



# U.S.-Oman Trade Bulletin

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## U.S. Ambassador Highlights Sohar Educational and Commercial Sites



U.S. Ambassador Greta C. Holtz travelled to Sohar on April 1 to visit Omani educational and commercial sites. The U.S. Embassy delegation first visited the Port of Sohar, where they toured the state-of-the-art facilities and met with senior port leadership. The ambassador had the opportunity to learn more about the exciting development and growth of the Sohar Free Zone, and the tremendous potential for investment under the benefits offered by the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement. “I am extremely impressed by the wealth of economic and commercial opportunities the Port of Sohar has to offer,” said Ambassador Holtz. “We encourage many American companies to come to Oman and take advantage of the excellent business environment and strategic trade positioning of the Sultanate.”

In recognition of the importance of young professionals and students in the region, Ambassador Holtz also met with over 20 alumni of U.S. Embassy exchange programs. This meeting produced a fruitful discussion about “education for employment” and further training opportunities. After the alumni gathering, the U.S. Embassy delegation visited the Al Karama School to meet with local educators and students as part of the “Access English Microscholarship Program.” The Access program, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in cooperation with AMIDEAST and the Ministry of Education, is a unique two-year after-school English program for Omani students in grades 9 and 10. “I am extremely impressed by the excellence of students and teachers I have met in Sohar today,” said Ambassador Holtz. “We are delighted to partner with AMIDEAST and the Ministry of Education on this excellent program, which enhances English skills and intercultural understanding among youth.” The Ambassador’s visit to Sohar highlighted the Embassy’s Public Affairs-sponsored educational programs to enhance mutual understanding and friendship between the U.S. and the Sultanate of Oman.

## MABC Tax Seminar

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From R-L: Presenters Alfred Strolla, Tony Watson, Philip Bond, and Dhana Pillai

On April 17th, 2013, the Muscat American Business Council (MABC) organized an informative Tax Seminar at the Crowne Plaza in Muscat.

Mr. Alfred Strolla, from Deloitte, explained "Withholding Tax under the Income Tax Law." Mr. Tony Watson of AMJ Law Firm and Mr. Philip Bond of KPMG provided a general overview of Oman's tax law. Ms. Dhana Pillai of SNR Denton spoke about "Taxation of Oil & Gas Exploration and Production."



MABC members & Economic Commercial staff from the US Embassy





**“Direct Line” Webinar on Higher Education:** On April 27, the Embassy Public Affairs and Commercial Sections hosted a “Direct Line for U.S. Business” webinar. Ambassador Holtz hosted a great turnout of roughly 25 U.S. university representatives, and more than 60 virtual participants, to learn about opportunities in Oman’s higher education sector. Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) officials presented on Oman’s external scholarship requirements and procedures, as well as plans to partner with international institutions on an upcoming Science & Technology City and a new research-focused national university. Our [EducationUSA](#) advisor and Regional Educational Advising Coordinator also provided insights on the Omani educational system and student population. A question and answer session followed the presentation and many in the audience expressed interest in submitting proposals. The visiting U.S. universities, in town for Oman’s annual Global Higher Education Expo, GHEDEX, enjoyed the opportunity to network directly with MOHE decision-makers at an earlier breakfast, as well as a pre-webinar reception. After the webinar our guest presenters remarked that the event had been a helpful professional development opportunity, and suggested we follow up with similar events to provide Omani scholarship recipients with career guidance.



Photo L-R: Paul Simpson, Sr. Vice President; Rick t'Hart, Projects Director Vanderlande; Greta C. Holtz, U.S. Ambassador; Khamis al Ajmi, CEO, Dahra Logistics



### **L-3 Presents Cutting Edge Solutions to Omani Security Forces**

On May 22, 2013, L-3 Security Detection Systems (SDS), along with local partner Dahra Logistics, hosted a seminar at the ROP Traffic Safety Institute in Muscat for assembled officers from Oman's security forces, vital infrastructure stakeholders, and managers of the Sultanate's various ports of entry. The educational conference, entitled "Technology Solutions for Border Security", provided local attendees with an overview of the most cutting edge technologies currently available to detect radiation and explosives, combat smuggling and terrorism, and secure borders and critical transit facilities. Brian Gunn, U.S. Embassy Export Control and Border Security Advisor, opened the meeting by recounting the U.S. and Oman's long history of bilateral cooperation and highlighting the breadth of U.S.-Omani security cooperation; including anti-terrorism, anti-money laundering, and joint military training. W. Ralph Basham, founding director of Command Consulting Group and former director of both the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, then delivered the keynote address, offering best practices from his more than 30 years in federal law enforcement. Some key lessons learned in the aftermath of 9/11 included improving intelligence sharing to drive risk-based operations; building better partnerships with industry, e.g., the aviation sector; and leveraging cutting-edge technology such as sensors and cameras to improve networking among law enforcement. The first day of the conference concluded with a formal signing of a Letter of Intent for L-3's "Examiner" scanner to be used by contractor Vanderlande in the new Muscat International Airport baggage handling system. In addition, U.S. Ambassador Greta C. Holtz lauded L-3's plans to set up a regional training center in Oman, a multi-million dollar investment demonstrating L-3's long-term commitment. She emphasized that this skill and technology transfer represents the kind of "win-win" investments we seek to promote under the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement.

## Embassy's World IP Day Event Raises Profile of IPR Protection

Embassy Muscat jointly hosted with the Omani Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) and the Information Technology Authority (ITA), a conference on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Protection April 27-28, to mark global Intellectual Property Rights Day. The event, a first of its kind in Muscat, provided both local and American businesspeople the opportunity to learn how to protect their intellectual property in Oman, and network directly with enforcement officials. Visiting officials from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the U.S. Commerce Department's International Trade Administration shared best practices with the Omani and international audience. The event received wide media coverage, enhancing awareness of the negative impact of counterfeit goods on economic growth and innovation, as well as the importance of IPR enforcement.

**The event was opened by Ambassador Holtz and Oman's Undersecretary for Administrative, Financial, and Regional Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, H.E. Ahmed al-Maimani.**



**Microsoft's Regional Technology Officer, Cyril Voisin, spoke about the interconnection between IPR and cyber-security**

**GE’s “Partners in Progress”** On May 26, 2013, in support of Oman’s Vision 2020 to diversify the economy, develop the national human resource, and stimulate the private sector, GE, celebrating its nearly 40 heritage in the Sultanate, presented its diverse array of advanced technologies in the energy, power, water, aviation and healthcare sectors. Ambassador Holtz met with GE’s senior leadership, who discussed new technical solutions to boost operational efficiencies, promote sustainable growth, and build human capital. GE highlighted the importance of strong public-private partnerships in accelerating economic diversification and job creation.



Ambassador Holtz, Marc Daoud of GE, and Dr. Hatem Al Shanfari, Member of Central Bank Oman's Board of Governors



Above Photo R-L: Moderator Naser El Tibi from Al Arabiya News Channel; Dr. Hatem Al Shanfari; Mulham Al Jarf, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Oman Oil Company; and Nabil Habayeb, President and CEO, GE Middle East, North Africa, & Turkey, participate in a moderated forum discussing GE's support of Oman's Vision 2020 and how Oman's economy can benefit from foreign private investment.

**GIST TECHCONNECT “BOOTSTRAPPING YOUR VENTURE”**

On May 13, the Embassy’s Public Affairs and Economic Sections organized an interactive session for the Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST) program’s web-chat. The event featured the live broadcasting of a number of distinguished speakers and entrepreneurs from Washington D.C. for an Omani audience at the Modern College of Business and Science in Muscat. The event had an audience of roughly 60 students and teachers eager to learn about advancing tech start-up ventures through cost-efficient and network-oriented methods, as well as strategies for becoming a successful entrepreneur.



**U.S. Embassy Environment, Science, Technology & Health (ESTH) Officer Claire Ruffing opened the webinar.**

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### **Middle East Desalination Research Center (MEDRC)**



**Left Photo, L-R: Products & Systems Manager Karim Nasr (GE), Economic Officer Emily Shaffer, Political-Economic Officer Claire Ruffing, and MEDRC Director of Training Mr. Michel Morillon.**

**Center Photo: Welcome speech by MEDRC Center Director, Ambassador Ronald Mollinger with Muscat American Business Council (MABC) President Ali Daud looking on.**

**Right Photo, L-R: Parsons Vice President Rick Schoenthaler, Owner of RadiantSail Engineering Consultancy Nathan Heckman, US Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Paul Malik, and MABC Treasurer Prabal Gupta**

On June 11, 2013 the Middle East Desalination Research Center (MEDRC) hosted a group of American businessmen and U.S. Embassy personnel to present a detailed training plan for future Omani desalination experts. MEDRC is an international, intergovernmental organization that works towards the achievement of peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa by promoting and supporting the use of desalination to provide clean, fresh water for the people of this region. MEDRC has projects

all over the Middle East and North Africa, including Gaza. MEDRC hopes to serve as a center for excellence in continuing professional education for water operators, engineers, and managers, helping to boost Omanization of the sector.

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**Emily Shaffer visiting the Norris Production Systems booth at OTC.**

### **Commercial Officer Attends Offshore Technology Conference (OTC):**

The world's largest global oil and gas trade show, the OTC took place May 6-9 in Houston, bringing together over 104,000 public and private experts and 2,728 companies from 40 countries. The Embassy's Economic and Commercial officer lead a delegation of Omani buyers and facilitated matchmaking meetings at the show. Economic and Commercial Officer Emily Shaffer counseled several U.S. companies, encouraged them to consider doing business in Oman, and made introductions to potential Omani partners.



**Commercial Officer Emily Shaffer visits Baker Hughes drill bit manufacturing facility in Houston.**



**Emily Shaffer with Commercial colleagues from U.S. Embassies throughout the region at OTC Houston**

On April 21, Ambassador Holtz and U.S. Embassy Commercial and Consular staff welcomed Omani delegates traveling to the Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) to the embassy for a send-off. OTC is the largest petroleum industry trade show in the world, featuring both onshore and offshore equipment, services, and expert speakers. The U.S. Embassy-organized annual delegation offers excellent value helping Omani visitors navigate the thousands of exhibitors on the show floor, set up targeted matchmaking with U.S. suppliers, access high-level networking receptions, and offering logistical support such as visa facilitation and professional brochures.



**U.S. Ambassador Greta C. Holtz (Center), Economic and Commercial Officer Emily Shaffer (back row, left of the Ambassador), Consular Chief Andrea Finnegan (behind the Ambassador), Commercial Assistant Ida Mathew (far left) along with OTC delegates during the send-off celebration.**

#### **U.S.-OMAN TRADE BULLETIN**

### **Commercial Assistant Attends Beauty World Middle East:**

Commercial Assistant Ida Mathew attended Beauty World Middle East 2013 to meet and counsel U.S. exhibitors. Beauty World Middle East is the largest international trade fair for beauty and hair products, fragrances, and wellbeing in the Middle East. The event was held May 28-30, 2013 in Dubai, UAE, and attracted roughly 65 U.S. exhibitors showcasing their products.



**(L-R) Helen Simpson-Davis, Senior International Trade Specialist-D.C.; Martina "Tina" Echevarria, International Trade Specialist –FL; Ambassador Michael H. Corbin, U.S. Ambassador to UAE; Robert Bannerman, Principal Commercial Officer-UAE; Ida Mathew Commercial Assistant-Oman; Dilek Kelly, Commercial Assistant-UAE; Anissa Lahreche, Commercial Specialist-Qatar; and Ashok Ghosh Commercial Specialist-UAE at the U.S. Commercial Services booth.**

**U.S.-OMAN TRADE BULLETIN**



**Commercial Assistant Ida Mathew Attends Automechanika 2013 in Dubai, Meets and Counsels U.S. Exhibitors**

Automechanika Dubai is one of the most important events in the Middle East and Africa region for the Automobile sector. This year almost 60 U.S. exhibitors attended.

**(L-R): Ida Mathew, Commercial Assistant-Oman; Ashok Ghosh, Commercial Assistant Specialist- UAE; Faredon Hartoqa, Commercial Assistant Specialist -Jordan; and Michael Thompson, Director, Trade Fair Certification at the U.S. Commercial Services booth.**

## Coffee with U.S. Senators



On May 29, visiting U.S. senators met with American IT companies to hear about doing business in Oman and to discuss global cyber security developments. Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC), Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY), Sen. Dan Coats (R-IN) and Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS) met with local representatives from Cisco, Motorola, and NCR.

## Ambassador Hosts Luncheon Connecting American Business with MEDRC:

On Wednesday June 26, Ambassador Holtz hosted the Secretary General of Oman's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and head of the Executive Council of the Middle East Desalination Research Center (MEDRC), His Excellency Sayyid Badr; Ambassador Roland Mollinger, Director of MEDRC; and executives of prominent American companies at her residence. The American companies represented, including Bechtel, Oxy, Dover, PB, GlassPoint and Raytheon, are key stakeholders in the water, power, training, and technology sectors, and were interested in learning more about potential CSR and partnership opportunities with MEDRC.

Ambassador Mollinger described MEDRC's plans to serve as a regional Center of Excellence, offering internationally-certified continuing professional education for local water engineers, operators, and managers. H.E. Sayyid Badr and Ambassador Holtz look forward to hosting similar business roundtable events in the near future.



## Aquaculture Investment Workshop with Lockheed Martin



On May 29, 2013 Embassy officials attended a presentation by Lockheed Martin and Kampachi Farms on a new aquaculture investment in Oman, hosted by local consortium partner Al-Safwa Group. Al-Safwa head Warith al Kharusi introduced the new “Sahwa Saal” consortium during his key note address, identifying project goals and highlighting keys to success. Emily Shaffer, Economic & Commercial Officer, and Claire Ruffing, Environment, Science, Technology & Health (ESTH) Officer, engaged with other attendees from the investment, legal and fishery communities to help vet and strengthen the project proposal.

## ROP Customs Luncheon



On April 29 the Muscat American Business Council (MABC) organized a luncheon meeting between Royal Oman Police Customs representatives and U.S. importers. The American companies raised issues on clearing, engraving, and Free Trade Agreement compliance with ROP Customs officials Saif Al Mawali, Head of International Cooperation, and Khalifa Al-Syabi, Director of Customs Affairs. Visiting experts from the U.S. Department of Commerce and U.S. Customs & Border Protection, Kevin Reichelt and Christopher Robertson, added insights on U.S. government best practices for customs regulation and enforcement. Additionally, Mr. Said al Mashani, the Director General of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates, presented on opportunities for U.S. companies to invest in local industrial estates.

**For more photos**, please check out our [Commercial Corner](#) Facebook album.

## Upcoming U.S. Trade Shows:

[PRINT 2013](#) (Printing & Graphics)

Chicago, IL, United States

September 8-12, 2013

[www.graphexpo.com](http://www.graphexpo.com)

[RETECH 2013](#) (Renewable Energy)

Washington, DC, United States

September 9-11, 2013

[www.retech2013.com](http://www.retech2013.com)

[PACK EXPO Las Vegas 2013](#) (Manufacturing)

Las Vegas, NV, United States

September 23-25, 2013

[www.packexpo.com](http://www.packexpo.com)

WEFTEC 2013 (Water Technology)

Chicago, IL, United States

October 5-9, 2013

[www.weftec.org](http://www.weftec.org)

Louisiana Gulf Coast Oil Exposition (LAGCOE) 2013 (Petroleum)

Lafayette, LA, United States

October 22-24, 2013

[www.lagcoe.com](http://www.lagcoe.com)

[GridWeek 2013](#) (Power)

Washington, DC, United States

October 28-30, 2013

[www.gridweek.com](http://www.gridweek.com)

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