4th of July celebration, and a contact identified the surviving sons of George N. Drakos. The sons, Elias and Nikolaos Drakos, then told of how their father, a downtown Athens store owner, visited Kansas City in 1953 and while on a stroll met President Truman. Drakos doffed his hat, President Truman thanked him and, on learning Drakos was from Greece, invited him to visit his home in Independence. There, Drakos thanked Truman for his hospitality and the president responded saying, "No. It is we who will be forever indebted to Greece for giving us democracy."

Drakos was so moved, he promised President Truman a gift to remember Greece by and, on his return to Athens, commissioned a painting of the Acropolis by an Italian landscape painter, who spent two months on the task. The painting was framed and sent to President Truman, who sent a thank-you letter in 1954.

The two surviving sons had no further knowledge of the painting until they learned it now hangs in the music room of Truman's home. The embassy invited them to see the photos, and the consular section held an event to give them a collage that included copies of the painting, the letter from President Truman and a photo of the music room. The brothers brought the signed letter from President Truman and an old photo of their father holding the just-finished painting.

Elias Drakos, right, shows Ambassador David D. Pearce, center, the letter his father received from President Truman thanking him for the painting. Nikolaos Drakos is at left.
Photo by Era Terzian

Harley-Davidson Ride Promotes Trade

In September, U.S. Ambassador to Portugal Robert Sherman kicked off a cross-country outreach tour to promote the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP). Starting in the historic town square of Evora, in the Alentejo region, Ambassador Sherman and a team of motorcycle riders from the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon led a group of 300 Harley-Davidson enthusiasts on a ride through the country's agricultural heartland to bring attention to the T-TIP agreement.

"If we want to be heard, we have to make some noise," Ambassador Sherman joked. "And there's nothing better for that than a Harley."

The group rode past Evora's historic Roman ruins and a UNESCO World Heritage site, through vineyards and picturesque fields dotted with cork and olive trees, finally ending up at a local horse ranch. "T-TIP will open markets—meaning more Alentejo wine on American tables and more Harley-Davidsons on Portuguese roads," he told the post-ride lunch crowd.

Afterward, the ambassador continued on to visit a number of local businesses to learn firsthand about the challenges facing small and medium-sized companies. At Quinta do Zambujeiro, a small winery that produces 100,000 bottles per year and exports to 14 countries, Ambassador Sherman inspected grapevines, maceration vats and oak barrels as company managers explained the hurdles of exporting to the United States. From there, he visited the quarries of a successful marble exporter, met with business leaders in Elvas, near the Portugal-Spain border, and sipped espresso at the headquarters of Delta Cafes, Portugal's largest coffee seller.

Ambassador Sherman revs his Harley-Davidson motorcycle in the historic city of Évora.
Photo by Jorge Arcanjo

At each stop, he learned about the difficulties of marketing Portugal internationally and delivered the message that T-TIP would help Portuguese businesses access U.S. markets and attract American investment.

The trip generated significant media attention, including through social media and in print outlets. Expresso, Portugal's leading weekly newspaper, published a full-page feature on the trip. The Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs has since recognized the trip as a T-TIP "best practice."

Subsequent motorcycle trips are planned to central and northern Portugal, where Ambassador Sherman will visit the industrial manufacturing and textile sectors.

In the News

Roth Awards Announced

The Lois Roth Endowment awards recognizing excellence in cultural diplomacy were presented at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) annual awards ceremony Sept. 23. Dr. Skyler Arndt-Briggs, chair of the endowment, said the awards, which come with a $1,500 stipend, "recognize and motivate cultural diplomats worldwide."

This year's winners, selected from 19 nominations worldwide, are Sherry Keneson-Hall, cultural affairs officer in Prague, who won the award given to a Foreign Service officer; Dominique Benbrahim, cultural affairs specialist in Rabat, who won the Gill Jacot-Guillarmod Award for a Locally Employed Staff member; and Michael Weider, chief of the Program Management Branch in the Executive Office of ECA/IIP, who won the Ilchman-Richardson Award for a Civil Service employee.

All three winners were present to receive their awards from ECA Assistant Secretary Evan Ryan. She said ECA plans to name the conference rooms in State Annex 5 for past heroes of U.S. cultural diplomacy, such as J. William Fulbright and Lois W. Roth. Dick Arndt, who founded the endowment in honor of his late wife, said, "Lois was a role model for men and women working to create lasting ties for America. We hope those who meet in the conference room named for her and who win these awards will be inspired by the energy, creativity and humanity that were the hallmarks of her life and are her legacy."

Gathered for a photo at the 2014 Roth Endowment Awards are, from left, the organization's chairperson, Dr. Skyler Arndt-Briggs, and its founder, Richard T. Arndt, Locally Employed Staff winner Dominique Benbrahim, Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs Evan Ryan, Civil Service winner Michael Weider and Foreign Service officer winner Sherry Keneson-Hall.

Photo by Anne V. Barbaro

In Sofia, Volunteers Aid Local Food Bank

Americans often volunteer on Sept. 11, the National Day of Service and Remembrance, and at the U.S. Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria, the first- and second-tour (FAST) officers group spent the afternoon of that day sorting produce at the Bulgarian Food Bank (BFB) in Sofia. The BFB receives donations of unsold produce from the local farmers markets, which needs to be sorted to be utilized.

FAST members separated and salvaged more than 230 pounds of onions, which helped provide more than 300 meals to victims of recent floods in Bulgaria.

This post's FAST group has increased its activities during the past two years. It has broadened membership, now at nine, by including specialists, interns and temporary employees, and has a monthly newsletter and SharePoint site. It has also collaborated with senior leadership from all embassy sections to provide professional development opportunities and gain guidance on events.

The 9/11 event was organized by David McKay and FAST Coordinator Eva Coffey, with participation by fellow FAST members Julia Dillard and Lance Erickson, along with family member Traci McKay. The group hopes to hold events associated with Martin Luther King Day of Service and/or National Volunteer Week in April.

"Volunteering and giving back to the community takes only a few hours of time, but it can have a significant impact on those in need of help," Erickson said.

Dillard said she learned about the generosity of the Bulgarian people and liked how FAST officers and family members were able "to get to know each other in a setting outside the office, while serving the community." Information on how an embassy or FAST group can organize community volunteer activities can be obtained from Coffey or McKay via email or on the Intranet.

Looking up from their sorting of food are, from left, Lance Erickson, FAST member; Teodora Bakardzhieva, volunteer coordinator; Julia Dillard, FAST member; Traci McKay, family member; David McKay, FAST volunteer organizer; and Eva Coffey, FAST coordinator.

Photo by Tsanka Milanova, Bulgarian Food Bank

Diversity Notes

JOHN M. ROBINSON
OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

The EEO Mediation Process at State

This month's column is an insider's guide from the Office of Civil Rights (S/OCR) on the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process.

The Department utilizes mediation, a form of ADR, to resolve EEO complaints. The process is confidential, protected by law and empowers both parties in a conflict to create a solution. Mediation is a structured, non-administrative process that can dramatically shorten the EEO complaint process. Participating in mediation does not mean there is an admission of guilt by either party to a conflict. Mediation seeks to facilitate productive communication, so parties may find their own solutions, potentially resulting in a settlement agreement.

The aggrieved party may select ADR either in the informal or formal stage of an EEO complaint. Not all cases are suitable for ADR. S/OCR has the authority to accept or deny cases as appropriate. If accepted, S/OCR contacts the parties involved, coordinates logistics and sends a detailed memo to participants outlining the process. Mediation sessions can be conducted in person or via digital videoconference or teleconference. Parties are expected to be available for about four to six hours.

There are usually four key roles in mediation: 1) the mediator/s, 2) the aggrieved party (in the informal stage) or complainant (formal stage), 3) the responding official (the individual alleged to have made the decision or taken the action that is in dispute), and 4) the resolving official (the person in the bureau or at post who represents the Department). The aggrieved party or complainant and the Department may elect to have additional representatives present who can provide the decision-makers with advice and/or information.

The mediator begins a session by explaining the ground rules of the process, including required terms that parties must abide by in order to facilitate respectful communication and confidentiality. Information disclosed during mediation is strictly confidential and may not be repeated or discussed outside of the mediation.

The aggrieved party then begins by providing a statement of the issues and relief he or she seeks. Management officials have the opportunity to respond. Mediators may summarize, ask clarifying questions or encourage a different perspective throughout the mediation. During the process, a separate caucus may allow each party to tell the mediator of specific issues or discuss options for resolution. A caucus may also be suggested when the discussion is no longer moving forward productively or emotions are running too high.

If the parties reach a resolution, a legally binding settlement agreement with the terms approved by the parties is drafted by the mediator. If either side feels the agreement has been violated thereafter, S/OCR can be notified and will conduct an investigation to determine if there was a violation.

If mediation does not result in an agreement and the case is in the informal stage, a Notice of Right to File a Formal EEO Complaint will be issued to the aggrieved party. If the case is in the formal stage, the processing of the EEO complaint will continue from the point where it was paused for ADR.

S/OCR's ADR program has been quite successful. In FY14, 80 percent of mediated cases reached an agreement. We hope that if you find yourself in an EEO conflict, you will participate in mediation with a good faith commitment toward resolution. For non-EEO related conflict, the Ombudsman's Workplace Conflict Resolution Center is a resource available to employees interested in ADR options. Please contact S/OCR or visit our website at http://socr.state.gov/ if you have any questions about mediation options available in the EEO complaint process. ◻

Office of the Month

Christian Blackman, left, and Sara Swann study a contract.

Money Matters

Office administers more than $457 million in grants

By Kerry Neal, division chief, and Chesler Dorsey, grants management specialist, Bureaus of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and International Information Programs (IIP) Grants Division
Photos by Ed Warner

The Bureaus of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and International Information Programs (IIP) Grants Division, part of the bureaus' shared executive office, provides institutional and individual grants, and administers grants and cooperative agreements that bring foreign students and international participants to the United States and vice versa. It is also the primary administrative contact for the recipient organizations that partner with ECA to implement people-to-people exchanges.

While a Department grants officer by definition ensures timely issuance of awards, award amendments, and approval of major budget and programmatic changes, ECA-IIP Grants Officers also have the final authority in obligating funds and binding the contract for ECA-IIP exchange programs. The office's 16 warranted grants officers are divided into two teams, each having its own deputy division chief and led by Grants Chief Kerry Neal. These 16 grants officers also protect U.S. taxpayer dollars through budget negotiations, site visits, compliance reviews, audit report reviews, questioning costs, disallowing costs, and sometimes, reducing or terminating awards altogether.

Each member of the grants division has diverse experience, which allows him or her to serve multiple roles within the division. Some of these activities include training and outreach, automation and efficiencies improvements, and grant closeouts. Though many have significant grant administration experience, some in the division have undergraduate and advanced degrees in diverse subjects, including law, education, English and international politics. Many grants officers have also previously worked for other U.S. government agencies, including the Departments of Commerce, Interior, Health and Human Services, Education and Homeland Security.

Besides the routine work of grant award administration, the grants division also plays a significant role in closing old and inactive grants, having liquidated more than $14 million in old/expired awards in fiscal 2014 alone.

The routine work of a grants officer is to

Andrew Reisig prepares to examine a binder of contracts.

authorize funds, cost and no-cost amendments, and budget modification requests and changes to award terms and conditions for exchange programs. Grant recipients, also known as "implementing partners," engage in American cultural activities and workshops and leadership learning opportunities for foreign participants.

"Being a grants officer in ECA means being responsible for giving opportunities to international students and foreign professionals to travel to the USA and learn about our culture first hand," said Grants Officer Anne Eccles. "They are then able to bring back a better understanding of the USA to the people of their home country."

ECA-IIP's grants officers administer more than $450 million of yearly awards and more than $1 billion in total financial assistance representing all open bureau awards. They also resolve routine and complex issues from internal and external customers. The division also serves as the bureaus' primary point of contact for audit engagements, including those of the General Accounting Office and Office of the Inspector General, and the annual State Department Financial Statement Audit through the Office of Federal Assistance Financial Management.

ECA's people-to-people exchanges involve thousands of program participants, including those from the Fulbright, Youth Programs, Study of the U.S. Institutes, Mansfield Fellows, Sports Diplomacy Programs, International Visitor Leadership Programs, and various other citizen exchanges, all of whom ECA-IIP grants officers serve.

A grants officer's work encompasses all phases of award administration. In ECA-IIP, grants officers work closely with the Program Management Office in the pre-award process of solicitation review, posting of announcements and establishing risk assessments for organizations. Once the grant proposals are reviewed in a "panel," the grants division assumes responsibility and engages the intended grant recipient in the final budget review and negotiation of award terms.

The bureau has recently standardized grants management as a result of the deployment of the State Award Management System (SAMS)/ GrantSolutions. This department-wide system replaced legacy systems and eliminates paper-driven processes, including the requirement to keep and maintain physical grant files. Over time, the system will decrease costs and increase efficiencies, process automation and customer service, and allow for a completely electronic exchange of award documents. Having a single system for grants administration also centralizes knowledge management, shares best practices, and increases audit-resolution responsiveness. The new system also integrates financial assistance policy in a standardized and streamlined way across the department, ensuring compliance with grants policy directives. Bringing all grant-making bureaus under one system allows for closer collaboration between grant-making bureaus of the department in the administration of financial assistance.

Beyond the GrantSolutions/SAMS systems implementation, the grants division has also incorporated other ECA-specific process enhancements, including the core award project grants management notification process, integration of a standard risk assessment model and paperless processing of grant reviews. In all, these improvements promote a more customer-focused approach to managing the bureau's grants and help the office be more responsive to customer needs. The grants officers in ECA-IIP are critical to meeting the Department's mission in its engagement and public diplomacy between the people of foreign nations and those of the United States. ◘

Chesler Dorsey reviews a report with Deborah Thompson.

Office Director Kerry Neal speaks at an office meeting.

Ready to Go

Offices support Department's evacuees

By Sarah Genton, division chief, and
Dianna Rooney, crisis management officer, Family Liaison Office

Daisy Bachmann, an evacuee from the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, makes a point during a teleconference.
Photo by Ed Warner

Evacuations at post leave employees and their families unsettled and coping with the aftermath. Haiti's earthquake, with its massive destruction and loss of life, was traumatic for embassy staff. The U.S. Embassy in Cairo's evacuation, one of the Department's largest, affected a significant number of school-age children. U.S. Embassy General Kyiv's evacuation, despite its short length, meant uncertainty for family members while they awaited their return in nearby Warsaw.

Today, the U.S. Embassies in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Monrovia, Liberia, are on emergency staffing levels due to the Ebola crisis. Sana'a, Yemen, and Tripoli, Libya, are in "ordered departure" status. Evacuated employees and family members have been given safe haven in the United States or other locations.

In an evacuation, the State Department stands ready to help. For instance, when six employees walked into the Family Liaison Office (FLO) the day after arriving in the United States due to the evacuation of U.S. Embassy in Tripoli, they faced several challenges, including how to report the loss of their belongings. To ease the evacuees' arrival, two home bureau employees had met them at the airport and arranged for hotel accommodations. Next, FLO staff helped them apply for the subsistence evacuation allowance and connected them with the Office of Transportation's Personal Property Claims department.

Evacuees often speak of feeling uncertainty, loss, lack of control, being in limbo and feeling stressed. While they may have trained for an evacuation, they still must face the "real thing," which always has unique challenges. An evacuation might mean relocation of employees and their families within their post's region or even to the United States.

In the past five years, 45 posts have faced evacuations or relocation of personnel. Reasons include civil unrest and health crises, such as Ebola. Responding, several offices in the Department and in other agencies provide evacuees and those who remain behind with relief and support.

According to Dianna Rooney, FLO's crisis management officer, "behind every office acronym, there's a person who wants to help." To do so, FLO gathers those offices that offer assistance for a town hall meeting with evacuees. Typically, these include the post's home bureau and the offices of Allowances, Transportation, Overseas Schools, Medical Services' (MED) Employee Consultation Service and Deployment Stress Management Program, as well as the Bureau of Human Resources and Charleston, S.C., financial center. They share information and resolve specific issues.

An example of how this plays out at the bureau level comes from Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) and South Central Asia (SCA). They share an executive office (EX) that centralizes bureau support for evacuations in their regions. Because of their high number of evacuations, many of the Department's best practices for evacuations come from these two bureaus, such as tailoring their town hall meetings to unique circumstances. For larger evacuations, NEA-SCA/EX hosts, in conjunction with FLO, panel discussions outlining available support. For smaller groups, it provides weekly updates from post. A Sharepoint website hosts all evacuation materials, and is easily accessible by bureau representatives.

For the current evacuation of the U.S. Embassy in Yemen, NEA-SCA/EX formed a special "Yemen Forward" team to be the one-stop source for all evacuation-related questions. A generic email box also centralizes all requests for assistance.

Town hall meetings of evacuees are sometimes held off site at apartment complexes where evacuees are housed; digital videoconferences are often used for evacuees who are not physically in Washington, D.C. The meetings address questions on forward assignments, allowances, timetables, logistics, and other topics.

"What's important here is that when dealing with evacuations, it's not a post you're evacuating, it's people," explained Andrew Burton, a post management officer in NEA-SCA/EX. "People need some certainty in their lives." He said EX does its best to account for individuals' circumstances, such as concerns of spouses, tandem couples and school-age children. Some may request alternate

> **"What's important here is that when dealing with evacuations, it's not a post you're evacuating, it's people. People need some certainty in their lives."**
> **- Andrew Burton, post management officer, NEA-SCA/EX**

safe havens or allowances, and the bureau must explain if they qualify or not, he said.

The Bureau of African Affairs, meanwhile, has responded to post evacuation in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Clayton Bond, the post management officer for both embassies, organized conference calls between employees from both posts and AF leadership, representatives of FLO, MED, Charleston, Overseas Schools and other entities. Bond helped answer questions, followed up on evacuation allowances and advocated for evacuees seeking alternate foreign safe havens.

Bond said he is impressed with the work of Community Liaison Office (CLO) coordinators and other offices in helping evacuees "make as smooth an adjustment as possible back to the United States or to their alternate foreign safe haven."

When approved by post and the bureau, CLO coordinators often work out of the FLO office during the evacuation, disseminating information, organizing community events and continuing preparations for those assigned to post. They identify difficulties and bring them to the attention of post management.

As for FLO, it helps evacuees fill out allowance applications, vent frustrations, and identify the services they need. It also advocates for evacuees and brings together contacts from all agencies at post, to ensure everyone at post is cared for.

"Person-to-person contact with each individual is so important, and everyone needs to be heard," said Ann Posner, chief of the Special Programs Branch in USAID's Office of Human Resources.

Evacuated school-age children face several challenges, including interrupted routines, curriculum differences between their new and old schools, and possible new limits on their ability to participate in sports and after-school activities. They may also miss friends from post or have problems adjusting to a new safe haven. If they return to the United States, "finishing out the semester might take priority over returning back to post," explained Leah Wallace, FLO's education and youth officer.

Reflecting these challenges, Cherie Griffith, an evacuee from Cairo, said she brought her 16-year-old son to Washington, and that it was the right move: "We definitely had more support than families who were elsewhere in the U.S., and the school was fantastic in helping our son enroll despite our indefinite situation."

Her son started his senior year of high school along with about 20 other youths who had been together in school in Cairo, boosting camaraderie and easing their transition. Griffith said choosing the right middle and high school was important, and noted that her sons new school worked with the Cairo American College to help match classes for the evacuated students. In addition, the principal and faculty at the new school welcomed evacuated students calling them the "Cairo kids."

When her family was to return to Cairo, Cherie was pleased: "the school district allowed students to complete the semester and receive grades, as of winter, missing about three weeks of classes and final exams."

Several international schools allow students to attend classes online when away for a limited period. According to the Office of Overseas Schools, 74 of the Department of State-assisted schools can activate their virtual program if disruption of normal school activities occurs.

Outside organizations also provide support. The Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide seeks out loaner strollers and high chairs, even winter coats, for evacuees and offers volunteers to meet evacuees at airports. The Foreign Service Youth Foundation includes evacuated children in its programs and has organized special events with an evacuated community in mind.

Although an evacuation can be unsettling and difficult, resilience is the key. When people face an extreme experience, "we often reflect afterwards on the coping skills used at the time to get us through," observed Helen Jones, an Employee Consultation Service social worker. "One's ability to bounce back and recover is what resilience is all about."

Department Offers Coping Tips

Since 1988, some 330 posts have experienced a drawdown or evacuation, most centered in the NEA/SCA and AF bureaus. Thus, the Department has gained an extensive set of tips for those who might be evacuated. Among these lessons are:

- Keep personal and emergency contact information up to date through HR Online, the Employee Services Center and with post.
- When away from post for any reason, leave your contact information with post's management officer, especially your personal email address.
- Be financially prepared with a line of credit and consider getting a government travel card, since the cost of hotels, taxis and other expenses adds up.
- Upon departure from post, leave money with someone staying behind to cover such expenses as payments to household staff or pet-evacuation tickets, since you may be unable to return right away.
- Keep vital documents together and easily accessible, and scan and store them electronically in your personal email account. Consider leaving some copies of important documents with family back home.
- Insure your belongings (in transit as well), bring nothing to post that you would be upset to lose and inventory everything, especially valuable items.
- Have a plan and identify colleagues or trusted household staff who can care for your pets in an emergency. Keep extra pet food and the animal's vaccination records on hand.
- Have a personal evacuation plan, whether you're single or with your family, and be sure it involves a possible safe haven and a solution for your children's schooling.
- Have a "go bag" ready for a sudden departure and a home emergency kit, if you must shelter in place.
- Seek out additional information in the online FLO Personal Preparedness booklet and on FLO's Crisis Management Web page.

Dining Diplomacy

Talented chefs whip up Secretary's official meals

By James P. Sinopoli, senior executive chef, Office of the Chief of Protocol
Photos by Isaac D. Pacheco

This holiday season, as many people cringe at the thought of cooking for a large crowd, the Department's Special Services Unit (SSU) looks at it as just another day at the office. The professional chefs of the SSU produce meals for events at Blair House, the president's guest house, and the Diplomatic Reception Rooms (DRR) on the eighth floor of the Harry S Truman Building (HST).

Cooking for a crowd is no different than throwing a dinner party at home. We, too, consider guests' dietary needs and the Secretary of State's preferences, and what foods and ingredients are seasonal, fresh and local (as much as possible). For instance, we found fish was the easiest crowd-pleaser as an entrée—until the Department hosted the Oceans Conference. The conference at HST forced us to become better educated about fishing practices, and we are now much more aware of how important that issue is to the Secretary. As a result, the "Seafood Watch" app is part of our menu planning. The app, available on iOS and and Android devices, offers seafood recommendations from a sustainability perspective.

When preparing for a representational meal, we try to showcase the best American-produced products, using local purveyors where possible. Last year, one SSU chef, Jason Larkin, discovered the Barren Island Oyster Company, and its representatives joined us for several events where we featured Maryland oysters shucked fresh on-site. Local breweries and wineries have also taken part in events.

Depending on the event's size, we will sometimes shop at local farmers markets, seeking to ensure products are sourced locally and fresh. This gives us a chance to handpick our products and that can be a source of inspiration. During the summer months, the SSU chefs bought the heirloom tomatoes used at Blair House from the farmers market just off Jackson Square in Washington, D.C.

On the DRR's sunny terrace, we're growing fresh herbs to use year-round. (It doesn't get much more local than that!) We enjoy the challenge of sourcing locally,

Senior Executive Chef James P. Sinopoli preps herbs and vegetables for a soup that will comprise one course of an official meal.

Deputy Chef and Event Manager Christopher James polishes silverware and prepares the tray that will be used to serve the Secretary's lunch.

but also the knowledge that such food hasn't sat in a warehouse for weeks. Executive Chef Ian Knox of the Blair House staff has for years built relationships with local purveyors who can supply the president's guest house with local ingredients.

Our approach to menu planning follows three basic rules. First, we showcase American products and try to be local whenever possible. Secondly, we're seasonal when menu planning, taking the view that, even if you can get a hold of fresh ramps in the dead of winter, it's best not to use them because they would be out of their element. Thirdly, if a special meal is planned for a head of state or foreign dignitary, we try to give a "nod" to that country by using an ingredient familiar to that region.

However, we don't try to replicate foods specific to the visitor's homeland. We believe visitors to the United States hope to experience our nation's wonderful melting pot of cultures and cuisines, something so well showcased in "fusion" cuisine.

When the Secretary is entertaining guests in the DRR, more than just the SSU team in the Office of Protocol (S/CPR) is hard at work; in fact, three Department units are working together as one team. The DRR is managed by the Bureau of Administration (A), while the DRR's art collection is managed by the Office of Fine Arts (M/FA). Working together, the three teams are entrusted with the rooms' antiques collection and, during any event there, the tables, linens and flatware.

From left, Sinopoli, Larkin and James sample an assortment of fresh micro greens and vegetables that will be used as elements in dishes they craft for the Secretary and official meals at the Department and Blair House.

They also set up and take down the stages, press risers and microphones, and work on choreography. At an event, much of the movement of the president, vice president, secretary and their guests is rehearsed in advance by the A team, who also help keep the events on time and on schedule, planning days before the event. (If there's a tight schedule, they will work with SSU to shave minutes off the food service, so that all the courses that have been planned and prepared can be served without delay.)

The holidays bring even more challenges to the SSU and A teams. For instance, there are the complications arising from a D.C.-area winter. Last year, the Secretary's holiday party was postponed until after Jan. 1 due to weather closings. To avoid this being a problem, the SSU chefs prepare some of the holiday foods using ingredients that freeze well, such as puff pastry items or mini quiche.

In addition, Chef Christopher James and I start work on the holiday tables' centerpieces, the gingerbread houses, in late September, cutting and baking them so that they can be assembled and decorated later, and used for several events. For each event, though, we also bake fresh gingerbread cookies to display and for guests to eat (we do not make these in advance). Last year we also created several smaller gingerbread cottages that could be assembled into a village or displayed separately, if space was limited.

We've worked on large, almost life-size replicas, but we really prefer to take a more whimsical approach with gingerbread. I feel that when you see a gingerbread house, you should want to take a bite out of it, and not just adore it for its artistic rendition of realism.

Much of the SSU's behind-the-scenes work may be done in the kitchen, but like all of the Department's work, it uses creativity within the team. Like other offices, we hold strategy meetings—it's just that they often take place with food nearby.

That's a good thing: Food brings people together, promotes discussions, bridges gaps, and allows everyone to work in a more relaxed setting. Food, in sum, can promote diplomacy. That, at least, is the goal of the SSU team. ◻

Photo by Praline3001

Chef's Gingerbread Cookie Recipe

Ingredients:

3/4 C Soft Unsalted Butter
3/4 C Light Brown Sugar
1/4 C Molasses
2 Egg Yolks

Sift the following ingredients together

2 1/3 C All Purpose Flour
2 tsp. Ground Cinnamon
2tsp. Ground Ginger
1 tsp. Ground Allspice
1/4 tsp. Ground Cloves
1/2 tsp. Baking Soda
1/4 tsp. Salt

Directions:

1) In a large mixing bowl beat butter, brown sugar, and molasses till light and fluffy.
2) Add egg yolks, beat till smooth.
3) On low speed, add the dry ingredients and mix just until a dough forms. (Dough will be very soft and sticky.) Remove and separate into three or four equal portions; wrap them in plastic wrap and chill overnight.
4) Working with only one portion at a time, keeping the other portions chilled, on a lightly floured surface, roll the dough to approximately 1/8 -1/4 inch thick. Place cut-out cookies on a parchment-lined cookie sheet, keeping some room between them, so they can spread. (We re-roll our "scraps" once, after gathering and chilling them again.)
5) Bake in a 325°F oven for approximately eight to 12 minutes, depending on how thickly rolled.
6) To decorate, combine confectioners' sugar with a small amount of water or milk to make a spreadable white icing. Ice the cookies, once they have cooled completely.

After her speech, the author, center in black jacket poses with a group of students from the University of Texas at Dallas.

Photo by Vinni Anandham

Speaking Out

Volunteers engage, inform U.S. audiences

By Beena Varnan, economic and commercial officer, Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs

When the great journalist and former United States Information Agency Director, Edward R. Murrow, spoke in 1963 about "the last three feet" of public diplomacy, he was talking about the importance of reaching people abroad with face-to-face contact.

The same holds true for reaching out to people here at home.

Nothing beats getting in front of an American audience to share one's experiences in the Foreign Service. And there are endless opportunities for Department of State employees to speak publicly about our work abroad and why it is so important. While many employees know of the Hometown Diplomats Program (HDP), it's less well known that bureaus themselves will fund their employees to speak on behalf of the Department.

I first learned about a career at State while on an international exchange program during law school. In a chance encounter, a fellow student in the program, now a dear friend, told me that she had just passed a day-long interview to work as a diplomat and travel around the world.

"Sign me up," I thought. After I joined, I felt driven to let others know about State Department careers. A few years ago, I got that chance when I spoke to classes at both my high school and university alma maters through the Hometown Diplomats Program. This program allows Department employees to volunteer to talk to local organizations, schools, and state and local elected officials during trips to their hometowns.

I'm driven by the chance to recruit diplomats from among those who demographically may be less accustomed to hearing about federal government jobs, since diversity strengthens the Department's ranks and helps us tell the American story abroad in powerful ways.

The Hometown Diplomats Program is just one form of outreach. Recently, in my current job in the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (EB) Office of Multilateral Trade Affairs, I had the opportunity to talk to U.S. university and high school students interested in trade policy. I spoke about my experience—and excitement—as an economic officer to be part of an American delegation made up of several government agencies working together to improve market access for American goods and services around the world. I also spoke about the Department's approach to international trade negotiations and multilateral trade forums, such as the World Trade Organization.

For all my efforts to talk about my current work, I found the students had many more questions about my personal journey to becoming an FSO. They knew I had stood in their shoes not long ago, and many were hearing about the Foreign Service for the first time. The wheels of possibility were turning in their heads as they considered diplomacy as a career choice, and I hope some of them will become colleagues at State or partners for our work in their communities.

Another EB staffer, Caron de Mars, from the Office of Commercial and Business Affairs, recently spoke at the Kentucky World Affairs Council about what the U.S. government is doing to help entrepreneurs at home and abroad. Not only did this give her an opportunity to tell the audience about the work we do on their behalf, it gave her a chance to get useful feedback, and learn what was on their minds.

In EB, as with other bureaus and offices, we work on being attentive to Americans' needs and concerns, so we can be better implementers of U.S. policy objectives. The EB's director of Bilateral Trade Affairs, Robert Manogue, underscores this when meeting with students and representatives of business and local government. He considers it critical that EB staff speak to people in their hometowns because we represent them when negotiating trade agreements. With regard to State's role in shaping trade policy, it's important to hear about the challenges that everyday Americans face and what would be in their best interests. As Manogue puts it: "We must constantly ask ourselves, 'Will the things we are asking for in international trade agreements ultimately create jobs here at home.' "

Engaging foreign audiences builds America's overseas presence and helps us articulate and support our nation's policies. But we also need to remember that audiences at home need to be engaged and involved, and that face-to-face outreach helps inform our fellow citizens about who we are, what we do, and why we support them, while giving us valuable feedback.

Through the bureau-funded outreach and Hometown Diplomats Program, you too can realize the power of your personal influence by informing Americans about the Department's work. More information is available from bureaus' public affairs offices or from the Hometown Diplomats Program at (202) 647-6197 or by email at HometownDiplomat@state.gov.

RefCoords to the Rescue

Coordinators are humanitarian diplomats

By Dan Langenkamp, public affairs advisor, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

Getting to the Mai-Aini refugee camp in northern Ethiopia required a bruising day's travel by prop plane and four-wheel vehicle on rutted dirt roads, but it was worth the trip. Steve Ruken, the Department's regional refugee coordinator based in Nairobi, and Linda Johnson, program officer from the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), had come to the camp to meet with refugees from Eritrea.

They feared finding a desolate sprawl of huts withering in the sun, a place that would only serve as a way station for refugees, including young unaccompanied children, who might then attempt to cross the Mediterranean in dangerous boats, seeking better lives in Europe. Thousands before them had died on the same journey.

Instead, they found a hive of activity, with schools, a library, a soccer pitch and even music classes. The refugees were thriving, evidence that U.S. taxpayer dollars were having an impact.

"This was one of the most vibrant camps I'd ever seen," said Ruken. "It was exactly what we'd hoped and wanted to see—a place that gives people some hope."

This is the world of PRM's refugee coordinators, or "RefCoords," FSOs who ensure that the billions of dollars in U.S. humanitarian aid (topping $3 billion in fiscal 2014) is doing the most it can to save the lives and mitigate the suffering of refugees, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable people.

The more than 25 RefCoords at 20 posts around the world often spend as much time travelling to refugee sites as sitting at their desks. They work in some of the most challenging circumstances, serving as PRM's eyes and ears on the ground.

"I love this job," Ruken said. "There's no typical day, and the best thing about it is making a difference in people's lives."

RefCoords do it all: reporting on displacement crises, advocating for fair treatment of refugees and displaced persons with host governments, briefing visiting CODELs, monitoring the U.S.-funded operations of humanitarian organizations and facilitating resettlement of refugees to

Left: RefCoord Josh Fischel, who spends 40–50 percent of his time on the road, discusses a program that trains displaced persons and refugees how to make fuel-efficient cookstoves, in Rutshuru, Democratic Republic of Congo.
Photo by Annie Gacukuzi

the United States as part of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

Extensive travel is common. Josh Fischel, PRM's RefCoord in Uganda, spends 40 to 50 percent of his time in the field, travelling by car, bush plane and any other means necessary to monitor projects by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and nongovernmental organizations, and collecting information on refugee situations in the region he covers. That region has more than three million refugees and internally displaced persons, and includes the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania.

Fischel just returned from a three-week trip to the DRC and Rwanda to review projects. Before that, he travelled to northern Uganda to inspect sites where more than 150,000 South Sudanese have sought refuge. There, he saw refugees surviving because of U.S.-funded boreholes that provide water, and who were well cared for in medical clinics and schools. In January he'll travel to Republic of the Congo and the DRC to visit refugee camps that can only be reached by boat.

"There is certainly no shortage of work, and it's a challenge to keep tabs on everything," he observed.

What Ruken likes most is the chance to use a range of different skills and see U.S. assistance saving lives.

The job involves project management, and monitoring and evaluation of programs, as well as old-fashioned diplomacy, engaging governments to facilitate refugee returns, ensure protection of populations and reduce statelessness.

This has had an impact in Uganda, which continues to host refugees, despite the unprecedented recent influx from South Sudan.

Helping save lives or mitigate suffering doesn't only happen in the field. Wendy Henning is one of four RefCoords at the U.S. Mission in Geneva, the UN capital of humanitarian agencies. She focuses on digging into budgets, governance and programming of the leading humanitarian organizations based there—UNHCR, IOM and ICRC. Her work helps ensure that important issues raised by RefCoords in the field or colleagues in Washington get attention from the humanitarian groups' headquarters.

The United States has special access to these organizations, as their largest donor and has more officers engaged with these organizations than any foreign government in Geneva. "Our presence here not only keeps our partners on their toes," she said. "It also ensures U.S. humanitarian interests are fully represented." RefCoords often find themselves at the center of a humanitarian crisis. Matt Johnson, the RefCoord in Adana, southern Turkey, had been at post only days before the Islamic State in Syria and the Levant began attacking Kurdish areas in northern Syria, forcing 130,000 Syrian Kurds into Turkey in less than two days in late September. It was the largest single movement of people in the entire conflict.

Suddenly, he became the focal point for the Department's efforts to understand the displacement crisis, fielding calls from PRM and the Operations Center in Washington, and drafting situation reports that were being used widely within the Department.

Johnson immediately began working the phones to find out where the refugees were, whether Turkey was keeping the border open and how organizations were responding.

"Almost all of my time recently has been political reporting," said Johnson, stressing the challenge of working in real-time refugee situations. These, he said, are often dynamic, politically sensitive and require cooperation with a wide range of people in the U.S. mission, host governments and international community. "You are just sort of a hub, making sure that everything is connected," he said.

The coordination function is especially important for RefCoords, many of whom also work on resettlement of refugees to the United States. RefCoord Anny Ho in Bangkok oversees PRM's resettlement operations of refugees from Burma and more than 30 other nationalities living in the East Asia region, managing the pipeline of cases, overseeing PRM's Resettlement Support Center operations to process refugee files, and helping facilitate eligibility interviews and security screening by the Department of Homeland Security, which makes the final determination of a refugee's eligibility.

Opposite: RefCoord site visits ensure the billions the State Department spends on humanitarian assistance each year is spent wisely. Here, Nairobi-based RefCoord Kristin Alderman takes a moment with Somali children in Kenya's Kakuma refugee camp.
Photo by Stephen Ruken

A camp for internally displaced persons in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo.
Photo by Dan Langenkamp

In total, she helped bring more than 14,000 refugees to the United States in fiscal 2014, a good portion of the 70,000 total admitted to the United States last year.

She said she loves seeing the results of her work because she is helping people who have suffered horrific persecution—including torture, rape and other violence.

"We are literally giving people a new lease on life," she said.

Having an impact makes all the difference for Bindi Patel, who as RefCoord in Addis Ababa covers Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and African refugees in Yemen. Patel recalls a recent visit to a refugee camp in Djibouti that, though home to 18,000 mostly Somali refugees, looked like the moon—dusty, cratered and inhospitable. She said it took her more than a day of flying and driving to get to the camp. Once there, while fielding questions from students at the camp's small secondary school, she experienced one of those moments that makes RefCoord work so rewarding.

One student asked for a laboratory, to study science, and another asked for a library. But when a third student rose to speak, it was not to ask for anything at all. Instead the student said, "I just want to thank you—for everything the United States has given us."

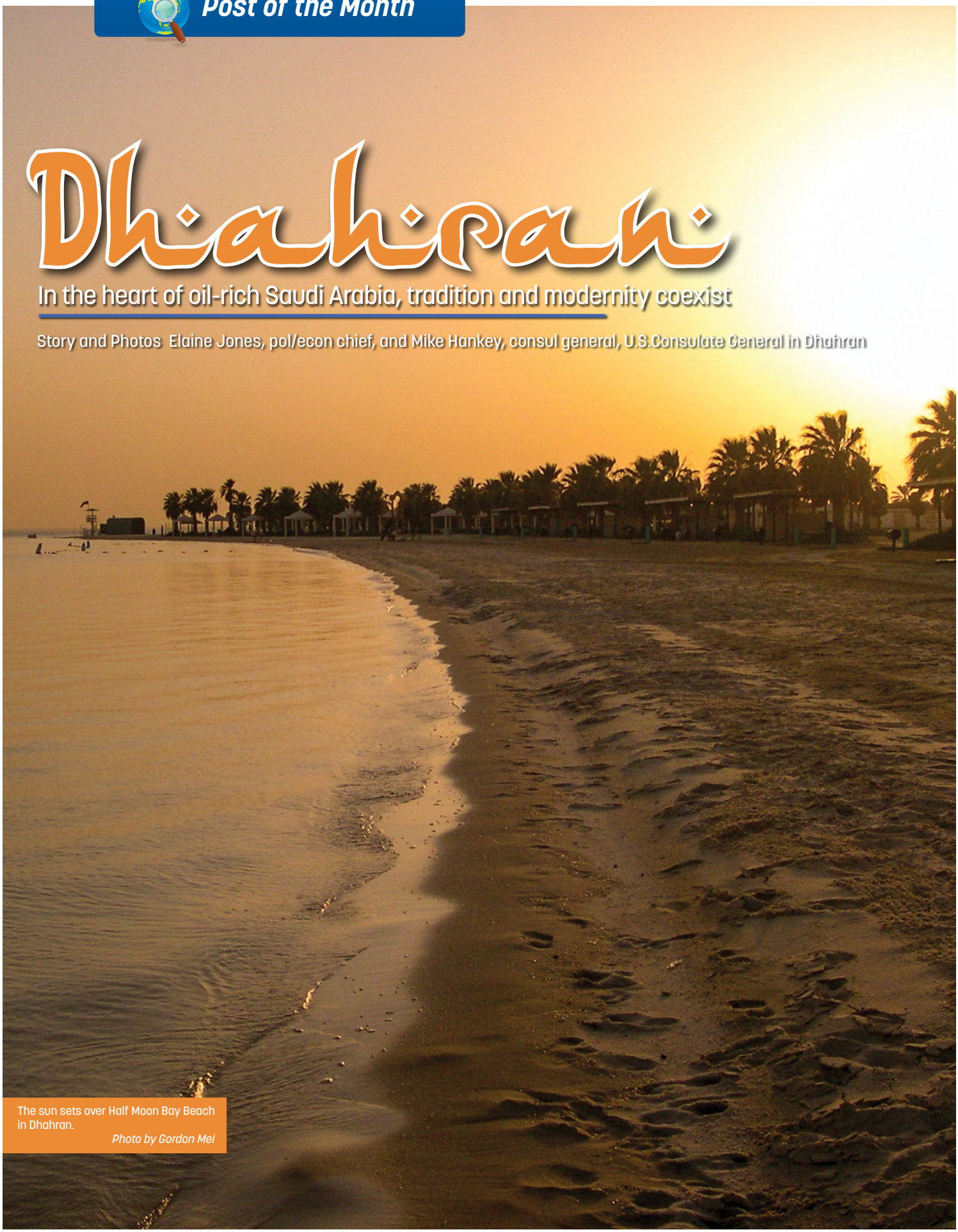
"He spoke with such sincerity about the generosity of the United States," Patel said. "I was speechless. I was almost in tears."

Then Patel reiterated what so many RefCoords say: "I love this job." ◻

Dhahran

In the heart of oil-rich Saudi Arabia, tradition and modernity coexist

Story and Photos Elaine Jones, pol/econ chief, and Mike Hankey, consul general, U.S.Consulate General in Dhahran



The sun sets over Half Moon Bay Beach in Dhahran.

Photo by Gordon Mei

The first U.S. consul in Dharhan, Parker Hart, is feted by the Emir and his entourage (ca. 1944). Hart was a rarity among diplomats, speaking fluent Arabic, and would become ambassador to Saudi Arabia in the early 1960s and later ambassador to Turkey. *State Department Photo*

Dwarfed by more populous cities like Riyadh, Jeddah and Mecca, Dhahran's claim to fame as the oil capital of Saudi Arabia—and, by extension, the world—gives it a prominent place in our constellation of U.S. consulates. The first oil fields in the Arabian Peninsula were explored by American companies in the 1930s in this region, now known as the Eastern Province, with Dhahran and the neighboring cities of Dammam and Khobar forming an almost seamless metropolitan hub, including outlets to the Persian Gulf. "Lucky No. 7," the first well in Saudi Arabia to produce oil in viable commercial quantities, is in Dhahran. Sometimes referred to as "Prosperity Well," it began pumping crude in March 1938, after six failed attempts over a period of nearly five years had left prospectors on the brink of giving up. Since then, prosperity has been the hallmark of oil wealth in this province and throughout the peninsula.

First established on the grounds of the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco) in 1944, Consulate General Dhahran (upgraded to a consulate general in 1949) has been Washington's direct liaison with Saudi Aramco, one of the world's richest corporations in control of the largest known oil reserves. Advancing key U.S. interests in the heart of the world's oil industry presents exciting professional opportunities. The consulate staff works closely with Aramco and its subsidiaries, partners and suppliers. Thanks to decades of mutually beneficial U.S.-Saudi initiatives in health, education, human resources and technology, the flow of intellectual and human capital that binds the United States and Saudi Arabia is as strong as ever. There are thousands of Saudi alumni of American universities and Saudi employees of American companies for consular staff to engage with in Dhahran. Together with these partners, the consulate promotes nearly $2 billion in bilateral trade annually, while facilitating travel for more than 15,000 local students seeking to attend U.S. universities. Recognizing the importance of Dhahran to international trade and travel, the consulate hosts—atypically for a constituent post—staff from the departments of Commerce, Homeland Security and State whose responsibilities encompass other U.S. embassies around the Gulf.

Even with its aura of modernity and globalized links, Dhahran, like Saudi Arabia itself, still offers challenges to Foreign Service officers and families. Women must be driven everywhere and dress conservatively in public. Options such as movie theaters, bars and mixed-gender restaurants are non-existent. And then there are the brutally hot summers. Yet, bidders from across the interagency community compete to serve here, because of the quality of the post's work in the energy sector and other factors.

Across the Eastern Province, a growing cohort of female entrepreneurs and professionals constitutes a particularly rewarding community for consulate engagement. Groups of female investors, industrialists and activists represent the potential of an increasingly well-educated and more integrated Saudi female workforce. During a recent investment forum in al Hasa, the world's largest date palm oasis and a settlement from pre-Islamic times, a group of 50 women watched the conference via closed circuit television. They warmly welcomed me as a consulate official, and a woman, to discuss expanding opportunities for them.

Later, over coffee at one participant's date palm plantation, a participant showed me photos of a daughter's wedding as we spoke of the groundbreaking efforts to operate a mixed-gender, mixed Shia-Sunni workforce to milk a local farm's thousands of cows each day. It was my first taste of Saudi women's engaging style, mixing personal and professional experiences. I soon learned that memorable hospitality and graciousness, coupled with tangible opportunities to gain useful insight into local institutions and economics, are common throughout Saudi Arabia. This is what makes Foreign Service work all the more rewarding.

Public Affairs Officer Donya Eldridge pours a cup of traditional Arabic coffee in a Bedouin tent at a camel ranch.

Roughly 20,000 American citizens live and work in Dhahran's consular district, including several thousand who came decades ago for the valuable work opportunities and settled here. For the Consulate General team it's not hard to see what so many Americans like about the Eastern Province. Political Officer Ed O'Bryan, his wife and two small daughters enjoy living on their kid-friendly international compound with a pool, play groups, painting classes, ballet and basketball.

"The compound has that small-town community feeling where I know my daughter can run to the little store or to her friend's house and I don't have to worry," O'Bryan said. "My wife has so many friends here from around the world; in fact, everyone in our family does, and we love that."

Going beyond the robust expatriate community, consulate staff capitalize on friendly Saudi contacts and their widespread knowledge of English to get to know our local contacts on a personal level. Through weddings, weekly diwaniyyas—similar to old European salons, but with more Arabic coffee—and visits to contacts' desert camps, officers and their families build deeply personal connections that few outsiders ever enjoy.

Craftsmen turn palm fronds into building materials at a local handicraft festival.

"Showing up for someone's diwaniyya is a way of demonstrating respect and showing that you value the relationship," said O'Bryan, indicating that the consulate's efforts to engage go a long way. "Our contacts genuinely appreciate our outreach and then invite us to more events."

Since Saudi Arabia doesn't offer tourist visas, the social events in which post staff participate are unique cultural experiences that few others can access, even in today's interconnected world. Given Saudi Arabia's reputation for strict enforcement of Islam, some of the cultural experiences available to consulate staff can be refreshingly unreserved. "What surprised me most about serving in Saudi Arabia was all the music and the dancing, especially at Saudi weddings," said Public Affairs Officer Donya Eldridge, who has joined with her contacts at the women-only side of many Saudi weddings into the small hours of the morning. "The consulate's close connections with the community provide amazing opportunities in this society, which can seem closed to outsiders."

Afternoon sun casts golden light on rock formations in the desert near Al Hasa.

Very little of the consulate's important work engaging Saudis across the Eastern Province would be possible without its veteran local staff from Saudi Arabia and 12 other countries. "Our consulate has people from all over the world," said Consular Officer Katie Garry. "I love the diversity."

Many of these employees have been with the consulate through the first Gulf War, the Khobar Towers bombing, the second Gulf War and the unaccompanied tours of the 2000s. According to veteran local employee Ibrahim Nur, the unparalleled opportunities to build relationships with an enthusiastic, friendly audience is what keeps employees coming back. Our contacts in that audience are interested in the same things we are: U.S. commercial connections, increased travel to the United States and partnerships with U.S. universities to train the next generation of Saudis.

Serving here has made us appreciate that Dhahran is one of those rare jewels in today's Foreign Service. It's a family-friendly post in the Middle East on the cutting edge of economic development, where local contacts welcome us into their offices, homes and even their families. There are undeniable challenges of working and living here, but for the Foreign Service officer who craves unrivaled cultural experiences, strong international school and family communities, and a unique opportunity to advance American commercial, consular and public diplomacy goals, Dhahran excels in all respects. ◻

Saudi Arabia At a Glance

Capital: Riyadh
Government type: monarchy
Area: 2,149,690 sq km
Population: 27,345,986
Languages: Arabic (official)
Religions: Islam
GDP per capita: $31,300
Export partners: Australia, China, U.S., Japan
Export commodities: petroleum and petroleum products
Import partners: China, U.S., South Korea, Germany, India, Japan
Import commodities: machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals, motor vehicles, textiles
Currency: Saudi riyal
Internet country code: .sa

Sources: The World Factbook

Joy of Secondment

Detail assignments enhance career experience

By Tom Wuchte, head, Anti-Terrorism,
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

When I was asked if I'd ever thought of moving to Vienna and taking on a "secondment," the question launched a journey that took me from being a foreign affairs officer to my current role fighting terrorism at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Another officer, Larry (Mitch) Mitchell, is seconded to the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai Peninsula, and still other Department staff have been seconded to such organizations as the United Nations and multilateral and intergovernmental organizations.

But first, the basics: What is secondment? A secondment is either a detail or transfer that allows the U.S. government to increase federal workforce participation in international organizations (IOs). Both Civil and Foreign Service employees from all federal agencies are eligible. In a detail, the employee is assigned to or loaned to an IO and continues to be accounted for and paid by the home agency. An employee transferred to an IO becomes an employee of, and is paid by, that IO, while retaining re-employment rights when he or she returns, according to Maryanne Thomas, chief of the Career Development and Training Office in the Bureau of Human Resources (HR) and IO/MPR.

Another requirement: For a secondment of either type to occur, an employee must gain permission from his or her current, or losing, bureau's assistant secretary. Secondments can last up to five years, with a possible three-year extension, and the losing bureau and the gaining IO have flexibility on the assignment's length. The Bureau for International Organization Affairs' Office of Management Policy and Resources (IO/MPR) is responsible for promoting secondments of federal employees to IOs and processing secondment extension requests.

In 2013, 201 federal employees were seconded to IOs.

While on secondment, Mitchell said he liked being overseas and interacting with the international community as part of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO). "As an observer, your teammates are all professional retired U.S. military and DOS personnel," he said. "Our duties include flying and/or driving around the Sinai and Israel every week. The work has been so challenging and interesting that I requested an extension for an additional year."

For myself, I found the office that facilitated my secondment, the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs' Office of Regional Security, Political, and Military Affairs, very supportive and responsive. The bureau also supports the placement of approximately 60 other U.S. personnel throughout the OSCE, including Department officers seconded to the OSCE who are based in Chisinau, Sarajevo and Belgrade. Secondments offer a career-broadening experience, with benefits to the officer and the IOs. The officer gains a nuanced experience and the IO gains a qualified member.

Meanwhile, at the MFO, which has personnel from 14 nations, Mitchell said his duty offers perspective into the culture and ideas of co-workers. As for me, serving in the OSCE Secretariat and working directly for a staff member from Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this has been an extremely positive experience both for us and the MFO.

The author presents on the OSCE's work to the UN General Assembly.
Photo by J.C. McIlwaine

Larry Mitchell prepares for a helicopter takeoff, for a Multinational Force and Observers recon mission in Egypt.

Photo by Ricky Hall

There is no typical secondment, and most participants say the biggest reward is contributing across a diverse and varied team, shedding American work practices for those of a collective work environment. Mitchell, in fact, said living and working in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula provided new challenges and experiences almost daily as he and his team learned to work together.

I also found secondment rewarding. As head of anti-terrorism, I oversee a staff of 12, drawn from Russia, Hungary, Spain and other parts of the OSCE region. Given recent events in Ukraine, the assignment is extremely challenging and provides an insider's view of how 57 OSCE participating States react to a pressing European security challenge.

In my experience, secondment career benefits include being on a team at the center of a multinational effort, gaining a broadened perspective beyond that of the United States and working at or quite above the level of one's current position.

More information on OSCE employment opportunities is on the organization's website. Those interested in exploring secondments can visit the International Organization Careers website, which has an FAQ section on the detailing and transferring of federal employees to international organizations. Those interested in the Egypt-Israel Treaty of Peace and serving with the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai Peninsula may contact Rina Chatterji in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at ChatterjiR@state.gov. ◻

Considering a secondment? If so, here are some tips:

- You won't be working for Uncle Sam. Most if not all officers say there are bumps and hurdles in the bureaucracy they join, and they must remember their professional and ethical duty to promote the goals and values of their new organization. To navigate that tricky road, consider your tolerance for ambiguity.
- Check the fine print. A secondment may change your relationship with HR and Global Financial Services (GFS), as transferees must officially resign from the Department. For example, HR and GFS require that transferred employee make continued payroll contributions to the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and Federal Employee's Retirement System (FERS).
- If interested in transferring, confirm your re-employment rights before you leave, since your home agency must, under law, "give due consideration to the employee's overall qualifications" when setting his or her position and grade when re-employed. For some, this may mean returning to the same job while others move into a different position.

Ambassador DeLisi hosts activists for those with disabilities at an Embassy Kampala roundtable discussion.
Photo by Christopher Lubega

Access Advocates

African posts promote disability rights

By Zainabu Williams, political officer, U.S. Embassy in Accra, Matthew Bunt, political officer, U.S. Embassy in Kampala, Maroof Ahmed, political officer, U.S. Embassy in Port Louis

Several U.S. Missions in Africa, including those in Ghana, Uganda and Mauritius, have done outreach this year in support of persons with disabilities. Often, this involved the Ambassador meeting with representatives of the host nation and advocacy organizations.

For instance, the U.S. Embassy in Accra, Ghana, in June, hosted a roundtable discussion with representatives from 18 NGOs about how to improve conditions for persons with disabilities in Ghana. Chaired by Ambassador Gene Cretz and USAID Acting Deputy Director Tom Crubaugh, the discussion highlighted the discrimination affecting access to basic government services, health care, education, employment and voting. According to a 2011 report by the World Health Organization and World Bank, 13 percent of the Ghanaian population lives with a disability.

"NGOs' efforts are critical to protecting and advancing the rights of Ghanaians with disabilities," Ambassador Cretz said, "so it is important that we not only engage them in dialogue but also support their efforts."

In September, the embassy awarded a $47,000 Democracy and Human Rights Fund grant to one of the roundtable participants, the Human Rights Advocacy Center, to address some of the issues facing persons with disabilities. The grant will fund awareness-raising campaigns, train lawyers about the rights of persons with disabilities, educate employers on their responsibilities under the law and underwrite publication of a handbook for the judiciary on disability rights and best practices in obtaining justice for persons with disabilities.

Caitlin McGuire, a former Peace Corps volunteer, told the roundtable of her efforts to create a national Ghanaian sign language picture dictionary that represents the deaf culture of Ghana and will provide a learning tool for family members of deaf individuals and schools for the deaf.

Many participants felt more should be done to educate parents on how to care for their disabled children, with one participant asserting that many parents have never had their child examined by a medical professional. The group agreed that there should be a focus on connecting NGOs and community leaders with medical professionals.

Crubaugh discussed the funding challenges many disability NGOs face and that USAID works with the government of Ghana to ensure all USAID-funded development projects comply with national accessibility laws.

Meanwhile, in Uganda, where persons with disabilities face discrimination and access challenges, the U.S. Embassy is assisting civil society organizations that advocate for those with disabilities. Political and Economic Counselor Michael Newbill said engaging with and assisting marginalized groups in Uganda is an embassy priority.

"We want to ensure that all Ugandans benefit from the rule of law and have their rights respected," said Newbill.

In June, Ambassador Scott DeLisi held a roundtable discussion with six civil society activists and organizations working on behalf of persons with disabilities, including an economic empowerment center, a legal assistance provider and a national union for the disabled. He emphasized U.S. support and sought participants' advice on how to improve the situation in Uganda.

The activists said many people, especially in rural areas, feel shame or embarrassment when a family member has a disability. Challenges arise as they navigate streets and buildings or rural areas, as accessible facilities are largely nonexistent. Grassroots advocacy organizations say they often are denied funding.

Responding to these issues, the embassy public affairs and political/economic sections

Blind Mauritian activist Coomara Pyaneandee canoes near Salt Lake City during a Department-sponsored visitor program.
Photo by Utah Council for Citizen Diplomacy

Students at Koforidua School for the Deaf in eastern Ghana take a break from picking carrots and okra in the school's garden during a Peace Corps-sponsored project.
Photo by Caitlin McGuire

are collaborating with civil society to help create a coalition of advocacy and support organizations that can coordinate and more effectively advocate. The post has offered the nascent coalition meeting space.

In Mauritius, Embassy Port Louis regularly engages on disability matters through exchange programs, grant funding and public awareness-raising activities. For instance, it named Aarthi Burtony, a woman who is blind, as a Mandela Washington Fellow. Burtony, who has a law degree and interns at the Mauritius Supreme Court, completed her fellowship at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

The embassy also chose Coomara Pyaneandee, a blind Mauritian lawyer recently elected to the U.N. Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to visit the United States under the Voluntary Visitor program to examine the rights of those with disabilities. Upon his return, he and Ambassador Shari Villarosa led a discussion about the obstacles facing the disabled, with NGO representatives challenging government officials to respond. Pyaneandee is now drafting a new, comprehensive disabilities law for the Mauritian government.

The Ambassador's Special Self-Help program also assists persons with disabilities through such projects as converting textbooks to Braille, buying equipment to provide vocational training for persons with hearing disabilities and improving physical access at schools and centers that serve those with disabilities.

According to the 2011 WHO World Report on Disability, at least 15 percent of the world's population has some type of disability and 80 percent of them live in developing countries.

"NGOs' efforts are critical to protecting and advancing the rights of Ghanaians with disabilities ... so it is important that we not only engage them in dialogue but also support their efforts."

- Ambassador Cretz

Judith E. Heumann, the Department's Special Advisor for International Disability Rights, said U.S. diplomatic posts are identifying disabled leaders in their countries and helping them learn more "about the laws we have in the United States, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act." She added that program alumni, such as Mandela Washington Fellows, are also crucial because they are "taking their new knowledge and applying it to their day-to-day work in Africa and around the world."

More information about the Department's efforts on disability rights is available from the Special Advisor for International Disability Rights in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, and USAID's disabilities website.

REA Life

Skilled temps lend a hand in Libreville

By Katherine Brucker, deputy chief of mission, U.S. Embassy in Libreville

Above: Gathered with the author, second from right, outside the embassy are REAs, from left, Buck Jardine, Elise White, Won Lee, Pat Hamilton and Doug Hoffman. *Photo by Franck Makosso*

Background: A cargo ship passes Libreville as it transits the Gabon Estuary. *Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco*

Posts responding to curtailments and staffing gaps often turn to short-term temporary duty (TDY) employees on loan from the bureau or another post. For extended gaps, however, the more durable solution is the Reemployed Annuitant (REA), formerly known as the WAE (When Actually Employed) worker. REAs are retired Foreign Service officers and specialists from the Department of State and other foreign affairs agencies who bring the experience and, often, seniority traditional TDY employees may lack.

This is just how the U.S. Embassy in Libreville addressed its extended staffing gaps. Since July, it has been served by a team of TDY employees working in such key roles as management officer, information management officer, facilities manager, executive office management specialist and human resources/financial management officer. At one point, the cadre of five REAs constituted 25 percent of the U.S. direct hire staff. For a smaller post like Libreville, which has a high proportion of entry-level positions and section heads typically only on their third or fourth tours, an REA with more than 20 years of experience is worth his or her weight in gold.

In fact, the REAs serving our post in the second half of 2014 boasted a total of 89 years of Foreign Service experience in more than 35 overseas posts and 19 years as an REA in an additional 23 posts.

Posts with staffing gaps know how quickly work can come to a screeching halt, when there is no one to fix the computers, review the budget or prepare the diplomatic note. REAs can come in and get straight to work without a learning curve, and are not just fully trained but often have the years of experience to act more quickly and decisively than typical incumbents of the very positions they temporarily occupy.

They are also an incredible source of knowledge, advice and mentoring for their more junior colleagues. Especially within the management world, REAs know how to get things done within the rules. More importantly, they relish the chance to share their experience with newer officers.

When REA Management Officer Buck Jardine arrived in Libreville in early August, he doubled the number of American officers in the management section, as three of the four positions were vacant. He joined a second tour general services officer who was covering the management, general services, facilities and human resources functions. A six-year veteran as an REA, Jardine had retired from a 29-year career at State, where he served in nine overseas posts, including Lusaka, Frankfurt and The Hague.

Citing his experience as his greatest asset, Jardine said, "I have seen lots of different ways of doing things and have suggested solutions to procedural problems that help posts."

Another REA, Won Lee, stepped in to cover a critical Facilities gap when the incoming officer's assignment was broken a few months before his scheduled arrival. The post has a new embassy

compound, a housing pool that depends on Facilities for virtually all maintenance and repair, and an ambassador's residence that has been vacant for more than a year and needs work. That Facilities workload put Lee's 23 years of experience to good use.

The extended delay in getting a new ambassador at post has also meant we have no FSO Office Management Specialist. Saving the day, REA Elise White filled the bill for four months, supporting the newly arrived DCM and overseeing preparations for the arrival of the new ambassador. Her knowledge of State Department systems and front office protocols proved a big help to the two eligible family members who are filling office manager roles in other embassy sections.

REA Doug Hoffman has also been a lifesaver: he's kept the post's computer systems operating, first as information management officer and then while taking on the information systems manager's responsibilities when that officer departed post. In his 20-year Foreign Service career, Hoffman said, he has seen just about everything and become "an ancient traveler" who "brings some stability to post."

"Having been through most emergencies I don't get flustered so easily," he observed.

Though management and other support functions often constitute a large portion of the available REA slots, evacuations and extended delays in ambassadorial confirmations have increased the demand for political and economic officers to fill long-term vacancies. Recent retiree Judy Buelow filled a political reporting vacancy in Mali during the 2013 unrest and ordered departure, then spent three weeks as chargé d'affaires at Embassy Libreville and two months as DCM in Kigali in spring and summer of this year.

REA/WAEs are also a welcome source of information and advice for more senior officers. As a first-time DCM, I'm often confronted with management issues and questions I never had to deal with as pol/econ section head. Having very experienced management officers who can advise me is a real lifeline.

An unexpected benefit of REAs is that, with few possessions and usually no family members at post, they're free to become enthusiastic members of the embassy community, not just participating in but also organizing social events. Hoffman, for instance, was the impetus behind "Régab Wednesdays," where colleagues gather after work to socialize and enjoy the local beer.

REAs laud the program as well. Recent retiree Pat Hamilton captured the sentiment of many when he said the REA/WAE program helped him to "ease into full-time retirement."

Retired FSOs also often want to keep traveling, another asset of the REA life. Jardine, for instance, noted that five of his REA/WAE postings were in countries he had not visited, nor was likely to otherwise see. REA postings even allow spouses to come along (at the REA's expense, of course).

Pointing to his experience with organizations other than the State Department, Hamilton said the REA/WAE "program is unique. I don't know of any other public or private entities that have a program like WAE for retirees."

REAs also often like to be able to keep their skills fresh, maintain their connection to the State Department—and earn a bit of extra income. Jardine said he's saving for his son's college tuition, while White is saving for a house.

Becoming an REA is relatively simple. The first step is to register for the REA Global Registry no more than a month before retirement by going through GEMS HR Online under Employee Self Service or contacting the HR Service Center. The prospective REA will also need to network with the bureau's coordinators and/or hiring managers, to increase his or her chances of employment. They should also update his or her skills and competencies within Employee Profile Plus. Many resources are on the REA page on the Department's RNET website and on the HR Shared Service website, and at AskHR and AskRNET, which have useful FAQs on the program. ◻

FIGHTING EBOLA

Embassy on the front lines of epidemic

By Caroline Dow, economic officer, U.S. Embassy Monrovia

Liberian journalists at the Port of Buchanan watch the unloading of 700 20-foot and 40-foot containers from a ship contracted by the U.S. Defense Department to bring in medical and construction supplies and other items for the anti-Ebola fight in Liberia. *Photo by Jerry Gardiner*

The Ebola epidemic raging through Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia is unprecedented in scope, a disaster the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says "requires an equally unprecedented response."

Since the first outbreak, the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia has played a vital role in that response.

Liberia, hardest hit in the epidemic, has approximately four million people and deep ties to the United States reaching to its founding in 1847. More recently, the United States has assisted Liberia's recovery from decades of civil war. The war, which ended in 2003, destroyed most of the country's infrastructure, including health services.

Only a small percentage of Liberia's road network is paved and its national power grid serves a mere 25,000 customers in Monrovia. With a gross domestic product of less than $3 billion and a national budget of $559 million, pre-Ebola Liberia had few resources to fall back on to combat an international health crisis.

Although the international response is underway, the Ebola outbreak had been simmering since early 2014 in a forested region where the three West African nations share a border. The first cases appeared in Guinea, but with the high volume of traffic between the three countries in that area, it was not long before Ebola appeared in Liberia's northwestern Lofa County in March.

Embassy Monrovia immediately got involved.

USAID's existing health programs in Liberia spent approximately $47 million in fiscal 2013 and focused on such key areas as malaria, sanitation, and child and maternal health. With such a large program in place, Embassy Monrovia already had robust relations with the host nation's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare when the crisis unfolded.

As Ebola caught hold in Lofa, the embassy worked with the CDC and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) to bring experts and supplies to Liberia to assist the ministry's response. This work included strengthening of "contact tracing" (determining with whom a victim had been in contact), setting up treatment units, and improving and increasing laboratory testing capabilities.

In addition, the embassy set a tone of calm and reason for Americans living in Liberia and the wider population. Information about the Ebola virus was disseminated to the large Amcit community via warden messages and town hall meetings, and the community spread that information more broadly within Liberia. Throughout the crisis, the embassy also has kept Washington apprised of the situation.

By the end of May, the outbreak appeared to be slowing, but in July Ebola re-emerged, hitting densely populated Monrovia. The last two weeks of the month saw more new infections than had occurred cumulatively since March.

To compound the crisis, hospitals began closing as staff members became infected or refused to come to work, and beds were scarce in Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs) for the infected and those suspected of having the illness. The nation's already weakened mainstream health care services were decimated. Liberia needed technical, human and equipment support, and needed it quickly.

In August, Liberia declared a national emergency, closing schools and ordering nonessential government employees to stay home; medical NGOs and the World Health Organization warned the epidemic, now raging in the three countries, would become an international health threat. Meanwhile, the ambassador requested a disaster declaration for Liberia, allowing USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) to deploy a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), including personnel from USAID, CDC, the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Defense and U.S. Public Health Service.

The agencies began to coordinate U.S. assistance with efforts of the governments of the affected nations and those of other

Top to bottom: A U.S. Navy researcher at the U.S. Navy mobile lab at Cuttington University prepares to inspect a suspected Ebola specimen from the Bong Ebola Treatment Unit. *Photo by Sally Hodgson;* U.S. Ambassador Deborah Malac, in red at center, tours the Tubmanburg ETU being built by U.S. military personnel and members of the Armed Forces of Liberia. *Photo by Jerry Gardiner;* From left, Ambassador Malac, center in white, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and DART leader Bill Berger tour an Ebola Treatment Unit being built in Monrovia. *Photo by Sally Hodgson*

international partners and NGOs. OFDA flew in tons of supplies, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), materials to build ETUs and chlorine for disinfection. The CDC increased the number of epidemiologists and health experts on the ground to a level making this the largest international health emergency response in the agency's history. On Sept. 16, President Obama announced the planned deployment of about 3,000 troops to the region to build more ETUs, assist with logistics capabilities and train health care workers.

More and more aid workers and supplies continue to arrive each day from a variety of countries and international partners to help Liberia tackle this historic health emergency. The U.S. response is substantial and complex, with Embassy Monrovia serving as a platform to support the responding agencies and as a vital link to the government of Liberia. The number of U.S. government personnel in Liberia under chief of mission authority and supported by Embassy Monrovia has more than doubled since August.

Major General Darryl Williams, U.S. Army Africa commander, lauds the role of Ambassador to Liberia Deborah Malac, saying "her leadership and ability to convene [organizations] are indispensable in terms of setting the tone we all follow." Commander Williams and the leaders of DART and the CDC team work hand in glove with Ambassador Malac in Operation United Assistance, the international effort to contain Ebola, engaging Liberia's government and directing U.S. assistance where it is most needed. Ambassador Malac's strong relationship with Liberia's president is also an asset, providing critical access to Liberian leadership to quickly clear roadblocks.

The embassy's strong network of contacts with Liberia's government, civil society, media and private sector facilitate other agencies' ability to operate. OFDA knows "how to do disaster [relief], but how to do it in this country, that's where the embassy is essential," said Bill Berger, DART's leader.

There is still much to be done before the Ebola epidemic will be fully contained, but as Ambassador Malac put it, "We have come some distance. With our coordinated effort, we will succeed."

On the ground, that impact is being felt. For example, a U.S. Navy mobile laboratory deployed in Bong County near a USAID-supported ETU run by the International Medical Corps (IMC) is a "game changer," according to IMC Ebola Emergency Response Team Director Sean Casey. "What took four to five days for test results has been reduced to four to five hours, helping us move patients who test negative out the same day, opening beds in the suspected cases ward," he explained.

Quick and efficient case testing is a critical step in tracing and preventing unnecessary infections, and ensuring those who test positive get the care they need.

The coordinated, whole-of-government U.S. response is already making a difference. By providing crucial in-country expertise and leveraging its host-country relationships, Embassy Monrovia is channeling efforts that will ultimately tame the virus and help Liberia on the road to recovery. ◻

in brief

CFC Off to Good Start

The 2014 Combined Federal Campaign kick-off event in October at Main State, hosted by the Bureau of Human Resources' Work/Life Division, featured a performance by children from the Diplotots childcare center and a speech by Dr. Mark Bergel, founder of one of the several charities attending the event. The charities cover such issues as the environment, housing, veterans and pets.

Shortly afterward came the first of several Department-wide CFC fundraisers, the Wellness Fun Run, Walk & Roll, which raised more than $1,300 for the CFC's undesignated fund. More than 165 federal employees participated in the October event, receiving fruit, water and CFC shirts (for the first 50 runners and 50 walkers) donated by the Foreign Affairs Recreation Association. Planned future fundraisers include a chili cook-off, a bake sale and, on Dec. 4, the 3rd Annual Cupcake Taste-Off in the Exhibit Hall from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. More information on the CFC and future events can be gained by emailing CFC@state.gov.

Acting Director General Hans Klemm speaks at the CFC kickoff event, interpreted for the hearing impaired by Chari L. Tamashiro.

Photo by Robert M. Stewart

The UN Gender Network's co-chair, Julia Viciosa, left, listens as Sharon Ketchum describes her exhibit.

Photo by Ann Wisen

Exhibit Honors Rural Women

In honor of the International Day of Rural Women, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization featured an exhibit, "Feeding The Planet: The Hidden Work of Women Farmers," made up of photos taken by Sharon Ketchum, public affairs officer for the U.S. Mission to the U.N. Agencies in Rome (USUN Rome). The display, inaugurated on Oct. 14, highlights the important work of rural women and was co-sponsored by the Rome U.N. Gender Network and USUN Rome.

The exhibit drew attention to the need to empower women to decrease world hunger. Nearly half of the world's farmers are women, but the assumption that most farmers are male means female farmers receive only 5 percent of agricultural technical assistance worldwide. Giving women equal access to agricultural resources could increase their production by 20 to 30 percent, and feed over 100 million more people across the globe.

U.S. Consul General Milas greets former FSN Dagmar Westberg at German-American Friendship Day Oct. 1. *Photo by Dr. Walter Wieland*

Former FSN Going Strong at 100

When U.S. Consul General Kevin C. Milas spoke at German-American Friendship Day at Frankfurt's historic City Hall Oct. 1, he praised guest of honor Dagmar Westberg, a generous supporter of Frankfurt's university and art museums and a woman who had a long State Department career.

After studying English in the United Kingdom in the 1930s, Westberg joined the American Consulate General in Hamburg and worked in the visa and passport section from 1939 until the consulate's closure in 1941. After the war, she rejoined Mission Germany as a staff member of the executive office in the newly reopened American consulate in Frankfurt, where she served eight consuls general until her retirement in 1965. She has kept in close touch with the consulate and regularly attends events such as Friendship Day.

Few of this year's 500 guests knew that Westberg, agile and sharp-minded as ever, will celebrate her 100th birthday in December, making her one of the oldest living Foreign Service Nationals. As Consul General Milas said in his speech, "She is strong proof that if you support the U.S.-German friendship, you'll live a long and healthy life."

Shower Room Opens at DC Annex

To encourage employee health and wellness, in July the bureaus of Administration (A) and Human Resources opened an employee shower facility at 2121 Virginia Ave., N.W, the building housing the Department's SA-3 offices. The Oct. 8 ribbon-cutting for the facility was part of the Department's contribution to work-life wellness during National Work and Family Month.

Now, employees can ride bikes to work, jog at lunch, take an exercise class and have a place to shower afterward. In line with the A Bureau's "greening" efforts, the showers were built with energy efficiency in mind and construction waste was recycled when possible.

From left, DAS for Administration Dr. Keith Miller, DAS for Human Resources Ambassador Marcia Bernicat, Chief of the Work Life Division Judy Ikels, American Foreign Service Association State Vice President Matthew Asada and Project Manager Matthew Lindstrom cut the ribbon, opening the new showers.

Photo by Robert M. Stewart

in brief

Political Section staff who use standing desks gather for a photo. *Photo by Mary Helen Mueller*

Embassy Manila Stands Up

With medical studies warning of the dangers of too much sitting on our duffs, the U.S. Embassy in Manila has been at the forefront in allowing employees to choose alternative workstations. As a result, more than half of the 18 members of the political section stand while working, just as Thomas Jefferson once did.

"When I read how sitting changes your blood chemistry and shortens your lifespan, I knew I wanted a stand-up desk," reported Human Rights Officer John Fazio.

"I'm just more productive and sharper in my thinking and writing," said Nate Young. "I also come home after work with more energy."

Political Counselor Eric Kneedler was the section's first member to opt for a standing desk, doing so on arrival last summer. "When you consider how many hours you sit during a typical day, at meetings and working meals, the choice became a no-brainer," he observed.

Elsewhere at post, employees are working while standing in the public affairs section and the front office. Working while standing needs no special medical condition or special funding at this post, where facilities management accommodated each request and fitted each stand-up desk according to height.

Deputy Secretary Addresses Group

In October, Deputy Secretary William J. Burns joined 60 members of the State Department employee affinity group, the Thursday Luncheon Group (TLG), in the newly renovated Martin Van Buren Dining Room to receive the group's medallion in recognition of his leadership and support for a more diverse and representative State Department. TLG holds quarterly meetings in the dining room. Its 400 members are comprised of Foreign Service and Civil Service active and retired employees, and associate members.

TLG President Stacy Williams, left, presents Burns with the TLG's award. *Photo by Robert M. Stewart*

Retirements

Foreign Service

Atnip, Cynthia Dianne
Baganz, Vienna K.
Balbi, Lori Ellen
Ball, Perry Edwin
Bandik, Mark G.
Barnes, Kou M.
Beede, Christopher James
Bendsen, Christian D.
Bentz, Patrick W.
Birdsall, Paul D.
Blau, Robert I.
Bocchetti, Mark William
Bono, John B.
Boyle, Kathleen L.
Breiter, Ann Kathleen
Butenis, Patricia A.
Campbell, Glenn Scott
Christensen, Casey H.
Christenson, Dan Blane
Clark Jr., Joseph F.
Cohn, Mitchell Allen
Colvin Jr., George Wood
Connerley, John Alan
Conners, Mary Deane
Cooper, Nancy J.
Dabbs, Helen H.
Demerse, Timothy J.
Desjardins, Marc L.
DiCarlo, Rosemary A.
Dorsey, Liane Renee
Dougherty, Marcia W.
Dowdy, Felix A.
Erviti, Pedro Gustavo
Faux-Gable, Laura P.
Featherstone, Sharon K.
Fedak, Janice J.
Ferguson-Augustus, Rhonda
Foster, Kenneth Lee
Fox, John Gilmore
Friedman, Abigail S.
Graves, Andrew B.
Graves, Earl J.
Hanks, Russell J.
Hargan, Kimberly G.
Haskell, Brian Jean
Himes, Bradley A.
Hoh, Christopher J.
Houston, Randall Warren
Hurst, Cathy L.
Jackson, Carole Ann
Kambara, Ann
Kane, Joan E.
Kessler, Helene M.
Klein, Stephen J.
Larsen, Janelle L.
Liston, Stephen M.
Luke, Robert S.
Mann, Theodore Albert
Manthos, Peter N.
McCauley, Brian
McFarland, Stephen George
McGeehan, Mary Grace
Mejia, Gustavo Alberto
Metzger, Mary I.
Miles, Barbara J.
Moore, Barry M.
Moore, John A.
Morrison, Sarah C.
Murphy, Joseph P.
Neuling, R. Bruce
Newby, Amy J.
Norton, James C.
O'Connor, Mark Brendan
Parker, Andrew Charles
Parpart, Leo R.
Reed-Rowe, Helen Patricia
Romero, Orlando
Rueter, Eric J.
Saifullah, Mohammad
Sainz, Francisco D.
Siletzky, Robert
Simon, Anne Winifred
Skipper, Kristen B.
Skipper, Thomas F.
Smith, Jay Thomas
Smith, Stephen F.
Steele, Earl James
Stefanick, Michelle L.
Stewart, David C.
Summers, Susan B.
Sweigart, Bernard A.
Swinimer, Mary-Jo
Taylor, Lowry
Taylor, Pamela E.
Tokola, Mark A.
Toma Jr., Raymond Daniel
Tuntland, Stephen E.
Weitzenkorn, Laurie B.
Winchester, Rebecca R.
Winnick, Seth D.
Wintheiser, Charles James

Civil Service

Beard, Connie
Brenner, John Duane
Brenton, Patrick M.
Brown, Deborah H.
Cabral, John L.
Campbell, James E.
Cirujales, John R.
Clark, Bobby J.
Clark, Marsha Louise
Corsun, Andrew F.
Cross, Alan H.
Doyle, Elja Fatima M.
Fisher, Cynthia K.
Hinton,Valerie C.
Hopkins, Donna Leigh
Kretzer, Irvin R.
Littlefield, Timothy R.
Martinson, Diana S.
McLaughlin, Michael D.
Menold Jr., William F.
Pace, Rosa D.
Rubendall, Brian D.
Schmidt, Rolf P.
Shoemaker, Tony R.
Shuman, Gene R.
Sutton, Marsalia Y.
Sutton, Terri N.
Weaver, Carol Susan
Wolfson, Michael R.

Ethics Answers

Q: A co-worker asked if I would contribute $15 toward a group holiday gift card for our supervisor from her favorite coffee shop. Is this ok?

A: No. Under the ethics rules, an employee may solicit voluntary contributions of nominal amounts from fellow employees for an appropriate gift to an official superior only on special, infrequent occasions. This is also permissible on an occasional basis for items such as food and refreshments to be shared in the office. However, holidays and birthdays are not considered special, infrequent occasions under the ethics rules, and this gift is not for food or refreshments to be shared in the office, so your co-worker may not solicit the gift you've described, nor could you contribute to it.

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

Correction: In the October issue of *State Magazine*, the obituary for Harold Ashby should have read that he was the legally married husband of Ed McKeon.

Appointments

David Pressman
Alternate Representative of the United States to the United Nations for Special Political Affairs

Kevin F. O'Malley
U.S. Ambassador to Ireland

Bathsheba N. Crocker
Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs

Adam M. Scheinman
Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation

John R. Bass (SFS) of New York is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey. Previously, he served as executive secretary of the Department of State. Before that, he was ambassador to Georgia. He has also been head of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghdad, director of the Operations Center at the Department, special advisor to former Vice President Cheney and chief of staff in the Office of the Deputy Secretary. His overseas assignments include Brussels, Antwerp and N'Djamena.

Robert Stephen Beecroft (SFS) of California is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt. Previously, he was ambassador to Iraq. He has also been ambassador to Jordan. As executive assistant to former Secretaries of State Rice and Powell, he was involved in many of the most important policy decisions on the Middle East. He has held assignments in the executive secretariat and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. His overseas postings include Riyadh and Damascus. Early in his career he practiced law in the San Francisco office of an international law firm.

Bathsheba N. Crocker of the District of Columbia is the new Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. Her most recent positions include senior advisor to the Secretary, principal deputy director in the Office of Policy Planning and chief of staff to the Deputy Secretary. Before that she worked for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and at the United Nations in the areas of peacebuilding support and tsunami recovery. She has been a fellow at both the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Council on Foreign Relations.

Nina Hachigian of California is the new U.S. Representative to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, with the rank of Ambassador. Previously, she was a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and the author of books and reports on Asia policy. Prior to this, she was a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation and served as the director of its Center for Asia Pacific Policy. She has been on the staff of the National Security Council and served as an advisor to the chairman of the Federal Trade Commission.

Jane D. Hartley of New York is the new U.S. Ambassador to the French Republic and the Principality of Monaco. Most recently, she was CEO of the Observatory Group, an advisory firm. Previously, she served as CEO for the G-7 Group. Before that, she held executive positions at WWOR-TV in Secaucus, N.J.; MCA Broadcasting (Universal); Westinghouse Broadcasting; and Group W Cable. She also served as associate assistant in the Office of Public Liaison at the White House and as director of congressional relations at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Mark William Lippert of Ohio is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea. A U.S. Navy veteran with service in Iraq and Afghanistan, he was special assistant to the secretary of defense and the deputy secretary of defense. Prior to this, he was assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific security affairs and deputy assistant to the president and chief of staff for the National Security Council. He has been a staff member to prominent Democratic figures in the Senate, including then-Senator Barack Obama.

Kevin F. O'Malley of Missouri is the new U.S. Ambassador to Ireland. Previously, he was an attorney and partner at the law firm of Greensfelder, Hemker & Gale in St. Louis. He has also been an adjunct professor at Washington University School of Law, taught at St. Louis University School of Law and served as a legal instructor for the Central and Eastern European Law Initiative in Moscow and Warsaw. He was an assistant U.S. attorney in St. Louis and a special attorney in the Organized Crime and Racketeering Section of the Department of Justice.

David Pressman of New York is the new Alternate Representative of the United States to the United Nations for Special Political Affairs, with the rank of Ambassador. Prior to his appointment, he was the Counselor to the Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations. He has also served as assistant secretary for policy development at the Department of Homeland Security and on detail as the director for war crimes and atrocities on the National Security Council. He was a member of President Obama's Atrocity Prevention Board.

Adam M. Scheinman of Virginia is the new Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation, with the rank of Ambassador. Previously, he was senior advisor for nuclear nonproliferation in the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation. He also served as director for nonproliferation on the White House National Security Staff. Prior to this, he held a number of positions in the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration, including director in the Office of Export Control Policy and Cooperation.

Obituaries

Robert D. Brandt, 92, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Aug. 10 from complications after a fall in Rock Hill, S.C. He served in the Army during World War II and worked for the Department from 1954 to 1982. His postings as a USAID training officer included Paraguay, Honduras, Ecuador, Colombia, Afghanistan and Egypt. He was an accomplished businessman, project manager, craftsman and pilot.

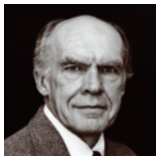
Francis Xavier "Frank" Cunningham, 87, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Sept. 20 in Arlington, Va. In between careers as a chemist and rocket scientist with NASA, he joined the Department in 1974 and was posted to Brussels, Manila and Cairo. In Washington, he worked for the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. In retirement, he spent several years declassifying documents for the government and, during his leisure time, wrote and published two books on wellness. He was a runner and fitness/nutrition advocate.

Robert W. "Bob" Dean, 94, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Sept. 10 in Dallas, Texas. A World War II Navy veteran who served in the Pacific, he joined the Department in 1945. He served as ambassador to Peru, with earlier postings to Germany, Brazil, Chile and Mexico. He retired to Dallas in 1978, later establishing his own business. In retirement he remained active in international organizations in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. He loved tennis, golf, travel, studying Latin America and spending time with family.

Francis J. Dennett, 93, a retired Foreign Service officer, died August 10 in Asheville, N.C. He served in the Army during and after World War II, and took part in the Battle of the Bulge. In 1966, he joined the Department and retired in 1984. His overseas assignments in both services took him to nearly a dozen countries. He pursued travel in retirement, logging 300,000 miles in his RV throughout North and Central America.

Sally Kux, 51, a Civil Service employee, died Oct. 1 in Washington, D.C. She was the senior advisor for democracy and governance programs in the Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources (F) and had been a vital member of the F family since its inception. After earning a doctorate in Russian from Stanford University, she began her government career at the U.S. Information Agency in 1994, covering East Europe and Russia, followed by years in the Bureau of European Affairs supporting democracy programs. She devoted her free time to her family, yoga, her garden and projects at her children's schools.

Jerry E. Kyle, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Aug. 26 in Ukiah, Calif. He served in the Army during the Korean War and joined the U.S. Information Agency in 1961. His postings included Manila, Chiang Mai, Jakarta, Nairobi and Rangoon, where on his second tour in the early 1980s he was public affairs officer.



William W. Marsh, 82, a retired president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Europe (RFE/RL), died Sept. 13 in Naples, Fla. He served in the Army in postwar Germany where he began his career in journalism, working first for the American Forces Network, then Radio Free Europe and subsequently in Washington, D.C., for the Voice of America as news director. He returned to Munich in 1986 and held top positions at RFE/RL until retirement in 1994.

Edward F. McKnew, Jr., 94, a retired Civil Service employee, died on Sept. 12 in Midlothian, Va. He served with the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II and took part in the Normandy landing. He worked for the Department and the U.S. Information Agency as an auditor and retired in 1978 after 32 years of government service. He had temporary duty assignments in 53 countries throughout the world. After his retirement, he served as a volunteer at Fairfax Hospital and Chippenham Hospital in Richmond.

Thomas J. O'Rourke, 73, a retired Civil Service employee, died Sept. 25 in La Plata, Md. He served in the Air Force during the Vietnam War and then worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigation before joining the Department in 1989. He also worked for Homeland Security and Naval Sealift Command in his 35-year government career. In retirement, he devoted time to his family, cars and animals.

Alfred Wells, 98, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Sept. 27 in the Canary Islands, Spain, where he lived with his wife, former U.S. Ambassador Melissa Wells. He entered the Foreign Service in 1941 and retired in 1966 after serving in Buenos Aires, Colombo, Paris, Rangoon, Vienna, Bremen, Bonn and London. Upon retirement, he started a new career in tropical architecture and urban planning, and worked as a consultant to numerous organizations, including the United Nations Development Program.

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.

Lying in State

Originally published in December 2004.

Italy

Philippines

End State

Italy Pg. 28

Rome's Flavian Amphitheatre, better known as the Colloseum, is visible in puddles dotting a cobblestone walkway.

by Moyan Brenn

Philippines Pg. 30

A long exposure turns the night sky into a painterly blur as city lights reflect off Manila Bay.

Photo by Tralphe XY

Moldova Pg. 34

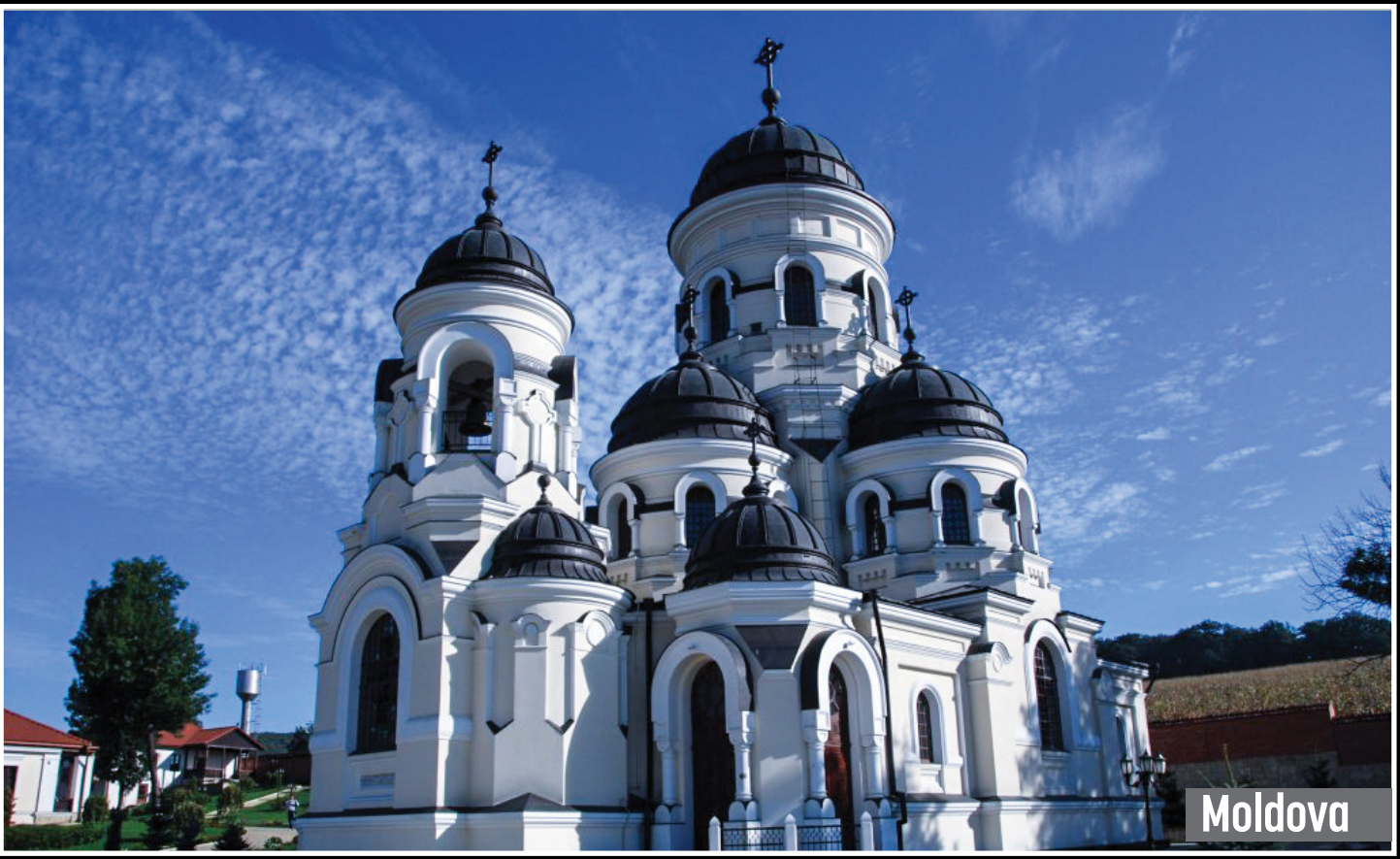
The rising sun casts long shadows on a monastery in Capriana as Sunday morning services take place within.

Photo by Pieter van Marion

Uganda Pg. 3

Privately-owned minibuses at the central matutu station in Kampala are the city's main form of public transportation.

Photo by Fred Inklaar



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U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Human Resources
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