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U.S. Embassy Works with Local Community to Beautify Seattle Peace Park in Tashkent

To celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Sister City relationship between Seattle and Tashkent, the U.S. Embassy organized a clean-up of the Seattle Peace Park in Tashkent on March 29. To help clean the park, U.S. Embassy staff gathered, along with more than 60 others, including alumni of USG-exchange programs, regular visitors to the Embassy's Information Resource Center and students from a nearby lyceum.



Ambassador Richard Norland (far right) and his wife Mary Hartnett plant a tree in Seattle Peace Park in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

The Embassy donated two dozen shrubs, 20 tree saplings and over a hundred flowers to plant in the park,

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U.S. Will Take Relations with Muslim World to "Next Level"

INTERVIEW with Sada Cumber, new U.S. special envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference

said his job is to "share with Muslims my country's deep respect for Islam, its firm commitment to religious freedom."

March 18, 2008

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Almost 30 years to the day after Sada Cumber came to the United States from Karachi, Pakistan, he was selected to be the first-ever U.S. special envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the 57-member Islamic organization.



In his new job to reach out to Muslims across the world, Cumber hopes his multi-cultural background will help him talk to Muslims overseas about the freedom American Muslims enjoy in practicing their faith. He

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, right, introduces Sada Cumber, far left, as the new U.S. Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference during a reception for OIC member nations at the State Department in Washington, Monday, March 10, 2008 (© AP Images)

Embassy Works with Local Community to Beautify Seattle Peace Park



Clean-up is in full swing! (U.S. Embassy photo)

Continued from front page

while the Tashkent city mayor's office provided necessary equipment, including rakes, shovels, brooms, and a truck to remove debris. The Hokimyat had also repaired the fountain in the park, greatly improving the feel of the area.



The youngest volunteer contributes to the clean-up. (U.S. Embassy photo)

U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan Richard Norland and his wife Mary Hartnett also pitched in to beautify the park. Upon arriving at the park, they were greeted by local government and media representatives. Working with Deputy Hokim of Tashkent City Agzamjon Rizahev, the Ambassador planted several new trees himself. Members of the Marine Security Guard participated as well, throwing themselves into digging holes for new trees. All participants could see the results of their hard work immediately -- in less than two hours the group managed to plant all the trees and flowers, and the whole park was shining like new.



Ambassador Norland signs a guestbook at the cafe in the Seattle Peace Park. (U.S. Embassy photo)

This year promises to bring many joint activities between the residents of Tashkent and Seattle in many spheres, from education to cultural affairs. This event set a perfect tone for future activities to commemorate the anniversary. Everyone who gathered in the park left with energy for future activities. Uzbeks traditionally celebrate the beginning of spring as a time when nature is reborn, and it is an Uzbek tradition to get outside and clean up their communities each year. This was the first time a foreign Embassy participated in this "Ha-shar" or spring cleaning, and everyone, both the Uzbeks and Americans, appreciated the significance of this act to help beautify Tashkent.

The Seattle Peace Park is located in the center of Tashkent and covers a territory of 1.5 acres. The Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association along with Peace Corps Volunteers created the park in 1988, decorating it with a fountain, a mosaic map of the world, a striking sculpture by a Seattle-based artist, many decorative and unique tiles designed by Seattle citizens. The trees they planted have grown over the years and now shade half of the park.

Digital Technology Connects Uzbek Students to Seattle Central Community College



Ambassador Norland greets the guests at the DVC with Seattle Central Community College. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On April 23 the Educational Advising Center (EAC) at the U.S. Embassy held a Digital Video Conference (DVC) with Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) admissions officers to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Relationship. The DVC connected SCCC Dean of International Admissions Andrea Insley, her colleague Johan François, and President of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association Dan Peterson with more than 45 students, teachers and community members from Tashkent.

First, Ambassador Richard Norland welcomed everyone to the event. In his remarks, he explained that the relationship between Tashkent and Seattle dates back to 1961, commenting that, "After the mayor of Seattle visited Tashkent in 1972 on one of these exchanges, he decided that Seattle should be the first American city to acquire a sister city in the Soviet Union." He also highlighted other activities that the Embassy and the Sister City Association are organizing to commemorate this anniversary, including a reunion for all Seattle-Tashkent Alumni in Seattle, a showing of the American film "Sleepless in Seattle" at the Embassy this summer, and a visit by an official delegation from Seattle to Tashkent.

From Seattle, President of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association Dan Peterson then greeted the audience in the Uzbek manner, "Assalom Alaykum." The audience responded with applause. Mr. Peterson emphasized the importance of the people to people relationship that has developed between the citizens of Seattle and Tashkent and which can break many cultural barriers, misunderstandings, and myths between peoples.

Next Dean of International Education Programs Andrea Insley presented information about community colleges in gen-

eral and in particular about SCCC. Ms. Insley explained some advantages of community colleges. They offer two years of university education after which students can then transfer to a four-year university and also provide training and professional development opportunities. Additionally, community colleges respond to community education and training needs and can play vital role in workforce and economic development. She stated that there are 1,195 community colleges in the U.S., and about 50% of all American students begin their higher education at a community college. She explained that students choose community college for a variety of reasons, including lower tuition fees; smaller class sizes; professors

that focus on teaching, rather than researching; and transfer options. She also emphasized SCCC's advantages: great downtown location, award winning programs and services, diverse student population with 1,000 international students from more than 60 different countries, easy transfer to top universities with a transfer guarantee option, top notch facilities, and the availability of scholarships for prospective and current international students. In addition she pointed out that students can also finish High School

in the college's Fast Track program. Moreover she advised students that in order to pursue higher education in the U.S., they should research different schools, take the necessary exams, submit their applications to institutions for admissions and scholarship, receive the I-20 form and apply for an F-1 visa, make housing arrangements, and arrive at the school two weeks before classes begin.

After the presentation students asked numerous questions about student support, transfer options, student life, and the availability of scholarships. In response, Mr. François explained that there are a few ways that students can receive free assistance in writing English compositions. He also described the kinds of scholarships that the college offers for international students, including a few that are geared to new students and others that focus on students already studying at SCCC. The panelists explained that there are many opportunities for students to socialize with others and learn about American culture. They highlighted the fact that downtown Seattle is within easy walking distance of the college's campus, and there is a beautiful park across the street from the college where students can exercise or just relax.

To learn more about Seattle Central Community College, visit their website at <http://seattlecentral.edu/international/>. You can also learn more about the U.S. Embassy's Educational Advising Center at <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/advising>.



Embassy's Educational Adviser asks a question to the DVC panel in Seattle. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Kosovo Independence Significant in Muslim World, Envoy Says

Balkan diplomatic process is positive example for Palestinian state

Kosovo may be Europe's newest nation, but its significance extends well beyond the region, especially to the Muslim world.

"To be able to secure a Muslim-majority state inside the European whole is a terrific signal that the Muslim world and the non-Muslim world can live side by side in peace and cooperation, one with the other," says Ambassador Frank Wisner, U.S. special envoy for Kosovo.

As the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) met in Dakar, Senegal, Wisner told America.gov that its member nations should consider building on the group's statement of support following Kosovo's February 17 declaration of independence with political and economic support to help the new state move forward.

"I think the Kosovars are ready for that and want it," Wisner said. "That's a political signal that Kosovo has a home in a larger spiritual community."

Before joining EU and Russian representatives in talks to help Serbian and Kosovar leaders resolve Kosovo's final status, Wisner served as U.S. ambassador to OIC member Egypt, as well as ambassador to India, the Philippines and Zambia during a diplomatic career that spanned more than 30 years.

While the Muslim world faces numerous regional challenges, the Balkans share historical ties to the Middle East and should not be overlooked, Wisner said.

"I believe that for most of the Muslim world, it's very important that one looks at [Kosovo as] a matter of justice, what is right," Wisner said. "A people sought to practice its faith, the country is largely Muslim, inside a European context. To make certain that happens is in the interest of the entire world, notably in the Muslim world."

The U.N.-driven process for reaching an agreement on Kosovo's future was rooted in international legitimacy, Wisner said, and even after Kosovo's decision to declare independence, its leaders have committed to the plan developed by U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. Wisner strongly rejected critics' arguments that Kosovo



Kosovar youths pray at a Pristina mosque on the first day of Eid al-Adha. (© AP Images)

should be viewed as a "precedent" for redrawing the world map. Instead, he said, it should be viewed as an example of how the international community can come together for peace. He drew a connection between Kosovo and the prospects of a future Palestinian state, a goal strongly supported by the United States.

Kosovo, he said, is a "signal that the international community can make a difference, can settle sovereignty as a signal inside the region, about Palestine. We need to see ... many positive examples to support that quest for statehood."

Kosovo will need a great deal of help as it moves forward, Wisner said, and OIC member states should consider ways they could extend their political and economic support, such as participating in an international fund being formed by the European Community and World Bank aimed at rebuilding key infrastructure that will tie Kosovo to the Balkans, and the Balkans to Europe.

"It's a good investment in the future," Wisner said. "It's a profitable investment in terms of the eventual economic evolution of Southeastern Europe, and I hope a strong economic signal will accompany a political signal."



Muslim women perform afternoon prayers inside a mosque in Pristina. (© AP Images)

Bangladeshi American is First Muslim Chaplain in Marine Corps

Abuhena Saifulislam counsels troops from all backgrounds and faiths

A man who once was a student in the United States from Bangladesh has become the first Muslim chaplain in the U.S. Marine Corps, using his love for God and humanity to help U.S. military personnel of all faiths and backgrounds.

Abuhena Saifulislam, 45, joined the U.S. Navy in September 1992 after receiving a master's degree in business administration from the University of New Hampshire. He had come to the United States from Bangladesh as a student in 1989 and received residency rights through the U.S. government immigration lottery.

Working in the Navy in payroll and accounting, he became a U.S. citizen at the end of 1995 and then embarked on his quest to become a Muslim military chaplain.



Chaplain Abuhena M. Saifulislam speaks with President Bush at the White House in Washington, DC. (© AP Images)

“When I found out that they were looking for Muslim chaplains, I wanted to become one. I was already involved in religious activities inside the Pentagon [Defense Department headquarters], establishing Friday services and other such things,” the chaplain said.

In 1996, the Defense Department and the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences in Leesburg, Virginia, set up a program to train Muslim military chaplains, and Saifulislam enrolled as the first student in the program. He completed the rigorous coursework in two years, was inducted into the chaplain candidate program in 1998, and, the following year, received his chaplain's commission. The Navy assigned him to the Marines, a subdivision of the Navy, as the corps' first Muslim chaplain. He represents the United States as Muslim military chaplain abroad and at home, helping U.S. service people understand Islam and counseling individual soldiers, most of whom are not Muslim.

“Ninety-nine percent of the people who come to me for counseling are not Muslim,” he said. “We, as chaplains, support everybody. When it comes to personal relationships, marriage, drugs, alcohol, stress or financial problems, religion doesn't play a role. We provide support, grieving in death, anything,” he said.

When he counsels soldiers who are torn between their religious convictions, on the one hand, and going to war and possibly killing people, on the other, he said it does not matter whether they are Muslim.

“I counsel service members before they go to battle, and the majority of them are non-Muslims. I counsel equally, in the same fashion,” the chaplain said.

The U.S. intention in Iraq and Afghanistan is to rebuild those

countries, he tells service people. “If they are Muslim, I give them the perspective that they can be part of the rebuilding or they can help their comrades understand Muslim culture and Islam. I ask them, ‘Do you think that you can contribute?’ Then they make the decision,” he said.

He also teaches Muslims and non-Muslims to understand one another better. “It's a two-way process. One is to let one group know that although there are some extremist Muslims, who happen to be criminals in my opinion, that is not Islam. I'm a speaker at the National Defense University,” he said. “When I was assigned to the naval station at Norfolk, Virginia, I traveled all over the country to train service people -- mainly National Guard and Army who were deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan -- about religious sensitivity.”

The chaplain said that in his efforts to teach in the opposite direction, he responds to questions from Muslims about the actions of the U.S. military. “In the Muslim community, there are some groups that associate me with Abu Ghraib [the U.S. military prison in Iraq where U.S. troops abused and humiliated Iraqi prisoners]. I tell them that it is an isolated incident. I know how we train our troops. ... There are isolated incidents, but they are not policy,” he said.

The chaplain said the same applies to acts of discrimination against Muslims that take place within the U.S. military.

“There is prejudice as part of human nature, but it is not condoned or accepted. If it is known, we take action,” he said.

American Composer Demetrius Spaneas Brings American Music to Life



American musician Demetrius Spaneas speaks to the Chay Chay guests at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On February 29, the U.S. Embassy's weekly Chay Chat Conversation Club featured American musician Demetrius Spaneas. Mr. Spaneas, who plays the clarinet, flute, and saxophone, composes and performs both classical and contemporary music. He is also the founder and leader of the world music ensemble BALKANASIA, which combines music from the Balkans and Near East with jazz and rock, and he is the co-director of the Sapphire Ensemble, a New York-based chamber group. His trip to Uzbekistan was part of a 2007-08 season in which he is presenting concerts, lectures, and festivals as both a performer and composer throughout Europe and Asia. The support that the U.S. Embassy provided allowed Mr. Spaneas to make this trip to Uzbekistan to help educate young audiences, both specialists and the general public, about modern American music.

Approximately 90 high school and university students attended the Chay Chat featuring Mr. Spaneas and had the opportunity to hear him talk about the culture and music of America. During his presentation, he also performed musical pieces by George Gershwin, Molly Thompson, and Carol Alban. His lecture engaged the audience with interesting facts about American music and encouraged the students to ask a variety of questions. Audience members inquired about the difference between Jazz and Blues, Mr. Spaneas' inspirations as a composer, and about different instruments and types of music.

Mr. Spaneas also told the audience about his professional experience in the music world. The Chay Chat guests, who had just watched the movie *Ray* the week before to commemorate Black History Month, were particularly impressed to hear that Mr. Spaneas had played with Ray Charles. The students enjoyed learning how Mr. Spaneas forged his own path in life, which has allowed him to travel around the

world and introduce American music to many different audiences.

In addition to his Chay Chat presentation at the Embassy, Mr. Spaneas also performed at local theaters and taught some master classes at the conservatory while he was in Tashkent. He performed at the Ilkhom Theater's Omnibus Blackbox Music and Vision Festival in Tashkent. At the festival he performed solo to short American films, including *Not Waving, But Drowning* by Denise Broadhurst, *BAJALICA* by Natasha Bogojevich and Hurt McDermott, and *Native New Yorker* by William Susman and Steven Bilich. He also assumed the role of conductor and led the Omnibus Ensemble in a premiere performance of an orchestral version of *Elastic Stronghold*, which he himself wrote with Justin Heim.

You can read more about recent cultural events that the U.S. Embassy has sponsored at the Embassy's homepage <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/>



Demetrius Spaneas performs at the Chay Chay Club at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Visiting Regional English Language Officer Spreads Global English Across Uzbekistan

Regional English Language Officer (RELO) for Central Asia Andrea Schindler visited Uzbekistan in February to become better acquainted with English language education in Uzbekistan. Although Ms. Schindler lives and works in the U.S.



Andrea Schindler makes a presentation on "Vocabulary Activities for Young Learners" to teachers in Bukhara. (U.S. Embassy photo).

Embassy in Astana, Kazakhstan, she is responsible for consulting on English language activities in all five countries of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan. During her visit to Uzbekistan, she traveled to Tashkent, Bukhara and Samarkand, conducting workshops for English teachers at every stop. She also had the opportunity to meet with the administrations of several universities to discuss opportunities for future collaboration.

Ms. Schindler made all of her workshops exciting and interactive, urging teachers to assume the role of students for an hour and try many of the activities that they could later use in their classrooms. In Tashkent, Ms. Schindler conducted a workshop for approximately 25 teachers on "Developing Communicative Activities." Instead of just lecturing to the teachers, Ms. Schindler had them do the activities so they could experience how much more fun and effective such hands-on sessions are. In one task, teachers worked in pairs to overcome an information gap. In each pair, one teacher had to describe a picture that the RELO provided, while the other team member tried to draw the picture correctly, based only on his or her partner's verbal descriptions. In Bukhara, Ms. Schindler made a presentation on "Vocabulary Activities for Young Learners" to an audience of about 15 teachers. Her workshop had everyone in the room on their feet and laughing as English teachers in one activity competed against each other to answer questions correctly by hitting one of many pictures with a plastic rug beater. Although the workshop,

which Ms. Schindler adapted from an article she published in Forum magazine in 2006, offered ideas for teaching children and young students, the teachers learned that such activities can be enjoyable for students of all ages and English abilities. In Samarkand, Ms. Schindler held a workshop on "Public Speaking Strategies and Skills" for current and future English teachers. She encouraged the assembled teachers to never just read a speech or paper verbatim, but adapt it into a dynamic presentation, stressing that such a presentation will be much more interesting and understandable to the audience. At each workshop, the RELO and Cultural Affairs Officer Stephanie Fitzmaurice also distributed numerous publications, including several different issues of Forum magazine and the USA Map Facts in Brief.

In all of her encounters with teachers and students, Ms. Schindler conveyed a positive message. She encouraged students to continue their study of English, as it will open many doors for them in life. She also emphasized that distinctions between British English or American English are no longer important, because English truly has become a global language. Ms. Schindler pointed out that there are more people in the world today who speak



English teachers work in groups during a workshop ran by Andrea Schindler in Bukhara. (U.S. Embassy photo)

English as a second language than those that speak it as a native language. For this reason, she encouraged everyone to seize every available opportunity to practice speaking English with other non-native speakers. She emphasized that it is not necessary to study or practice speaking English with a native speaker in order to improve.

If you are an English teacher and wish to join the RELO network, please, send your contact information to SchindlerAD@state.gov



Washington State - The Evergreen State



If you look at a map, Washington State is located in the far northwest corner of the U.S., right next to the Pacific Ocean. Its neighbor to the north is Canada, to the east is Idaho and to the south is Oregon. This beautiful region is called the Pacific Northwest.

Washington is special as it is the only state named after a president - George Washington. Its nickname is the Ev-



A Washington state ferry passes the Space Needle and a view of the Cascade Mountains as it heads for its dock in Seattle. (© AP Images)

ergreen State, because of its lush forests. It also has miles of ocean beaches, snow-capped mountains, dry deserts and rocky river canyons. It is overflowing with wild places and fun stuff to do. You can climb up a volcano or hike into a rainforest. Watch a whale splash or a bald eagle soar. Touch a starfish or a salmon. Dig for clams or for fossils. Kayak up a river or ski down a mountain. Visit a ghost town or an old logging museum. Take in a Wild West rodeo or a Native American Powwow.

Every year thousands of visitors come to explore Washington. It is famous for apples, cherries, rain, Starbucks coffee, Boeing airplanes, Mount St. Helens, and Microsoft.

HISTORY

Washington's fascinating history begins with the Native Americans. For thousands of years before European explorers arrived, the land that is now Washington was home to about 70 tribes of Indians.

When the first explorers arrived, the Indians traded goods with them and showed them where to fish and find plants to eat and survive. While the newcomers learned how to survive, they unfortunately brought small pox and other diseases with them that killed thousands of Native Americans, sometimes up to 90% of the population of villages. Then large numbers of settlers arrived and changed the traditional Indian way of life forever.

Many cities, counties, towns, rivers, lakes and mountains in Washington still have their original Indian names. Seattle, the largest city, was named after Chief Sealth (pronounced See-elth). Today Washington is home to 29 Indian tribes with their own governments. The traditions of ancient days are kept alive in the stories, songs, dances, powwows, canoe races and art of today's Indian nations.

In the early 1800s many fur traders and trappers arrived, eager to make their fortune in furs or "soft gold." When beaver became scarce in the 1840s, some trappers became guides for settlers who came west.

As more people moved to the Northwest, the United States and Britain agreed to divide the land they had previously shared. The British moved their fur trading operations north into Canada. In 1848, the U.S. Congress created the Oregon Territory. It included all of present-day Washington, Oregon, Idaho and parts of Montana and Wyoming.

Starting with the first wagon in 1842, thousands of settlers followed the Oregon Trail west. Here most of the early pioneers settled south of the Columbia River, but some moved north and found their way to the Puget Sound area.

By 1853, Washington had enough people to form its own separate territory from the Oregon Territory. More settlers continued to pour in from the east. The thick forests and tall trees brought lumber-jacks. Sawmills sprung up around the



A pod of orcas swim off the coast of Washington. (© AP Images)

Puget Sound. Towns around the sawmills grew into cities. It was not until the 1880s that the population of Washington reached 125,000, a number considered large enough for statehood. On November 11, 1889, Washington became the 42nd state of the United States.

FAMOUS ATTRACTIONS

Boeing's 747/767 Assembly Plant (Everett) - the largest building by volume in the world; it covers 0.25 sq. km, and is 11 stories high; the railroad spur that delivers parts to the plant climbs 182.8 m in just over 4.8 km, and is the second steepest standard gauge railroad in the world.

Grand Coulee Dam (Northeastern Washington) - completed in 1941 this is one of the largest concrete structures in the world, containing nearly 9.1 million cubic meters of concrete; it is 152.4 m wide at the base, 1.3 km across the crest, stands 167.6 m above bedrock (as high as the Washington Monument); it's the country's largest hydroelectric producer and the world's third largest - generating 6,494,000 kilowatts in a single instant - more power than a million locomotives.

Olympic National Park - contains the largest wilderness area in the 48 contiguous states, plus the longest stretch of wilderness ocean beaches at 99.8 km.

ECONOMY

Washington's economy proves that diversification and resilience go hand in hand. Home to a large variety of companies, including such giants as Microsoft, Boeing, Immunex/AMGEN, Costco, Amazon.com, Nordstrom, Starbucks, Nintendo America and Weyerhaeuser, whose goods and services are in demand locally, nationally, and internationally, Washington's rate of job growth surpassed national measures by nearly a factor of three in 2007.

High technology industries and aerospace have grabbed the headlines, as well generated a noteworthy share of jobs and income. Agriculture and natural resource-related sectors may not generate the number of jobs they have historically, but with the help of newer technology they continue to generate significant income.

Boeing - The world's largest aircraft manufacturer, Boeing, was founded in Seattle. They built the first jet that took flight in the U.S. and started the first commercial jet airliner service in the U.S. in the 1950s. The Boeing plant is located in Everett, just north of Seattle. It is in the Guinness Book of World Records as the largest building in the world. It covers over 0.4 sq. km and is so large that it has its own fire department.

Microsoft - Bill Gates started writing computer programs when he was only 13 years old. In 1975, he and a friend, Paul Allen, started Microsoft, a company that makes software for computers and in 1985, Microsoft released its first version of Microsoft Windows. Today Microsoft is a world-wide leader in computer software, and is still based in Redmond (north-east of Seattle), Washington.

Starbucks - In 1971, Starbucks Coffee opened its first store in Seattle. Thirty-five years later, there are more than 6,500 Starbucks coffee shops around the world, including China. They are popular with students and young professionals. Starbucks' headquarters are still in Seattle and they are famous around the world for coffee and latte lingo.

Amazon.com - Seattle is also home to one of the world's largest and most popular online stores. Amazon.com was founded in 1994 by Jeff Bezos in his Seattle garage. It was one of the first internet stores. Amazon began as an online bookstore, but soon added music CDs, DVDs, electronics, appliances, and more. It now has separate websites in Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, France, China and Japan and is the "Earth's largest bookstore."

Farming - Washington is first in the nation when it comes to apples, pears, sweet cherries, red raspberries, and hops. They also have the sweetest onions, the famous Walla Walla onions. Did you know that Washington's apple orchards produce about 15 billion apples each year, more than any other state, and Washington apples can be purchased in Tashkent supermarkets?

Sources: <http://access.wa.gov>,
<http://www.experiencewa.com>,
<http://www.travel-in-wa.com>,
<http://www.census.gov>



U.S. Map, courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau.

Quick Facts

Abbreviation: WA

Capital City: Olympia

Governor: Christine Gregoire

Date of Statehood: November 11, 1889 (42nd)

Population: 6,395,798 (est. 2006, U.S. Census Bureau)

Land area: 172 446.58 sq. km, 20th largest

Origin of State's Name: Named after first American President George Washington

Largest Cities: Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, Bellevue, Everett

Major industries: Software development, aerospace, forestry, biotechnology, food processing and tourism

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The envoy's extensive business experience -- he has founded 11 technology companies and sits on boards of several economic development organizations -- will guide him in his new mission. He believes America can contribute greatly to economic development efforts in OIC nations.

Stressing that the United States is a country that "hopes to work more closely with Muslim countries on creating new understanding," Cumber said that both President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told him they view his appointment as "an opportunity to take our relationship with the Muslim world to the next level."

America.gov senior editor Mofid Deak spoke with Cumber recently on his appointment. Following is the transcript of that interview:

America.gov: First, congratulations, Mr. Cumber on this wonderful appointment, and I might add, a very challenging one as well. My first question is how would you define your mandate or your mission as the first-ever U.S. special envoy to the OIC?

Mr. Cumber: Thank you. My mandate, put simply, is to talk to Muslim communities around the world, to share with Muslims my country's deep respect for Islam, its firm commitment to religious freedom, and the President's determination to work with Muslim leaders to advance peace and prosperity for all peoples.

When President Bush appointed me in this job, he was signaling the next important step in our relations with the Muslim world. Recall that it has been 50 years since President Eisenhower laid the cornerstone of our Islamic center in Washington, and since that time the dialogue with American Muslims and Muslims around the world has been maturing.

Clearly, we want to continue working with the Muslim Umma (nation), expanding our contacts, strengthening our relationships. I took an important step in that regard during my first week as Envoy, when I traveled to OIC headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and met with the Secretary General and other Organization leaders. One thing that struck me was that, if you look at the goals of the OIC's 10-year program, you can see immediately that it reflects the Muslim Umma's values and Islam's values -- and that they are completely in sync with our values in America. When I was with the secretary-general of OIC, I told him, "I'm here to work. I have only one year in this position. I'm ready to work with you."

America.gov: What was your initial feeling about this appointment, considering that most people say that U.S. relations with the Muslim world are going through a rough patch, especially since September 11, 2001?

Cumber: I really don't see the rough patch that is being suggested by some. Where there are misunderstandings, we, as American Muslims, need to reach out to the Muslim Umma and tell them about life here in America. As a Muslim-Amer-

ican, I and my family have enjoyed all the joy and all the opportunities that America offers any of her citizens. And I believe that is true for the other 5 to 7 million Muslims who live in America today. I think the question is, how do we communicate the truth to the Muslim world, the truth about our freedom of expression, the way we freely practice our faith, live our lives, raise our families?

I was sharing this with the Secretary General of OIC, and I said, "The challenge within the Muslim nation is that we have 1.5 billion people, and yet the OIC member nations, 57 in all, represent only 5 percent of the world's GDP." So the larger challenge is how do we take care of our elderly, pay for education, grow our economies? America can bring a lot to these conversations.

America.gov: We'll come to that question, actually, later on in the interview. But people may be asking the question: Why does the U.S. even want to appoint a special envoy to the OIC now, in your view?

Cumber: Both President Bush and Secretary Rice informed me that they view this appointment as an opportunity to take our relationship with the Muslim world to the next level. We already do so much in terms of student exchange, economic development, educational development -- but we can and should look to expand this engagement and look for new opportunities.

America.gov: And what would you hope to accomplish in this new job at the end of tenure, which you just mentioned to me -- it's a one year tenure, basically?

Cumber: I'm glad you asked! With the timeline that I have, I have to be ready to work very, very hard -- and immediately. I have asked the OIC leadership to work with me, to identify their highest priorities that we can start working on now. I told them that I have one year, and that I believe in delivering, I believe in programs and timelines. In one year, if I'm able to work with OIC to put some programs together and build some lasting relationships, I think I will happily go back to Austin [Texas].

America.gov: What are some of your immediate messages to the Muslim world? You talk about the grassroots, basically, and taking the message to the 1.5 billion Muslims. What are your immediate messages to those people as a U.S. Muslim envoy?

Cumber: The immediate message to the Muslim world is very clear: The United States is a country that protects Muslim values, promotes respect for Muslim traditions, and hopes to work more closely with Muslim countries on creating new understanding and new relationships.

But the other message is for the Muslim world to look at America and see the values that America represents, and mesh those values with the Muslim values. I think we will all be surprised and impressed that those values are in most cases the same and at the same level.

America.gov: Some people in this country think that the

U.S. has three primary objectives in the Muslim world at this stage. One is to prevent the spread of extremism. Second, it needs to avoid creating the impression that it is actually fighting Islam, as opposed to extremism. And the third thing is to try to help the Muslim world address its own deeper economic, social and political challenges, which some say are feeding Islamic radicalism today. What do you think of that, with these objectives in mind?

Cumber: Well, I had a very interesting dialogue in Jeddah on this issue - presented to me as Islamophobia. My response to that was the fact that if you look at Islam or any other faith or culture or heritage there is always bigotry directed at it from somewhere. We need to keep our focus on how we address that bigotry, that intolerance, wherever it occurs.

America.gov: And again, a lot of people think that the discourse between the United States and the Muslim world in the past few years has been mired in too much negativity, that is kind of a cycle of charges and countercharges back and forth between the U.S. and the Muslim world. The U.S. would say, "Oh, you're not doing enough condemning terrorism and radicalism." And they shoot back saying that "you are applying double standards." Do you think your mission could help in trying to get out of this cycle of negative discourse and change it to a more cooperative tone, a more collaborative path?

Cumber: In my opinion we can either engage in rhetoric and not get to the next level, or we can open new channels for dialogue, for interaction, and for understanding. At the same time we really need to engage in substantial opportunities, not only dialogue.

America.gov: In light of that, what could American Muslims do, both as individuals and as groups and civil society organizations, to bridge these differences between the United States and the Muslim world.

Cumber: I am so impressed with the activities of Muslim Americans. I truly believe that the Muslim American community can offer a great model for Muslim and other faith communities around the world. When I travel the country, I see tremendous dialogue between communities, between faiths, people talking to one another, learning from one another, growing closer, not apart.

But to respond to your question, I believe that Muslim communities in the U.S. have done an excellent job since 9/11 of building new linkages to their communities, explaining their faith, and involving other Americans in the daily expressions of belief.

America.gov: One last question. How are you going to put your business background to work in this new mission? Prior to your appointment, your litany of business successes included founding 11 technology companies and, most recently, CACH Capital Management, a wealth management firm based in Austin, Texas. Your business expertise in global strategy and political insights make you a powerful corporate leader and advisor to numerous economic development boards. Are you going to use business as a tool to bridge some

Sada Cumber
Special Envoy, OIC

Term of Appointment:
03/03/2008 to present

Sada Cumber assumed his duties as Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on March 3, 2008. As Special Envoy, Mr. Cumber serves as U.S. representative to the OIC, seeking to promote mutual understanding and dialogue between the United States and Muslim communities around the world.



Prior to his appointment, Mr. Cumber was an entrepreneur and investor based in Austin, Texas. Mr. Cumber's business background is in senior management, marketing, and imaging technology. As an entrepreneur, Mr. Cumber has specialized in national and global network strategy, strategic marketing, business planning and institution building. He has founded 11 companies in technology-based industries, including Texas Global, an international strategic advising firm, and CACH Capital Management, an investment advisory and wealth management firm.

Mr. Cumber has been active in the public sphere, serving on the boards of various Texas-based and international organizations, including the Board of Directors of the Texas Economic Development Board (a \$300 million fund), the Texas Emerging Technology Fund (a \$200 million fund), the 15th World Congress on Information Technology, the Texas Business Council, and the Governor's Task Force on Higher Education.

Mr. Cumber is committed to using his multicultural background and extensive business, social, and political skills to promote cooperation across cultures, to support international economic development and help advance meaningful dialogue among the world's religious communities.

Mr. Cumber was born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1951. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Commerce and a Master's Degree in History, both from the University of Karachi. Mr. Cumber came to the U.S. in 1978 and has been an American citizen since 1986.

of these differences between the U.S. and the Muslim world?

Cumber: Absolutely. As you suggest, my background is in building assets. When you build assets, you create wealth, jobs, and opportunity. This is a chance for us to think outside the box, and look for new avenues, new possibilities. America is committed to this goal. I am personally committed, as is the President. I look forward to building a new partnership with the OIC and the member states, many of which I hope to visit in the coming months.

America.gov: Mr. Cumber, thank you very much. It's a pleasure.

Cumber: Thank you. Thank you for your time and opportunity.

Films Offer Entertaining Glimpse into American Culture and History



Guests raise hands to answer a question during a pre-movie quiz at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Once a month, the Embassy's English Language Chay Chat Conversation Club meets at 3:00 pm on Friday to watch an American movie. Recent movies have included *Philadelphia*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *A Beautiful Mind*. Not only do Chay Chat participants get to watch the movie and practice their English comprehension skills, but they also get to learn more about the subject or issue that the movie highlights. Before showing each film, members of the Embassy staff hold a small contest. They ask the audience questions that relate to the topic of the movie, and the audience member that answers each question correctly wins an English language book.

At the November showing of *Philadelphia*, which commemorated World AIDS Day, audience members learned about the new group of drugs that can effectively treat HIV and AIDS, ways that HIV can be transmitted and how to prevent themselves from becoming infected, and also how HIV or AIDS can be diagnosed. When it was released in 1993, *Philadelphia* was a groundbreaking film that changed many people's perceptions about HIV/AIDS. It tells the story of a gay lawyer, played by Tom Hanks, who was fired by his conservative law firm after they learned he had AIDS. After being fired, he sues the law firm with the help of a homophobic attorney, played by Denzel Washington. Through the course of their legal battle, his attorney comes to sympathize with Beckett and to understand that he is no different from anyone else. By the end of this mov-

ing film, Beckett's attorney sheds his homophobia and helps Beckett win the case against his former employers before he succumbs to AIDS.

In March, to commemorate International Women's Day and Women's History Month, the audience watched the film *Iron-Jawed Angels*, which recounts a key chapter in U.S. history: the struggle of suffragists to pass the 19th Amendment. The film tells the true story of two defiant women, Alice Paul (Hilary Swank) and Lucy Burns (Frances O'Connor), who broke from the mainstream women's rights movement and dared to push the boundaries of political protest to secure women's voting rights in the 1920s. They also battled public opinion as they dared to criticize President Woodrow Wilson during a time of war. Many audience members commented that although they had read about these events in American history textbooks, seeing them depicted on the movie screen made the events and the women who fought to win these rights seem much more real and significant. Through the quiz that preceded the movie, audience members also learned about other famous American women and their contributions to society, including such women as Eleanor Roosevelt and Oprah Winfrey.

In June, the Embassy will show a modern American classic, *Sleepless in Seattle*, starring Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks. This film is part of a year-long series of events to honor the 35th anniversary of Sister City relationship between Seattle and Tashkent.

The Chay Chat Club gathers every Friday at the American Embassy at 4:00 pm for a discussion led by a native English speaker. Topics vary, but tend to focus on American culture, policies and society or on issues of global importance. If you would like to attend, you should call the Embassy at 120-5450 at least two days in advance to sign up. Movies are usually shown on one of the last Fridays of the month at 3:00 pm. The procedure for reserving a spot for the movie is the same.



Quiz winner gets an American fiction book from Information Officer Molly Stephenson at a movie night hosted by the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Tuberculosis: A Global Challenge



Ben Mills listens to a question from a guest at the Chay Chat Club on tuberculosis. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On March 14, Mr. Benjamin Mills of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) spoke to the Chay Chat Conversation Club about the global challenge of tuberculosis (TB). His presentation was timed to commemorate International Tuberculosis day, which falls on March 24. The Chay Chat is a conversation club that the U.S. Embassy holds on a weekly basis. It provides the general public with an opportunity to learn about America, while simultaneously letting them practice their English with a native speaker.

In his presentation, Mr. Mills outlined the history of TB, ex-

plained its symptoms and how people can become infected with this disease, and highlighted the crisis that TB represents. He grabbed the audience's attention when he stated that TB is the second leading killer of adults in the world and that 1 in 3 people worldwide are already infected with a latent form of the disease. He then told them that that 40,000 people in Uzbekistan have active TB, a number that puts Uzbekistan 10th on the list of countries with the highest number of TB cases. Additionally he described common symptoms of TB infection, which include weight loss, fever, chest pain, coughing for two weeks or longer, and tiredness or weakness. He explained that it is only possible to catch TB when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings or shouts in close proximity to you, and you then breathe the TB germ into your lungs. Then Mr. Mills offered some tips for how people can avoid becoming infected. He also described the treatments that are available for TB and stressed that all forms of TB are curable. Finally, he told the audience about several ongoing projects in Uzbekistan that aim to raise public awareness about the disease and explained how USAID is collaborating with the government of Uzbekistan and NGO partners to implement several of them. He closed his presentation by showing a never-before-aired public service announcement about the dangers of TB represents that soon will air nationwide on television in both Russian and Uzbek. Through this informal conversation, Mr. Mills raised young people's awareness of this global problem and provided them with tips on how they can stay healthy and protect themselves from this infectious disease.

Local Orphanage Thanks U.S. Embassy for Solar Energy

Some 80 children from a local orphanage, together with local officials in Chirchik, expressed their gratitude to the U.S. Embassy for providing them with the first solar panels in town.

The U.S. Embassy under its Small Grants Environmental, Science and Technology Program gave a \$5,000 grant to NGO Sharq Ayoli to purchase and install solar panels at Orphanage No. 14 in Chirchik, Tashkent Region. The solar panels generate over 600 liters of hot water that is used by 84 children at the orphanage every day.

The presentation of the solar panel project turned into a big celebration, including children's performances. U.S. Embassy's Political/Economic Officer Steven Prohaska was greeted by Chirchik's deputy mayor, the orphanage director, representatives from NGO Sharq Ayoli and Chirchik City Department of Public Education as well as the orphanage's children all dressed up in their best holiday attire. While giving a tour of the orphanage, the director said that the solar panels were the biggest present the children have received in the Year of Youth and that the hot water improved the health of the children. By introducing the use of solar batteries, NGO Sharq Ayoli demonstrated and promoted the use of environmentally-

friendly source of alternative energy to the Chirchik community.



The dormitory of orphanage No. 14 furnished with the solar panels donated by the U.S. Embassy. (U.S. Embassy photo)

United States Helps Preserve Cultural Heritage in Khiva



The Juma Mosque in Khiva is one of the many sites that needed protection from termites (Photo courtesy of Dr. Raina)

Everywhere there is wood there may be termites. Whereas, in the forests termites perform an important ecological role by consuming the dead wood, in urban areas they can cause a lot of damage to houses and trees. In Khiva, inside the fortress Ichan Kala, there are 56 buildings of great historic importance and the place has been designated by UNESCO as a world heritage site. Most of these buildings have wood as one of the building materials in

addition to ornate wooden pillars. It is this wood that was infested by the Turkestan termite. In 2003, the United States Department of Agriculture initiated a collaborative project with the Institute of Zoology of the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences to develop strategies for managing the termites in these buildings. Dr. Ashok Raina of the Agricultural Research Service of USDA stationed in New Orleans and working on the Formosan subterranean termite was designated as the US collaborator. Prof. Aloviddin Khamraev and his colleagues at the Institute of Zoology formed the Uzbekistan team.

The work got started immediately with meticulous examination and recording of infestation sites. Not much was known about the biology and development of caste system in this termite species. Plenty of useful information was obtained about how this termite lives and feeds. From screening of over 40 native plants, shrubs and trees it was determined that the foods most preferred by the Turkestan termite are sunflower and corn stems. These were then ground up to make a bait matrix. In the mean time, large number of bacteria and fungi infecting termites and other insects were collected and evaluated against the Turkestan termite. In addition to these, an environmentally safe chemical that inhibits molting in insects was sent from the U.S. and incorporated into the baits. First baits were placed in key buildings like the Juma mosque in 2005, and by 2007 most of the termite infestation in this structure was eliminated. The program is being expanded to cover all the buildings.

A socioeconomic study undertaken by the project people revealed that private houses in the surrounding communities were heavily infested by the Turkestan termite. In some cases the damage was so intense that the people had abandoned the houses. Through community seminars and door to door campaigns, people were made aware of the termite damage and how to prevent it. Recently, the surveys for termite infestation were expanded to other regions in North East and

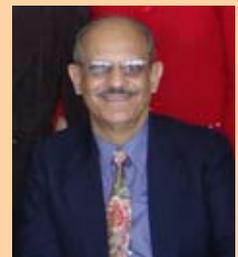
North West Uzbekistan. An interesting finding was that in Karakalpakstan, nearly 78% of all wooden telegraph poles were infested with the termite. Termite infestation also makes the houses very weak that may pose a great danger in case of an earthquake. The local administration is very supportive of the termite control program. In October 2005, an international workshop on the biology, ecology and control of the Turkestan termite was held in Khiva. The workshop, attended by many scientists from Central Asia, was a great success.

In recognition of his contributions to science in general and help to the scientists of Uzbekistan in preserving the cultural heritage sites, Dr. Raina was elected a member of the Peoples Academy of Central Asia, a first for any western scientist.

DR. ASHOK RAINA

U.S. Department of Agriculture

The U.S. Embassy Tashkent hosted Dr. Ashok Raina, Supervisory Research Entomologist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Research Service laboratory in New Orleans, LA, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to support the joint USDA-Former Soviet Union Scientific Cooperation Program in Uzbekistan. The project, run by scientists of the Institute of Zoology of the Academy of Science of Uzbekistan is designed to develop management strategies for the control of Turkestan termites at the cultural heritage site in Khiva, Uzbekistan. In addition to already having made significant progress in controlling the termites, Dr. Raina's participation in the ESFP program helps to advance the efforts of U.S. Embassy Tashkent to establish lasting relationships between Uzbek and American scientists.



Dr. Ashok Raina
(Photo courtesy of
Dr. Raina)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE EMBASSY SCIENCE FELLOWS PROGRAM

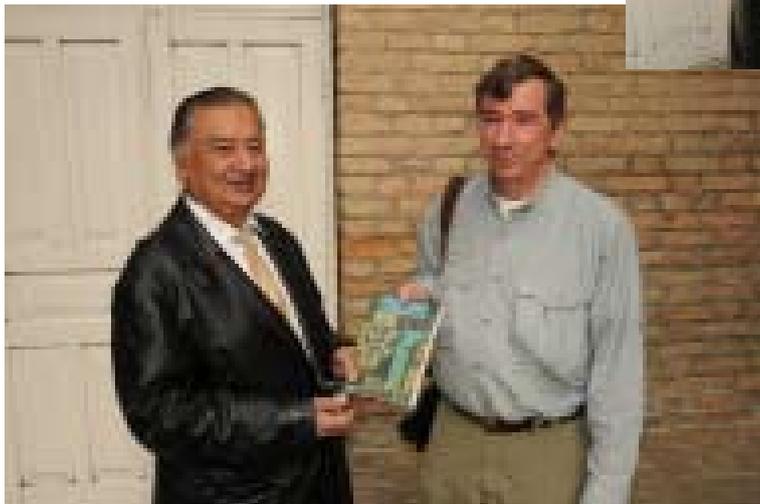
The Embassy Science Fellows Program (ESFP) offers U.S. Embassies an opportunity to host a working scientist for a one to three month stay. Begun in 2001, the ESFP provides a valuable mechanism through which experts from USG technical agencies can assist posts on country-specific scientific issues. The ESFP also advances national research and development priorities through international collaborations and explores the degree to which new science and technology (S&T) agreements might provide a venue for relationships to further mutual benefits. The Program builds on the complementary strengths and needs of the partner organizations, providing Embassies with the high-level scientific advisory capacity they need to address S&T issues important to their missions while simultaneously affording U.S.-based experts an opportunity to gain valuable international experience, training, and contacts.

130th Birthday of Father of Modern Tajik Literature, Sadriddin Aini, Commemorated



On April 16, Mr. Hanson made a visit to the Sadriddin Aini Memorial House Museum, where Aini lived many years of his life, across the street from the Registan in Samarkand. There he presented the English translation to Museum Director Abdugarim Ganizoda. The museum had just celebrated the 130th anniversary of the writer's birthday the day before with a conference attended by numerous professors and students of Tajik

Sadriddin Aini, widely known as “the father of modern Tajik literature,” wrote not only in Tajik, but also in Uzbek and Russian. He was a prolific writer, authoring novels, poems, scholarly articles, and journalistic and



language and literature and the Tajik Ambassador to Uzbekistan.

propagandistic essays. Some of his works have been translated into other languages. Recently, two American professors, John Perry and Rachel Lehr, collaborated on an English language translation of his autobiography, “Yoddosht-ho,” directly from Tajik into English. On April 14 and 16, U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Brad Hanson visited two museums devoted to the Tajik-language writer Sadriddin Aini and presented copies of their English-language translation of Aini's work. Both museums were happy to receive this English version, entitled “The Sands of Oxus: Boyhood Reminiscences of Sadriddin Aini.”

Mr. Hanson visited the Sadriddin Aini House Museum in Suktare, the writer's birthplace, about thirty kilometers from Bukhara on April 14. Sadriddin Aini was born there on April 15, 1878. Mr. Hanson presented the English translation to the Museum Director Mastura Zikriyayeva, who is also the granddaughter of Sadriddin Aini's brother, and then Ms. Zikriyayeva showed Mr. Hanson around the museum.



All photos: Courtesy of U.S. Embassy, Tashkent.

President Bush Orders \$200 Million for Emergency Food Relief

Global food prices soar to record levels



Relief goods from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are unloaded from a cargo plane. (© AP Images)

Responding aggressively to a worsening global food crisis, President Bush has ordered an estimated \$200 million in emergency U.S. food assistance for global relief efforts and to help relieve political instability in some regions.

“This additional food aid will address the impact of rising commodity prices on U.S. emergency food aid programs, and be used to meet unanticipated food aid needs in Africa and elsewhere,” the White House said in a statement.

Bush directed Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer April 14 to draw the funds from the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust, which is a food reserve for emergency needs in the developing world, to meet global emergency needs abroad. “With this action, an estimated \$200 million in emergency food aid will be made available through the U.S. Agency for International Development,” the White House said.

The White House noted that the United States is the largest provider of general food aid, providing more than \$2.1 billion for 2.5 million metric tons of commodities to 78 developing countries in 2007. “We are also the world’s largest provider for emergency food assistance, delivering 1.5 million metric tons of emergency food aid valued at \$1.2 billion to 30 countries in 2007,” it said in a statement.

U.S. emergency food assistance helped almost 23 million people, the White House said.

“The United States Agency for International Development has sought to invest in agricultural production in developing countries as a major strategy for increased food availability. Working through local institutions and partners, USAID has introduced new policy and technology-adapting capabilities to address near- and longer-term issues,” the White House statement says.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization attributes ris-

ing global food prices to a combination of factors, including reduced production because of climate change, historically low levels of food stocks, higher consumption of meat and dairy products in emerging economies, increased demand for biofuels production, drought and the higher cost of energy and transportation.

Group of Seven finance ministers and central bankers meeting in Washington called for immediate action to deal with the rising food prices.

“The problem is very serious around the world, due to severe price rises, and we have seen riots in Egypt, Cameroon, Haiti and Burkina Faso,” says Jacques Diouf, director-general of the United Nations’ Rome-based Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). “There is a risk that this unrest will spread in countries where 50 [percent] to 60 percent of income goes to food.”

The FAO also has reported incidents of civil unrest in Indonesia, Côte d’Ivoire, Mauritania, Mozambique, Bolivia, Senegal and the Philippines over food prices.

According to U.N. officials, the price of staples such as rice, beans, fruit and condensed milk has gone up 50 percent in the past year, while the cost of pasta has more than doubled in Haiti. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged donor countries to provide emergency aid.

“The rapidly escalating crisis of food availability around the world has reached emergency proportions. The World Bank has indicated that the doubling of food prices over the last three years could push 100 million people in low-income countries deeper into poverty,” Ban said April 14 at a special meeting of the U.N. Economic and Social Council.

“The international community will also need to take urgent and concerted action in order to avert the larger political and security implications of this growing crisis,” Ban said.



Palestinians unload bags of flour from a truck at a United Nations food aid distribution center in Gaza City. (© AP Images)

Killing of Journalists Threatens Global Press Freedom

May 3 is commemorated as World Press Freedom Day



Reporters Bob Woodward, right, and Carl Bernstein, whose reporting of the Watergate case won a Pulitzer Prize, sit in the newsroom of the Washington Post, May 7, 1973. (© AP Images)

The biggest challenges to press freedom include censorship, reporters being forced to reveal confidential sources and the brutalizing and killing of journalists, media professionals tell America.gov.

John Powers, a sportswriter for the Boston Globe who specializes in covering the Olympic Games, said that challenges to press freedom vary from country to country. The United States has issues of reporters being forced to reveal confidential sources, while journalists in totalitarian regimes are “routinely jailed, beaten, and killed,” said Powers, who shared the 1983 Pulitzer Prize for national reporting with other Globe writers for their report on the nuclear arms race.

The United States, Powers said, has “always had the freest press in the world.” However, in several well-publicized court cases, U.S. reporters have been sent to jail for refusing to reveal the names of confidential sources.

Powers said American media groups are calling on the U.S. Congress to pass a federal “shield law” that would help clarify the circumstances under which reporters must reveal news sources. The proposed legislation is designed to balance the public’s right to know with protecting national security interests.

JOURNALISTS FACE CENSORSHIP WORLDWIDE

Simon Reeve, a British best-selling author and broadcaster, calls censorship the biggest challenge facing journalists worldwide. Censorship, he said, can come from government repression, or from threats and violence against the media.

Censorship also can result from “pressure from corporations, shareholders and the wealthy owners of mainstream media in the developing and developed world,” said Reeve, who wrote *One Day in September* about the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre of Israeli athletes and coaches. Reeve won

England’s One World Broadcasting Trust Award in 2005 for “outstanding contribution to greater world understanding.”

Reeve said World Press Freedom Day, to be commemorated May 3, is “just as important now as when it was launched” in 1993. That day, he said, marks the “very real physical risks journalists in the developing world take when investigating contentious stories,” and the “professional risks that journalists take in the developed world when they work on unfashionable issues that deserve wider exposure.”

DECLINING RESPECT FOR JOURNALISTS CITED AS PROBLEM

Greg Mitchell, editor of *Editor and Publisher* magazine, says declining respect for journalists in many parts of the world could lead to more and more rights being taken away from reporters.

The lack of esteem, he said, stems from the work of journalists no longer being valued, in part due to public criticisms of media bias on a particular political issue. Another factor, he said, is that the public might think journalists are “not really out for the full story,” but are instead “trying to do sensationalism.” An additional factor, he said, is that the public thinks it can now get its news from the Internet.

A major concern for American journalists, said Mitchell, is declining circulation for U.S. newspapers, with the prospect that print newspapers eventually could become extinct. Mitchell said the future of newspapers might be exemplified by the *Capital Times* in Madison, Wisconsin, which announced it would reduce staff and no longer print daily editions of its newspapers, switching instead to an online-only publication. Many are expressing concerns that a nationwide trend of print newspapers moving to online news could lead to a decrease in the number of trained working journalists.

JOURNALISTS FEEL UNEASY ABOUT JOBS

Cathy Packer, an associate professor of journalism and mass communications at the University of North Carolina, said the declining number of newspapers makes U.S. journalists uneasy about their careers. Packer agreed, however, that the issues facing U.S. journalists, such as being forced to reveal confidential sources, do not compare to the plight of reporters elsewhere in the world.

Packer said the case of former *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller spending 85 days in jail for refusing to name sources “would look like a vacation” to journalists overseas who are being beaten or shot to death for pursuing investigations against organized crime or corruption in government.

But Packer added that the issue of revealing sources and the declining number of U.S. newspapers is leaving many American reporters feeling “defenseless.”

General Motors Establishes a Joint Venture in Uzbekistan



GM Europe VP Eric Stevens (left) and Uzbek Deputy PM Kuvondik Sanakulov (center) make remarks at the official presentation of GM Uzbekistan JV in Tashkent, March 20, 2008. (Photo courtesy of GM Corporation)

General Motors (GM) Corporation and State Company UzAvtoSanoat have established a joint venture which will serve as a cornerstone of Uzbekistan's economic growth and development. Because the auto industry is both capital and labor intensive, is a significant multiplier in terms of downstream and upstream jobs and investment, and is a significant developer and consumer of new technologies, many countries around the world recognize the power of a strong automotive sector as an engine of economic growth.

GM Uzbekistan will provide a fresh future for Uzbekistan's auto industry by providing new models and manufacturing know-how. Over time, it is expected that the production will grow to as much as 250,000 vehicles annually, with more than half of these intended for export.



Interior of the new Nexia. (Photo courtesy of GM Corporation)

For General Motors, the newly created company represents an important next step on the way to establishing a leadership position in the world's fastest growing markets and will contribute to the continued, rapid global growth of GM's largest brand, Chevrolet.

The General Motors Uzbekistan joint venture will build Chevrolet cars and SUVs for distribution through a network of more than 60 domestic dealerships. Three Chevrolet models -- the Captiva, Epica and Tacuma -- are already being assembled at the joint venture's plant in Asaka, Andijan province, 350 km from the capital. The Chevrolet Lacetti will join the line-up later this year and in March 2008, GM Uzbekistan launched the updated Nexia which will also be available this year. Other Chevrolet models are going to follow over the next few years.

The joint venture has been established with GM holding 25% equity plus one share. UzAvtoSanoat and General Motors managers will work side by side on the joint venture's



The updated Nexia is expected on the market later this year. (Photo courtesy of GM Corporation)

board of management, sharing key positions throughout the new company in areas including manufacturing, engineering, quality, purchasing, finance, human resources, product planning, information technology and legal, as well as sales, marketing and after sales.

Gary West, First Deputy General Director, is an American who has served in manufacturing leadership roles for General Motors in the U.S., Egypt and Mexico prior to moving to Uzbekistan last Fall. The GM team will include a small number of highly skilled managers from the U.S., Korea, Germany, Russia and other countries who will share their knowledge and experience.

According to Mr. West, "The GM team welcomes this opportunity to work with our partners from UzAvtoSanoat to build this venture to world class levels of quality, offering highly competitive and appealing vehicles to customers in Uzbekistan, Russia and other countries in the region."



Headquarters of General Motors Uzbekistan in Asaka. (Photo courtesy of GM Corporation)

General Motors is providing new technology, modern manufacturing processes and training for the plant's 4,700-member workforce. In total, the joint venture will employ over 5,000 employees including the Sales & Marketing and Finance Staffs, located in Tashkent.

The Asaka assembly plant will operate according to General Motors' Global Manufacturing System. The system focuses on high quality, leading productivity, involvement of the employees and continuous improvement of all processes. Already, more than 100 workers from Uzbekistan participate at a time for extended training at GM-DAT operations in Korea. It is anticipated that the 4,700 plant employees will also participate in thousands of hours of training over the next year to enhance their skills, including learning about the General Motors Manufacturing System.

The five principles of the General Motors Manufacturing System are: People Involvement (People are the most valuable resource in the company), Standardization (Set and follow standards to achieve a base from which to grow), Built-In-Quality (Customer's Quality expectations are built in to each process to avoid defects), Continuous Improvement (Foster



First Deputy General Director Gary West and team members perform final inspection of cars manufactured in Asaka. (Photo courtesy of GM Corporation)

an attitude of change and constant improvement), and Short Lead Time (reduce the time to deliver any good or service). GM uses this one production system worldwide and is including GMUZ as part of the GM family in this system.

General Motors is the benchmark in the automotive industry globally in terms of health and safety. It is bringing this strong focus on health and safety to the day to day operations of the Asaka plant. The plant is equipped with modern, state of the art manufacturing equipment, including robotization of some portions of the assembly plant and an environmentally responsible basecoat-clearcoat paint facility. It will operate to high levels of environmental responsibility and has its own wastewater treatment facility.

As the plant includes more new vehicles in its production line-up, the joint venture will endeavour to attract parts and component manufacturers to support the growth of the regional automotive industry, creating further jobs and investment for Uzbekistan.



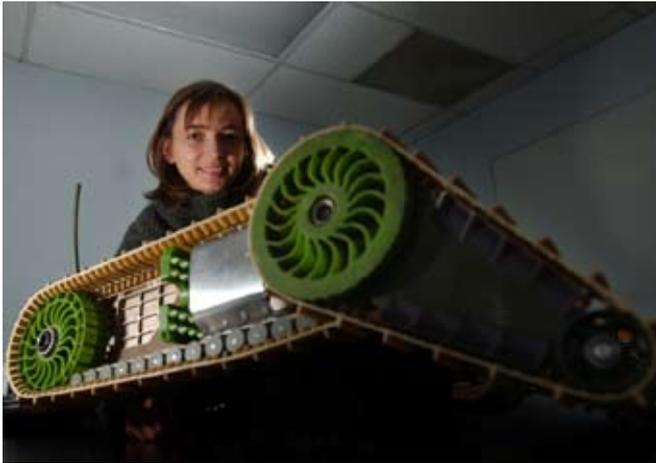
Robots perform some of the tasks in the assembly plant. (Photo courtesy of GM Corporation)

The venture will also develop and expand the capabilities of the local dealer network. For example, several GM Uzbekistan dealers will participate along with GM dealers from across Western, Central and Eastern Europe in "GMNext" celebrations in Germany in May which will both celebrate GM's 100th anniversary and provide information to enhance the dealers' ability to meet the needs of their customer base.

General Motors has a strong tradition of building vehicles where it sells them. With sales of over 4.5 million vehicles a year, Chevy is already GM's biggest brand and one of the top three brands on the global market. GM has manufacturing partners in Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and now Uzbekistan to build Chevrolets for these markets.

General Motors is the world's largest automaker and has been the annual global industry sales leader for 77 years. Founded in 1908, GM today employs about 266,000 people around the world. With global headquarters in Detroit, GM manufactures its cars and trucks in 35 countries and in 2007, nearly 9.37 million GM cars and trucks were sold globally.

Entrepreneurship Spreads Across U.S. University Campuses



Helen Greiner with a robot developed by iRobot, a company she incubated and co-founded at MIT. (© AP Images)

Syed Hussain started his business in 2007, prompted by a desire to fight extortion. That is what he calls \$60- to \$70-per-hour fees he had been asked to pay for tutoring when he was an undergraduate student. The torment of not being able to afford tutoring led Hussain to develop uProdigy. Through this firm, 120 English-speaking tutors in South Asia and the United States offer affordable online help to America's college students. Not only is uProdigy prospering, but the business plan Hussain crafted for it was selected a winner in a major business competition.

That contest -- the \$100K Business Plan Competition at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) -- is one of many ways an increasing number of U.S. colleges and universities promote entrepreneurship among students and faculty members. The competition awards prizes in cash and business services to student entrepreneurs, who devise best business plans for new ventures.

Purely technical training does not suffice any more, says Tina Seelig, executive director for the Stanford Technology Ventures Program. With advances in biotechnology and information technology, "we need engineers and scientists who can get ideas out of lab into the marketplace," she told *America.gov*.

In the past, entrepreneurship programs were available only to business school students. This started to change in the 1990s when educators realized that students in science, engineering and other disciplines had to have entrepreneurship and leadership skills to succeed in a rapidly changing world. In 1970, no more than a handful of such programs existed. By the early 2000s, about 1,600 universities and colleges offered 2,200 entrepreneurship courses, according to a 2003 study. And those courses have grown in popularity among students.

Edward Roberts, the chairman of the MIT Entrepreneurship Center, says that because of growing demand for graduates who can lead, negotiate and push new ideas and products, even MIT, which had a long tradition of entrepreneurship, had to change.

Roberts started the center in 1996 to couple technical expertise with management skills across different departments and schools within MIT. Other initiatives such as a center for technological innovation and a venture mentoring service followed, creating what Roberts calls a "positive feedback loop." MIT's strong entrepreneurial reputation attracts students with entrepreneurial ambitions who in turn reinforce MIT's reputation. "In the last 10 years, we have seen a rapid growth in MIT-related startup ventures," Roberts said.

About 150 MIT-related companies are founded each year, according to the center. The institute, along with its neighbor and competitor, Harvard University, takes credit for creating Route 128, a cluster of science- and technology-based companies around Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Stanford University, the main force behind the world's best-known high-technology hub, in the so-called Silicon Valley in California, was another school that changed its approach to entrepreneurship in the mid-1990s. It developed the Stanford Technology Ventures Program when it realized the need for a cross-campus, structured approach to entrepreneurial training and laying solid foundations to entrepreneurial activities.

The program takes great advantage of the intellectual, entrepreneurial and financial resources of its high-tech business environment. "Our students get plugged directly into the entrepreneurial community and Silicon Valley [business] ecosystem," Seelig said.

In contrast to MIT, Stanford does not measure business-venture creation related to its entrepreneurship program. Seelig said counting the number of companies started by the university's graduates is a superficial measure. "Our program's graduates are in great demand because it is about the entrepreneurial mindset, not necessarily about starting a company," she said.

But there are more similarities between MIT and Stanford entrepreneurship efforts than differences. "Visitors to MIT, Stanford ... are often struck by the intense relationships between university researchers and the high-tech companies of their hinterlands," observed a reporter of the British *Guardian* newspaper in 2002. "Prominent academics are founders or directors of companies. ... Their graduate students work in company labs. ... As far as research goes, it is often difficult to determine where the university ends and industry begins."

Both schools spread the entrepreneurship gospel across the world. Stanford, which helped India develop entrepreneurship education, hosts international round tables on the topic in North and South America, Europe and Asia. MIT, which assisted similar efforts by British and Danish governments, runs an entrepreneurship development program for educators from around the world. It also hosts a workshop each year in a different country to encourage creating a contest similar to its \$100K competition.

U.S. Universities Strive To Increase Student Diversity

University of Virginia wins award for graduate student program



Jing An, left, a visiting scholar from China, converses in Chinese with Sean Halpin at the University of Virginia. (© AP Images)

Supporting diversity and creating a sense of inclusiveness for minority and foreign-born students are growing priorities for U.S. graduate schools. The University of Virginia recently received a national award for its new program to support graduate student diversity.

The award -- the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS)/Peterson's Award for Innovation in Promoting an Inclusive Graduate Community -- recognizes innovative efforts to identify, recruit and retain minority graduate students.

"We know that having students from many different backgrounds ensures a diversity of thought, which we believe is an important element of research inquiry," said R. Ariel Gomez, vice president for research and graduate studies at the University of Virginia (U.Va.). His office has established a new pilot mentoring program for graduate students from diverse backgrounds.

The program -- grounded in research conducted by University of Virginia Darden School of Business professor Martin Davidson and Dartmouth College professor Lynn Foster-Johnson -- aims to address both the challenges faced by graduate students from underrepresented populations and the need for faculty mentors to understand the unique experiences of these students.

The CGS-Peterson's award, presented at the Council of Graduate Schools annual meeting in Seattle in December 2007, includes a \$20,000 grant to create an Inter-Ethnic/Interdisciplinary Mentoring Institute for Graduate Education.

A key component of the program will be the use of "reciprocal mentoring," a mutually beneficial process that nurtures students while raising the cultural sensitivity and mentoring skills of faculty.

"Students teach their teaching faculty in the process of learning from them," Cheryl Burgan Evans, U.Va.'s director of graduate student diversity programs, explained in an interview.

"This is necessary at U.Va. because not enough minority faculty are available to meet the mentoring needs," she said. Reciprocal mentoring helps to sensitize faculty to the needs of minority students.

U.Va. students tend to do well academically, and the university has a high retention rate, Evans said. What the university hopes to improve is its climate of inclusiveness. "[Foreign-born students] tend to do well, but they don't always have such a positive experience on the personal and cultural side," she said.

A recent CGS survey shows strong growth in the enrollment of every minority group in U.S. graduate schools over the past decade. Between 1996 and 2006, Hispanic enrollment grew an average of 5 percent each year, while African-American, Asian and American Indian enrollment grew an average of 4 percent a year, compared with no growth for white students. International student enrollment grew an average of 4 percent annually during the 1996-2006 period.

As of 2006, some 59 percent of U.S. graduate students were female.

Like many institutions, the University of Virginia has had to overcome a period in its history before the civil rights era when no minorities were admitted, Evans said. "Then it went through a second phase where a small number of [minority] students were allowed to matriculate. It is now in the third phase, where capacity building is taking place. This means that there is considerable recognition of the value of diversity and inclusiveness and, most [important], of starting a pipeline for sustainability."

"We value diversity here because it has to do with the human richness, the variety of experiences and backgrounds and perspectives and reasons for learning that distinguish us as people, based on our own backgrounds, our own expectations and our own prior experiences," said U.Va. President John T. Casteen III.

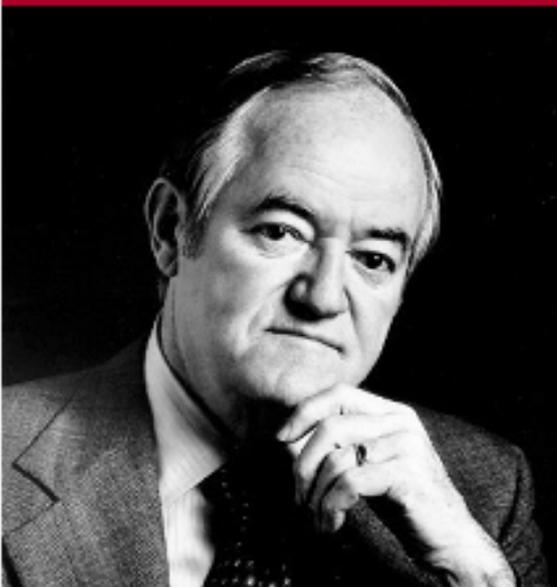
The Council of Graduate Schools is an organization of nearly 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees.



Embassy of the United States
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

Inaugurated in 1978, this one-year, full scholarship program is offered to mid-career professionals who have a proven track record of leadership, a commitment to public service, and the capacity to take full advantage of a self-defined program of independent study at a leading U.S. university. The program awards a certificate from the U.S. Government. It is not designed to deliver an advanced degree.



Eligible fields:

- Agricultural Development/ Agricultural Economics
 - Communications/Journalism
 - Economic Development/Finance and Banking
 - Educational Administration, Planning and Policy
 - HIV/AIDS Policy and Prevention
 - Human Resource Management
 - Law and Human Rights
 - Natural Resources and Environmental Management
 - Public Health Policy and Management
 - Public Policy Analysis and Public Administration
 - Teaching of English as a Foreign Language, Teacher Training or Curriculum Development
 - Technology Policy and Management
 - Trafficking in Persons, Policy and Prevention
 - Urban and Regional Planning
 - Substance Abuse Education, Treatment and Prevention
- Candidates in this field must complete a supplementary field-specific application page, and must have a research background in the field or demonstrate an ability to understand the results and policy implications of current research.

The 2009-2010 application form for the Hubert - Humphrey Fellowship Program can be downloaded at:

HCFUzbekistan.usembassy.gov

Four copies of the completed application should be delivered to the Embassy. Electronic versions should also be sent to: TashHumphrey-Prgr@state.gov no later than July 1, 2008.

Address: U.S. Embassy,
2 Mayqorjon Street
Yul'kent District, Tashkent
Telephone: (800 77) 120-5460

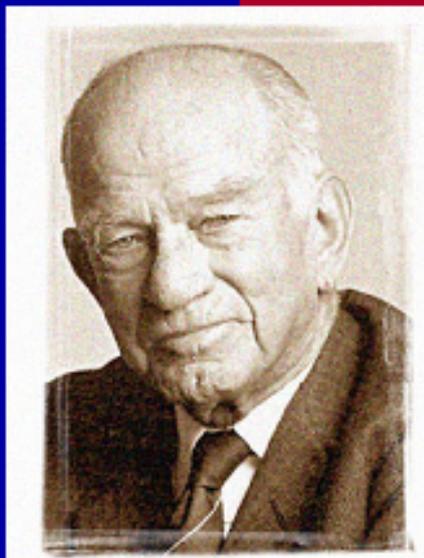


FULBRIGHT

The Fulbright Scholar Program is open to college and university professors and professionals who wish to conduct research in the U.S. during the 2009-2010 academic year in the following fields:

- Justice
- Education
- Library Science
- Journalism
- Political Science
- Business
- Finance
- Sociology
- Environmental Studies
- Arts and Humanities

Those interested may apply for this program if they are citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan and fluent in English, are candidates for or have a doctoral degree, or are professionals with at least 15 years of work experience at the time of application. Additionally, all candidates must be in good health.



The Embassy of the United States of America is pleased to announce the competition for Fulbright Scholarships for the 2009-2010 academic year.

The goal of the Fulbright program is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries, and thus assist in the development of friendly and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries of the world.

For over 50 years the Fulbright Scholarship program has offered grants to college and university faculty, as well as to independent scholars around the globe, to allow them to lecture and conduct research in the United States. At the same time, the program, since its inception in 1948, has permitted thousands of American scholars to teach and conduct research throughout the world.

Application deadline:
November 3, 2008

Please call the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy prior to filling out the application.

Four copies of the completed application should be delivered to the Embassy. Electronic version should also be sent to:
TashFulbright-Prog@state.gov

Applicants who successfully pass the preliminary screening process will be invited for an interview.

**Address: U.S. Embassy, 3 Moyqorgon,
Yunusabad District, Tashkent
Telephone: (998 71) 140-2441
120 5450**

May 21 - Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People



Secretary Rice makes remarks to the Council of the Americas 38th Annual Meeting. (© AP Images)

“We believe unequivocally that Cuba deserves, no less than any other nation in the Americas, to choose its own future freely, without outside interference... The regime must and should remove the fear factor from Cuba’s political life. We are eager to support Cuba and its talented people in transforming its society. We want to engage with Cuba. We want to engage its people as free citizens, not as subjects.”

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s remarks at the Council of the Americas 38th Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C. May 7, 2008.

For more information on Day of Solidarity with the Cuban people go to <http://www.solidaridadcuba.org/eng/index.php>.

U.S. STATEMENT ON ANNIVERSARY OF CUBA’S BLACK SPRING

March 18, 2008

Five years ago today, the Cuban government began a week-long roundup of human rights advocates, independent librarians and journalists, and other Cuban citizens seeking peaceful, democratic change. Known as the Black Spring, 75 of these individuals were arrested, subjected to show trials, and sentenced to prison terms ranging from 14 to 30 years. They joined a long list of Cuban prisoners of conscience already jailed. For their peaceful acts, they have spent years held under brutal prison conditions.

We join Vaclav Havel, the former President of the Czech Republic, and other voices in calling for the immediate, unconditional release of the victims of the Black Spring and all prisoners of conscience in Cuba.

As President Bush has said, “We will know there is a new Cuba when authorities go to the prisons, walk to the cells where people are being held for their beliefs and set them free.” The Cuban people deserve real change and the opportunity to join a dialogue about their country’s future free from fear.

May 21 is Day of Solidarity with the Cuban People. It honors the Cuban people and brings attention to the Castro regime’s reprehensible record on human rights and political prisoners.



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