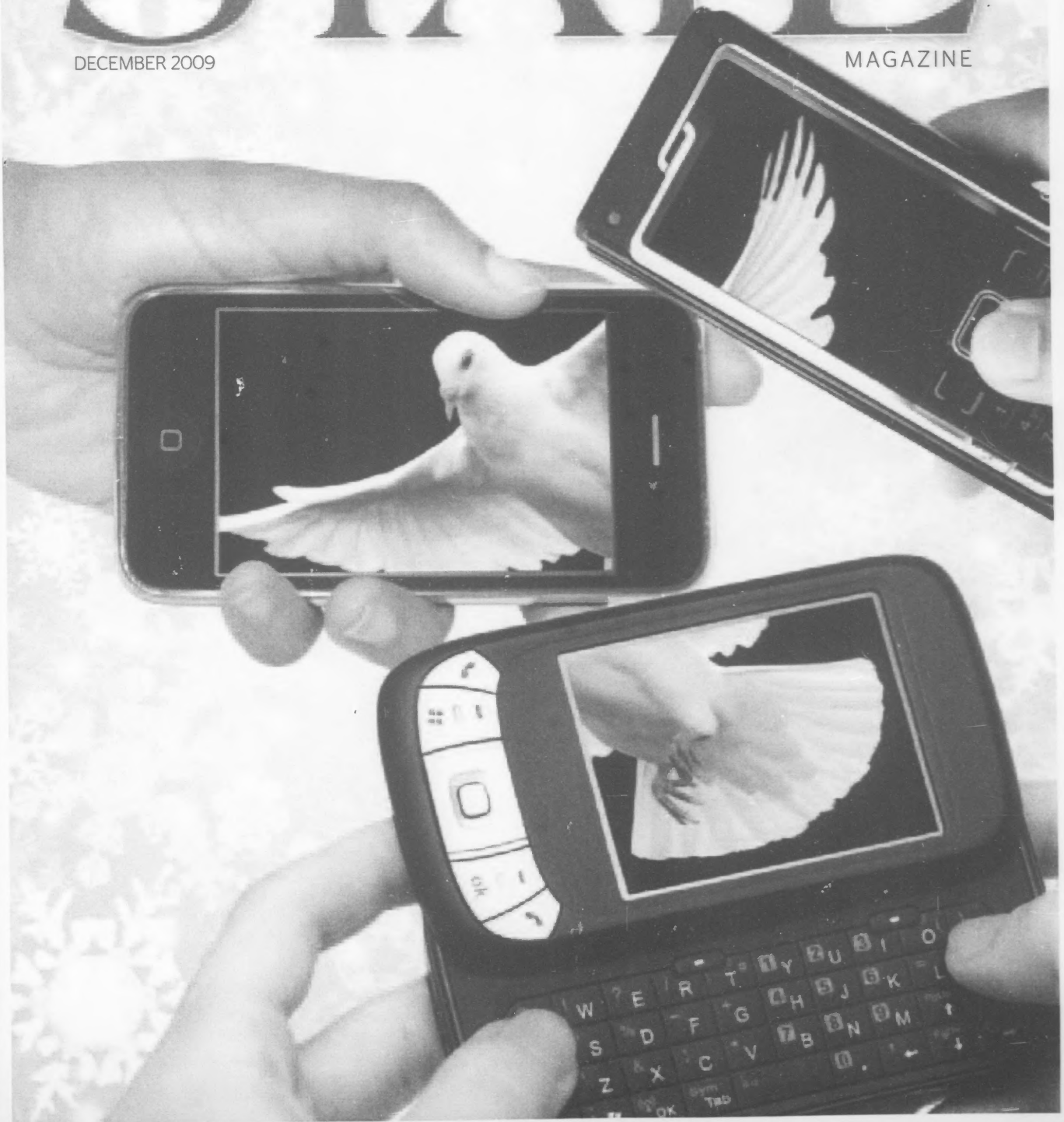


U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

STATE

DECEMBER 2009

MAGAZINE



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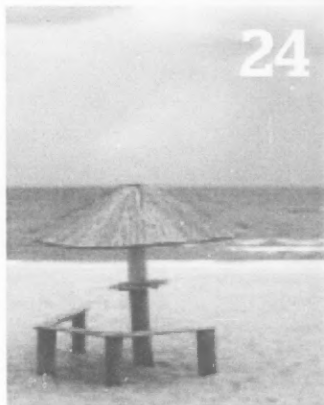
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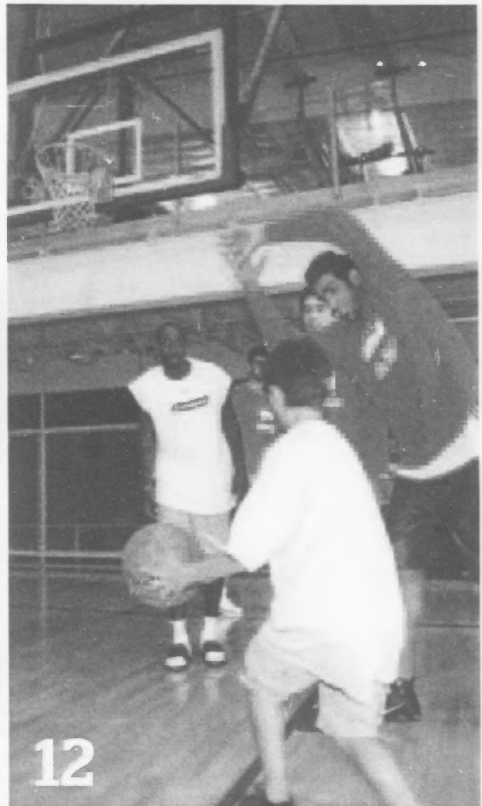
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On the Cover

Applying the latest technology may help the Department solve the Peace on Earth puzzle.

SWAT Teams at State

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones around the world a peaceful and joyous holiday season. As we close the year, let me review for you what HR has been doing, with your help, to improve both the State Department's hiring process and the conditions for those of you already on board.

In June of this year, John Berry, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, sent a memo to agency chiefs directing them to convene "SWAT teams" to streamline the hiring process, improve employee satisfaction and implement wellness initiatives. As Director Berry said, "The state of the federal workforce is sound, but with room for improvement." Though we ranked fifth in the 2009 list of Best Places to Work in the Federal Government, the State Department, too, can do even better.

To that end, State this summer convened its SWAT teams, coordinated by HR's Office of Shared Services, and they are already showing results.

HR's Office of Civil Service Human Resource Management is taking the lead on mandated hiring reform. They have developed plain language job announcements. Additionally, applicants are now notified in a timely manner at four points during the hiring process: (1) receipt of application, (2) assessment of application, (3) referral to the selecting official and (4) selection decision. Moving forward, the team is developing Standardized Vacancy Announcements to be used in conjunction with the Department's Standardized Position Descriptions. These adjustments to the hiring process should result in a system that is more user-friendly to both applicants and hiring offices.

HR's Shared Services Provider office is guiding a team focused on improving engagement by managers in the hiring process. The team convened a focus group composed of managers from various bureaus and another one composed of HR professionals from across the Department. The focus groups provided the basis for an action plan that we are using to develop a training course for managers and HR specialists.

Yet another team, chaired by HR's Office of Resource Management and Organization Analysis, is addressing employee satisfaction issues. After carefully analyzing the 2008 Federal Human Capital Survey results, they conducted three employee focus groups of Civil and Foreign Service staff from throughout the Department on performance management, senior leadership,

training and development, and work-life balance issues. As a result of the discussions, the team has developed an action plan, including new training initiatives and tools for managers and supervisors, which was submitted to the Office of Management and Budget and OPM as required and will be used to move forward in addressing employees' concerns.

Finally—but by no means least—HR's Office of Employee Relations is coordinating the wellness initiative. The team has successfully promoted discounted memberships at local health clubs available to Department employees and healthy cafeteria food choices. An employee focus group met, and their ideas are

being incorporated into an action plan for the coming year. Already, the team's efforts have resulted in additional bike racks for errands within the District and should result in more employee showers within the Department. For 2010, OPM's goal is to have a comprehensive wellness program in 75 percent of facilities and 75 percent of employees participating in the programs. The Department, with its robust Office of Medical Services and occupational health staff, is well positioned as a leader in wellness initiatives for the government. While government-wide reporting will continue to focus on domestic employees, the Department is also working to extend wellness initiatives to its posts overseas, where many personnel are serving in hardship assignments with limited exercise and health care options.

While there is much work yet to be done, the SWAT teams are on track to

realize the President's goals and improve the hiring process for applicants and managers, increase employee satisfaction and improve work-life options for all employees. I encourage you to be part of the process. In addition to the employee focus groups, for which we are always seeking volunteers, we take a serious look at the constructive input employees offer through the Sounding Board and DG Direct, and our SWAT teams' work reflects a number of those suggestions. We know there are many more good ideas out there—keep them coming. ■



Nancy J. Powell
Director General



Departed Friends

In all my very many years of reading *State Magazine*, I have never felt the compulsion I have today to write a letter to the editor.

How many of us have viewed the obituaries section over the years to see if anyone we knew was, sadly, listed? And how many times have many of us probably silently noted that we didn't know anyone in that monthly section, remarking that many were quite old when they passed away? Some had retired before many of us even entered on duty, right? The thought suddenly hit me this morning that: OF COURSE I KNOW THEM! ALL OF THEM! They are part of

what we all went through: all the foreign assignments, all the ups/downs everyone goes through in new surroundings, having raised families who shared in the priceless wonders that those travels brought, and if applicable, having seen their young grow and leave to begin lives of their own. Sure I know them—they are US! In their time, they shared the experiences and carried the memories we all have.

R.I.P., dear friends. R.I.P.

Mike McCaffrey
Retired Foreign Service officer

Good Issue

I appreciate the diversity of pictures in the October issue of *State Magazine*. It appears that you are fair and sensitive to our multicultural environment at State and in the world. There is also a good variety of features and columns to address the interests of all readers of this magazine. This is one of your best issues. I look forward to continued positive diversity in future issues.

Faye Hartgrove
*School of Language Studies
Foreign Service Institute*

Talk to Us

Letters should not exceed 250 words and should include the writer's name, address and daytime phone number. All letters become the property of *State Magazine*. Letters will be edited for length, accuracy and clarity. Only signed letters will be considered.

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News



The steamroller does its messy work in Kuala Lumpur.

Outdated Equipment? Send for the Steamroller

The U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, this summer conducted Operation Crunch, in which its Information Resource Management staff destroyed more than 1,000 kilograms of antiquated equipment, including old personal computers and printers and other outdated or useless items.

Security regulations required that much of the equipment be obliterated, and that typically means using sledgehammers. This time, the IRM team sought out a

piece of road-building equipment known as a steamroller. A local company provided a steamroller, a safety officer who could show how to use the machine and, if necessary, help flatten items.

This investment was fiscally sound and efficient, saved time and raised morale by allowing the staff to do something it normally doesn't get to do—crunch things with a steamroller. In addition, much of the resulting debris was recyclable.



A Pennsylvania National Guard Black Hawk helicopter carries the journalists near the Ziggurat of Ur. Right: Iraqi journalists take pictures from the Black Hawk's back seat.



Photo Safari Captures Iraq's Drought from Air

Two U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters touched down near Muthanna, Iraq, in October to pick up 10 local reporters, loaded with cameras and notebooks, for a three-hour flight to take aerial pictures of the extreme drought plaguing the province. While the reporters have written on the drought, the aerial shots of Lake Sahwa and the Euphrates River depicted the stark reality.

The flight also took the journalists to photograph the archaeological sites Ziggurat of Ur and Warka, where the sunken ruins are best seen from the air.

"Flying over the ruins gave the photojournalists amazing shots of the many different and varied layers of the Warka ruins," said Provisional Reconstruction Team-Muthanna Public Diplomacy Officer Kelli Cook. "These shots are something they otherwise never

would have been able to take."

The trip was part of the PRT's ongoing program to provide the provincial press with training, equipment and access to stories about American activities in Muthanna Province. The next training session, as requested by the journalists, will be a photography class to be taught by a military news photographer.

Some of the Muthanna reporters studied journalism at Baghdad universities, but many are self taught. Future classes will focus on videography, taught by a military videographer, and investigative reporting, taught by a member of PRT Baghdad who is a credentialed freelance reporter.

Iraq's reporters need training in writing, technical skills and running the business side of a broadcast station or newspaper to achieve the same level as their Western counterparts.

However, advertising, which would keep media outlets independent from the government, is a foreign concept in Iraq.

Cook said she hopes to find business training for the station owners since "[t]hey are used to being backed by political parties or the government.

"When the price of oil goes down, the central government cuts state-owned stations' budgets," she said. "If the station managers could find alternate revenue sources, then they could weather tough financial times."

As for the helicopter photo safari, "All the journalists enjoyed the helicopter ride," said Yousef Al-Muhsen, news director for Muthanna TV Station, one of the biggest media outlets in Muthanna. "It was a new experience to most, especially those working in TV stations."

Foreign Service Children Eligible for DACOR Foundation Awards

Several scholarships and fellowships will be available in academic year 2010-2011 for children and grandchildren of Foreign Service officers, active or retired, for study at The Hotchkiss School and Yale University. These awards, sponsored by Diplomatic and Consular Officers, Retired Bacon House Foundation are made possible by a bequest of the late Ambassador Louis G. Dreyfus Jr.

Hotchkiss will select one enrolled student for a \$5,000 scholarship. Applicants should contact the Director of Financial Aid, The Hotchkiss School, Lakeville, CT 06039-0800, providing evidence of a parent's or grandparent's Foreign Service status.

Awards to Yale students, based on merit, will be made in consultation with Yale. Aspirants may apply for the Dreyfus awards when applying for admission. Awards are contingent upon confirmation by Yale that the student has been admitted or is in good standing.

Awards to undergraduates may be up to \$5,000. Any field of study is acceptable, but if there are many applicants, preference will be given to students pursuing a master's degree in a field related to foreign affairs.

To apply, students should send a copy of the parent's or grandparent's most recent Foreign Service appointment or promotion document, a brief letter of interest, full contact information, résumé, most recent transcript and a one-page statement of their academic goals, work experience, awards and non-academic achievements to DACOR Bacon House Foundation, Attn: William C. Hamilton, 1801 F Street N.W., Washington, DC 20006. Applicants for graduate fellowships should include a page outlining career goals.

The deadline for applications is March 12, 2010. For more information, contact Caroline Conway at (202) 682-0500 x. 17 or prog.coord@dacorbacon.org.



As part of the project, youths engage in filming in Sri Lanka.

POST'S FILM CAMPS SPEAK YOUTHS' LANGUAGE

Famed director Frank Capra called film "one of three universal languages," and the U.S. Embassy in Colombo endorsed that view in film camps it held recently for youths in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Sri Lanka's bloody 26-year war ended in May, but with half the population under age 30 many citizens have no memory of their nation before the conflict. Although Sri Lanka is a multiethnic and multilingual nation, many citizens speak only one language and know only the members of their own ethnic group. The embassy public diplomacy team sought to bridge these divides through film.

For 10 days in August, 40 Sri Lankan teenagers from different regions and ethnic groups

worked in multilingual, multi-ethnic teams at a retreat outside of Colombo making short films. They wrote scripts, acted, filmed, and edited the final product.

Hollywood acting coach and producer Constance Tillotson, who came to Colombo through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Cultural Envoy program, joined Sri Lankan film directors Anoma Rajakaruna and Kasinathar Gnanadas to guide the youths, as did a team of Sri Lankan university student volunteers. The volunteers also interpreted between Sinhalese, Tamil and English.

The eight resulting films—in either Sinhala or Tamil—premiered at a theater in Colombo. They have been featured on Sri Lankan television and will be

screened this month at the Galle Film Festival.

Meanwhile in the Maldives, a 1,200-island nation in the Indian Ocean, the white sandy beaches and turquoise waters formed the backdrop for another film camp. Last year, the Maldives, in its first multiparty elections in three decades, replaced South Asia's longest-serving leader with a political dissident who had been imprisoned by his predecessor. However, the country's young democracy faces challenges that threaten social stability, including a serious heroin epidemic among an estimated 30 percent of its youth.

To support the nation's recovery efforts, the embassy organized a week-long film camp for youths at the country's largest

drug rehabilitation center. The goal was to raise awareness about drug abuse, build self-esteem among recovering young addicts and help remove some of the social stigma against them. As in the Sri Lankan program, Tillotson helped the young Maldivians make short films about their lives and how they overcame substance abuse. The films, screened at a gala event for patients, family members and government officials, were featured on Maldivian television and at a national conference on the drug issue.

The films from can be viewed on YouTube.com by searching for "U.S. Embassy Colombo." One, titled "Little Flower," is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZjzSMbdGVs>.





Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, left, passes out bread during the iftar.

Post Follows 9/11 Event With Iftar

On Sept. 11, Mission Afghanistan staff gathered at the chancery to commemorate the anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. At the ceremony, a Marine Color Guard lowered the flag to half-mast in memory of the fallen.

Ambassador Karl Eikenberry described the attacks' significance for the United States and Afghanistan and their enduring partnership in the fight against violent extremism. Afghan Foreign Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta thanked the American people for their sacrifice and said U.S. leadership in Afghani-

stan will determine the outcome of a global struggle "for the soul of the Islamic world."

Consular Officer Kathleen Nutt then sang "America the Beautiful," and all attendees observed a moment of silence.

Two days later, Ambassador Eikenberry, Deputy Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone, Assistant Chief of Mission Joseph Mussomeli and Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs E. Anthony Wayne hosted an iftar dinner in honor of Locally Employed Staff at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. The iftar is an evening meal that breaks the

fast in the Islamic month of Ramadan.

At the iftar, Ambassador Eikenberry thanked the more than 150 LE Staff members in attendance for their outstanding effort and dedication.

"I am delighted to see so many friends and colleagues, Afghan and American, come together as one community joined by our shared work and common values," he said. "We are a strong and united team in our common effort with the Afghan people to bring a more prosperous and secure future to Afghanistan."

Plaque Commemorates PRT's Fallen Members

At an October ceremony held by the Provincial Reconstruction Team for Basra Province, Iraq, Ambassador Christopher R. Hill and PRT Leader John Naland unveiled a bronze memorial plaque honoring seven U.S. citizens killed while working for the Department in Basra between 2004 and 2009.

Speakers at the ceremony lauded the service and sacrifice of the fallen, saying they gave selflessly to coworkers, their country and the people of Iraq. Six were personal security contractors, and one was an information management contractor. All but one died in roadside bombings, and all but one had previously served in the U.S. military or in a U.S. law enforcement agency.

The plaque's inscription quotes Abraham Lincoln: "I do the very best that I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep on doing so until the end." The plaque will be displayed at PRT Basra until it relocates to an enduring U.S. diplomatic facility in Basra or to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.



PRT leader John Naland, left, and Ambassador to Iraq Christopher R. Hill admire the memorial plaque.

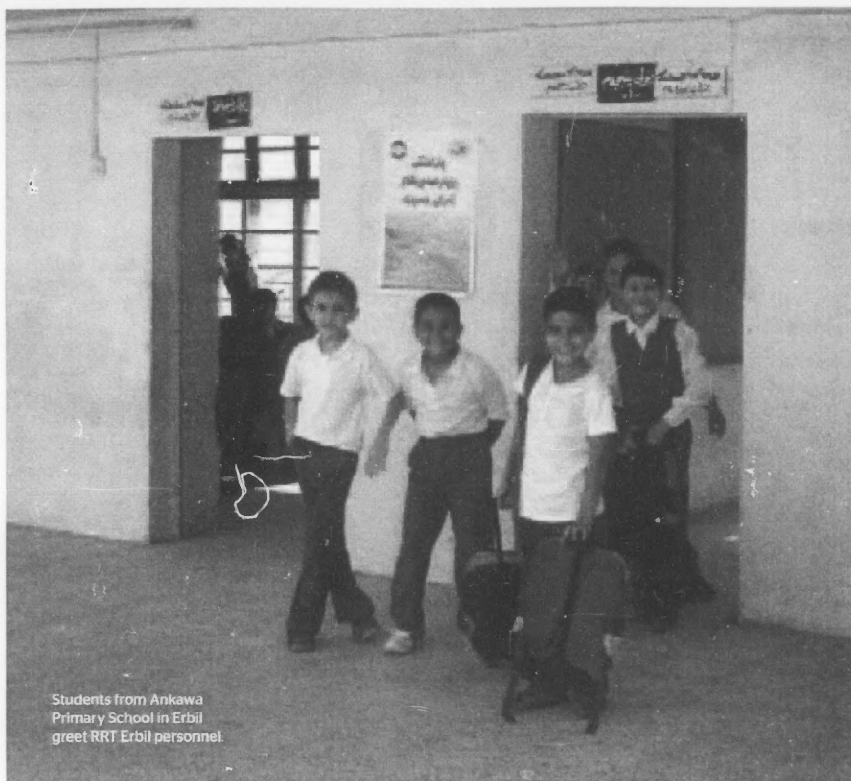
News

Team in Iraq Delivers School Supplies

In September when it supported approximately 150 visits, including a Vice Presidential visit, the regional security office of the Regional Reconstruction Team in Erbil, Iraq, still managed to provide school supplies and recreational equipment to students of the town's Ankawa Primary School.

At the school, regional security office staff met smiling children and appreciative staff. Then, the RRT team presented the school with such supplies as large dry-erase boards and exercise equipment. Students received backpacks—the boys favored one featuring the soccer team Manchester United, and the girls a pink Disney princess character.

The team plans to paint the school's interior during the Christmas holiday vacation and has organized a pen pal campaign between the school and U.S. schools.



Students from Ankawa Primary School in Erbil greet RRT Erbil personnel.

EMBASSY BRINGS SMILES WITH ART

It's not easy being an artist in Yemen. Materials, gallery space and appreciative local audiences can be scarce. Sales depend largely on foreign tourists, who have been few and far between in recent years due to an uptick in terrorist violence.

To help struggling artists earn a livelihood and stimulate Yemen's cultural scene, the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa hosted an exhibition of Yemeni artwork in July. This was a rare large representational event at a post where U.S. government interests have suffered three terrorist attacks since March 2008. Under the canopy of a massive tent adjacent to the ambassador's residence, nearly 300 works by more than 20 local artists were displayed for sale.

Ambassador Stephen A. Seche also used this exhibition to raise funds for a worthy cause. Sponsors were enlisted from the local business community, and all proceeds went to Yemen Smile, a local nongovernmental organization that performs cleft-palate and other critical surgical procedures for needy Yemeni children. Even during a difficult time for the local economy, sponsors contributed \$37,000 to Yemen Smile, significantly increasing its ability to provide life-changing reconstructive surgery.

The exhibition was envisioned as the embassy's biggest representational event of the year, with a guest list of almost 500 individuals—the leading lights of the Yemeni government, private sector, foreign

diplomatic corps and nongovernmental organization community. Last-minute threat information forced the embassy to cancel the attendance of almost all outside guests, and the event was transformed into an internal exhibit for the embassy community. Despite this, many pieces of art were sold, and the participating artists and Yemen Smile look forward to collaborating with the embassy again in the future. At a post with a paucity of cultural programming, the event gave the embassy community an occasion to smile.



Embassy Public Affairs Specialist Amal al-Hakimi was one of the exhibit's many visitors.

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Debunking Common Myths about S/OCR

If an office can have a “corridor reputation,” then ours is legendary. The Office of Civil Rights has been attributed the ability to wield power over assignments, promotions, presidential appointments, awards and discipline with virtually no boundaries. Good employees reduced to sniveling has-beens. Years of excellent work cast asunder. And all of this happens because an angry, possibly poorly performing, employee files a grievance or an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint naming the manager, who after all is only trying to do his or her job as a Responding Management Official.

It just ain't true, people.

Let's take a look at two common misperceptions of the EEO system and compare them to reality.

Myth #1: S/OCR keeps track of individuals who are named as Responding Management Officials and prevents them from receiving promotions or accepting assignments of increasing responsibility once the EEO complaint moves forward.

Reality: S/OCR is only one of a number of offices asked to conduct “vetting”—that is, a review of employees who are being considered for promotions, awards or assignments to senior management positions, such as deputy chief of mission, to ensure that there is no truly derogatory information about that person that would embarrass the Secretary of State or the President if such person were to receive the benefit or assignment proposed. The trigger point is derogatory information: the mere fact that a manager has been named in an EEO complaint is of no consequence without supporting evidence that, in fact, the manager did something inappropriate.

Often, managers are named as a formality when they have little or no connection to the employee or problem situation. If S/OCR has derogatory information about someone who appears on a vetting list, then we report that information to the Director General so that she or her designee can decide if an assignment, promotion, award or other action should be held in abeyance. If during the course of an S/OCR investigation or sexual harassment inquiry it appears that disciplinary action may be warranted, we send the relevant documentation to the Bureau of Human Resources' Office of Employee Relations for that office to decide if it will propose discipline. Again, S/OCR does not make the decision.

Myth #2: As long as I avoid engaging in active performance or conduct management, my employees won't name me in a discrimination complaint.

Reality: Avoiding proactive performance and conduct management will not save you from an EEO complaint. For example, you have an average-to-mediocre-performing employee. You give him or her a glowing performance narrative, yet when the call for award nominations or Temporary Duty personnel goes out, you do not put this person in for consideration. Why not? Because, in spite of what you have said on paper, you know that the person deserves neither an award nor a professional developmental opportunity. So, in effect, you were less than candid and in the process undermined your own credibility in the performance evaluation. So, in an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission proceeding, how are you going to explain why an employee you rated highly was denied an opportunity? That you were willing to fudge the truth to suit your own convenience?

Anyone can file a complaint naming anyone for any reason. Period. The laws enforced by the EEOC intentionally require minimal initial information

and procedural compliance under the theory that, if someone is actually suffering from discrimination, there should be minimal bureaucratic obstacles to getting EEO professionals involved in attempting to resolve the situation. So avoiding the complaint itself is not the goal. The goal is to make sure a case is not lost or made more difficult to defend because the supervisor has failed to take reasonable, prudent and timely management actions to address performance and/or conduct problems.

And yes, we know most cases brought to us do not actually involve “discrimination.” So do yourself a favor: Engage in proactive management without fear that S/OCR will come after you. On the contrary, we can help. ■



John M. Robinson
John M. Robinson
Office of Civil Rights

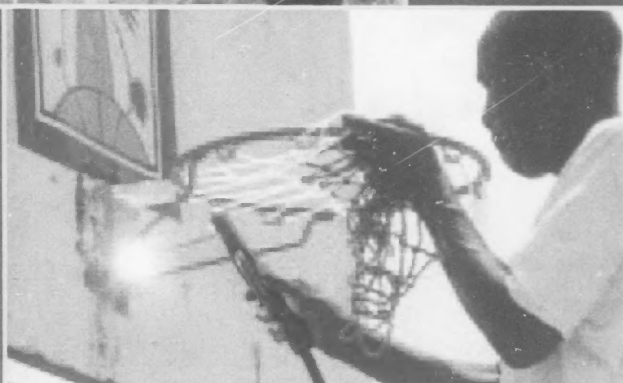


Left: The Dedama Community School garden gets a facelift from Embassy Lusaka volunteers. Below: A welder fixes the rim on the backboard at the basketball court in Jos.

Reaching Youths

Posts' service days aid host nations

By Priscilla Ann Hernandez, Parvez Khan and Abby Bylotas



President Obama's call for a National Day of Service and Remembrance to commemorate the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks led at least two posts in Africa this year to engage in local service activities.

In Zambia in September, more than 50 Americans and Zambians from the U.S. Embassy in Lusaka volunteered at Dedama Community School, which serves orphans and foster children. They repaired school desks, created a compost heap and vegetable garden, and painted educational murals on classroom walls.

In October, about 30 employees of the U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, travelled to the town of Jos, a three-hour ride over bumpy roads, to support the community's 18 Peace Clubs, which bring together Christian and Muslim youth. Founded in 2003 in response to religious violence, the clubs promote mutual understanding through sports.

Presidential Challenge

"In remembrance of the events of September 11, 2001, President Obama challenged us to reach out to our host countries in the spirit of goodwill and unity," said U.S. Ambassador to Zambia Donald E. Booth. "Our Zambian and American staff work hard every day to build and sustain good relationships with

Zambians, but this was a special opportunity for so many of us to come together to assist some underprivileged Zambian children."

With just six small classrooms, one built with an Ambassador's Special Self-Help Grant from the embassy, Dedama Community School was founded by Edna Choongo when she realized local orphans had no access to education. Choongo worked with the local Catholic archdiocese, supplemented teacher salaries with her pension and asked the embassy for help. The post responded with manpower, tools and diverse skills.

A small garden at the school helps provide what is the only meal of the day for many students, and several students take remaining scraps of food home to younger siblings. With expansion of the garden, that meager subsistence is supplemented with nutritional fare.

"Most of our students don't have school supplies to bring to school, but they do bring plates or bowls," Choongo said.

Aiding Nigeria

Meanwhile in Nigeria, which is divided nearly equally between Christians and Muslims, the embassy provided the volunteers going to Jos with repair and painting materials for a basketball court, and donated

supplies including new basketballs, soccer balls and volleyballs for the Peace Clubs. Jos was the site of violence in November 2008 that left hundreds of Muslims and Christians dead and many more injured.

On Oct. 17, the volunteers arrived in Jos to join local volunteers. In a coordinated effort, 20 Nigerian youths lifted a heavy fallen basketball stanchion using only one rope and two ladders and held it in place for half an hour while a welder fixed the broken pole.

Other volunteers taped and painted the lines and backboards of the basketball and volleyball courts or picked up trash on the grounds. Following a midday break, Nigerian youths challenged the mission personnel to a pick-up basketball game, which the Nigerians won handily.

Deputy Chief of Mission Dundas McCullough and a representative of the state's youth commission spoke, a ribbon-cutting was held and representatives of Muslim and Christian youth groups received the donated sports equipment. ■

Priscilla Ann Hernandez is a public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Lusaka. Parvez Khan is senior human resources officer and Abby Bylotas is an office management specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Abuja.

Tel Aviv Consular section and public diplomacy staff watch the YouTube clip they jointly produced. At rear from left are Ruben Harutunian, assistant information officer; Matty Stern, information assistant; and Pazit Vinakor, visa assistant. At desks from left are Deputy Consul General Wendy Vincent and Ziv Sokolov.



Partnering for Progress

CA works with other bureaus to get results // By Kathryn Fitrell

If consular officers have the best stories, some of the best ones involve the Bureau of Consular Affairs partnering with other bureaus to enhance the public face of the Department. With cases that range from routine to high-profile, CA understands the value of reaching out often and early to other bureaus.

Take, for instance, a recent case where CA partnered with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Linda McFadyen, a desk officer in CA's Office of Overseas Citizens Services, worked with EAP and the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang, North Korea, in the case of two American citizen journalists, Laura Ling and Euna Lee, who were detained for illegal entry

into North Korea earlier this year.

As Sweden is the United States' protecting power in North Korea, McFadyen began by contacting Swedish Ambassador Mats Foyer in Pyongyang, urging him to locate the two women and request a consular visit to them as soon as possible. Over the next five months, Ambassador Foyer visited the women four



Above: Players from the National Basketball Association and Iranian national basketball team hold a basketball clinic for youth in Utah as part of a SportsUnited exchange. Left: Linda McFadyen and Kurt Tong wait in an airplane hangar in Burbank, Calif., for the arrival of detained journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee.

times, persuaded the North Koreans to allow the women to call home four times and delivered medication, books, toiletries, letters and even Sudoku puzzles from family members.

EAP Connection

McFadyen also reached out to Kurt Tong, director of EAP's Office of Korean Affairs, and his team. OCS was

concerned about the health and well-being of the Americans, and EAP was focused on the diplomatic effort to obtain the journalists' release in the midst of difficult denuclearization negotiations and in the absence of formal diplomatic relations with North Korea. EAP and OCS pursued a quiet campaign to ensure protection for the women and communication with their families, while keeping sensitive discussions out of the news.

McFadyen and Tong took the lead on conducting frequent, joint conference calls with the detainees' families, collaborated closely on joint memos to the Secretary of State and arranged for the Secretary to meet with the families.

Early on August 5, Ling and Lee were reunited with their families, as the CA and EAP officers watched from the sidelines. When asked by the media if he was confident of his daughter's return, Doug Ling said, "Yes, I had a lot of faith in the State Department."

Another Partnership

A lasting partnership between CA and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs was formed in 2003, when then ECA Senior Advisor Nina Bishop met with Janice Jacobs, then CA's deputy assistant secretary for Visa Services. Bishop was starting the SportsUnited office and asked Jacobs for a dedicated CA point of contact for questions on visas and passports.

Getting foreign-born athletes to the United States for an ECA exchange or an Olympic qualifier can require extensive coordination. For instance, when Iranian basketball player Hamed Haddad caught the attention of the Memphis Grizzlies, after coming to the United States on a SportsUnited exchange, the team decided to sign him. As an Iranian, he qualified for a single-entry visa and required additional time for processing. The logistics could have been impossible, but CA's Visa Office and ECA coordinated with the U.S. Consulate in Dubai to make it work.

In another case, the Women's World Cup soccer tournament was abruptly moved to the United States because of the SARS outbreak in China in 2003. Fifteen teams, including the North Korean women's national soccer team, needed U.S. visas on short notice. With the Visa Office's assistance, Bishop directed the team to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and the team made the tournament.

"CA has been amazing," Bishop said. "This arrangement was pivotal to the success of our office."

Correction Made

At posts overseas, consular and public diplomacy sections are natural partners. A few months ago, the consular section in the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv became frustrated with the false information on YouTube about "legal" work opportunities for Israelis in the United States and asked the public diplomacy section for help with a corrective video.

Consular staff developed the content, and the public diplomacy section staff provided the technical expertise to produce and publicize the video. The resulting nine-minute video has drawn more than 2,550 hits on the embassy's YouTube channel, making it the post's most popular video. It's at <http://usembassy-israel.org.il/consular/niv/index.aspx>.

The partnership helped correct misinformation and let the public diplomacy section meet its outreach objectives by using Web 2.0 technologies to reach an under-represented group with the embassy.

"It's really important for us to experiment with social media and nontraditional tools to reach a younger audience," said Ruben Harutunian, an officer in a rotational position in both sections.

"This is another way to get our message out to those who don't have the 'in' with the embassy that others have," said Deputy Consul General Wendy Vincent.

Consular sections are making more use of social media, and they are not doing it alone. The consular section at the U.S. Embassy in London is developing its third video clip, after teaming up with its public diplomacy section and the Department of Homeland Security.

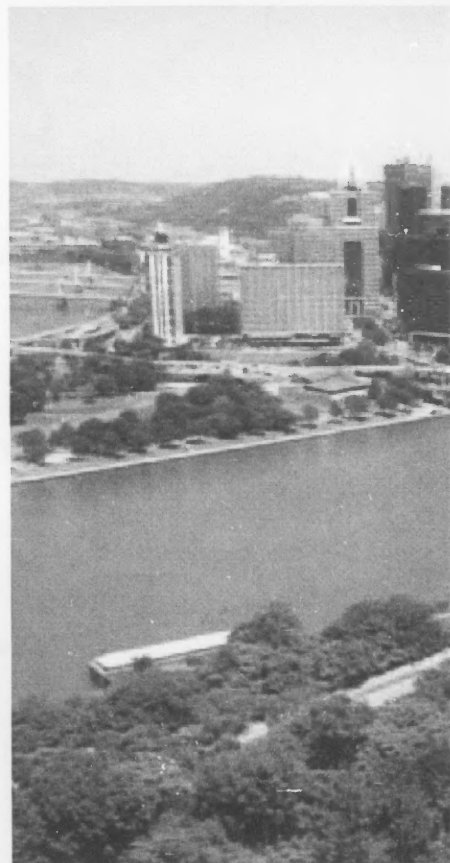
"Our collaborations have been so successful that we are now filming the first in our Scam Net series on Internet financial fraud," said Consul Liza Petrush.

One of CA's leadership tenets is to build great teams. As these examples illustrate, success is multiplied when the bureau partners with other bureaus. ■

The author is a special assistant in CA's Office of Policy Coordination and Public Affairs.

PUBLIC TALKS

Blog sheds light on G-20 Summit /// By Richard Boly



Clockwise from above: Pittsburgh welcomed the G-20 Summit with eager curiosity; Advance delegations to the conference receive a tour of Pittsburgh's Phipps Conservatory; At an August reception for G-20 advance delegations at the Heinz History Center were, from left, Department employees Matt McManus and Amanda Alcott, Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and employees Jordan Winkler, Jordan Helber and Alex Whittington; Department staff involved in the summit gather for a "family photo" at the event's end.

During the September summit meeting of the Group of 20 nations in Pittsburgh, a handful of Department of State officers engaged in frank and open online discussions about what goes on behind the scenes at an international summit. The G-20 Summit Blog, <http://blog.pittsburghsummit.gov>, gave a global audience and the American public a front-line peek at diplomats at work.

A hallmark of the Administration's approach to foreign policy is to increase transparency, broaden dialogue and promote citizen engagement. Using new media to showcase a global economic summit heightens public understanding of the negotiation process, informs those not in attendance and signals the public and Department employees that they are part of an open, collaborative government.

The offices of Public Affairs and eDiplomacy coordinated the outreach effort with the Bureau of Energy, Economic and Business Affairs; Department of Treasury; White House and the M family bureaus.



PHOTOGRAPHS: MATTHEW MCMANUS, (FAR LEFT), OFFICE OF eDIPLOMACY



Public Access

The blog also gave the public a window on diplomacy.

"We received positive responses to the human interest aspect of the blog posts," said Smith. "The public is interested in the so-called mundane jobs that engineer a summit, topics very different from what's covered by the press.

"Public engagement exceeded expectations, and proves that this sort of outreach can be a natural extension of the summit policy activity."

The Pittsburgh Summit blog received 64,175 page views over its eight-day run to Sept. 30 and still receives visitors.

The need for fresh blog entries—on such topics as summit events and profiles of the city or delegates—meant long hours.

"The blog was central to the summit's engagement with the public," recalled Public Affairs Specialist Luke Forgeron, of the Office of Public Affairs. "Many individuals were working long hours, but they took time to tell the summit's story."

Comments on the blog came from India, Indonesia, Sweden and other places—including Pittsburgh. "The blog offered Pennsylvanians a way to become involved with the summit taking place in their backyard," Forgeron said.

The blog also demystified summits, which some members of the public see as magnets for irksome demonstrations and public misbehavior.

"We want our efforts at repairing the global economy to be accessible to the public, rather than cloaked in mystery, and I think the blog helped us achieve that," said Danny Stoian of the Office of the Under Secretary for Management. "It was great meeting residents in Pittsburgh who were following every development at the summit."

Locals Fascinated

Residents of Pittsburgh, he said, wanted to know what was happening and found it fascinating to learn about protocol rules, how a press event is organized and what goes on behind the scenes.

A Pennsylvania resident posted a comment asking that the blog "fill a void in the regular media reporting regarding this important world gathering. Please make it meaty, filled with facts, out-of-the-box ideas for solutions and backstories about issues and players."

The Department also used other innovative technology at the summit. Since the White House, Secret Service and the Office of Public Affairs needed a simple method to securely process credential requests from more than 4,000 press and delegation members attending the G-20 summit, "the Bureau of Information Resource Management, under the direction of the Executive Secretariat, quickly developed an online application to validate and collect credential requests," said Penny Duncan of the bureau's Systems and Integration Office. "Then, Public Affairs vetted and formatted the requests online for submission to the Secret Service."

Duncan, chief of the Enterprise Collaboration Services Branch, attributed the Web application's success to the Department's Enterprise SharePoint Program and the collaboration of the Executive Secretariat, her bureau and the Foreign Press Center.

In the era of "Twitter diplomacy," there had to be a G-20 Twitter account, and it promoted the President's G-20 summit press conference, among other activities.

The blog showed the public how diplomacy relates to Hometown America. With a goal to demystify government and facilitate transparent online dialogue with citizens, future blogging efforts will be more proactively promoted. ■

The author is director of the Bureau of Information Resource Management's Office of eDiplomacy.



Morale Boosted

Background articles on planning and executing the summit were published by the Office of Protocol, Foreign Press Center, National Security Council, Treasury and White House. Staff working at the summit said reading the blog, being profiled in it or reading comments from the public raised morale during an otherwise stressful week.

"Blogging can be done by people who aren't professional bloggers," said Tiffany Smith, an eDiplomacy program analyst.

Gordon K. Duguid, director of the Foreign Press Center, found it difficult to write for the blog at the end of an 18-hour workday. "Blogging first thing in the morning may have been an option, but I didn't have much to contribute until the end of the day," he said.

Unified Vision

New HR Web site makes information more accessible // By Tracy Walraven



OLD



The Bureau of Human Resources will early next year have a new, consolidated HR Intranet Web site designed to be more user-friendly and convenient. The site will include online profiles of the bureau and its offices, and will combine HR Web and HR Online into a new, restructured and improved online resource.

The new site, named HR Web,

places HR services and content that employees are looking for into five tabbed categories: Benefits & Compensation; Employee Relations; Recruitment, Staffing, Employment; Retirement & Separation; and Workforce. Thus, the site makes it easier for employees to find information and meets the Office of Personnel Management's requirements for categorizing

such information.

"HR Self-Service initiatives and the redesign of HR Web and HR Online provide employees with one-stop access to online resources, streamline common HR processes and will provide more timely service," said HR Executive Director Ruben Torres. "HR never loses sight of our most important customer, the employee."

On the former HR Web site, employees would need significant institutional knowledge of HR and the Department to find the information they needed. For example, an employee seeking information on alternate work schedules would need to know this program is administered by HR's Employee Relations office and could be found under the HR/ER Web site.



Top: The staff of the office responsible for HR Web includes, from left, Patrick Hannon, Todd Fein, Toni Miller and Gaan Kimsawatde. **Bottom:** Other members of the office's staff include, from left, Steve Clark, Udayan Sinha, David Stahl, Ravi Devarakonda and Steve Sielinski.



One-click Access

On the new Web site, the topic "alternate work schedules" will now be one click away under the "workforce" category. This, and the site's expanded search functionality, saves time and frustration.

The new HR Web site requires no previous knowledge of the HR bureau; it represents a shift to a more user-focused way of providing access to information.

In focus groups, users commented on the revamped Web site.

"I really like the simplicity of the site design and the expanded

menu options," said one user. "It is easier to find what I'm looking for, and putting the Points of Contact and Other Information [categories] in the right-hand column breaks up the page and is good value added."

Another user said "I used to design Web sites for a living and I really appreciate sites that are not heavily graphics-loaded and easy to navigate."

Integrated Function

One of the interesting parts of this upgrade is its integration of HR Online into the site, requiring no additional action by employees to get to the

HR Self-Services and applications they need. This means employees' HR Online roles and accesses transfer with them. By clicking on the applications in the Employee Self-Service box, employees are automatically routed to what they need.

The site uses Microsoft Office SharePoint Technologies, an online collaboration tool that offers an array of advantages including personalization, intuitive navigation and easy content management. Now, users are no longer confronted with a laundry list of applications. Instead, they see only the areas they are authorized to access.

The new site features improved navigation, drop-down menus and other features that make HR content easy to find without requiring the user to shift through multiple layers of information.

Because the site uses Flash and SharePoint technologies, it offers such features as HR At A Glance, interactive organizational charts and access to *State Magazine's* front page.

Revision Eased

Additionally, content can be edited, uploaded or moved easily by HR Web contacts in each office. This results in accurate, up-to-date information being dispensed in a timely manner.

"We are extremely pleased to launch this new Web site," said Enterprise Systems Division Director Lisa Chichester. "We hope users will be able to leverage the latest technology solutions to find the information they desire faster and more effectively."

The bureau plans to create "collaboration portals" for bureau offices and will integrate into the planning processes automatic business intelligence reporting dashboards. Online dashboards are software-based information panels that often display simulated graphics and statistics of the data offices need most, much like the gauges and dials of an automobile dashboard.

These projects will help HR meet its goals of delivering streamlined communication and providing relevant information on demand. Questions or comments on HR Web and HR Online may be directed to HRHelpDesk@state.gov. ■

The author is an Internet information specialist in the Bureau of Human Resources.



Sound Ideas

Department uses social media to make improvements
/// By Kerry O'Connor, Molly Moran and Corey Martin

Two weeks after arriving in the Department, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reached out to employees with an urgent request: She needed to hear from us about better ideas, better methods and better ways of executing the very difficult tasks that confront us.

At a February Town Hall meeting, she said, "We want to continue the dialogue we're beginning today...we're creating a space on the Intranet Web site for you to generate your own ideas and engage in conversations with the whole Department."

That space is The Sounding Board, at <http://soundingboard.state.gov>. In addition to providing the Secretary a window into employee concerns, it serves another valuable purpose: It promotes communication between employees, alerts management to problems and concerns and gives management the opportunity to provide feedback or dispel myths.

Innovative Social Media

Many organizations use social media to spur dialogue and innovation. IBM has since 2001 been hosting massive online conversations called *Innovation Jams* to unite its dispersed employees and generate

ideas. Dell Computer's *IdeaStorm* and Starbucks' *My Starbucks Idea* allow customers to submit, discuss and endorse ideas, resulting in changes to product offerings.

These experiences using social media to harness dialogue and ideas are not limited to the private sector, as evidenced by the Citizen's Briefing Book, launched by the Presidential Transition Committee. The Transportation Security Administration's IdeaLab has resulted in changes such as family and business traveler lanes at airport security checkpoints. And even within the State Department, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security runs an online Bright Ideas Program to solicit ideas for improvements to technical security systems. The Operations Center's Idea Lab enables employees on different shifts to collaborate and reach consensus on new ideas and best practices.

Given these trends, The Sounding Board team saw this technology as a natural way to implement the Secretary's vision, and harness employees' collective wisdom. The team, with input from IBM, the White House and the Transportation Security Administration, developed The Sounding Board site using eDiplomacy's technology platform, which supports more than 50 Communities @ State sites.



Molly Moran, left, and Kerry O'Connor share a laugh with, from right, Corey Martin and Tiffany Smith, who are also members of The Sounding Board team.

How It Works

First, employees submit ideas about how to better achieve our foreign policy goals (with an emphasis on the “how,” not necessarily the “what” or the “why” of foreign policy). The ideas should discuss the impact or cost savings, resource requirements and any obstacles or challenges. Colleagues can then comment on the ideas, adding perspective, highlighting concerns and filling in details that may be missing.

Unlike an e-mail suggestion box in which only a few people see an idea, question or response, an online forum such as The Sounding Board opens the conversation to everyone who is interested. The interactive dialogue fosters a community of ideas where employees can share thoughts and best practices.

Since its launch in February, employees have logged more than 250,000 visits to the site and submitted more than 900 ideas, which have generated more than 3,200 follow-up comments. The response has been so overwhelming that The Sounding Board staff has been unable to keep up with submissions.

Ideas in Action

Some of the most popular ideas on The Sounding Board, in terms of page views and comments received, deal with human resources, information technology and greening issues. Popular ideas include upgrading the Department’s Internet browsers, training employees on military matters, facilitating biking to work and increasing environmentally friendly food packaging in the cafeterias.

These conversations are yielding results. The suggestion on upgrading Internet browsers was also discussed at a recent Secretary’s Town Hall meeting and is now being implemented by the Bureau of Information Resource Management. In response to an idea for

training on military matters, Sounding Board users collaboratively published a Diplopedia article highlighting existing military training opportunities.

The Bureau of Administration implemented a bike-share program to facilitate local trips to interagency meetings and will also build more showers for bicycle commuters. The Harry S Truman Building and the Foreign Service Institute cafeterias introduced “greenware” disposable food packaging and committed to reducing non-biodegradable waste.

Some ideas that did not receive as many page views or conversations also made a big impact. The Global Financial Center in Charleston, S.C., implemented two such ideas: collecting principal officers’ Official Representation Expenses by automatic payroll deduction, moving away from a cumbersome paper process; and giving employees the choice to eliminate paper copies of Citibank Travel Card statements.

The Sounding Board has been recognized as a model for employee outreach and was one of three innovative programs studied by the National Economic Council and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Other agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services, are now looking to The Sounding Board for good ideas as they launch their own initiatives.

The Sounding Board team—the Executive Secretariat, Office of Under Secretary for Management and IRM’s Office of eDiplomacy—stand ready to answer questions at SoundingBoard@state.gov.

Or why not post an idea on The Sounding Board itself? ■

Kerry O'Connor is The Sounding Board program manager in the Executive Secretariat, Molly Moran is senior new media adviser in the Office of eDiplomacy and Corey Martin is a technical advisor in the Information Resource Management unit of the Executive Secretariat.

Helping Hand

Unit in Amman supports Embassy Baghdad. // By Kathleen Domian

Every diplomat who goes to Iraq uses the services of the Iraq Support Unit in Amman, Jordan, for purposes as varied as obtaining medical clearances, flying into Baghdad or obtaining necessary items purchased in Amman.

Annually, the unit's travel section issues nearly 3,000 travel authorizations, reserves 7,000 hotel rooms, and arranges about 20 conferences. Obtaining all varieties of goods and services worldwide, its procurement section completed 650 orders in fiscal year 2009, 60 percent of them over the micro-threshold. The unit's financial management operation controls \$15 million worth of funds for Iraq operations, controls and maintains project logs valued at \$50 million and processes vouchers worth \$3.5 million. The unit's motor pool makes more than 5,500 trips annually and facilitates MilAir flights with approximately 60 passengers twice a week. It human resources unit processes about 300 personnel actions and has processed Computer Aided Job Applications for more than 60 positions.

The U.S. Embassy in Kuwait also hosts an Iraq Support Unit, which has 13 employees and facilitates congressional and other VIP delegations traveling through Kuwait to Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries within the region. It also coordinates with contractors, shippers and the U.S. military to support transshipment of essential equipment and supplies to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

The Iraq Support Unit in Amman was created in July 2004 to perform essential tasks for the new embassy in Baghdad that did not need to be physically performed in Iraq. Within four months, Department officers hired 11 local employees to staff the unit's finance, motor pool, health, procurement and human resource sections under the leadership of two American officers. These original 11 Locally Employed Staff were told their positions and unit would last only one or two years.

In early 2005, the unit moved to the U.S. Embassy in Amman and acquired a travel section. Today, the unit employs five American officers and 29 LE Staff, and supports LE Staff working in Iraq.

Supporting the largest American embassy in the world, the Iraq Support Unit in Amman must balance many demands and adapt to fast-developing requirements. In addition to frequent summer sandstorms that impede MilAir flights in and out of Baghdad, the unit's staff has handled such challenges as facilitating repatriation cases, collecting hundreds of thousands of dollars of outstanding funds from vendors and stopping attempts to smuggle materials into Iraq. They even medically supported an LE Staff member hit by a rocket in Baghdad.

The unit works with the Embassy Baghdad management team, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Agency for International Development, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, Global Financial Services and the Departments of Justice and Agriculture, among others.

With the Department seeking to reduce the number of staff on the ground in hazardous locations, the Amman unit provides a successful example of innovative offshoring, a nontraditional model of embassy support. The Amman support unit reduces the number of positions the Department needs to maintain in Baghdad, an unaccompanied danger-pay post.

"The Iraq Support Unit will continue to be an essential part of Embassy Baghdad's Management Section, providing administrative services that do not need to be performed in Baghdad," said Embassy Baghdad Management Counselor Ambassador Jeanine Jackson. "The



unit is among several Department regional service organizations that have reduced embassy footprints, saved money and improved services."

"At heart, we are a customer service operation," said Iraq Support Unit-Amman Director Matthew Smith. "Though we handle more travel volume than any post in the world, we aim to make each person in Iraq feel like we understand their hardships and really care about making their lives easier by giving them individual service attention—that is what the Iraq Support Unit demands of itself." ■

The author is an office management specialist at the U.S. Embassy in Amman.



Clockwise from left: ISU-Kuwait's staff includes, from left, Assistant Regional Security Officer Lorne Segerstrom, liaison Kristina Weiss and Management Officer Larry Carson; ISU-Amman human resources staff members Gilder Washington, left, and Lubna AbdulHadi share information; The ISU-Amman's travel assistants include, from left, Sandy Malouf, Wesam Al-Khatib and Nour Jbour; Meeting in the author's cubicle are, from left, Financial Specialist Aberer Salameh, the author and ISU Director Matthew Smith.





Patricia Manso, rule of law advisor to the Provisional Reconstruction Team in Baghdad, plays with a child at the Karrada Girls Detention Facility in Baghdad.

Rule of Law

Effort in Iraq becomes a multi-agency success story // By Robert Ogburn and Kyle Kelly

Helping to transform Iraq from a fragile state into a robust, stable society, the Office of the Rule of Law Coordinator at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad is planting the seeds for efficient courts, better prisons, disciplined police, informed lawyers, updated criminal and civil laws, honest officials and legal assistance for those who need it.

Under Ambassador Christopher R. Hill's authority and led by Department of Justice Assistant United States Attorney Douglas A. Allen, the office is the first at any U.S. embassy to formulate national rule of law strategy and coordinate the activities of hundreds of staff from the departments of Justice, Defense, Homeland Security and State.

Rule of law is the laws, institutions, behavior and expectations that keep an orderly country running and form the basis for business, governmental and civic relationships. As the cradle of civilization, Iraq's tradition in law dates to the first code of law, Hammurabi's Code of 4,000 years ago.

Triumvirate Objectives

During the huge multinational effort to

rebuild Iraq's infrastructure, then-U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad created the Rule of Law Section in 2007 to lead, liaise and link the mission's rule of law efforts. The Office of the Rule of Law Coordinator also helps fulfill the historic January 2009 U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement to support Iraq's political process, reinforce national reconciliation and strengthen the development of democracy and a prosperous economy.

To promote a transparent, independent, efficient and secure Iraqi judiciary, the departments of Defense and State have helped build, renovate and secure more than two dozen courthouses in Baghdad, Anbar, Erbil, Basra and other areas. A key antiterrorism court, the Central Criminal Court of Iraq, the Al-Karkh in Baghdad, now receives hundreds of daily visitors for civilian and criminal cases. Advisors from the Departments of State and Justice engage the nation's judicial leaders at the Higher Judicial Council. In addition, the DOJ Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training has resident legal advisors and contracted rule of law advisors at the Provincial Reconstruc-

tion Teams working with Iraqi counterparts throughout Iraq. With the U.S. military beginning its withdrawal, the Office of the Rule of Law Coordinator now seeks to improve the judicial process, including case processing, warrant tracking and court administration.

To improve Iraq's law enforcement capacity and capabilities, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' attaché in the Office of the Rule of Law Coordinator assisted the Iraqi government's investigation of the Aug. 19 blasts that killed more than 100 people and wounded more than 700 at the ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs. The Department of Justice attaché and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, in concert with the Embassy of the United Kingdom, are working with the Higher Judicial Council to host a criminal evidence conference at the INL-funded Iraq Judicial Development Institute. And, as the U.S. military draws down, the Departments of Defense and State plan to have the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs take over training for Iraqi police and security forces.



Above: Members of the Rule of Law Section include representatives from the offices of INL, ATF, FBI, DOJ, Judge Advocate and U.S. Marshals. **Left:** Rule of Law Coordinator Douglas Allen, left, meets with Iraqi Minister of Justice Dara Noor Al-Deen at the Rule of Law Community Forum. **Below:** Rule of Law office staff relax with the attorneys from the Baghdad Legal Defense Center.



Improving Corrections

To improve Iraq's detention and corrections practices and capacities, the Department of Defense is transferring U.S. detention centers and security detainees to the Iraqi government, and 40 DOJ International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program advisors are working to open more modern prisons. They are also training Iraqi Corrections Services officers in humane and modern prison management.

To enact civil justice reforms and fight corruption, the Office of the Rule of Law Coordinator is helping the Iraqi government's Real Estate Registry Office to catalog and digitize its housing and business real property records. In addition, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs is working with ICITAP trainers and the embassy's anticorruption coordina-

tor, Ambassador Joseph Stafford, to create programs to increase Iraq's anticorruption effort, and a team of judicial experts is working with senior Iraqi judges to recommend changes to the Iraqi criminal code.

Access to Justice

To enhance the legal profession, the rule of law advisors worked with law school deans in Kurdistan and the Iraqi Bar Association on a national bar exam, discussed career options with law students and worked with law schools to establish sister-school relationships and ensure that the next generation of Iraqi lawyers receives the best education.

Programs to promote equal access to justice include the U.S.-developed legal assistance center in Karbala, which raises women's awareness of their legal rights, and the Baghdad Legal Defense Center,

funded by the Ambassador's Targeted Development Fund.

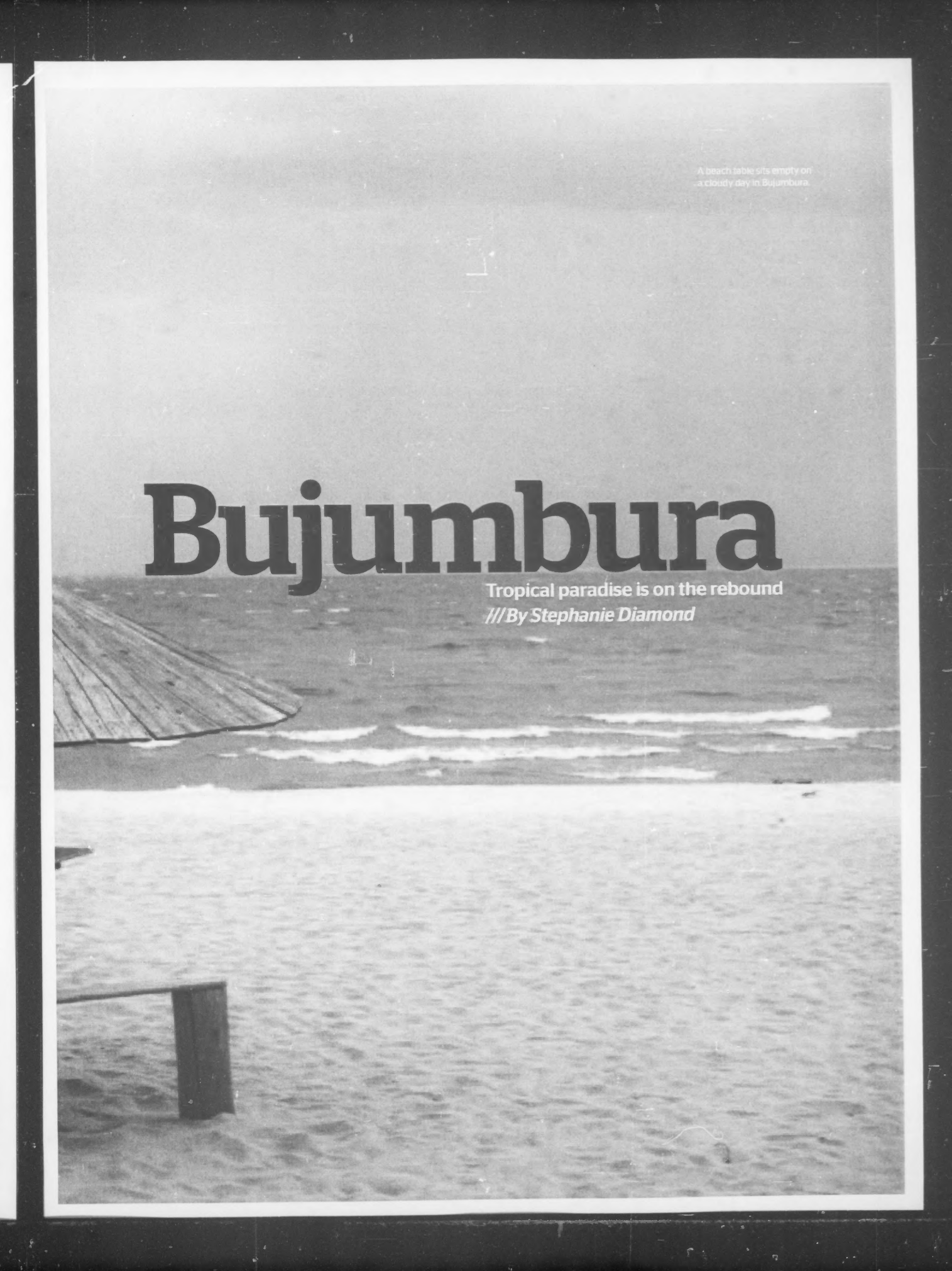
The Office of the Rule of Law Coordinator frequently interacts with rule of law programs of the international donor community and coordinates with the U.S. Agency for International Development, which is embarking on a major program next year to educate Iraqis on their legal rights and to promote broader access to the justice system through the wider provision of legal assistance and remedies.

Through these and other activities, the Office of the Rule of Law Coordinator is helping Iraq toward a successful democracy with adherence to the rule of law. ■

Robert Ogburn is the senior State Department advisor to the Rule of Law Coordinator's Office. Kyle Kelly is a rule of law analyst in that office.

* Post of the Month

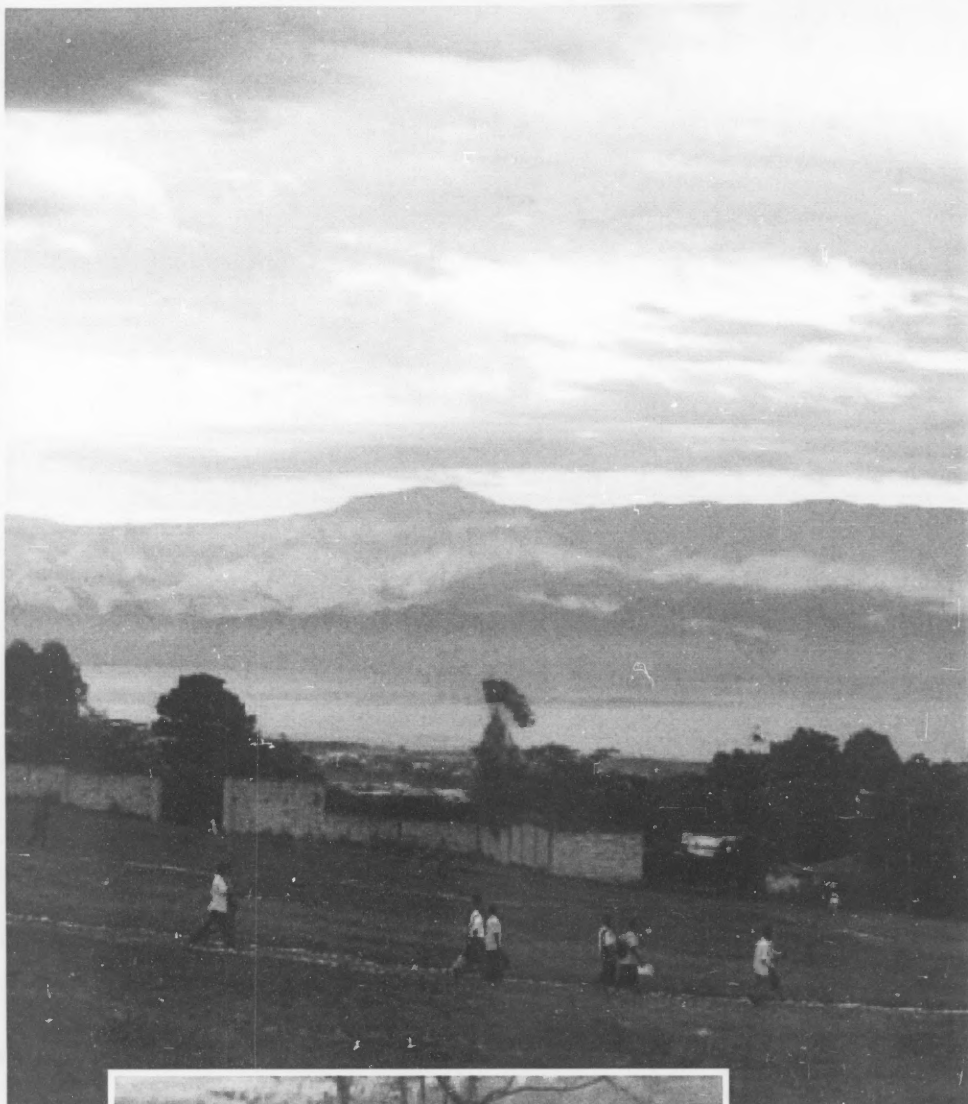




A beach table sits empty on
a cloudy day in Bujumbura.

Bujumbura

Tropical paradise is on the rebound
/// By *Stephanie Diamond*



On a clear morning, the residents of Bujumbura, Burundi, wake to a stunning view of the Congo mountains across Lake Tanganyika. The sunrise prompts people on foot to join cyclists, moto-taxis and large sport utility vehicles on the roads for the commute into the center of town.

And thus the city springs to life every day in a tropical paradise.

Burundi is a small, mountainous country in central Africa bordered by the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and vast Lake Tanganyika. It gained independence from Belgium in 1962. The United States established a consulate in Bujumbura in 1961, and it became an embassy after independence.

The U.S. Agency for International Development and the Defense Department are also represented at post, and there

is a small Marine Security Guard detachment. Because of the growth of the embassy community, a new embassy compound is in the works. It should be completed within the next three years and will feature environmentally friendly elements, such as solar panels and recycled water treatment.

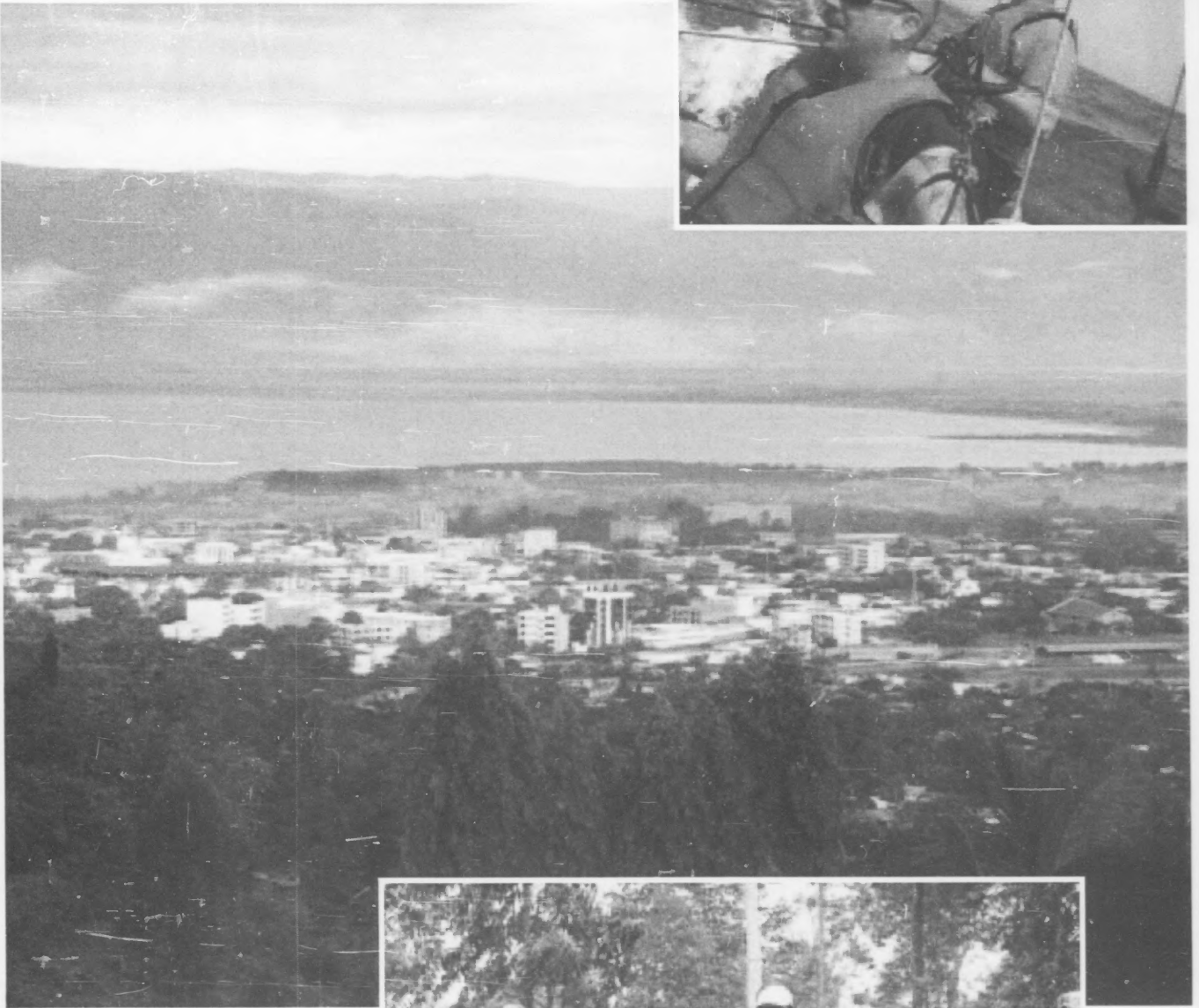
People at post work hard and play hard. Officers are kept busy with fluctuating security conditions, a fledgling economy trying to expand and a government struggling to provide for its citizens. Embassy morale is high, despite a weak national infrastructure that turns everyday tasks into challenges.

During their precious moments of downtime, embassy staffers play tennis or swim on the grounds of the chief of mission's residence, sail on Lake Tanganyika, play beach volleyball on the lake's sandy shore or jog up the mountain in search of the best views. At the end of the day, they relax with a fresh pineapple juice while watching the sunset. The embassy homes are large, with walled-in yards, and some have views of the mountains or lake. Home parties make up a large portion of the nightlife.

Burundi, an agricultural country, is one of the world's most densely populated nations and one of the poorest. Nearly every square mile of land is inhabited or cultivated, from



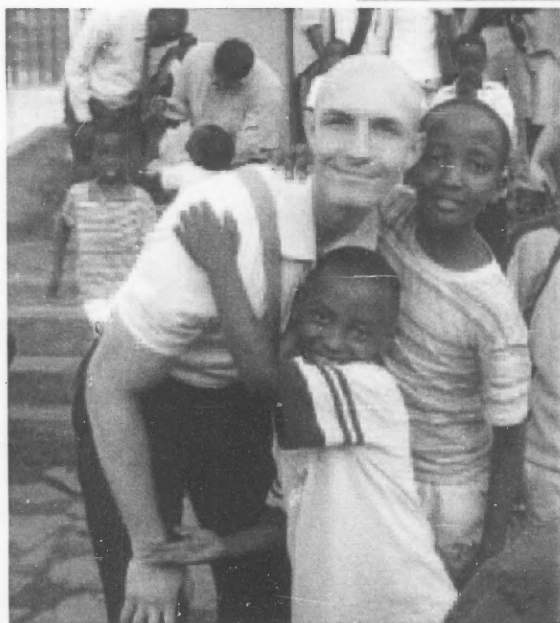
PHOTOGRAPHS (CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT): STEPHANIE DIAMOND, CHRIS BAKKEN, CHRIS BAKKEN, MIKE DIAMOND, AND MARGRETHE KLEBER



Clockwise from far left: Burundian drummers perform a traditional dance; Schoolchildren walk down the mountain toward Bujumbura; Bujumbura sits on the shore of Lake Tanganyika at the base of the Congo mountains; Operations Coordinator Tom Moriarty, left, and Regional Security Officer Chris Bakken sail on Lake Tanganyika on Bakken's catamaran; Ambassador Patricia Moller and Economic Specialist Jean Hakizimana (wearing suit) visit the coffee plantation in Vumbi Commune, Kirundo.



Above: Trees dot the sandy beach of Lake Tanganyika. **Right:** An embassy dog checks out some monkeys. The agile creatures often invade the grounds of embassy residences. **Below:** Marine Security Guard Raphael Rychik volunteers at a state-run orphanage.



the coffee and tea plantations in the mountains to the rice paddies in the river delta. The World Bank and USAID invest in agriculture and land-reform programs, economic policy reform and trade.

Burundi is working hard to heal from years of civil conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. In 1972, a Hutu rebellion and Tutsi military retaliation resulted in thousands of deaths. Tensions remained high for two decades.

Civil war broke out again in 1993 when the first democratically elected president of the country, Melchior Ndadaye, was assassinated. The next elected president, Cyprien Ntaryamira, died in 1994 in the same plane crash that killed Rwandan president Juvénal Habyarimana, sparking the genocide in Rwanda and exacerbating troubles in Burundi. Hundreds

of thousands of Burundians were killed in the mid-1990s, and it wasn't until 2006 that a ceasefire was signed by the leading rebel group. In May, the last of the rebel groups signed a peace treaty and became a legitimate political party.

Burundi faces health issues, such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and cholera. The Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program has granted funds for a clinic to treat members of the Burundian military and their families. USAID receives funding from the President's Malaria Initiative to prevent and treat the disease, and the embassy health unit provides mosquito nets to Locally Employed Staff and their families. Poor water supplies cause sporadic cholera outbreaks in Bujumbura; USAID works with Coca-Cola and the Water Development Alliance to preserve the clean water in Lake Tanganyika, among other projects.

Despite these challenges, Burundi and especially Bujumbura are growing. School attendance and literacy rates are rising, and although Kirundi and French are the official languages, schools are starting to offer English classes to prepare Burundians for integration into the East African Community. The Defense attaché office provides English-language training for the Burundian military, and embassy personnel volunteer with local students' English clubs. In 2008, the post launched an Educational Advisory Center to provide resources to Burundian students wishing to study in the United States.

In 2010, the first democratic presidential election in five years will be held—only the second since the end of the civil conflict. USAID is supporting election preparations, along with programs on good governance, civic participation and women in leadership. Funds have been granted to Burundi's Electoral Commission to ensure transparency and fairness in the election. U.S. resources also support voter education programs and access to unbiased media coverage.

Through the Department's Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program, several battalions of the Burundian military have received extensive training for peacekeeping in Somalia. The embassy's regional security office works closely with the Burundian National Police, facilitating training at academies throughout Africa and in the United States. Such training is important for shaping an organization that continues to absorb demobilized fighters.

The post works closely with the African Development Foundation to help expand local businesses and encourage the entrepreneurial spirit. Coffee is the main export, and American specialty coffee companies buy small lots of premium coffee from Burundi. USAID supports projects for plantations and coffee-washing stations.

Tropical fruits are a major crop. A former Foreign Service National nurse at the embassy, Muke Kigoma, received a grant from the African Development Fund and the Ambassador's Self-Help Fund to start a pineapple and passion fruit juice company. Several years later, the juices produced and bottled by her company are among the most popular drinks in Bujumbura, and nearly every restaurant and store carries them. The Ambassador's Self-Help Fund has also assisted a bakery that raises money for a malaria clinic.

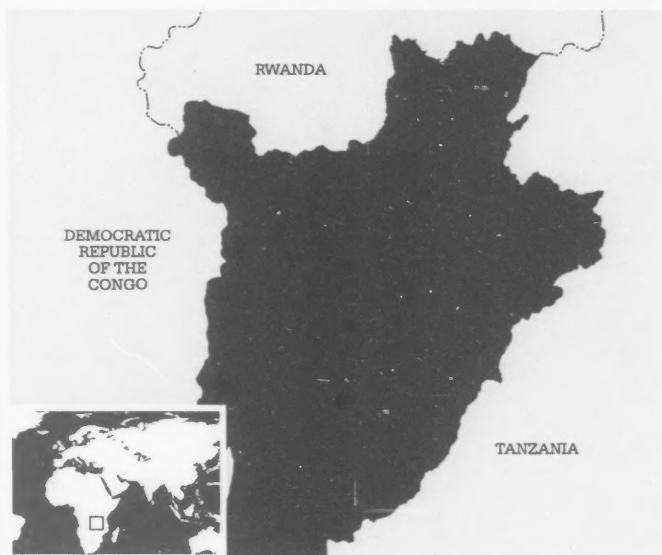
The natural beauty of Burundi is increasingly noticed by outsiders. Resorts and restaurants are popping up along Lake Tanganyika. Burundi is luring eco-tourists by establishing hiking trails in the ancient Kibira forest, one of the few undeveloped bits of land left in the country, where chimpanzees still run wild. Rusizi National Park has opened to tourists, giving visitors a chance to see hippos and crocodiles sunning themselves on the banks of the Rusizi River. The river delta is home to Gustave, the world's largest Nile crocodile. Hundreds of bird species live in Burundi and hundreds more migrate through each year, including species from as far as the U.S. east coast.

Other points of interest include the National Museum in Gitega, which received a grant in 2008 from the Ambassador's Cultural Preservation Fund to renovate its exhibit space; the Pierre de Livingstone et Stanley, a boulder where the pair carved their names when passing through in 1871; and the Source du Nil, one of the lesser-known places claiming to be the source of the Nile. Evidence of Burundi's rich cultural history is seen nearly every day in performances by traditional drummers.

At the end of the day in Bujumbura, people are back on the road for the evening commute, hoping to be home before the early sunset. Burundian or American, they may pause along a lakeshore road to watch a hippopotamus wallowing in the shallow water. It's a sight even the locals never tire of seeing. ■

The author is the community liaison office coordinator at the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura.

At a Glance >>> Burundi



Capital: Bujumbura

Government type: Republic

Area: 27,830 sq. km.

Comparative area: Slightly smaller than Maryland

Population: 8.69 million

Languages: Kirundi (official), French (official) and Swahili

Ethnic groups: Hutu (Bantu), Tutsi (Hamitic) and Twa (Pygmy)

GDP - per capita: \$138

Export commodities: Coffee, tea, sugar, cotton and hides

Export partners: Japan, Germany and Pakistan

Import commodities: Food, tobacco, chemicals and vehicles

Import partners: Saudi Arabia, Kenya and Belgium

Currency (code): Burundi francs (BIF)

Internet country code: .bi

Source: Country Background Notes





A Pakistani construction worker fabricates a rebar cage for a concrete column at the Jeddah site.

Safe Sites

OBO protects its construction workers worldwide
/// By Abigail Crim

Over the course of a year, the Department's construction contractors employ more than 35,000 foreign national workers to build new diplomatic facilities. On any particular day, 15,000 workers are working on more than 30 facilities. These workers represent a diverse mix of nationalities, cultures, languages, tribes and religious backgrounds and work alongside those with whom they have had long-standing cultural or religious animosities. However, despite these differences, they are working toward a common goal—building diplomatic platforms for the United States.

The Construction Safety Program of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations is responsible for understanding and respecting these ethnological differences.

Vincent Abramo, OBO's construction safety and occupational health manager, said the program was "created to implement the fundamental principle that all workers on a construction site deserve to be employed in a safe, healthy work environment and to accommodate their cultural differences and religious beliefs. The construction site must be rooted in the spirit of diplomacy."

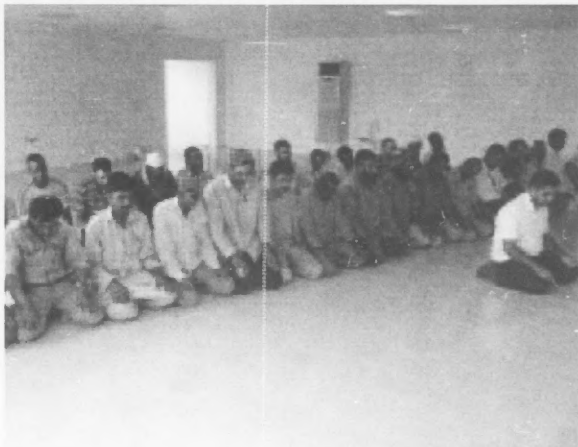
The Construction Safety Program requires contractors who employ the foreign nationals to provide the highest quality equipment, machinery and onsite training so that workers have the tools to operate as a cohesive unit. Each country has its own construction standards, but the contractors on OBO projects must meet stringent U.S. safety standards.

Toolbox Talks

These standards require contractors to hold "toolbox talks" with all construction workers regarding pressing safety issues and work schedules. The talks help reinforce workers' training, give workers an opportunity to participate in discussions and are supported and reinforced by on-site contractors and OBO safety program management. Reflecting the toolbox talks' success, OBO projects have lost-time and accident rates well below similar work performed by the U.S. construction industry. The average U.S. injury rate is 2.26 workers per 200,000 hours worked. OBO's injury rate is significantly lower at 1.5 workers per 200,000 hours worked.



Clockwise from upper left: At the new consulate compound construction site in Jeddah, Construction Supervisor James Frank takes a break with the Pakistani work-site superintendent; A form-work carpenter gets a beam ready for the pouring of concrete at the Jeddah work site; Workers at the Port-au-Prince, Haiti, site upgrade their skills in the electrical shop; Workers at the new consulate compound construction site in Jeddah pray in the on-site prayer area.



To implement a construction schedule, everyone on the job site must be able to communicate. The Construction Safety Program requires the contractors' supervisors to provide workers with direction in the workers' native languages. During peak construction at the new embassy compound project in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, just under 1,000 workers were on-site each day. The contractor's safety and health manager provided workers with direction in Haitian Creole and English. Although there were more than 5.3 million worker hours on the project in Haiti, there were no lost-time accidents.

Construction work involves hazardous materials and products. Therefore, the Construction Safety Program insists that contractors maintain a clean, sanitary and healthy environment at the construction site. Contractors must provide shower facilities for employees who may be exposed to irritating material, such as cement, lime or drywall

dust. Contractors also must provide culturally appropriate restroom facilities designed for the number of workers at a project site.

A contractor also must provide quality food having 1,200 calories per meal in a separate dining facility, and the meals must meet the workers' religious requirements.

Religious Sensitivity

More than 60 percent of foreign national construction workers are Muslims. At the construction site in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, ablution areas are made available for Muslim workers to purify themselves before prayer. Designated times and areas are also set aside for workers to pray.

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast during the day and eat only before sunrise and after sunset. Because of the extreme afternoon heat and humidity at the site, Muslim workers were allowed to work their shifts after the evening iftar meal.

Throughout a project, OBO's Construction Safety Program encourages construction workers to gain additional knowledge and skills. Contractors must help workers diversify their skills by making available on-site metal and wood fabrication shops where workers may cross-train and upgrade craft skills. The additional training sharpens their expertise, providing future vocational opportunities.

OBO's Construction Safety Program practices diplomacy every day on every construction site, showing concern for the safety and well-being of workers and respecting individuals' cultures. All over the world, foreign nationals build U.S. facilities as a team, setting aside cultural differences. Every OBO construction site is diplomacy in action.

Abigail Crim is a program analyst in the Office of Construction Management.

CMI Advantage



Contrary to the old line about communication being a two-way street, today's business communication bears more resemblance to a many-layered interchange of 10-lane superhighways with traffic moving simultaneously in dozens of different directions.

Known as CMI, the Collaborative Management Initiative is a by-the-field, for-the-field quality management system that takes advantage of this multi-dimensional communication. Initiated in 2007 by the executive directors of the Department's regional bureaus and coordinated by the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing and Innovation, CMI seeks to provide posts' management sections with the tools they need to give their customers cost-effective, consis-

tent service. The initiative has been developed collaboratively, thanks in part to such online tools as wikis—forums for revising posted material—and discussion boards, but also due to in-person collaboration at workshops and conferences.

The first step in developing CMI was to formulate common service standards for the 195 management services provided at posts around the world. "Uniform service standards" were developed in workshops in 2008. American and Locally Employed Staff representatives from large and small posts in all regions and from all management sub-sections worked together in week-long sessions to develop consensus service levels. In subsequent workshops,

equally diverse groups gathered in Washington, D.C., to build pictorial standard operating procedures and process maps. Building on this foundation in the winter of 2008–09, teams conducted follow-on sessions at management officer and budget conferences.

Collaborative Consensus Building

These actions were the beginning; building consensus for this slate of improvements among all overseas posts was far more daunting. The CMI "playbook" was placed on Diplopedia, the Department's wiki page, so there would be a central point to access the uniform service standards, process maps and standard operating procedures.

Visitors to Diplopedia can provide suggestions on how to improve the process maps and standard operating procedures in the playbook, thereby expanding collaboration to service providers throughout the world.

CMI was launched via a series of official messages beginning in September 2008. To help manage its implementation, each post was asked to form a quality team and identify a quality coordinator. A CMI SharePoint-based Web site was created to assist posts—<http://m.state.sbu/sites/pri/cmi/default.aspx>—and it features tools to encourage quality management through collaboration. The site includes a discussion board, videos and quick-start guides.

Quality initiative improves services in overseas posts // By Eric Stein



Opposite page: The staff of the office that produced the initiative includes, from left, Jane Kim, Eric Stein, Margot Shoemaker and Ted Lienhart. **Above:** Carrie Fox-Myers, left, of the Bureau of Information Resource Management often works with M/PRI's Cynthia Nelson of the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing and Innovation. **Left:** Dan Christenson is the office director.

One-Stop Shop

The eServices Web site can be used by posts' customers to request services electronically. This one-stop shop provides a familiar look and feel. Requests are electronically sent for action to the appropriate management section at post, such as motorpool or human resources. Throughout the process of submitting and completing a request, eServices automatically captures performance-related metrics to determine whether the uniform service standard for that particular service is being met.

After a service is completed, customers provide feedback on the quality of service through a survey. Unlike with requests made by phone or in person, posts now have the means of producing data on the volume of services being delivered at post—and they will know whether their customers are satisfied. Available on the OpenNet, eServices recently became accessible via the Internet for government employees with government e-mail addresses, such as “.gov” and “.mil” e-mail addresses, and for some with “.edu” addresses. In

the future, eServices will also be accessible for nongovernmental e-mail addresses, such as Gmail and Yahoo! accounts.

Using input from the field, M/PRI and the project management office for the Post Administrative Software Suite are working to improve eServices. They are reviewing change requests made through the Tracking Results and Change Requests (known as TRACR) application, which lets posts suggest enhancements to eServices.

The initiative's tools—the playbook, SharePoint site and

eServices—will help posts identify, share and implement best practices. With the majority of the Department's posts now generating performance data, posts' managers will soon be receiving feedback about the services they provide to their customers via reports and an interactive visualization tool known as a “data dashboard.” The data dashboard visually depicts the data generated by eServices in a series of graphs and tables, indicating a post's performance in providing service compared to the uniform service standards. In addition, the dashboard allows posts to create graphs identifying how often they meet the uniform service standards compared with other posts within the same bureau, with the average performance level for their regional bureau and with the global average. A sample dashboard is now available on the SharePoint site for posts to review.

Gaining Momentum

In employee workshops and online, there is growing enthusiasm for quality management and CMI. In September, LE Staff quality coordinators from more than 30 posts came to Washington for a week-long workshop. A month later, M/PRI invited 30 representatives of overseas posts to Washington to help determine the business requirements for the next generation of management software. Interest in the playbook is widespread; it contains two of the top five most-visited pages on Diplopedia. Collaboration, in person and online, is helping improve quality.

M/PRI stands ready to answer questions and receive feedback about the Collaborative Management Initiative. Questions and comments may also be directed to regional bureaus' executive offices or the discussion board on the SharePoint site. ■

The author is a management analyst in M/PRI.



RETIREMENT

Never Too Early

Retirement Office Says 'Plan Ahead' // By Cynthia Suen and Brandeis Mills

Retirement is a complex process involving such decisions as when and how to withdraw Thrift Savings Plan funds, or whether to continue Federal Employees Group Life Insurance and the Federal Employees Health Benefit program. It may also involve how to accommodate the rights of a former spouse or ensure your spouse will have a survivor annuity.

The Retirement Office in the Bureau of Human Resources believes it is never too early to think about retirement. Employees should start researching the issues five years before they intend to retire and check with HR/RET a year before their retirement date to familiarize themselves with the process.

HR/RET adjudicates Foreign Service retirements for all foreign affairs agencies, including those other than the Department of State. These programs cover nearly 27,000 current and former Foreign Service employees of the departments of State, Agriculture and Com-

merce; U.S. Agency for International Development; Peace Corps; and Broadcasting Board of Governors.

It also determines the amount of an employee's annuity based on laws and regulations, and on the employee's service history. HR/RET also administers the multibillion-dollar Foreign Service Retirement and Disability Fund, which funds the three Foreign Service pension systems—the Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System, its offset system and the Foreign Service Pension System.

HR/RET, along with the Office of Personnel Management, also administers retirement benefits for more than 13,000 State Department Civil Service employees covered by the Civil Service Retirement System and its offset system, and the Federal Employees Retirement System; OPM does the final adjudication of all Civil Service retirements.

HR/RET also keeps employees informed about the nuances of the retirement process by participating in the Career Transition Center's retirement workshops and seminars, and in orientations, making new hires aware of their retirement benefits so that they can make necessary adjustments from the outset. HR/RET has also developed a one-day course on Foreign Service retirements designed for management officers and human resources professionals.

"We are proud to provide innovative, open and friendly services to serve all the retirement needs of employees and retirees," said Office Director Patricia Nelson-Douvelis.



From left Sharone Floyd, Tere Flatt and James E. Johnson work on RET's Civil Service team.



Automated System

In the past year, HR launched the Employee Benefits Information System, an Intranet-based tool that helps Civil Service and Foreign Service employees learn about, plan and process their retirements. Foreign Service retirees from other agencies will continue to use the Internet-based RNet Web site (www.RNet.state.gov) for their requirements.

With the adoption of EBIS, employees have become more aware of the importance of ensuring that their work history records are accurate.

“The Department of State is the first federal agency to have a completely automated retirement system,” Nelson-Douvelis said, “and HR/RET staff are participating in an interagency group, looking to share our best practices.”

EBIS incorporates the features of RNet and the now-retired ePhone. EBIS has a library of information—including online seminars—on federal retirement plans, the FEHB, FEGLI, TSP and Social Security. It lets employees access real-time personal benefits statements and calculate estimates of their annuity. Employees can also use it to run “what if” scenarios and submit retirement applications electronically.

Employees should submit their retirement applications via EBIS’s “e-Retirement” module at least 90 days before their retirement date. A retirement counselor must thoroughly review the retiring employee’s Official Personnel File to determine if the employee meets the age and service requirements for retirement and if the employee has outstanding prior-service issues. If the employee is divorced, allocating retirement benefits can take additional time. Once a Foreign Service retirement case is adjudicated, HR/RET transmits the case to the Retirement Accounts Division in Charleston, S.C., which pays the annuities.

Resolving prior-service claims can take months, and HR/RET recommends all employees sort out their records early in their careers. Straightening out prior military and civilian service records to maintain correct service-history records can be tricky. Different rules apply, depending on one’s age, work history and retirement system. Once the service has been verified, HR/RET will change the employee’s service computation date for retirement, and employees will be able to run their own annuity calculations accurately on EBIS and make retirement decisions accordingly.

* Office of the Month



Opposite page: The RET staff, with Director Patricia Nelson-Douvelis, far right, expects retirements to return to historical levels in the near future. **Above:** Sharee Wilkins, left, and Ramona Payne work on one of RET's Foreign Service teams. **Left:** Jonell Jackson is a retirement benefits specialist in RET.

HR/RET remains the main point of contact for Foreign Service annuitants; OPM fills that role for Civil Service annuitants.

Leadership

HR/RET leadership includes Office Director Nelson-Douvelis, who leads 30 policy experts, retirement counselors and program assistants. William Jones is the supervisory HR specialist; he leads HR/RET's operations staff, which includes two Foreign Service teams that adjudicate retirements and authorize payments for all Foreign Service

personnel. The teams also provide post-retirement support services to Foreign Service annuitants and their families. The Civil Service and Prior Service team processes all Civil Service retirements as well as prior-service requests for Civil Service and Foreign Service employees.

HR/RET Senior Policy Advisor Jacqueline Long manages other policy experts to stay abreast of changes in the retirement systems, draft new guidelines and improve the functions of HR/RET. Her team also determines the eligibility of former spouses to benefits under the Foreign Service Act of 1980 and the Civil Service Spouse Equity Act of 1984, and adjudicates the most complex cases.

Nelson-Douvelis said the number of retirements processed in 2008 was slightly down, compared to 2007, and that this was likely due to the downturn of the economy.

"Our experience in 2009 so far shows yet another decline," she said. "But with the aging of the Foreign Service population, we expect retirements to return to historical levels in the near future."

The decrease in retirement cases has not reduced HR/RET's workload. With the adoption of EBIS, employees have become more aware of the importance of ensuring that their work history records are accurate. Thus, the number of requests to change prior-service records has increased significantly.

Annuitant Services

HR/RET is working with other elements of HR to move a number of annuitant services to the new HR Service Center in Charleston. Annuitants are encouraged to make the center their first point of contact regarding retirement inquiries. They should contact the center to receive guidance and assistance regarding actions ranging from changing their health benefits provider during FEHB Open Season Enrollment to getting advice on what to do in the event

of a change in marital circumstances (death of a spouse, marriage/remarriage, divorce, etc.).

The HR Service Center hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday to Friday. The telephone number is 1-866-300-7419 or 1-843-308-5539 (if calling from outside the United States). Its address is U.S. Department of State, HR Service Center, 1269 Holland Street, Charleston, SC 29405. The e-mail address is HRSC@state.gov. ■

Cynthia Suen is a human resources specialist and Brandeis Mills is a paralegal in HR/RET.



The day before her 2008 fundraising ride in Tucson, Harty energized herself for the ride.

Helping Hands

Former Department officials aid children's charities // By Ed Warner

When Maura Harty and Michael Klosson retired from the Department, they wanted to achieve their dreams of helping children. Ideally, they said they wanted to do this using the skills gained while at the Department, she as assistant secretary for Consular Affairs, he as deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Legislative Affairs.

In what is something of a dream come true for both officials—and perhaps for at-risk children worldwide—each now has a key role with a nonprofit children's charity. Harty is senior policy director at the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, putting her multinational negotiating experience to work on such projects as helping nations ban child pornography.

Klosson is the chief policy officer for the U.S. office of Save the Children, heading its

U.S. policy and advocacy work—including congressional relations. His final overseas posting with the Department had been as ambassador to Cyprus, and he said experience in a zone of potential conflict prepared him for his current job—many of the world's neediest children are in conflict areas—as did his role with Legislative Affairs.

Save the Children, on the Web at www.savethechildren.org, is an alliance of 28 nongovernmental organizations assisting children in poverty in 120 nations as diverse as Sudan and Bangladesh. Klosson likens his job to working with the General Assembly of the United Nations.

One Voice

"We want to speak with one voice to press governments to do more; for example, to

stop the needless deaths of almost 9 million children each year from diseases like pneumonia or diarrhea that rarely kill children in the developed world," he said. "These children can be saved by treatments that cost pennies."

In September, he headed the group's delegation to the Group of 20 conference in Pittsburgh. He said his activities at Save the Children "are the things I did on the other side of the street" while at the State Department.

Klosson said that, despite its breadth, Save the Children doesn't have the "bench strength" of the Department, where he could hand off an initiative to others for implementation. Many times now, he makes a decision and executes it himself, he said.

At the State Department, Harty organized CA's Office of Children's Issues, which among

* The Active Years

other tasks implemented the U.S. role in the Hague Convention on child abduction. For child abductions involving children brought into the United States, the new office needed help coordinating with U.S. law enforcement agencies, and it gained that help from the Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the U.S. group famous for helping solve child-kidnapping cases. That group's worldwide sister organization is the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, which fights child exploitation and abduction.

When Harty retired in April 2008, it was a natural to come to work for a group that had many of the same goals as she'd pursued at the Department, she said.

Department's Blessing

Harty finds her international efforts often carry the Department's blessing. For instance, in May she went to Japan at the Department's request to encourage that nation to adopt a law criminalizing child pornography. It's important for the United States to engage civil society, and sometimes that's most adroitly done through a nongovernmental group, she said.

However, at an international meeting on child abduction, she was asked to join the participating diplomats on stage and she declined, figuring it wasn't her place.

"But the diplomats wanted me there, insisting that it was a good example of collaboration between governments and nongovernmental organizations," she said.

Harty said she is constantly on the road, but she doesn't go anywhere without checking in with the U.S. embassy. Advised she would be in Brazil, for instance, the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia set up meetings for her with Brazilian law enforcement officials.

One reason U.S. embassies are so helpful to her, she joked, is that her cohorts from her A-100 introductory Foreign Service course are running embassies now.

Harty will be spending more time on the road as a result of her group's effort to enlist the world's top financial and online-services companies in a coalition to help law enforcement organizations stop the flow of money in the child porn trade. Supporters include PayPal and Microsoft, she said.

"There are no companies that don't want to help," she added.

Fundraiser

To relax, Harty likes bicycling—especially when it can help others. In November, she rode 109 miles in Tucson, Ariz., in a fundraiser for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. By mid-October, she had already raised more than \$31,000, most of it from friends and acquaintances in the Department.

Klosson, meanwhile, recalled the time when he was preparing to retire and the trepidation he felt as he considered leaving a career where

he'd spent his working life. He credited the Department's Career Transition Center with helping remove the blinders that he said kept him from envisioning a life outside the Foreign Service. To make the transition, he said, "I thought about what I liked doing best, so this [new work] is no surprise."

In fact, he said, "I'm having a blast and making a real difference for children in need." ■

The author is deputy editor of State Magazine.



Klosson prepares for a congressional briefing on the educational needs of children in war zones.

* Medical Report



More Than You Bargained for?

'Medical tourism' can be a bumpy ride // By Dr. Robert Burney

A bargain is something you have decided to buy for less than you expected to pay.

By that definition, getting health care overseas seems like a bargain. Prices for the same procedure may run 25 to 50 percent of prices in the United States. For very expensive procedures like open heart surgery, that's enough of a savings to pay for the plane ticket and still come out ahead. This bargain is not lost on U.S. insurance companies, some of which are experimenting with sending patients overseas for expensive procedures.

But price isn't the only factor for most people; they also consider quality and safety. The Institute of Medicine's landmark publication "To Err Is Human" highlighted shortcomings in the U.S. health care system, particularly in the realm of safety. By its estimate, 98,000 Americans die each year from medical errors in hospitals. A similar but more extensive study of hospitals in Canada yielded similar results, so the problem seems endemic in Western health care systems. A fair statement might be that the United States can provide the best health care in the world but doesn't always deliver on that promise. Similar studies have not been done in other countries, so the safety of overseas hospitals is unknown.

What does this mean for the patient considering care? Many overseas facilities have U.S. board-certified surgeons, but the systems they work in are vastly different from a comparable system in the United States. Hospitals and most procedure-oriented facilities in the United States are licensed by the state and accredited by one of several accrediting organizations, such as the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. U.S. facilities also exercise some oversight over surgeons and have mechanisms for addressing problems with patient care.

The goal of these safeguards is to produce consistently good results. Almost any hospital can produce good results now and then. The trick is to have mechanisms in place to ensure good results every time. And the closer you get to perfection, the harder the next increment of improvement is to achieve.

Overseas, safeguards vary greatly and are frequently weaker if they exist at all. The JCAHO's subsidiary, the Joint Com-

mission International, accredits hospitals overseas, but its standards are much less stringent than the JCAHO standards for U.S. hospitals. For State Department employees, regional medical officers evaluate local facilities and can provide guidance based on their observations.

Department employees aren't the only Americans seeking elective surgery overseas. There's a name for it—"medical tourism"—and a trade association (www.medicaltourismassociation.com). But difficulties may arise when obtaining health care outside the U.S. An American Medical Association position paper calls attention to the potential problems.

The cost factor prompts overseas facilities to court U.S. patients. Lasik surgery, for example, can cost from \$400 in Mexico to \$1,400 in Spain, compared with the estimated cost of \$2,400 in the United States. But what about the quality, and what do you do if something goes wrong? Here is a quote from the medical handbook at one overseas post where medical tourism is common:

"Many local medical facilities actively promote elective and cosmetic surgery."

This attracts many Americans. Although post-surgical infections and adverse health outcomes can occur anywhere surgery is performed, in the United States the government, as well as professional and accrediting organizations, rigorously oversee standards for licensing health care professionals and accrediting health care facilities. It is very difficult to obtain reliable information on the post-surgical infection rates and adverse outcomes for elective and cosmetic procedures performed in local hospitals. Those considering elective or cosmetic surgery are advised to discuss their plans with the Regional Medical Office and/or their personal physician in the United States.

The Office of Medical Services strongly recommends that anyone contemplating elective surgery overseas consult with their post's health unit. Some things can be done safely some places, but not everything and not everywhere. ■

The author is director of quality improvement in the Office of Medical Services.

Abounding Talent

Pianists, gospel singers highlight recent concerts // By John Bentel

The Foreign Affairs Recreation Association and the State of the Arts Cultural Series recently presented programs on Asian heritage and outstanding pianists, as well as an uplifting gospel concert and their 4th Annual Talent Show.

Anne Yang, of New Tang Dynasty TV, presented a program about traditional Chinese dance (shown at right) and fashion in conjunction with the Asian Community Service Center. The program featured fan and ribbon dances and a fashion show of clothing of the Chinese Han nationality, from ancient times to the mid-17th century.

The concert of the Fusion Arts Exchange in Music, 2009, was presented by FARA and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The exchange provides U.S. educational experiences to university-level students from Brazil, India, Ireland, Mali, South Africa and the United States.

The concert by the piano protégés, winners of the 2009 International Young Artists Piano Competition, featured Evan Hub, Julia Lu Tong Li, Zeya Chelsea Goo, Alisa Hwang, Kristina Hub and Fife Zhang. Their ages range from 7 years to 16 years.

Another concert featured college-level prize winners of the 2009 International Young Artists Piano Competition. They included Sangria Yoon (Korea) and Xing Chen (China) and played selections by Ludwig van Beethoven, Frederic Chopin, Samuel Barber and others.

The Gemini Piano Trio—Hsiu-Hui Wang on piano, Sheng-Tsung Wang on violin and Benjamin Myers on cello—played selections by Francis Poulenc, Franz Schubert and Astor Piazzolla with no one instrument overpowering the performance. A relaxed audience showered them with applause.

Maharold Peoples Jr., founder and director of the Tribe of Praise, presented a concert by a group of talented singers and musicians who performed original gospel music he composed.

The State of the Arts 4th Annual Talent Show once again played to a capacity crowd. Singer Barbara Pollard opened the festivities and was followed by vocalists Ben Perry and Cynthia Andrews. Back for his second appearance, Paul Hopper recited short humorous poems, including some of his own compositions. Classical singer Kyra Koh, accompanied on piano by Cuong Van, sang familiar opera arias, Bob Holden and the Lost Agency Ramblers performed folk music,



Dyrone Johnson and partner Caryl Traten Fisher later danced to the music of *I Will Survive* and Steve Black offered an entertaining interpretation of popular music. ■

The author is a computer specialist in the Executive Secretariat.

Upcoming Events

Performances are on Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m. in the Dean Acheson Auditorium (unless otherwise noted)

December 2
Matthew Odell,
piano

December 16
Holiday program with
Maharold Peoples Jr.
Gospel Choir

January 13
Maria Martinez,
Spanish cellist

**January 27
and
February 10**
TBA

February 24
Allan Harris in
"Cross That River"



U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia

Jonathan S. Addleton of Georgia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, is the new U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia. Previously, he served as development counselor at the U.S. Mission to the European Union in Brussels. He has been U.S. Agency for

International Development mission director in Pakistan, Cambodia and Mongolia. Earlier USAID postings include Jordan, Kazakhstan, South Africa and Yemen. Born in Pakistan, he is married and has three teenage children.



U.S. Representative to the Vienna Office of the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency

Glyn T. Davies of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to International

Organizations in Vienna and to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Previously, he was principal deputy assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Before that, he was deputy chief of mission in London and executive secretary of the National Security Council staff. Other assignments include Australia, Zaire and France.



U.S. Representative to the African Union

Michael A. Battle Sr. of Georgia, an academic leader and chaplain, is the new U.S. Representative to the African Union with the rank of Ambassador. Previously, he was president of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, which

trained leaders, teachers and pastors dedicated to serving the church and society. He held high-level positions at several universities, served for 20 years as a chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserve and was vice president of the American Committee on Africa. He is married and has three grown children.



U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania

Anne E. Dersé of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Lithuania. Previously, she was ambassador to Azerbaijan. Before that, she was director of Biodefense Policy at the Homeland

Security Council. Other postings include Baghdad, Brussels (U.S. Mission to the European Union and U.S. Embassy), the Philippines, Korea, Singapore and Trinidad and Tobago. She is married and has four children.



U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso

Gayleatha B. Brown of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso. Previously, she was ambassador to Benin. She served as consul general and U.S. deputy permanent

observer to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. Other postings include Pretoria, Harare, Dar es Salaam, Paris and Abidjan. Before joining the Department, she was a special assistant to the USAID assistant administrator for Africa and a legislative assistant in the U.S. House of Representatives.



U.S. Ambassador to Croatia

James B. Foley of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia. Previously, he was senior coordinator for Iraqi Refugee Issues. He served as deputy

commandant of the National War College, ambassador to Haiti, deputy permanent representative to the United Nations in Geneva and deputy spokesman of the Department. Other postings include Manila, Algiers and Brussels.



U.S. Ambassador to Romania

Mark H. Gitenstein of the District of Columbia, a scholar, attorney and congressional aide, is the new U.S. Ambassador to Romania. Previously, he was a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, specializing in national security and civil liberties. He was also a partner at the Washington office of multinational firm Mayer Brown LLP. He worked as a U.S. Senate staff member for 17 years, including as chief counsel for the Judiciary Committee. His great-grandparents emigrated from Romania to the United States. He is married and has three children.



U.S. Ambassador to China

Jon M. Huntsman Jr., former governor of Utah, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China. He was twice elected governor and also served as chairman of the Western Governors Association. He has served as deputy assistant secretary of Commerce, ambassador to Singapore and deputy U.S. Trade Representative. He negotiated dozens of trade agreements and guided the simultaneous accession of China and Taiwan into the World Trade Organization. He is a founding director of the Pacific Council on International Policy.



Assistant Secretary for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs

Kerri-Ann Jones of Maine, a consultant and government official, is the new Assistant Secretary for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. Previously, she was a consultant specializing in strategic planning and development of research and education portfolios. Before that, she was director of the National Science Foundation's Office of International Science and Engineering. She has also worked at the White House Office of Science and Technology, USAID and the National Institutes of Health.



U.S. Ambassador to Malta

Douglas W. Kmiec of California, a legal scholar and author, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Malta. Previously, he taught constitutional law at Pepperdine University School of Law. He has served on the faculty of Notre Dame Law School and as dean of Catholic University Law School. He was head of the Office of Legal Counsel under President Ronald Reagan. He has written widely on constitutional law, jurisprudence and the importance of inter-faith understanding to successful diplomacy. He is married and has five children.



U.S. Ambassador to Benin

James Knight of Alabama, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Benin. Previously, he was director of the Office of East African Affairs. He was team leader for the Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team based in Mosul, Iraq, and deputy chief of mission in Luanda and Praia. Other postings include Madagascar, the Gambia and Nigeria. He is married and has four children.



U.S. Ambassador to Uganda

Jerry P. Lanier of North Carolina, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Uganda. Previously, he was foreign policy advisor to the U.S. Africa Command based in Stuttgart, Germany. He served as director of the Office of Regional and Security Affairs in the Bureau of African Affairs. His postings include the Philippines, Kenya, Thailand, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Ghana.



U.S. Ambassador to Argentina

Vilma S. Martinez of California, a lawyer, is the new U.S. Ambassador to Argentina. Previously, she was a partner at Munger, Tolles & Olson, where she specialized in federal and state court commercial litigation and advising companies on enhancing equal employment opportunity policies. She

served as president and general counsel of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund and as a staff attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. She has two sons.



U.S. Ambassador to Guinea

Patricia N. Moller of Arkansas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Guinea. Previously, she was ambassador to Burundi. She served as deputy chief of mission in Tbilisi and Yerevan. Other postings include

Munich, Madras and Belgrade. She was Vietnam desk officer during bilateral negotiations to reestablish diplomatic relations.



U.S. Ambassador to Mexico

Carlos Pascual of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, is the new U.S. Ambassador to Mexico. Most recently, he was director of the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution. He served as coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization and before that as coordinator for U.S.

Assistance to Europe and Eurasia. He was ambassador to Ukraine and worked for USAID in Sudan, South Africa and Mozambique.



U.S. Ambassador to France and Monaco

Charles H. Rivkin of California, an executive in the entertainment industry, is the new U.S. Ambassador to France, to serve concurrently as Ambassador to Monaco. Previously, he was president and chief executive officer of Wildbrain, an

award-winning entertainment company. He was also president and CEO of the Jim Henson Company. He and his family since 1968 have presented the Rivkin Award honoring intellectual courage and constructive dissent in the Foreign Service.



U.S. Ambassador to Oman

Richard J. Schmierer of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. Previously he served as a deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and director of the Office of Iraq

Affairs. His Foreign Service postings have included Baghdad, Berlin, Riyadh, Bonn and Dhahran. He is married and has a daughter and two sons.



U.S. Ambassador to Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu

Teddy B. Taylor of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to Papua New Guinea, to serve concurrently as Ambassador to the

Solomon Islands and the Republic of Vanuatu. Previously, he was deputy assistant secretary and director of the Office of Employee Relations in the Bureau of Human Resources. His postings include Guatemala City, Havana, Budapest, Tegucigalpa and Panama.

* Obituaries



Valerie Vance Belcher, 57, a retired embassy nurse and daughter-in-law of former U.S. Ambassador Taylor Garrison "Toby" Belcher, died suddenly Sept. 22 in New York City. She worked as a nurse at U.S. embassies in Lisbon and Mexico City. She later worked as a school nurse and home-care nurse for terminally ill AIDS patients in New York City. She and her husband had recently retired to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.



Dorothea Schaller Bonavito, 87, a retired Foreign Service secretary, died Sept. 14 from stroke-related complications in San Francisco, Calif. She joined the Department in 1949 and her postings included Paris, Rome, Geneva, Bangkok, Islamabad, Mozambique and New Delhi. After retiring in 1984, she lived in Paris, working at the embassy travel office and volunteering for the American Aid Society. She returned to San Francisco in 2004.



a community college.

Madeleine Byron-Maguire, 82, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Oct. 8. A Paris war bride, she and her husband lived in France, Morocco and Chicago. She joined the Foreign Service in 1967, after her husband's death, and served in Monrovia, Conakry, Prague, Tunis, Nairobi and Yaoundé. Her second husband, Edward Maguire, was also a Foreign Service officer and preceded her in death. She retired to Oregon and taught French conversation at



Charles O. Hoffman, 78, a retired Foreign Service specialist, died July 23 in Danville, Pa. He served with the Army Security Agency during the Korean War and entered the Department in 1956. He was a regional communications electronics officer in Beirut, London, Bangkok and Bonn. After retiring in 1981, he returned to Danville and worked as a contractor for Department communications facilities worldwide.



Betty-Jane Jones, 85, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Aug. 10 in Washington, D.C. During her 40-year career, she served as a consular, economic/commercial and political officer in Venice, Berlin, Palermo, Calcutta and Jerusalem. She was also posted to the Royal College of Defence Studies in London. After retiring, she travelled to Spain, Australia, New Zealand, China and the Galapagos Islands.



John Brayton "Bray" Redecker, 76, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Oct. 8 in Washington, D.C., after a brief illness. Prior to entering the Foreign Service, he was a naval intelligence officer. He pioneered the use of game theory to illuminate foreign policy issues. His assignments included Berlin, Brussels (USNATO), Rabat, Madrid and Frankfurt. He retired in 1991. Subsequently, he served in Egypt and the Philippines as a development specialist and became an active reserve diplomatic courier.



Sterlyn Steele, 86, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Jan. 28 in Dana Point, Calif. After working as a Fulbright English teacher in Japan, he joined the U.S. Information Agency in 1960. His postings included Iran, India, Vietnam, Sudan, Ghana, Italy and Austria, where he directed the renowned Salzburg Seminar. After retiring in 1986, he settled in Dana Point, where he was active in the American Civil Liberties Union. He loved

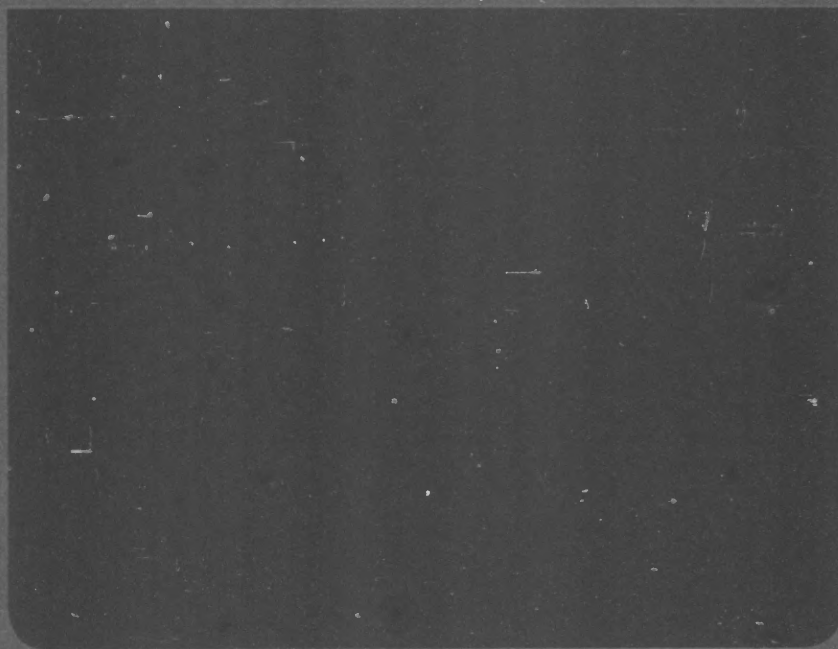
books and reading.



Chrystyna Zenovia Sulzynsky, 57, wife of Wolodymyr R. Sulzynsky, a retired attorney-adviser with the Office of the Legal Advisor, died July 5 in Washington, D.C., and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. She accompanied her husband to a posting in Ukraine, where she worked at the embassy in Kyiv. She was active in the Ukrainian-American community and worked in real estate.

Retirements

Foreign Service



Civil Service



Bits and Bytes: Solving the Peace Puzzle

Modern technology joins hands with tried and true diplomacy in the Department's continuing drive to piece together the elusive puzzle of Peace on Earth. In this issue, we explore some of the ways the Department uses those electronic tools to fulfill its mission.

Taking advantage of the Obama Administration's approach to foreign policy—*increase transparency, broaden dialogue and engage American citizens*—a small group of Department representatives from several bureaus used new media to showcase the early fall Group of 20 Summit, held in Pittsburgh. Coordinated by the offices of Public Diplomacy and eDiplomacy, the G-20 Blog held open and live online discussions from the international economic meeting.

The blog was active for eight days and gave a global audience and the American public a front-line glimpse at diplomats at work. During its run, the blog tallied more than 64,000 page views and comments from such diverse places as India, Sweden and Indonesia—and from Pittsburgh residents, who seemed especially fascinated with protocol and how to organize a press event.

Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton wasted no time in adapting New Age methods to the Department's needs; less than two weeks after her official arrival, she tapped into social media technology to expand dialogue between her office and the Department's workforce. Recognizing the collective value of employee knowledge and experience, she had her staff create The Sounding Board, an electronic meeting hall where anyone and everyone can offer ideas about new projects or better ways to complete old ones.



The Board not only gives the Secretary insights into employee concerns; it also encourages employees to communicate often with each other and allows management to quickly address rumors or myths and provide constructive feedback. The Sounding Board goes way beyond typical suggestion boxes because its interactive dialogue fosters a true community of ideas. How's it working? Since February, employees have visited the site more than 250,000 times and submitted more than 900 ideas, with more than 3,200 follow-up comments.

In the midst of Diplomacy 3.0, the Department's biggest hiring campaign in years, the Bureau of Human Resources has also embraced modern technology. HR/EX's Enterprise Systems Division will soon unveil a new HR Intranet Web site that will be friendlier to users and therefore more useful. The new site will also include HR Online, so employees can easily reach HR Self-Services and applications.

The next brave new world may be built with bits and bytes.

Last but never least, a final salute to our colleagues en route to their final posting: Valerie Vance Belcher; Dorothea Schaller Bonavito; Madeleine Byron-Maguire; Charles

O. Hoffman; Betty-Jane Jones; John Brayton "Bray" Redecker; Sterlyn Steele; and Chrystyna Zenovia Sulzynsky. ■

Rob Wiley

Rob Wiley
Editor-in-Chief

COMING IN JANUARY

>>>

>>>

>>> U.S. Mission to NATO Reaches Out—to Afghanistan.



STATE OF HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

AMBASSADOR BLUESTONE'S TALKING POINTS: HOLIDAY GIFT EDITION!

- HO HO HO TO YOU TOO!
- OF COURSE I'VE BEEN GOOD (FOR GOODNESS SAKE)
- IS THIS HURTING YOUR KNEE? (SHIFT POSITION SLIGHTLY)
- WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU MEAN BY "NAUGHTY"?



THE POLICY PAPER GIFT BASKET IS A SWEETLY SUBSTANTIVE TREAT!

THIS ONE IS ON REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE - HOW ROBUSTACULAR!

UH, IS THERE PEANUT BRITTLE?



COMMEMORATIVE ORNAMENTS HIGHLIGHTING DEPARTMENTS LESS-KNOWN OFFICES!



A REMINDER: "SECRET" SANTA REQUIRES APPROPRIATE CLEARANCE...

HEY, HEY - I'M SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED SANTA!



LANYARD OF THE MONTH CLUB: GIVE YOUR STATE I.D. BADGE FRESH NEW LOOKS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!



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