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In this issue:

Embassy Hosts Program on Presidential Inauguration..... 1

Obama Becomes 44th U.S. President..... 1

Secretary of State Clinton Calls for Robust Diplomacy..... 3

IRO Shares Practical Tips with Uzbek Librarians..... 4

Tashkent Delegation Visits Seattle..... 5

Alumni Ring in the New Year with Charity Drive 6

Embassy Spreads Holiday Cheer with Gift Drives..... 7

Hawaii..... 8

Michelle Obama Presents Modern Image for Black Women..... 11

Film Festival Draws Enthusiastic Audience..... 12

Chai Chat Audience Interprets UDHR..... 13

International Education Fair.. 14

Online Higher Education Gets High Marks..... 15

Expert Advises Teachers to Invest in Themselves..... 16

American Automaker Expands Presence in Uzbekistan..... 18

Congress Moves on Help for Ailing Economy..... 19

U.S. Foreign Policy Shifts under New Administration..... 20

Defense Secretary: Afghanistan Is Significant Challenge..... 21

Media Reporting Contest 2009..... 22

Night of Jazz Rhythms in Tashkent..... 24

Embassy Hosts Informational Program on Presidential Inauguration



Chief Justice John Roberts administers the oath of office to Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States. (© AP Images)

More than 85 journalists, students, and members of the Uzbek public gathered at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent on January 22 to watch clips from President Barack Obama’s inauguration ceremony. President Obama was sworn in as the 44th president of the United States in a ceremony in Washington DC on January 20 in one of the most highly attended and anticipated inaugurations in U.S. history.

U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan Richard Norland opened the event with welcoming remarks before turning the stage over to Public Affairs Officer Carol Fajardo, who began the presentation with a clip of President Obama taking the oath of office. She emphasized that the President swears

Continued on next page

Barack Obama Becomes 44th President of the United States

Shortly after noon in Washington, D.C. January 20, Barack Obama took the presidential oath of office, becoming the 44th president and first African-American leader of the United States.



People celebrate after President Barack Obama takes the oath of office during his inauguration Tuesday, January 20, 2009 in Washington. (© AP Images)

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Roberts administered the oath of office to Obama on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. “I will faithfully execute the office of the President of the United States,” Obama said as he placed his hand on the Bible last used to inaugurate President Abraham Lincoln in 1861.

Cheers rang out as onlookers, who packed a three-kilometer piece of land stretching from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, waved American flags.

Continued on page 10

Embassy Hosts Informational Program on Presidential Inauguration



Public Affairs Officer Carol Fajardo answers the audience's questions regarding the transition of power in America. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Continued from front page

allegiance to the Constitution of the United States, and this allegiance governs the President's duty to the American people and his country.

Ms. Fajardo underscored the cooperative nature of the handover between outgoing President George W. Bush and President Obama. Prior to taking office on January 20th, President Obama appointed a transition team who worked closely with the Bush Administration over a period of two and half months to ensure a stable, seamless and peaceful transition of power. Republican and Democratic party members attended President Obama's inauguration, including his chief election opponent, Senator John McCain, who also attended the official post-inauguration luncheon at the U.S. Capitol building.

Following the formal presentation, attendees participated in a question-and-answer period. In particular, attendees were curious as to whether Uzbekistan should expect major changes to the U.S. Embassy personnel in Tashkent. Ms. Fajardo explained that there would be few visible changes at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent as a result of President Obama's assumption of office. As career diplomats, American staff retain their appointments; Ambassador Norland serves at the pleasure of the President.

Translated copies of the President Obama's inaugural address are available in English, Russian and Uzbek on the Embassy's website at <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov>.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF 44TH U.S. PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Barack H. Obama is the 44th President of the United States.

His story is the American story — values from the heartland, a middle-class upbringing in a strong family, hard work and education as the means of getting ahead, and the conviction that a life so blessed should be lived in service to others.

With a father from Kenya and a mother from Kansas, President Obama was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961. He was raised with help from his grandfather, who served under General George Patton's army in World War II, and his grandmother, who worked her way up from the secretarial pool to middle management at a bank.

After working his way through college with the help of scholarships and student loans, President Obama moved to Chicago, where he worked with a group of churches to help rebuild communities devastated by the closure of local steel plants.

He went on to attend law school, where he became the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review. Upon graduation, he returned to Chi-

cago to help lead a voter registration drive and teach constitutional law at the University of Chicago.

President Obama's years of public service are based around his unwavering belief in the ability to unite people around a purpose. In the Illinois State Senate, he passed the first major ethics reform in 25 years, cut taxes for working families, and expanded health care for children and their parents. As a United States Senator, he reached across the aisle to pass groundbreaking lobbying reform, lock up the world's most dangerous weapons, and bring transparency to government by putting federal spending online.

He was elected the 44th President of the United States on November 4, 2008, and sworn in on January 20, 2009. He and his wife, Michelle, are the proud parents of two daughters, Malia, 10, and Sasha, 7.



44th U.S. President Barack Obama. (© AP Images)

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Calls for Robust Diplomacy

President's visit to State Department highlights emphasis on diplomacy



President Barack Obama accompanied by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, left, greets State Department employees, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2009, at the State Department in Washington. (© AP Images)

Hours after being sworn in as the 67th Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton arrived for her first day on the job, telling a crowd of State Department employees gathered to welcome her that she will work with “joy and responsibility, commitment and collaboration.”

Speaking on January 22, Secretary Clinton described American foreign policy as a stool with three legs: defense, diplomacy and development. “We are responsible for two of the three legs,” she said.

“I will do all that I can, working with you, to make it abundantly clear that robust diplomacy and effective development are the best long-term tools for securing America’s future.”

Clinton was confirmed by the Senate January 21; immediately after the vote, she resigned her seat as a senator from New York. Then, in a private ceremony attended by her husband, former President Bill Clinton, she was sworn in as Secretary of State.

OBAMA PLEDGES PRINCIPLED, FOCUSED AND SUSTAINED DIPLOMACY

Clinton’s first day on the job included a visit to the State Department by President Obama and Vice President Biden.

Obama said his decision to meet with State Department officials on his second day in office “underscores my commitment to the importance of diplomacy in renewing American leadership.”

The strength of the United States “comes not just from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from our enduring values,” the President said. “And for the sake of our national security and the common aspirations of people around the globe, this era has to begin now.”

Obama said progress on addressing global challenges “will

not come quickly or easily,” and the United States cannot “promise to right every single wrong around the world.”

However, “we can pledge to use all elements of American power to protect our people and to promote our interests and ideals, starting with principled, focused and sustained American diplomacy.”

The Obama administration will seek new partnerships and ask more from the international community “because security in the 21st century is shared,” he said. “A new era of American leadership is at hand,” the president said, telling State Department employees they would be “at the front lines of engaging in that important work.”

CLINTON SEES GLOBAL “POTENTIAL AND POSSIBILITY”

Secretary Clinton told Obama she was “not only honored and delighted, but challenged” by the President’s visit. “And yet, Mr. President, we feel up to that challenge. We want to do our very best work in furtherance of your goals,” she said.

Clinton announced the appointments of former U.S. Senator George Mitchell as Special Envoy to the Middle East and former Ambassador Richard Holbrooke as Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

At her welcoming reception, Clinton said her task will not be easy, but she described the current global climate as one of “potential and possibility.” “I don’t get up in the morning just thinking about the threats and the dangers, as real as they are. I also think about what we can do and who we are and what we represent,” Clinton said.



State Department Employees welcome Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to the State Department in Washington, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2009. (© AP Images)

Information Resource Officer Shares Practical Tips with Librarians in Ferghana and Tashkent



Mary Nell Bryant shares a photo of her mother filling out her absentee ballot during the November 2008 U.S. Presidential Election. (U.S. Embassy photo)

From Nov. 14 to 21, the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section welcomed to Uzbekistan Information Resource Officer Mary Nell Bryant from the U.S. Department of State in Washington, DC. The expert in library science and information technology topics supports U.S. Information Resource Centers (IRC) throughout South and Central Asia.

During her busy visit, Ms. Bryant traveled to Urgench, Khiva, Samarkand and Ferghana. She toured libraries in Samarkand and Ferghana, meeting with local librarians.

She also explained how libraries can expand their programming and outreach via Web 2.0. She spoke to 50

librarians and students in Ferghana, and to 100 librarians and students from throughout the country who gathered at the National Library in Tashkent. She displayed example websites from various U.S. libraries, demonstrating how this user-friendly technology helps libraries become true community centers. She highlighted that the interactive nature of Web 2.0 allows for immediate feedback from members on library activities. She shared practical tips on how best to use technology in a library -- organize information (RSS feeds), use free catalogue software (www.librarything.com), contact members (Facebook), establish new programs (virtual book clubs), etc. The librarians appreciated the opportunity to interact with this expert on these interactive technology tools.

Arriving shortly after the U.S. presidential election, Ms. Bryant also outlined the "next steps" or "what comes next" in the peaceful transition in the White House. She shared this information at the Embassy's



Ms. Bryant explains the electoral college during her presentation to Uzbek journalists at the Embassy's month PressGap. (U.S. Embassy photo)

monthly PressGap (gathering of Uzbek journalists) and weekly Chai Chat English Conversation Club.

She shared her impressions of the vibrant electoral process, noting that each U.S. state runs its election slightly differently. For example, some states allow early voting. Ms. Bryant highlighted the role that volunteers play -- from Republican and Democratic parties alike -- to "get out the vote" and encourage voters to support their candidate. In closing she added that all newspapers in the Washington, DC, area quickly sold out the day after the election. She had not seen this before. It was a clear example of how closely everyone was following this historic U.S. presidential election.



Students raise a question about Web 2.0 in Ferghana Regional Library, Ferghana City. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Tashkent Delegation Visits Seattle in December 2008

By Dan Peterson, President, Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association



2008 marked the 35th anniversary of the Seattle-Tashkent sister city relationship, and it has been a very eventful year! The year culminated with events in Seattle from Dec. 7 to 11 with the arrival of a sixteen-member delegation from Tashkent, including Tashkent Deputy Mayor Shamurat Muhamedjanov, other Tashkent city officials and business people. In addition, His Excellency Ambassador Abdulaziz Kamilov, Uzbekistan's Ambassador to the United

States, and two of his staff joined us as well to recognize this historic anniversary.

The delegation participated in meetings with City of Seattle officials from many departments. Discussions were held with the electrical utility, water department, waste management and recycling departments. We also discussed ongoing conservation efforts and long-range transportation planning. A half-day meeting with local business people was sponsored by the Trade Development Alliance.

Further, some members of the delegation were able to visit a community college and recycling plant. Our mayor, the Honorable Greg Nickels, welcomed the entire delegation to Seattle and recognized the importance of the sister-city relationship. The group was also introduced to the full Seattle City Council during a live broadcast throughout the region, and Deputy Mayor Muhamedjanov made a well-received speech regarding Tashkent, future endeavors, the delegation membership, and the historic nature of our sister city relationship.

While in Seattle, we used this opportunity to develop cultural understanding as well. We showed them the city of Seattle, the aquarium, and had a home-style potluck provided by the board of directors, complete with outdoor preparation of plov



A local Native American group performs at the 35th anniversary celebration in Seattle. (Dan Peterson's photo)

for the meal. It surprised the delegation that we were able to provide such a feast with great Uzbek food as well. We also sang holiday songs to entertain the group and promote knowledge of American holiday traditions.

The highlight of the cultural and celebration activities was the evening 35th anniversary celebration with speeches by officials from both cities, and entertainment that included flamenco guitar, classical music and Uzbek dancing.

The hundred people in attendance found the most popular performance was by a local Native American group that brought the audience to their feet many times. It was an opportunity for Seattle to highlight the value and importance of the Native American culture in our area.



Officials raise a toast in celebration of the 35th anniversary of the Seattle-Tashkent sister city relationship. (Dan Peterson's photo)

The Seattle-Tashkent Sister City Association looks forward to a continued partnership between our two cities and many more exchanges that share information between city departments and collaboration to address common concerns.

We were the first Soviet-American sister city formed. Together we have weathered many challenges, and we have continued our friendship after the independence of Uzbekistan. The citizens and government of Seattle value this relationship and will continue to support it for the benefit for the people in both of our cities.

Alumni Ring in the New Year with Charity Drive and Celebration

They danced to favorite American music by Bon Jovi and Nirvana. They collected bags of toys and clothes for those less fortunate. They had a great time reconnecting with old friends and making new ones. On Dec. 26, the alumni of U.S.-sponsored exchange programs concluded an eventful and



The alumni dance the night away. (U.S. Embassy photo)

productive 2008 with their annual Alumni New Year Party. As is their tradition, the alumni also dedicated the event to helping the less fortunate with a charity drive for children who live in orphanages.

The evening began with an awards ceremony, during which U.S. Embassy staff recognized fifteen of the most active alumni for their significant contributions to society with Certificates of Appreciation. These alumni distinguished themselves by implementing successful Democracy Outreach/Alumni Grants in such spheres as education, environmental awareness and community service, as well as supporting various educational and cultural outreach events that the U.S. Embassy organized during the year.

Throughout the past year, the alumni and the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section (PAS) held a number of successful events. In the spring, PAS organized the 2nd Annual Alumni Conference in Tashkent region, bringing together almost one hundred alumni for two days full of workshops and networking activities. The alumni themselves staged a very successful performance of an American play at a local theater and organized a mountain clean-up project and a series of scout camps.

The Alumni New Year Party served as an excellent opportunity to highlight these accomplishments and set a positive tone for future alumni activities in 2009. The alumni have already started discussing future projects, such as staging another alumni play and implementing new community service projects.

More than 200 alumni and their friends attended the Alumni Party, which provided lots of great memories for everyone. After the official ceremony, the alumni enjoyed socializing with old friends and dancing. They also brought their donations – toys, children's clothes or monetary contributions – and left them in the donation box by the entrance.

The next day the alumni put the donated money to good use purchasing warm undergarments, fruits and sweets at a local market. On Dec. 29, alumni drove to an orphanage in a remote part of Tashkent region, where over 100 children aged 3 to 12 years were eagerly awaiting the guests. First, the kids put on a holiday performance, presenting national dances and reciting holiday poems by the Christmas tree. After that, the alumni distributed the gifts, ensuring that every child received his share of new clothes, toys and candy. Making the New Year very special for the orphans was the best present the alumni could receive this holiday season!

If you participated in a U.S.-government sponsored exchange program, and would like to get involved in alumni activities, please email Tashkent-alumni@state.gov and visit <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/alumni/>.



Children at the orphanage receive their presents. (U.S. Embassy photo)

If you would like to learn more about U.S. educational exchange programs, visit <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/exchanges>.

U.S. Embassy Spreads Holiday Cheer with Gift Drives



It is all smiles when the gifts are distributed. (U.S. Embassy photo)

More than 100 children at Tashkent's Boarding School for the Hearing Impaired enjoyed greater holiday cheer thanks to toys and other gifts donated by the U.S. Embassy staff and Marine Security Guard detachment in Tashkent.

On Dec. 22, representatives from the Embassy's Community Liaison Office (CLO) and Marines presented the toys collected during the 2008 Toys for Tots at a holiday party sponsored by the school.

Toys for Tots is an annual program run by the U.S. Marine Corps around the globe, which collects new toys from October to December each year. The Marines then dis-

tribute these toys as holiday gifts to disadvantaged children in the community. This is the third year the Marine Security Guard detachment in Tashkent has participated in the tradition. Gifts donated this year included a variety of sports equipment, toy cars, dolls and books.

Following the gift distribution, younger students treated the Embassy visitors to a "snow-flake" dance and older students performed a formal waltz.

In addition to the Toys for Tots programs, Embassy staff also purchased "Giving Tree" presents for approximately 40 toddlers to teenagers from the Chilanzaar orphanage, including nine special needs children. U.S. Embassy Co-CLOs, Jeanne Walker and Tatiana O'Hara, presented the gifts on behalf of the Embassy community on December 29.

Ms. Walker noted that clothing, especially jeans, was the most requested item. Several kids changed into their gifts immediately, showing their gratitude and excitement.

This was the first year that the Embassy has organized a



Two girls model the new clothes they received from the U.S. Embassy. (U.S. Embassy photo)



Wearing their new jeans, the boys gather around the Embassy's Co-CLOs. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Giving Tree, and due to the overwhelming positive response, the Embassy plans to sponsor donation programs more regularly, perhaps three or more times per year.



The State of Hawaii - The Aloha State



HAWAII IS LIKE NO OTHER PLACE ON EARTH

Home to one of the world's most active volcanoes and the world's tallest sea mountain. Birthplace of surfing and the hula. Former seat of a royal kingdom. Home state of the 44th U.S. President Barack Obama. Hawaii is one of the youngest geological formations in the world and the youngest state of the United States. But perhaps Hawaii's most unique feature is its Aloha Spirit: the warmth of the people of Hawaii that wonderfully complements the Islands' perfect temperatures.

Beyond Hawaii's natural beauty, the islands are a place of incredible diversity. Dating back to plantation days, Hawaii has been home to a multicultural mix of people. It is this culture of acceptance and aloha that has had a profound affect on Barack Obama and will continue to influence him in the future.

"What's best in me, and what's best in my message, is consistent with the tradition of Hawaii" ~ Barack Obama

(*'My Chance Encounter With Obama in Hawaii'*, Nov. 5, 2008, Time).

HAWAII BECAME THE 50TH STATE IN 1959

But the history of Hawaii goes back centuries earlier. More than 1,500 years ago, Polynesians from the Marquesas Islands first set foot on Hawaii's Big Island. With only the stars to guide them, they miraculously sailed over 2,000 miles in canoes to migrate to the Islands.



President Barack Obama, walks down Kailua Beach, with his daughters Malia, 10, right, and Sasha, 7, during a vacation in Hawaii. (© AP Images)

500 years later, settlers from Tahiti arrived, bringing their beliefs in gods and demi-gods and instituting a strict social hierarchy based on a kapu (taboo) system. Hawaiian culture flourished over the centuries, but land division conflicts between ruling chieftains were common.

In 1778, Captain James Cook landed on Kauai at Waimea Bay. Naming the archipelago the "Sandwich Islands" in honor of the Earl of Sandwich, Cook opened the doors to the West. Cook was killed a year later in Kealahou Bay on Hawaii's Big island.



Young hula dancers perform for tourists at the beach in Waikiki, Hawaii. (© AP Images)

In 1791, Kohala born Kamehameha united the warring factions of the Big Island and went on to unify all of the Hawaiian Islands into one kingdom in 1810. In 1819, less than a year after King Kamehameha's death, his son, Liholiho, abolished the ancient kapu system.

In 1820, the first Protestant missionaries arrived on the Big Island, filling the void left after the end of the kapu system. Hawaii became a port for seamen, traders and whalers. Throughout these years of growth, Western disease took a heavy toll on the native Hawaiian population.

Western influence continued to grow, and in 1893, American colonists who controlled much of Hawaii's economy overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom in a peaceful, yet still controversial coup. In 1898, Hawaii became a territory of the United States.

In the 20th century, sugar and pineapple plantations fueled Hawaii's economy, bringing an influx of Japanese, Chinese, Filipino and Portuguese immigrants. On Dec. 7, 1941, the Japanese launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on Oahu. Four years later, on Sept. 2, 1945, Japan signed its unconditional surrender on the USS Battleship Missouri, which still rests in Pearl Harbor today.



An aerial view of Mauna Kea Observatories in Hawaii. (© AP Images)

HAWAII'S ECONOMY

Tourism is Hawaii's key industry, attracting about seven million visitors to the state each year. However, recent economic problems in the world have had a negative effect on tourism numbers, and the state economy has suffered greatly as a result.

The state is committed to diversifying the economy. Industries encouraged are science and technology, film and television production, sports, ocean research and development, health and education tourism, diversified agriculture and floral and specialty food products.

In recognizing the need to diversify its economy, Hawaii is focused on promoting the emergence of a viable and sustainable high technology-based industry. It's one of America's most "wired" states, offering digital, high-capacity voice and data transmissions and virtually unlimited bandwidth. It has six undersea fiber-optic transpacific cables providing 1.6 million voice equivalent circuits between Hawaii and U.S. and Asian markets.

Research and Development Centers & Parks - Located on the islands of Oahu, Maui and Hawaii, the Hawaii Technology Development Corporation provides support for startup technology firms.

University of Hawaii at Manoa - A first-class research university, within which the "Honolulu Technique" for genetic cloning was pioneered.

Maui High Performance Computing Center - Has one of the most powerful supercomputers in the world, with capabilities for high-speed communication infrastructure such as data archiving, telemedicine, defense testing and evaluation, and remote sensing. The center's IBM SP Super Computer serves more than 900 academic and commercial clients.

Pacific Missile Range Facility - Provides the world's largest multi-environment range capable of supporting surface, subsurface, air and space operations.

Mauna Kea Observatories - The world's finest astronomical observatory, atop Mauna Kea on the Island of Hawaii, managed by the University of Hawaii and including 13 tele-

scopes – 8 of them exceeding 8 meters in diameter.

Hawaii's economy is service-oriented. Construction, manufacturing and agriculture account for only 10% of wage and salary jobs. About three in ten civilian workers are professional or managerial. Federal, state and local government accounts for 20% of wage and salary jobs.

Most of Hawaii's businesses are small. 52% have fewer than five employees and 94% have fewer than 50 employees.

Sources: <http://www.hawaii.gov>,
<http://www.gohawaii.com>,
<http://www.census.gov>



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

QUICK FACTS

Abbreviation: HI

Capital City: Honolulu

Governor: Linda Lingle

Date of Statehood: August 21, 1959

Population: 1,288,198 (2008)

Land area: 10,932 sq.mi., 43th largest

Origin of State's Name: the name comes from a combination of the words "*Hawa*" and "*ii*" and means a small or new homeland. Alternatively, the name stems from the traditional discoverer of the islands, *Hawaii Loa*.

Largest Cities: Honolulu, Hilo, Kailua, Kaneohe, Waipahu, Pearl City, Waimalu.

Major industries: Tourism, food processing, apparel, fabricated metal products, stone, clay, agriculture and glass products.

Continued from front page

No official estimate of the crowd's size is available, but the Washington Post reported that about two million people came to the National Mall. They boarded crowded trains miles outside the city and lined up at security checkpoints in Washington before dawn in below-freezing temperatures, knowing that the closest view they would get of the president was on one of the many large television screens scattered across the Mall.

Millions of Americans, at homes and in offices, watched the moment that many see as a milestone in U.S. history. In cities like New York and Los Angeles, crowds gathered in public squares to watch Obama's speech on large television screens. At military bases overseas, American soldiers crowded around televisions.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Moments after taking the oath, President Obama gave his first speech, known as the Inaugural Address. He spoke not only to Americans, but to millions across the globe who closely watched the 2008 campaign, election and transition.

"To all other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born: Know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and that we are ready to lead once more," the President said.

"Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please," Obama said. "Instead, they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint."

Obama spoke of strengthening cooperation with allies on global problems such as climate change and nuclear threats. The United States can "no longer afford indifference to suffering outside our borders," Obama said.

The President said the United States seeks to usher in a new era of peace in which it will seek to build a relationship with the Muslim world based on mutual interest and respect.

Obama also had a message for America's enemies. To terrorists, Obama said, America's spirit "is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you."

Discussing the challenges that lie ahead, including wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and a struggling economy, Obama said, "The challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America — they will be met."

Obama said the United States will begin to responsibly leave Iraq and forge a "hard-earned peace" in Afghanistan. He said

his administration will improve infrastructure and alternative energies to contribute to economic growth.

"Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends — honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism — these things are old," he said.

A DEMOCRATIC TRADITION

The 56th presidential inauguration began much as it had since America's earliest days. Obama and his wife, Michelle, attended a service at St. John's Church near the White House and then headed to the White House for coffee with President Bush and Laura Bush. Obama traveled with President Bush to the Capitol for the formal swearing-in ceremony and the Inaugural Address, after which the Bushes departed as private citizens via helicopter, on their way to their new home in Texas.

The new president joined members of Congress and government officials for a luncheon in the Capitol before embarking on more celebratory events, including a parade and 10 inaugural balls.

Inauguration Day, marking an unbroken tradition of peaceful transfers of power, is a hallmark of American democracy, but Obama noted in his speech that the inauguration of the first African-American president is especially historic.

"A man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath," Obama said, receiving one of the loudest cheers of his speech. "So let us mark this day with remembrance, of who we are and how far we have traveled."

A transcript of Obama's Inaugural Address is available on the Embassy's website.



President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama dance together at the Obama Home States Inaugural Ball in Washington, Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2009. (© AP Images)

Michelle Obama Presents Modern Image for Black Women

Helping families find work-life balance will be one of her causes

Every time Michelle Obama appears as First Lady, the combination of her professional and domestic success challenges stereotypical media images of black women in America.

As the first black woman to become first lady of the United States, Michelle Obama is shattering generations-old stereotypes about black women and working mothers. "To have a black woman in that position brings black women into the forefront as full-fledged American women and, more importantly, ladies," Andra Gillespie, a political science professor at Emory University, told America.gov. "It affirms black women's womanhood, their humanity, their femininity."

A graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Law School, Michelle Obama had a successful career as a corporate lawyer and executive at the University of Chicago Medical Center before her husband, Barack Obama, won the U.S. presidential election. The accomplished professional woman with a stable marriage and two cute, well-behaved daughters contrasts sharply with media images of black women as overweight, overbearing figures of fun in slapstick movies or hypersexual dancers in music videos.

"Popular depictions either cast them as emasculating shrews or sex objects to be exploited," Gillespie said. "For a generation of young girls, they now get to see a very positive image of what a black woman looks like. ... She's in a good position to be a positive image for American society and also for black America."

The history of black women being stigmatized in the United States comes out of slavery, which tore apart black families and allowed white male slave owners to abuse black women, Bart Landry, a sociology professor at the University of Maryland, told America.gov.

After the Civil War ended slavery, black women "were seen as part of the work force that would rebuild the economy of the South," Landry said. While many white women were shunning paid jobs in favor of "the cult of domesticity" prevalent in the 19th century, black women "were ridiculed for playing the lady."

Though negative overall, this message had the side benefit of freeing black women to pursue career success without the ambivalence that many white women experienced when they left the domestic sphere, said Landry, author of *Black Working Wives*.

Indeed, black women today are more likely to achieve higher education degrees than black men as black women earn 57 percent of all bachelor's and professional degrees awarded to African Americans, according to Census Bureau data. More education generally translates into higher earning power.

Thus, Michelle Obama presents another important image: a black woman who is successful professionally but also a devoted mother and wife. During her husband's presidential

campaign, she insisted on being home for ballet recitals or sports that involved her daughters and only rarely stayed away overnight, according to David Colbert, author of *Michelle Obama: An American Story*.

"Black women are extremely encouraged and proud to see someone like Michelle Obama in the White House," Tarshia Stanley, an associate professor at Spelman College in Atlanta, told America.gov. "She's representative of a huge group of people who take their mothering seriously, who do it well, but haven't gotten press."

The night that Barack Obama won the U.S. presidential election, he thanked his wife as "my best friend for the last 16 years, the rock of our family, the love of my life, the nation's next First Lady."

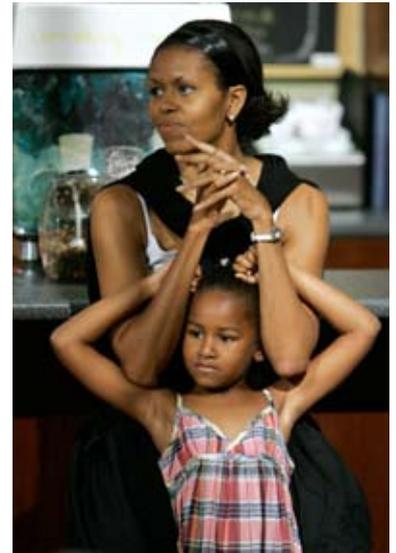
"All women admire the way he speaks about her and values her. It's very appealing," Liza Mundy, a Washington Post staff writer and author of *Michelle: A Biography*, told America.gov.

Both Barack and Michelle Obama have spoken frankly about the difficulty in balancing home life with her work and Barack Obama's political career. "There's no question that it was tough. She had this very demanding job at the university," Colbert said. "If he was at work, he was far away. If he wasn't, he was thinking about it. He was always writing a book."

Eventually, Michelle Obama started getting up at 4:30 a.m. to exercise at the gym on the days that her husband was in town. When the girls woke up, Barack Obama would have to feed and dress them because she wasn't there, he said.

As first lady, she plans to advocate for work-life balance. But even if Barack Obama hadn't won the presidential race, she hoped his candidacy would correct misperceptions of black families.

"Michelle Obama said from the start of the campaign, 'If all I do is show that we're not all from welfare families or [all] athletes, but we're ordinary professionals in functional families, that will be enough,'" Mundy said.



Michelle Obama sits with her daughter, Sasha, during an Iowa campaign event in 2007. (© AP Images)

American Film Festival Draws Enthusiastic Audience

On November 14-16, the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan held an American Film Festival, attracting an audience of many enthusiastic young people. Held at the Muzey Kino (Theater Museum), the three-day festival mixed old American movies with new and provided the audience with a taste of the wide variety of American films. Before each film, Embassy staff conducted a quiz on topics related to the movie. The audience member that answered each question correctly won an English language book or film on DVD.

The festival opened on Friday night with *Pay it Forward* (2000), a film that emphasizes the importance of giving back to others. This film, which was shown in English with Russian subtitles, highlights the American tradition of community service and of helping those in need. On Saturday, the Embassy presented three classic films: *West Side Story*



Guests pick up handout materials at the Film Festival. (U.S. Embassy photo)



A sea of hands goes up during the movie quiz. (U.S. Embassy photo)

(1961), *The Searchers* (1956), and *Roman Holiday* (1953) (in English with Russian subtitles). While most audience members watched *West Side Story* and *The Searchers* for the first time at the festival, *Roman Holiday* has long been popular in Uzbekistan. Several audience members commented that they were nonetheless glad the Embassy showed it at the festival, because this was the first time they had ever seen it in English. For many, it was also their first time viewing the film in its entirety.

On the final day, audience members watched three newer movies: *Toy Story* (1995), *Dave* (1993), and *Forrest Gump* (1994). *Toy Story*, an animated feature or cartoon, drew a younger audience and gave the film festival appeal for all ages.

Between 100 and 150 guests from all walks of life attended each film, all of which were shown free of charge. The guests included high school and university students, foreign diplomats, journalists, and Embassy cultural contacts, as well as members of the general public. In addition to the prizes given out during the quizzes, guests could also pick up books and journals on American culture and films and the recent

presidential election. The event was such a success that the Embassy is already planning for future film festivals.

If you are interested in watching American films in English, you can join the Embassy's English Language Chai Chat Conversation Club once a month on Friday at 15:00 to watch an American movie. Recent movies have included *Dead Poets Society*, *Runaway Jury*, and *I am Sam*. Not only do Chai 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. Similar to the film festival, before each movie, members of the Embassy staff also 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.

Visit <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/irc.html> to see this month's Chai Chat schedule and to find out when and what the next film will be. If you would like to attend, you should call the Embassy at 120-5450 at least two days in advance to sign up.



A quiz winner gets a DVD of classic American film as a prize from Cultural Affairs Officer Stephanie Fitzmaurice. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Chai Chat Audience Interprets the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



Mr. Fitzmaurice explains the UDHR to the Chai Chat audience. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On December 12, Embassy Political Officer Richard Fitzmaurice spoke to a full room of Chai Chat Conversation Club guests about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This event, which attracted a record crowd, was part of the U.S. Embassy's activities to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the signing of the UDHR. Attendees participated actively in the event, answering quiz questions, working in teams during group activities, and making their own brief presentations in front of the audience.

During his presentation, Mr. Fitzmaurice described the UDHR's history and significance as an internationally-recognized document that protects the rights of individuals worldwide. He highlighted the fact that the U.S. played a key role in creating the UDHR, which is the only international document signed by every country in the world.

Then he explained that the UDHR contains 30 articles, which focus on civil and political rights that protect individuals from government and state-condoned private abuses, and economic, social and cultural rights, such as access to education and the right to work. Mr. Fitzmaurice also pointed out that the document is universal, which means that it applies to all people everywhere.

Mr. Fitzmaurice noted that the UDHR was one of the first international agreements that Uzbekistan signed after it became independent. In his decree on the 60th Anniversary of the UDHR, President Karimov also recognized the UDHR as forming the framework of international human rights law.

Next, Mr. Fitzmaurice asked the Chai Chat participants to explain what human rights mean to them. He broke the audience up into groups for two different activities. First, each group chose one statement about human rights from a list and decided which article of the UDHR best matched their statement. They also explained in their own words what that article meant. Through this first activity, audience members became more familiar with the various articles of the UDHR.

The second group activity then required participants to apply this knowledge, by imagining their own planet, naming it, and then creating their own declaration of the 10 most important human rights for their planet. Most groups included such rights as education and preserving the environment in their declarations.

During the Q&A session after the activities, the guests asked Mr. Fitzmaurice questions about the U.S. government's actions to prevent human rights abuses, such as those in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and the rights of foreign students in the United States.

Mr. Fitzmaurice told the audience that it was important for all signatory countries to adhere to the articles of the declaration, acknowledging that no country, including the U.S., is perfect. He added that while the U.S. government monitors human rights practices in other countries, it is also open to feedback and criticism regarding the human rights situation in its own country.

The Chai Chat Club is held every Friday at the American Embassy at 16:00. Visit <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/irc.html> to see the latest schedule and call the Embassy at 120-5450 at least two days in advance to sign up to attend any presentation.

On the last Friday of the month, the Chai Chat often features an American movie, which is shown at 15:00. The procedure for reserving a spot for the movie is the same.



Guests create a declaration for their new planet. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Embassy's 2nd Annual International Education Fair a Hit!



English language resources on display at the fair. (U.S. Embassy photo)

The U.S. Embassy held its 2nd Annual International Education Fair on November 20, drawing 350 guests who came to learn about international study opportunities for citizens of Uzbekistan. This event allowed the Embassy to showcase its Educational Advising Center and many popular exchange programs. Additionally 13 outside organizations also participated, including English language centers, an English language book publisher, foreign testing centers, several foreign universities with branches in Tashkent and a number of other Embassies' cultural and educational centers.

U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan Richard Norland welcomed guests to the International Education Fair, explaining that the Embassy was sponsoring it to celebrate International Education Week and emphasizing that students should try to learn about opportunities for study in all of the countries represented at the fair, including Germany, Great Britain, France, Japan and Russia. After the Ambassador's remarks, Public Affairs Officer Carol Fajardo held a raffle, giving away educational materials, such as TOEFL test preparation kits and English dictionaries.

Attendees were of all ages, including high school students, university students and teachers who brought their students along to learn more about overseas study opportunities. Alumni of U.S. government educational exchange programs pitched in to make the event a success by helping to distribute raffle tickets and manning many of the booths. In addition to answering questions from students and teachers about the exchange programs, they personalized the programs by sharing photos and stories from their own experience in the United States.

The Embassy held this event to commemorate International Education Week, which is a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education. Celebrated in more than 100 countries around the world, Inter-

national Education Week promotes programs that prepare Americans for a global environment and attracts future leaders from abroad to study, learn and exchange experiences in the United States. International Education Week also serves as an opportunity to celebrate the benefits of international education and exchange, which are critical to developing mutual understanding and respect between the peoples of different countries.

If you would like to learn more about U.S.-government sponsored exchange programs, you can visit the U.S. Embassy's homepage at <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/exchanges>. The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy administers a broad spectrum of programs for high school and university students, advanced scholars and professionals. The Embassy recently introduced an exciting new exchange program, its Fulbright Visiting Student Program, which is open to citizens of Uzbekistan who have a bachelor's degree. The program allows them to pursue a master's degree in the U.S. in the humanities, social sciences or hard sciences.



A guest wins a dictionary in the International Education Fair raffle. (U.S. Embassy photo)

You can also learn more about opportunities to study in the U.S. through the Embassy's Educational Advising Center (EAC) at <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/advising>. The EAC offers many services free of charge, including consultations on educational opportunities in the U.S.; individual advising in areas of study and course descriptions; test preparation materials for SAT, TOEFL, GRE and GMAT that can be used during consultation hours; a U.S. college selection database; supporting reference materials; financial aid resources; application guides; and guides to Distance Learning. The Educational Advisor can answer questions by e-mail or in person. Individual advising sessions are by appointment from 13:00-17:00, Monday to Thursday. To schedule an appointment, please call 120-5450 between 9:30 and 12:00 Monday through Friday or e-mail Tashkent-Advising@state.gov.

Online Higher Education Gets High Marks from Educators

Students appreciate the flexibility and lower cost

More than one-fifth of all students involved in higher education in the United States — 3.9 million students — were taking at least one online course during the fall of 2007. According to a new report, students, faculty and college administrators agree that e-learning reduces or eliminates such barriers to higher education as distance, time, commuting costs, scheduling conflicts and child care. In addition, growing numbers of students already on campus are finding online courses can meet specific needs and complement their regular courses.

The report, *Staying the Course: Online Education in the United States, 2008*, was supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Based on responses from more than 2,500 colleges and universities, it found that the explosive growth of online education shows no sign of slowing as the number of online students has more than doubled in the last five years, growing at a compound annual rate of 19.7 percent.

E-learning can increase degree completion rates and decrease the amount of time students need to get a degree.

For example, Robert Schroeder, while an undergraduate student at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York, enrolled in several courses online through the College of Lake County (CLC), a community college in the northeastern suburbs of Chicago.

He took two classes — principles of marketing and business writing — while living at home about 20 minutes from campus during the summer break after his first year at Ithaca. He took three more online courses — introduction to psychology, introduction to sociology and macroeconomics — during the fall and spring semesters while enrolled at Ithaca.

“I was a double major — journalism and sport media — at Ithaca College,” Schroeder said, adding: “The only way for me to complete both majors and study abroad, which was a major priority for me, was to take these online classes. Flexibility and cost were major concerns for me.”

In citing the flexibility and cost savings of online learning as key factors, Schroeder was agreeing with the overwhelming majority of online students, more than half of whom enroll in courses offered by community colleges.

Many online students have full-time jobs, are in the military, have families or some combination of the three. Studies repeatedly have shown that time and money are the major obstacles to higher education.

Public institutions are more likely to see online learning as critical to their long-term strategy, according to the report, and more than two-thirds of colleges and universities agree that there is now competition for students in online courses and programs. Course offerings are also now common in all discipline areas, with the single exception of engineering, in which relatively few institutions offer fully online programs.

The overwhelming majority of chief academic officers at

community colleges say that their faculty accepts the value and legitimacy of online education, while slightly less than two-fifths of those at four-year colleges agree.

Schroeder said there was a definite difference in the difficulty of the courses he took online.

“The writing class was not difficult, mainly because it involved a lot of creative thinking and individual effort, concepts you don’t really need an in-class experience to reinforce,” he said. Similarly, the psychology and sociology classes “really lent themselves to the online experience,” and Schroeder took advantage of compact disk programs that came with each textbook, online studies and other supplementary material.

“On the other hand, I found the marketing and macroeconomics courses to be tougher online,” he said. “Granted, these classes did have online discussion boards to ask questions, but without a classroom setting, you really were on your own to grasp some difficult concepts. I think classes like these that include distinct principles and laws governed by numbers are more difficult to learn on your own than a social science class, where laws and principles can be more easily interpreted and applied to your own life.”

Online educational institutions vary in the amount and kinds of support available to students, although the trend is toward more support. For example, you can connect to live tutors 24 hours a day, seven days a week from any computer that has Internet access when you become one of the more than 50,000 students enrolled with Minnesota Online, which offers thousands of online courses and more than 200 degree, certificate and diploma programs through 32 colleges and universities in the state of Minnesota.

Minnesota Online has won national and international awards for its innovative use of technology to support students, who have such online resources as a writing lab with online instructors critiquing and returning essays within 24 hours and online instructors available to work with students in real time.

Summing up his own experience, Schroeder felt the flexibility of being able to take his online courses at his own pace more than made up for the lack of interaction in a physical classroom. “I was able to take advantage of times when my Ithaca classes had lighter workloads to cram a bunch of work in and to get ahead.”

“Having the flexibility to complete course material at my leisure and not having to spend time going to class was really a huge positive in allowing me to take on such a large class load,” Schroeder said.

Staying the Course: Online Education in the United States, 2008 (PDF, 28 pages) is available on the Web site of the Sloan Foundation at http://www.sloan-c.org/publications/survey/pdf/staying_the_course.pdf.

English Language Education Expert Advises Teachers to Invest in Themselves

November and December were busy months for the U.S. Embassy's English Language Program office in Uzbekistan. Regional English Language Officer (RELO) Andrea Schindler came to Uzbekistan for her second visit. English Language Specialists Dr. Christine Coombe and Peter Davidson also visited for one week to conduct workshops for English teachers in Bukhara and Samarkand.

Although Ms. Schindler works in the U.S. Embassy in Astana, Kazakhstan, she is responsible for consulting on English language activities in all five countries of Central Asia, including Uzbekistan. During this visit to Uzbekistan, she accompanied Dr. Coombe and Mr. Davidson to Bukhara and Samarkand and also visited Khiva and Urgench to conduct workshops for English teachers in Khorezm.

This was also Dr. Coombe's second visit to Uzbekistan, so the Public Affairs Section staff took this opportunity to ask her some questions about herself and her experiences in Uzbekistan. Dr. Coombe has a Ph.D in Foreign/Second Language Education and Testing from Ohio State University. She is currently on the English faculty of Dubai Men's College and works as an Assessment Leader



Dr. Coombe explains the basics of language testing. (U.S. Embassy photo)

for the Higher Colleges of Technology. She has lived and worked in the Persian Gulf for the past 15 years. During that time she has served as President of TESOL Arabia and as the founder and co-chair of the TESOL Arabia Testing, Assessment and Evaluation Special Interest Group who organize the Current Trends in English Language Testing (CTELT) Conference.

What do you consider to be your most significant professional achievement?

My most significant professional achievement is chairing the 2006 [Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages] TESOL Convention in Tampa, Florida, from half-way around the world in Dubai. That was a particularly difficult job, as I also chaired the TESOL Arabia Conference and the TESOL Symposium on Vocabulary about two weeks later. Of course, should I be elected TESOL President on January 13th, that will be my most significant achievement.

Can you tell us a bit about your book, *A Practical Guide to Assessing English Language Learners*? Is it geared towards a particular type of teacher?

The publication of *A Practical Guide to Assessing English Language Learners* was another significant achievement in my professional life. For years I'd been talking about how I wanted to sit down and do it, but I kept telling myself that I was too busy. The book is aimed at teachers of all levels who want to learn how to write tests (not just read about them). The practical activities in the book are widely acclaimed and popular with teachers in workshops. 2006 was a whirlwind of activity for me (see above), and it was the year I wrote this book!



Christine Coombe, Peter Davidson, and Andrea Schindler enjoy visiting Shah-i-Zinda in Samarkand. (U.S. Embassy photo)

What are your future plans concerning this book?

I am currently working on two other assessment books which I feel will add to the knowledge base and should be very practical for teachers. Firstly, I'm coordinating *A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment*, which will focus on different types of assessment in addition to traditional types of tests, i.e. portfolios, projects, presentations, etc. An edited volume is currently being planned, which will include short, practical chapters on all aspects of assessment written by experts in the field.

Some teachers may be intimidated by the field of assessment. Is there one easy tool or strategy that teachers can implement in their classrooms to help them better assess students on a day-to-day basis?

It is important to note that assessment generally gets bad press. Most teachers, as you say, are intimidated by it. The reason for this is that they simply don't have the training. In our graduate education classes when we learn to



Workshop participants work on a sample test in pairs. (U.S. Embassy photo)

be teachers, we feel fairly confident about running a classroom and teaching a lesson upon graduation. One thing we have to do as well on a daily basis once we're in our own classroom is participate in assessment or assessment-related activities, and because of the lack of training, we just don't feel confident enough. I think that participation in workshops like the FLAs that were conducted in Uzbekistan and the summer institutes (two week intensive training programs) that I've conducted all over the world are good tools to help teachers develop assessment literacy.

Please tell us a bit about your two visits to Uzbekistan. What was it like working with Uzbek teachers, and what did you enjoy most about your visits?

Thus far in my two visits to Uzbekistan, I've gotten to

meet with lots of teachers. The thing that struck me the most is the thirst for knowledge and the appreciation of the teachers. Most of the time in teacher training sessions, you can only really get in two to three hours of serious training interspersed with practical activities. However, Uzbek teachers seemed ready to stay and learn all day! I'm especially grateful to the U.S. [Department of State] who completely funded my first trip out and co-sponsored the FLAs in Samarkand and Bukhara.

What advice would you offer to any teacher of English?

I advise teachers to invest in themselves through taking advantage of the many programs and grant possibilities that are on offer. The best thing I ever did for myself was attend my first TESOL Conference in New York City many years ago. I still remember mulling over whether I should spend almost two months salary on going to a convention. I decided to go and have never been sorry. The convention shaped me as a professional, and now almost 20 years later

I am on the ballot for president! It seems amazing. So my advice is for teachers to look for conference opportunities close to them like UzTEA and CATEC [Central Asian Teachers of English Conference], submit a proposal to present and try to attend. I guarantee the experience will be life changing.

Visit <http://www.tesol.org> to learn more about TESOL. You can also visit the Embassy's English Language Programs page at <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/relo.html> for more information about the U.S. Department of State's English language programs and activities in Uzbekistan.

If you would like to receive emails from the Embassy with information about educational opportunities for English language teachers and students, please send an email to Tashkent-advising@state.gov.



RELO Andrea Schindler explains an activity to teachers in Urgench. (U.S. Embassy photo)

American Automaker Expands Presence in Uzbekistan



Ground-breaking ceremony for a new Powertrain joint venture in Uzbekistan: GM Powertrain Europe Vice President Mike Arcamone (on the right) and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan Ulugbek Rozukulov. (GM Photo)

On Dec. 18, a ground-breaking ceremony commenced construction on the new GM Powertrain Uzbekistan plant in Tashkent. This new joint venture will manufacture small, fuel-efficient General Motors engines (1.0-, 1.2-, 1.4- and 1.5-liter gasoline engines) for the Uzbekistan market and fu-



A GM Powertrain plant. A similar manufacturing operation will soon open in Uzbekistan, employing 1,200 people. (GM Photo)

ture vehicle operations in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The capacity of the plant will initially match demand from GM Uzbekistan, with a maximum capacity of 360,000 units a year. Production operations are scheduled to begin in March 2011.

The new joint venture GM Powertrain Uzbekistan is a separate entity, but is managed in coordination with GM Uzbekistan. General Motors holds the majority 52 percent stake in the new operation. GM Uzbekistan, which was established in October 2007, employs approximately 5,000 people, and



A worker at a GM powertrain plant. (GM Photo)

the new GM Powertrain Uzbekistan joint venture will create 1,200 additional jobs.

GM Uzbekistan currently builds a range of Chevrolet and GM Daewoo vehicles including Captiva, Epica, Lacetti, Nexia, Matiz and Damas in Asaka, Andijan province. In 2008, GM Uzbekistan expected to produce approximately 200,000 vehicles and plans to sell 85,000 of these in Uzbekistan, with additional Chevrolet models to be added to over the next three years.

Congress Moves on Help for Ailing Economy

Obama likely to have economic medicine at his disposal quickly

Congress moved to prevent the U.S. economy from getting worse by launching debate on a huge economic stimulus plan and by voting to make the rest of the financial rescue funds available to incoming President Barack Obama.

Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives unveiled January 15 an \$825 billion economic recovery bill aimed at halting the slide of the U.S. economy and stemming job losses. The Senate is working on its own version of the measure.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi presented the stimulus proposal as the first step in the legislative process, which is likely to involve intense haggling over the details and the cost of the measure between Democrats and Republicans in Congress, between the House and the Senate, and between the Congress and the new administration. Congressional observers believe the cost of the package is likely to grow before a final version ready for a vote.

To become law, the bill must be approved by both chambers and signed by the president.

Congressional Democrats, who are a majority in both the House and Senate, hope to pass the stimulus bill by mid-February.

The bulk of the money — about \$550 billion — would support spending on infrastructure, renewable energy, health care and educational projects as well as on the social safety net. The rest of the money would cover tax cuts that would offer relief for businesses and middle-class taxpayers.

“We have more money for investments because we believe that is where job creation is greater,” Pelosi said.

Most economists agree that stimulus funds should be spent quickly and efficiently to have a significant effect on the economy.

Democratic leaders expect the money largely to be spent over the next two years.

Obama, who has pressed for sizable public spending to help the economic recovery, hailed the package as “a significant down payment on our most urgent challenges.”

Although the main provisions are similar to what he sought, he did not get everything. For example, his idea of tax cuts tied to jobs created or retained by companies is missing from the proposed bill. This and another of Obama’s tax-cutting ideas were supported by congressional Republicans, who expressed disappointment over the content and the high cost of the Democratic measure.

House Minority Leader John Boehner criticized the lack of bipartisanship in shaping the bill, saying it “appears to be grounded in the flawed notion that we can simply borrow



Renewable-energy projects, such as this wind turbine installation in Ohio, are likely to get a boost from the stimulus bill. (© AP Images)

and spend our way back to prosperity.” House Republicans are working on their own version of a recovery plan.

CAPITAL MARKETS REMAIN CONCERNED

In a separate action on the same day, the Senate voted to release the second part of the \$700 billion financial rescue fund approved by Congress in October 2008. Because the release of the remaining \$350 billion could have been blocked only by disapproval of both chambers, the Senate’s vote, in practice, makes the money available to Obama once he takes office January 20.

Many economists believe the new president will need the rescue money quickly to further stabilize the ailing financial sector. Early this year, the U.S. central bank and government came to the rescue of two financial giants — Citigroup and Bank of America — with cash and guarantees on troubled assets.

The Senate vote is an early win for Obama, who sought the funds and personally contacted his former Senate colleagues from both parties. Many of them are frustrated by the way the first \$350 billion were used, which was made available as the Troubled Asset Relief Program.

The summary and full text of the stimulus bill can be viewed on the House of Representatives Web site at <http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/PressSummary01-15-09.pdf> and <http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/RecoveryBill01-15-09.pdf>, respectively.

U.S. Foreign Policy Sees Early Shifts under New Administration

President Obama began altering the course of U.S. foreign policy less than 48 hours after taking office, taking steps to make clear that the country's goals and objectives will be consistent with American values and the rule of law.

Saying "we have no time to lose," Obama summed up in a clipped response how urgent he believes it is to reinvigorate American diplomacy and to chart a new course in foreign relations.

After signing executive orders and issuing new directions to the intelligence community, Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden appeared at the State Department on Jan. 22 with newly confirmed Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to announce the appointment of special envoys.

In two days, the new administration set a pace for taking action not seen in previous administrations. Working from the White House and State Department headquarters several city blocks apart, Obama announced the closure of the Guantánamo Bay detention center in Cuba, abolishment of harsh interrogation methods by intelligence officers, halting of military tribunals for suspected terrorists at Guantánamo for at least 120 days and ending of secret prisons maintained by the intelligence community abroad. He also appointed two special diplomatic envoys to deal with Arab-Israeli peace and Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In so doing, Obama set a precise standard for U.S. behavior in its relations with others.

"I think the American people understand that we are not, as I said in the inauguration, going to continue with a false choice between our safety and our ideals. We think that it is precisely our ideals that give us the strength and the moral high ground to be able to effectively deal with the unthinking violence that we see emanating from terrorist organizations around the world," he said moments after announcing the closure of the Guantánamo detention center.

The President said that by his actions he is restoring the standards of due process and the core constitutional values that define the United States "even in the midst of war, even in dealing with terrorism."

GUANTÁNAMO AND DETAINEES

The changes began with the treatment and detention of detainees at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

Using a process known as executive orders, the President on January 22 ordered the Guantánamo facility closed within a year, a process that he acknowledged will be difficult. He also put together a panel of senior government officials to determine within 30 days whether the remaining 245 detainees at Guantánamo would be released, transferred to other countries or tried in U.S. courts.

The problem, the President said, is that some of the detain-

ees cannot be tried because of various problems related to evidence under federal laws. Evidence collection under U.S. laws must be carried out under exacting standards before a federal judge will even consider allowing it to be used at a criminal trial.

At the same time, the President signed an executive order that abolishes any secret prisons that have been used by the U.S. intelligence community abroad for dealing with terrorists. He also ordered that any interrogations carried out will be under the terms of a U.S. Army field manual on interrogations, which is consistent with U.S. treaties and the humane treatment of prisoners under international laws and obligations.

The 2006 Army manual the president cited in his executive order — Field Manual 2-22.3, "Human Intelligence Collector Operations" — complies with the Geneva Conventions and all of its protocols. It explicitly prohibits torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, and is also in compliance with the U.S. Detainee Treatment Act of 2005.

"We believe that the Army field manual reflects the best judgment of our military — that we can abide by a rule that says we don't torture, but that we can still effectively obtain the intelligence that we need," Obama said.

"This is me following through on not just a commitment I made during the [presidential] campaign, but I think an understanding that dates back to our Founding Fathers, that we are willing to observe core standards of conduct not just when it's easy, but also when it's hard."

Retired Navy Admiral Dennis Blair told the Senate Intelligence Committee on January 22 that the Army manual will be reviewed for any necessary changes to comply with the president's orders, and it will be called "the manual for government interrogations." Blair was testifying at his confirmation hearing to become Director of National Intelligence.

"I do not and I will not support any surveillance activities that circumvent established processes or their lawful authorization," he testified. "Torture is not moral, not legal, not effective. The U.S. government will have a clear and consistent standard for the treatment of detainees."

TWO ENVOYS

Secretary Clinton announced at the State Department on January 22 that former U.S. Senator George Mitchell would be joining the administration as Special Envoy for Middle East peace and would be focusing on Arab-Israeli issues. Mitchell led efforts under the Clinton administration to push peace in Northern Ireland, and led an international commission that investigated violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

Clinton also announced that former U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, who negotiated the Dayton Accords to end the 1992–1995 Balkan Wars, would return to serve as Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Defense Secretary Gates Says Afghanistan Is Significant Challenge

Congressional panels hear first testimony on new U.S. security policies

President Obama considers Afghanistan the “greatest military challenge” facing the United States as it works against an aggressive Taliban insurgency to bring peace and security, Defense Secretary Robert Gates says.

At a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing January 27, Gates said that “as you know, the United States has focused more on Central Asia in recent months. President Obama has made it clear that the Afghanistan theater should be our top overseas military priority.”

Gates’ assessment comes as Obama is considering options for an earlier-than-scheduled drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq. During his campaign for president, Obama expressed a goal of drawing down U.S. forces within 16 months of taking office, well ahead of the December 2011 deadline specified in the Status of Forces Agreement with the Iraqi government.

The Defense Secretary testified that Pentagon planners are drawing up several scenarios for ending active U.S. military engagement in Iraq, and Obama is scheduled to meet with the Joints Chiefs of Staff January 28 at the Pentagon to discuss them.

“The challenges facing the [Defense] Department at home and abroad are extraordinary. Foremost will be shifting the emphasis and the balance between two ongoing wars, drawing down in Iraq as we build up in Afghanistan,” Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin said. Senator John McCain, the ranking Republican on the committee, echoed Levin’s remarks in saying that “in all these areas and more, we face enormous and difficult decisions.”

It is Gates’ first hearing since the new administration took office January 20. Gates testified that the coordination of international efforts in Afghanistan has been less than successful, and must be improved to be effective and long-lasting.

“There are more than 40 nations, hundreds of NGOs [non-governmental organizations], universities, development banks, the United Nations, the European Union, NATO and more involved in Afghanistan — all working to help a nation beset by crushing poverty, a thriving drug trade fueling corruption, a ruthless and resilient insurgency and violent extremists of many stripes, not the least of which is al-Qaida,” Gates said. But he said there are assessments being made that should help provide an integrated way forward to unify these various efforts.

As in Iraq, there is no purely military solution in Afghanistan, Gates said, but the size of the Afghan national army needs to increase from a current strength of 80,000 troops to 134,000. While increasing the size of the army is important, of equal importance is enhancing the army’s training, he said.

The United States is increasing the size of its force in Afghanistan from about 34,000 troops now to nearly double that size. Gates said that there will be two additional combat



Bulldozers and other heavy machinery work to lay a new roadway during a construction project in the city of Kabul, Afghanistan. (© AP Images)

brigades added by late spring and a third brigade by mid-summer. “While this will undoubtedly be a long and difficult fight, we can attain what I believe should be among our strategic objectives: an Afghan people who do not provide a safe haven for al-Qaida, reject the rule of the Taliban and support the legitimate government that they elected and in which they have a stake,” Gates said.

IRAQ DRAWDOWN, OTHER CHALLENGES

The drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq is currently part of a schedule developed in the recently approved Status of Forces Agreement that requires all troops be withdrawn by December 2011. “It is a watershed — a firm indication that American military involvement is winding down,” Gates said.

Although violence in Iraq has remained low, he added, there is still the potential for setbacks.

Gates said other national security issues facing the United States include these:

- The vexing challenges presented by both North Korea and Iran with regard to the development of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons;
- Missile defense in Europe against potential rogue states such as Iran armed with nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them. Gates said there is a potential for further cooperation with Russia on a European-based missile defense system, and the United States will explore those possibilities;
- Expanded Chinese investment and growing capabilities in cyber- and anti-satellite warfare, anti-air and anti-ship weaponry, submarines and ballistic missiles;

The text of Gates’ testimony as prepared for delivery (PDF, 13 pages) is available on the Senate Armed Services Committee Website at <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2009/January/Gates%2001-27-09.pdf>.



CONTEST!

U.S. Embassy Launches Media Reporting Contest for 2009

To encourage professional reporting on U.S.-related issues, the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan is pleased to announce a contest in 2009 for journalists in Uzbekistan.

Eligibility

The contest is open to all TV, radio, newspaper, and internet journalists based in Uzbekistan. Regional journalists are especially encouraged to participate.

Successful media reports will feature a U.S.-related theme which could include, but are not limited to: developments in education, culture, foreign policy, trade, business, people-to-people relations, the arts, etc.

Both factual and opinion pieces can be submitted in Uzbek, Russian and/or English.

Judging Criteria

The media reports will be judged based on how successfully they:

- Demonstrate thoughtful, well-researched, balanced reporting
- Develop convincing arguments supported with specific examples and/or facts
- Communicate ideas clearly
- Are written in a compelling and original manner
- Deepen Uzbek audiences' understanding of the United States

U.S. Embassy representatives will select the top submissions. The prizes will be presented at the December 2009 PressGap.

Deadline for Entries

For a media report to be considered in the contest, please forward the following to TashkentPressCenter@state.gov within 10 days of when the report is broadcast/printed, but no later than **Tuesday, December 1, 2009**:

- The author's name, organization, and contact information
- Text of the report
- Date it will be or was published/aired/posted
- Name or address of the newspaper/TV and Radio channel/website which published/aired/posted the report

Prizes

First Prize:

- Award certificate
- Digital video camera

Second Prize:

- Award certificate
- Digital photo camera

Third Prize:

- Award certificate
- DVD player

If the U.S. Embassy receives a large quantity of excellent reports, multiple prize winners may be recognized in each prize bracket.

Questions

Please send all inquiries to TashkentPressCenter@state.gov



Democracy Commission Small Grants Program

The purpose of the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program is to award small grants for specific projects that support the development of democratic institutions in Uzbekistan. Grants will be awarded to non-governmental, non-profit organizations (NGOs) and media outlets, not individuals.

To be eligible for consideration, the applicant must be engaged in, or propose to carry out, a project relating to:

- building democratic institutions
- fostering a strong and independent media
- supporting civic education
- respecting the rule of law
- protecting human rights
- furthering women's political and social rights
- supporting market reforms
- protecting the environment

Proposals must be sent via e-mail to TashkentGrant@state.gov. Supporting documents and appli-

cations for organizations that do not have access to e-mail can be sent to:

Democracy Commission
Public Affairs Section
Embassy of the United States of America
3 Moyqorghon Street, 5th Block, Yunusobod District
Tashkent 100093, Uzbekistan

In case of any questions about the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program, please contact:

Democracy Commission Small Grants Coordinator
Embassy of the United States of America
3 Moyqorghon Street, 5th Block, Yunusobod District
Tashkent 100093, Uzbekistan
Phone: (+998-71) 140-2441
Fax: (+998-71) 120-6302
E-mail: TashkentGrant@state.gov
Website: <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/demcom>

Educational Advising Center at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent

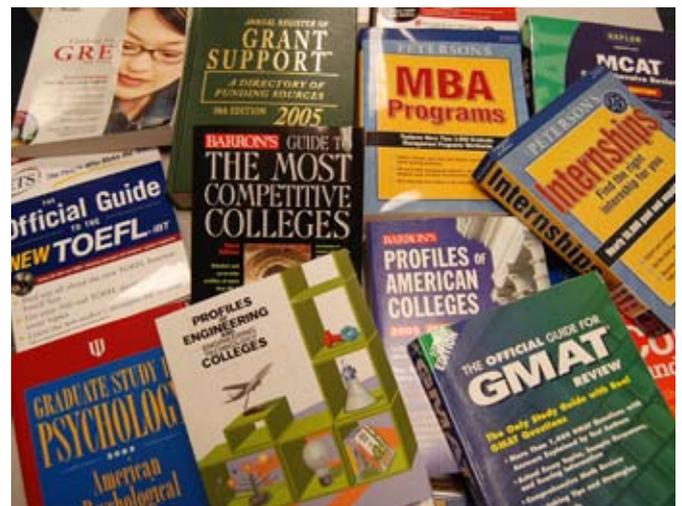


The Educational Advising Center offers the following services free of charge:

- general information about educational opportunities in the U.S.
- individual advising in areas of study and course descriptions
- test preparation materials for SAT, TOEFL, GRE and GMAT that can be used during consultation hours
- U.S. college selection database
- supporting reference materials
- financial aid resources
- application guides
- guides to Distance Learning

The center is supported by an educational advisor, a reference library, and educational software, all of which are geared to meeting the various needs of students that want to study in the United States.

Advising hours are by appointment from 13:00-17:00, Monday to Thursday. To schedule an appointment, please call



A sample of the materials offered by the Educational Advising Center at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

120-5450 between 9:30 to 12:00 Monday through Friday or e-mail Tashkent-Advising@state.gov.

A Night of Jazz Rhythms with the Tashkent Regional Hokimiyat's Women's Club "Concord"

Members of the diplomatic community, journalists, students and representatives of various non-governmental organizations gathered in Tashkent on January 28 to celebrate an evening of American culture. The event, which was organized by the U.S. Embassy and the Women's Club "Concord" of Tashkent, included a poster exhibition and a rousing jazz concert. The posters highlighted the United States' diverse and colorful landscapes and peoples. The musical performance featured the talented students from Tashkent's Uspensky School.

U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan Richard Norland opened the event with welcoming remarks. He thanked the Uzbek people for their hospitality and the U.S. Embassy's excitement at sharing Americans' culturally diverse heritage with others.

Ambassador Norland drew the crowd's attention to the images displayed in the poster lining the lobby. He noted that America is a nation of diverse landscapes and diverse peoples from many different races and backgrounds. However, the freedom to pursue the "American Dream" unites the American people. President Barack Obama's election as the 44th President of the United States serves as inspiration to anyone that thinks his or her own dream is impossible to achieve. The son of an immigrant from Kenya, President Obama defied the odds to win this historic election.

After the formal welcome, guests enjoyed American jazz numbers performed by the talented youth from Tashkent's Uspensky School.



Ambassador Norland and Director of the Women's Club "Concord" Albina Belevich, make opening remarks at Night of American Culture (U.S. Embassy photo)

The Women's Club hosts a permanent display on the United States with informational materials. These educational handouts are free to all who are interested. The posters are also available for loan to institutional users upon request. Interested parties should contact the Embassy's Public Affairs Section.



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