



# DO'STLIK



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## Native American Performance Impresses Audience at Sharq Taronalari Music Festival

A group of Native Americans traveled to Samarkand's historic Registan to participate in the 7th Semiannual International Music Festival Sharq Taronalari. The festival has become one of the most popular music festivals in Central Asia, and attracts many musicians from different parts of the world. This year, Buffalo Big Mountain, his two brothers Raymond and James Arthur Big Mountain, and his two children Sage and Kicking Horse brought traditional Native American dances to the people of Uzbekistan. During the four day music festival, the Big Mountain family performed several traditional dances, including Sneak Up, Grass Dance, and Warrior Dance. According to Buffalo Big Mountain, these dances demonstrate a very old style of native dancing from the southwestern United States.



U.S. Embassy photo

Even if the audience does not fully understand the background of the dances, it is still able to listen and experience the meaning of the songs. Buffalo Big Mountain hopes that his family's performances enable them to pass along the meaning and philosophy that is contained in the melodies of their nation.

stand the background of the dances, it is still able to listen and experience the meaning of the songs. Buffalo Big Mountain hopes that his family's performances enable them to pass along the meaning and philosophy that is contained in the melodies of their nation.

## President Obama Wishes Muslims Around the World a Blessed Month

On August 21, President Barack Obama said in a video message marking the beginning of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan that the United States looked forward to continuing its dialogue with Muslims worldwide and wished all Muslims a blessed month. Below is the text of the President's video message.

The White House  
Remarks of President Barack Obama  
Ramadan Message  
Washington, DC

On behalf of the American people – including Muslim communities in all fifty states – I want to extend best wishes to Muslims in America and around the world. Ramadan Kareem.

Ramadan is the month in which Muslims

believe the Koran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, beginning with a simple word – iqra. It is therefore a time when Muslims reflect upon the wisdom and guidance that comes with faith, and the responsibility that human beings have to one another, and to God.



President Barack Obama. (White House photo)

Like many people of different faiths who have known Ramadan through our communities and families, I know this to be a festive time – a time when families gather, friends host iftars, and meals are shared. But

**Continued on page 10**

## Friends Join Embassy Staff for U.S. Independence Day Celebration

The U.S. Embassy in Tashkent celebrated American Independence Day with a reception for nearly 700 of its friends, colleagues and partners in Uzbekistan.

The reception on July 2 was a chance for leaders in government, civil society, culture, business and the diplomatic community to enjoy a summer evening together on the grounds of the U.S. Embassy and take part in ceremonies celebrating 233 years of independence.

A U.S. Marines honor guard presented the American flag, and the Dip Notes – a group of singers from the Embassy's staff – sang the U.S. and Uzbek national anthems, along with a few popular songs about America. Banners showing Fourth of July fireworks displays and one showing the original Declaration of Independence decorated the Embassy grounds.

Among the many guests were First Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov; Diloram Tashmukhamedova, the Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis (Parliament); Ilgizar Sabirov, Chairman of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis; Chairman of the Supreme Court Buri-tosh Mustafaev; and Murat Atayev, the Secretary of the National Security Council in the Office of the President, along with other leaders of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

In his remarks, Ambassador Richard Norland spoke about “a new level of understanding with Uzbekistan,” and that the U.S. and Uzbekistan are pursuing further cooperation in fields of regional security, cultural exchange, human rights, democratic reform and economic investment.

“Those of us who serve at this Embassy feel fortunate to be in such an important, interesting part of the world at a pivotal time in history, and we are honored to be partners in our joint efforts to improve the future for all of our children,” Ambassador Norland said. “I express



In his remarks, Ambassador Norland speaks about “a new level of understanding with Uzbekistan,” as the U.S. and Uzbekistan further cooperation in the fields of regional security, cultural exchange, human rights, democratic reform and economic investment. (U.S. Embassy photo)

our sincere desire for continued deepening of the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Uzbekistan in the years ahead.”

Each year, the U.S. celebrates Independence Day on July 4, the day in 1776 that the Continental Congress of the 13 American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain. Thomas Jefferson, who would later become the United States' third President, wrote the Declaration of Independence as American troops were fighting the British in the Revolutionary War.

The American and local staff of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent also celebrated Independence Day on July 3 in traditional fashion, with an outdoor barbecue at the Ambassador's residence.



Reception was a chance for about 700 friends and colleagues of the staff of the U.S. Embassy to meet and get to know each other better. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## Under Secretary of State William Burns Leads Delegation to Uzbekistan



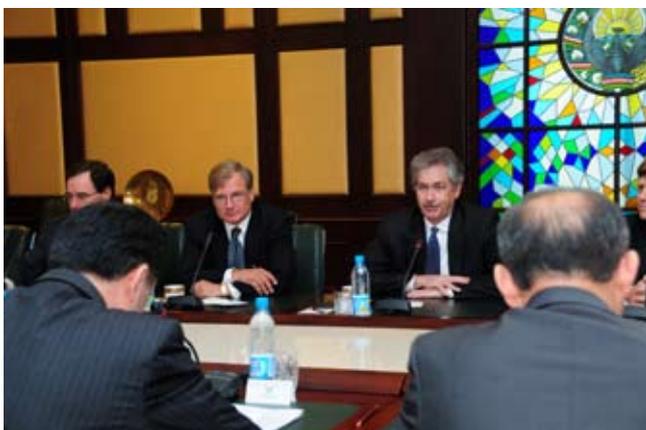
U.S. Under Secretary of State William Burns (center) is greeted by Uzbek First Deputy Foreign Minister Khamidulla Karamatov (right) at the Tashkent International Airport. (U.S. Embassy photo)

U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns led a high-level delegation to Uzbekistan on July 12-13, meeting with President Islam Karimov and senior government officials to discuss issues ranging from regional security to economic development and strengthening of civil society institutions.

Burns was joined by National Security Council Senior Director for Russia and Central Asia Michael McFaul and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Central Asia David Sedney. The delegation also traveled to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

The visit was a reflection of U.S. President Barack Obama's commitment to strong, mutually beneficial relations between the U.S. and Uzbekistan, Burns said.

"I'm convinced that we have an opportunity before us in a new administration to strengthen ties between our two countries," Burns said.



Under Secretary of State William Burns (center) meets with leaders of Uzbekistan, including Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov (left, back to camera). Here Burns is joined by U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland (left) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (U.S. Embassy photo)

"We see this visit as a first step in that direction. And our relationship should include increased ties at many levels."

The delegation met with President Islam Karimov and Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov during the two-day visit. Burns spoke of opportunities to expand economic cooperation between the two countries, and he expressed appreciation for the contributions Uzbekistan is making toward improving regional stability.

"Uzbekistan obviously plays an important leadership role in this region, and I look forward to hearing the President's perspectives how best to pursue our long-term strategy in Afghanistan and throughout the region, and how we can work together in the future," Burns said shortly before meeting with President Karimov.

The U.S. delegation also met with leaders of civil society institutions, reflecting President Obama's view that the U.S. needs to strengthen the ties between U.S. and



Under Secretary William Burns (right) meets with President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov. (U.S. Embassy photo)

other societies, as well as with other governments, Burns said.

Burns, a former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, has served as Under Secretary for Political Affairs since May 2008. He has also served as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and as Ambassador to Jordan.

## Diversity, Faith Define Evolving Identity of Muslim Americans

Two attributes connect individuals like professor Zareena Grewal of Yale University, writer and blogger Wajahat Ali, Congressman André Carson, fashion designer Nyla Hashmi, boxing coach Victor Perez, and California artist Dalah Faytrouni. They are Muslim and American — and constitute part of a remarkable community that, in large measure, mirrors the diversity of the United States itself.

Muslims in the United States come from 80 different countries and tend to be younger, better educated and in more highly skilled or professional careers than the general population, says Zahid Bukhari of the Georgetown University-based Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding.

Along with their varied ethnic identities, they are Sunni and Shiite — and range from orthodox to secular in their beliefs. They comprise recent immigrants as well as younger generations born in the United States, according to a 2007 survey by the Pew Research Center.

“We are the only country where you have a representation of the global Muslim community,” says Daisy Khan, executive director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement. “You can call us a mini-hajj — and an opportunity to be a model community for others.”

### DIALOGUE AND COMMUNITY



Ingrid Mattson, head of Islamic Society of North America. (© AP Images)

Ingrid Mattson, Canadian-born convert to Islam and head of the Islamic Society of North America, sees her job chiefly as making connections and negotiating differences in ways that not only reduce conflict but lead to positive growth and understanding with the larger American society.

“We represent a Muslim identity that flourishes in democracy,” she said in a recent interview on the American Public Radio program *Speaking of Faith*. Mattson states that many

European governments now are looking to American Muslims as a kind of model community.

“People [who criticize American Muslims] need to recognize the flaws in an approach that is confrontational, oppositional and does not engage in the patient work of consensus-building and conceding the rights of other parties,” says Mattson.

A new survey on the “state of faith relations” in nine North American and European countries seems to substantiate Mattson’s view. American and Canadian religious groups are more likely than Europeans to be classified as “integrated”

into their societies, according to the U.S. Gallup Poll organization and British-based Coexist Foundation.

### MUSLIM AND AMERICAN

In her counseling work, Khan sees the process by which people reconcile their Muslim and American identities firsthand. “It’s not enough to say you’re accidentally here and happen to be American,” she says. “You have to forge a new identity.”

A critical step is to recognize the difference between cultural practices that can be shed and the core values of Islam, according to Khan. She frequently makes this distinction in her counseling work with young people about what may be traditional practice in a parent’s home country — and what is “allowed or not allowed” in Islam.

First-generation Muslim Americans — in the same classic pattern of earlier immigrants — often choose to live and worship within their own ethnic and religious communities, she observed.

But as younger generations become more secure in balancing their dual identities as citizens and as Muslims, they can reach out and become more invested in the American experience — also a classic process that other minority groups have experienced. “This gives me a lot of hope,” Khan says.

### GOVERNMENT OUTREACH

Another critical factor in shaping Muslim-American perceptions is the response of government. A number of federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI, have instituted vigorous outreach programs to the Muslim-American community.

“Here in the Justice Department, we are committed to using criminal and civil rights laws to protect Muslim Americans,” declared Attorney General Eric Holder in June. “A top priority is a return to robust civil rights enforcement and outreach in defending religious freedoms and other fundamental rights of all of our fellow citizens.”

Valerie Jarrett, one of President Obama’s closest advisers and head of the White House Office for Public Engagement, spoke at the annual convention of the Islamic Society of North America in July.

“I will tell you, it is not always easy to identify American ‘Muslim’ business leaders, scientists, artists, athletes, and so on,” Jarrett said. “Not because there aren’t any, but because there are too many, and they are known for their talents and character — not simply their religion. This is a great thing. It is a reflection of the American dream, which is ultimately rooted in these values that we all share — values that are common to all of humanity.”

## State Department Official Encourages Dialogue with Muslim World *Congressman stresses positive role played by American Muslims*

President Obama and his administration are fully committed to pursuing “a deep and positive dialogue with Muslims around the world based on mutual respect and in support of our mutual interests,” according to a key State Department official.

The magnitude of the challenges faced makes it vital to go beyond interactions between governments to “reach out and develop partnerships with all elements of civil society,” said acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Madelyn Spirnak.

Public diplomacy, Spirnak said, “lies at the heart of America’s smart power,” and requires listening and not simply lecturing others.

“We ... will not always agree,” she said, “but we are prepared to listen to and talk with partners with whom we disagree in order to understand each other better and advance mutual interests.”

Spirnak, who oversees the department’s Middle East Partnership Initiative, said the United States has made a concerted effort to reach out to Muslim youth, particularly those vulnerable to extremism, “through English language training programs, high school and undergraduate exchanges, and sports programs.” Such programs, she said, “target youth at risk and provide an alternative vision of hope and opportunity.”

Spirnak spoke May 5 at the 10th annual conference of the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, a Washington-based nonprofit advocacy group that describes itself as “dedicated to studying Islamic and democratic political thought and merging them into a modern Islamic democratic discourse.”

Her talk followed a daylong series of panel discussions and speeches by academics and officials of nonprofit groups in the United States and abroad, mostly from a Muslim perspective, on the theme “How to improve relations with the Muslim world.”

### AMERICAN MUSLIMS PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE IN SHAPING DIALOGUE

Spirnak said the U.S. government welcomes dialogue with Muslim-American communities, which she said “play a constructive and important role in improving the public policy of our country.” She told her heavily Muslim-American audience, “Muslim Americans are not outsiders looking in; you are a part of the fabric of this country and have been for generations.”

“The United States is part of the Muslim world,” said Representative Keith Ellison of Minnesota, one of two Muslims serving in Congress. Ellison said 6 million Muslims live in the United States and are “involved in every aspect of

American life.” They include at least 17 elected officials from across the country, he said.

“There is no strict separation between the United States and the Muslim world. You and I and many of us in this room are evidence of that fact,” Ellison said. “People who want to drive a wedge and create this sharp division want us to think of the United States as other than the Muslim world.”



Congressman Keith Ellison, a Muslim American, notes Muslims play a role in all aspects of American life. (© AP Images)

Building bridges is important “because we live in a world that is so very interconnected,” Ellison said. “As Americans of whatever faith, we have to seek the new relationship, the new interaction.”

But bridge-building needs to be two-way, he said. “There’s nothing in Islam that teaches people that they should dislike the United States.”

Ellison urged his audience to oppose human rights abuses in Muslim countries, just as elsewhere. “Don’t let Muslim-majority countries off the hook, simply because we share their faith,” he said.

Ellison cited as an example his own protest April 27 outside the Sudanese Embassy over that nation’s actions in Darfur. He was among five members of Congress and three other activists who submitted to arrest on civil disobedience charges for crossing police lines in an effort to draw public attention to Darfur.

At a conference closing ceremony, Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy Executive Director Radwan Mas-moudi presented the group’s Muslim Democrat of the Year award to Ahmed Shaheed, foreign minister of the Maldives — the first sitting government official to receive the award in its 10-year history.

The award recognizes Shaheed for his “role in building democracy and preserving it in the face of hardship, for promoting tolerance and harmony, and for opening a window into a century of reason, freedom, human rights and democracy in the Maldives and South Asia.”

## Ambassador Visits Ferghana and Namangan Regions

U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland met with beekeepers, farmers, carpet makers, potters and workers in a silk factory during a visit to the Ferghana and Namangan provinces of the Ferghana Valley.

The Ambassador, his wife Mary Hartnett, and Dr. Philippa Strum, a visiting senior scholar from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, also drove through the mountains to visit the Shakhimardan enclave of Uzbekistan, a historic region of mostly Uzbek speakers surrounded by the territory of Kyrgyzstan.

On June 15, the Ambassador toured the Khudoyar Khan Palace and museum in Kokand, the seat of power in the Khanate of Kokand in the 18th and 19th centuries. He later visited the workshop of renowned potter Rustam Usmanov in Rishtan.

The visit to Shakhimardan was a highlight of the trip, with the beautiful mountain scenery and the hospitality extended to the American group by representatives of the Hokimiyat (Governor's office) of Ferghana and local officials in Shakhimardan, said Carrie Lee, the Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent.

On June 16, the Ambassador's group toured the Yodgorlik silk factory in Margilon, whose factory manager, Yusufjon Mamayusupov, participated in the U.S. State Department's International Visitors Leadership Program in the United States. His program focused on Small Business Development.

The group also met with members of the Ferghana Region Association of Beekeepers. Several of the association's members participated in a professional exchange program in 2008 sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), in which they spent three weeks in the U.S. building relationships with American beekeepers and others involved in agriculture.



U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland (right) visits the Yodgorlik Silk factory in Margilon, where factory manager Yusufjon Mamayusupov explains techniques for dyeing the materials. (U.S. Embassy photo)

In the Pap District of Namangan, the Ambassador met with members of the Shirinsuv Yangier ("Sweet Water, New Land") Water Users Association. Shirinsuv Yangier has received support through USAID's Water Users Association Support Project and AgLinks, which has provided information on agricultural practices, sought to improve access to markets and helped create a demonstration plot for grape production.

The economies of both Namangan and Ferghana provinces rely heavily on light industry and agriculture, including cotton, fruit and silk production. Much of the agriculture is dependent on intensive irrigation.

En route to the Pap District, the group stopped in the historic town of Chust to visit its lovely central park and examine the famous knives produced there.

With the tour of Namangan and Ferghana provinces, Ambassador Norland has formally visited all 14 of Uzbekistan's administrative divisions.



From left to right, Ambassador Norland, Mary Hatnett and Dr. Philippa Strum tour the Khudoyar Khan Palace and museum in Kokand. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## Salsa and Merengue Spice-up Weekly Chai Chat

Ole! The U.S. Embassy Tashkent became a center of Latin dancing for a day as over 60 participants of all ages visited the Embassy on August 14th to learn about the history of Latin American dance and practice the basic steps of Salsa and Merengue, two more well-known Latin American dance styles. With a significant percentage of the U.S. population of Latin American heritage, Latin American dance has become part of main-stream American culture, and Americans of all ethnicities increasing enjoy Latin-dance themed nightclubs and dance classes.

Led by Vice Consul Sean O'Hara and Assistant General Services Officer Yasya Petrova, participants listened to portions of salsa music and watched movie clips of dancing before trying the moves themselves. As Yasya Petrova explained, "modern Latin American dancing is very energetic and about self-expression." The dances primarily are performed with a partner as a social dance, but solo variations exist. The dances emphasize hip and knee movements and the connection between partners. Some of the dances are done in a close embrace while others are more traditional and hold a stronger frame between the partners. O'Hara and Petrova first introduced participants to the Salsa, noting that the word "salsa" means a sauce denoting a "spicy" flavor, which is an apt name for this dance which involves quick footwork and spins. A



Uzbek and American participants practice their salsa footwork. (U.S. Embassy photo)

lesson in Merengue, the national dance of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, closed the interactive Chai Chat.

Participants continued to dance away even after the end of the formal instruction. The U.S. Embassy hosts Chai Chats every Friday. The public is invited to learn about a wide variety of topics of American culture while practicing their English in an enjoyable, entertaining environment.

## U.S. Embassy Donates Artwork to Tashkent Hospital



A brightly-colored painting of a parrot perched in a field of wildflowers will grace a wall of the National Medical Emergency Central Hospital in Tashkent, thanks to the work of a non-profit organization in the United States that provides artwork to hospitals.

The Foundation for Hospital Art organizes volunteers to paint murals and large canvas pieces of art, which are then donated to hospitals. The Foundation has donated artwork to more than 2,000 hospitals in 188 countries.

The National Medical Emergency Central Hospital, formerly known as Tashkent City Hospital No. 16, has been a long-time partner of the U.S. Embassy, said Dr. Rustam Gubaydulin, the health care advisor at the Embassy. He and other Embassy staff helped set up the donation, the Foundation of Hospital Art's first donation in Uzbekistan, he said.

On May 26, U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland met with Dr. Khilola Alimova, Chief of Pediatric Service at the hospital, and presented the painting. She gave the Ambassador a tour of the facility and pointed out the spot in a public area where her staff plans to hang the 1.5-meter high painting.

On the photo: Dr. Khilola Alimova, Chief of Pediatric Service at the National Medical Emergency Central Hospital in Tashkent, talks with Ambassador Norland while Edith Gidley, head of the Medical Unit at the U.S. Embassy, assembles the artwork donated to the hospital. (U.S. Embassy photo)



## The State of Texas - The Lone Star State



Texas is big and bold. The diversity of the state allows visitors to combine outdoor adventure activities in the myriad of national and state parks or experience the Wild West and cowboy lifestyle followed by some time in one or more of Texas' premier cities.

There is something for everyone, once you grasp the lay of this vast and vibrant land. Travelers can drive some 1370 km north to south or east to west without leaving the state; while doing so, they will find a suprisingly urbane place, with a significant Hispanic influence, a diversified economy, and major aerospace and biotech centers. Still, it is the remnants of the old cattle frontier that really set Texas apart - the rolling prairies dotted with longhorns and oil rigs.

The land that is Texas today was originally part of Spain's holdings in Mexico. After Mexico won independence, the new government invited U.S. citizens to settle there. After many clashes between the Mexican and Anglo cultures, Texas broke away and for 10 years was an independent country before becoming a state in 1845.

Modern Texas was made by oil, discovered at Spindletop in 1901, and the state's economy has been tied to the oil market ever since. After World War II, the Texas economy soared, bringing both prosperity and an unprecedented population boom.

With the oil glut of the early 1980s, growth came to a halt, causing a drastic realignment of economic priorities. Unem-

petroleum industry accounts for only seven per cent of state revenues, down from 25 per cent a decade before. Texas has enormous resources ranging from cotton, cattle and timber to aerospace, computers and electronics. The largest of the 48 conterminous states, Texas' image as a state of wide-open spaces is understandable, but fully 80 per cent of its people live in metropolitan areas, and Dallas, Houston and San Antonio are among the nation's 10 largest cities.

Today Texas has the 11th largest economy in the world. While faring better than many other states, Texas is also



Exxon Mobil's Baytown complex is shown in Baytown, Texas. Exxon Mobil Corp., the world's biggest oil refiner, will spend more than \$1 billion in the next couple of years to increase its global production of cleaner-burning diesel by about 10 percent. (© AP Images)



The Rio Grande river is seen at the Big Bend State Park in Texas. (© AP Images)

ployment jumped more than 20 per cent during the 1980s, and remained higher than the national average in 1990, a year that saw many bank failures.

The economy has been forced to diversify; currently the

feeling the effects of the worldwide recession.

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, the U.S. economy peaked in December 2007 and has been in recession since then. Although the Texas economy slowed with the nation's late in 2008, Texas' gross product expanded almost twice as fast as the U.S. economy (2.0 percent versus 1.1 percent) during calendar 2008.

Texas emerged as the clear winner in *Fortune* magazine's 2007 ranking of the nation's 100 fastest-growing companies, with 32. California was a distant second, with 11 companies. The current list includes such Texas-based companies as Exxon Mobil, ConocoPhillips, AT&T, Valero Energy, Marathon Oil, Dell, Sysco, Enterprise GP Holdings, Plains All American Pipeline and Tesoro.

### TOP ATTRACTIONS

#### **The Alamo, San Antonio**

More than 2.5 million people a year visit the 1.7 hectare



Visitors view exhibits of the Long Barracks Museum at "The Alamo" in San Antonio. (© AP Images)

complex known worldwide as "The Alamo." Most come to see the old mission where a small band of Texans held out for thirteen days against the Centralist army of General Antonio López de Santa Anna. Although the Alamo fell in the early morning hours of March 6, 1836, the death of the Alamo Defenders has come to symbolize courage and sacrifice for the cause of Liberty. Located on Alamo Plaza in downtown San Antonio, Texas, the Alamo represents nearly 300 years of history. Three buildings - the Shrine, Long Barracks Museum and Gift Museum - house exhibits on the Texas Revolution and Texas History. Visitors are welcome to stroll through the beautiful Alamo Gardens. Just a short distance from the River Walk, the Alamo is a "must see" for all who come to San Antonio.

### **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, Waco**

Texas Ranger Museum opened in 1968. It was built under the auspices of the Texas Ranger Commemorative Commission, established by the legislature in 1971, and was turned over to the city of Waco. The museum holds thirty-three separate displays relating to the Texas Rangers and pioneer Texas history. Among the most important artifacts are the knife and rifle James Bowie used at the battle of the Alamo. A fine collection of percussion Colt revolvers includes the very rare Colt Paterson and Colt Walker. In 1976, the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame was built to house the portraits and biographies of the most famous Texas Rangers. It also contains wax figures depicting the rangers and their dress and equipment from frontier days to modern times.

### **Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston**

NASA field center at Houston, Texas, home of the mission control team for crewed space missions. Established in 1961, it is also NASA's main center for the design and development of spacecraft, and the location for the Astronaut Selection Office and the training of astronauts.

### **Big Bend National Park, Ft. Davis**

Few U.S. parks are as remote as Big Bend - the two main

northern entrances are both over an hour of drive from any mainstream town, and the nearest city is El Paso, 480 km to the west. The dominant feature of Big Bend National Park is the Rio Grande River, the course of which runs generally northwest from the Gulf of Mexico but takes a long diversion south of several mountain ranges before turning back north towards New Mexico; the national park sits in the lower part of this 'big bend,' adjacent to the international border. Three major canyons fall within the park boundary; Santa Elena, Marsical and Boquillas, between which the river flows through desert land that is wild and mostly unreachable.

Sources: <http://www.texasonline.com/>;  
<http://www.traveltex.com/>;  
 The New York Times Almanac, 2007;  
 USA, Lonely Planet, 2008.



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

### **QUICK FACTS**

**Abbreviation:** TX

**Capital City:** Austin

**Governor:** Rick Perry

**Date of Statehood:** December 29, 1845 (28th)

**Population:** 24,326,974, 2nd highest

**Area:** 695,622 sq. km, 2nd largest

**Origin of State's Name:** From the Caddo Indian word *tejas*, which means "friends" or "allies."

**Largest Cities:** Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Austin, Fort Worth, El Paso, Arlington.

**Major industries:** petroleum and natural gas, farming (cotton, livestock), steel, banking, insurance, tourism.

## PRESIDENT, continued from front page

I also know that Ramadan is a time of intense devotion and reflection – a time when Muslims fast during the day and perform tarawih prayers at night, reciting and listening to the entire Koran over the course of the month. These rituals remind us of the principles that we hold in common, and Islam's role in advancing justice, progress, tolerance, and the dignity of all human beings.

For instance, fasting is a concept shared by many faiths – including my own Christian faith – as a way to bring people closer to God, and to those among us who cannot take their next meal for granted. And the support that Muslims provide to others recalls our responsibility to advance opportunity and prosperity for people everywhere. For all of us must remember that the world we want to build – and the changes that we want to make – must begin in our own hearts, and our own communities.

This summer, people across America have served in their communities – educating children, caring for the sick, and extending a hand to those who have fallen on hard times. Faith-based organizations, including many Islamic organizations, have been at the forefront in participating in this summer of service. And in these challenging times, this is a spirit



U.S. President Barack Obama waves to the audience from the podium at Cairo University in Cairo, Egypt, June 4, 2009. (© AP Images)

of responsibility that we must sustain in the months and years to come.

Beyond America's borders, we are also committed to keeping our responsibility to build a world that is more peaceful and secure. That is why we are responsibly ending the war in Iraq. That is why we are isolating violent extremists while empowering the people in places like Afghanistan and Pakistan. That is why we are unyielding in our support for a two-state solution that recognizes the rights of Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security. And that is why America will always stand for the universal rights of all people to speak their mind, practice their religion, contribute fully to society and have confidence in the rule of law.

All of these efforts are a part of America's commitment to engage Muslims and Muslim-majority nations on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect. And at this time of renewal, I want to reiterate my commitment to a new beginning between America and Muslims around the world.

As I said in Cairo, this new beginning must be borne out in a sustained effort to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another, and to seek common ground. I believe an important part of this is listening, and in the last two months, American embassies around the world have reached out not just to governments, but directly to people in Muslim-majority countries. From around the world, we have received an outpouring of feedback about how America can be a partner on behalf of peoples' aspirations.

We have listened. We have heard you. And like you, we are focused on pursuing concrete actions that will make a difference over time – both in terms of the political and security issues that I have discussed, and in the areas that you have told us will make the most difference in peoples' lives.

These consultations are helping us implement the partnerships that I called for in Cairo – to expand education exchange programs; to foster entrepreneurship and create jobs; and to increase collaboration on science and technology, while supporting literacy and vocational learning. We are also moving forward in partnering with the OIC and OIC member states to eradicate polio, while working closely with the international community to confront common health challenges like H1N1 – which I know is of particular concern to many Muslims preparing for the upcoming hajj.

All of these efforts are aimed at advancing our common aspirations – to live in peace and security; to get an education and to work with dignity; to love our families, our communities, and our God. It will take time and patient effort. We cannot change things over night, but we can honestly resolve to do what must be done, while setting off in a new direction – toward the destination that we seek for ourselves, and for our children. That is the journey that we must travel together.

I look forward to continuing this critically important dialogue and turning it into action. And today, I want to join with the 1.5 billion Muslims around the world – and your families and friends – in welcoming the beginning of Ramadan, and wishing you a blessed month. May God's peace be upon you.

## Uzbek Citizens React to Obama's Speech to the Muslim World



Ambassador Richard Norland moderates a discussion after the screening of U.S. President Barack Obama's Address to the Muslim World on June 9 at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Citizens of Uzbekistan said they found U.S. President Barack Obama's Address to the Muslim World "really touching," "important," and "very clear in his mind" during a discussion of the speech on June 9.

About 50 people, both Americans and citizens of Uzbekistan, attended a screening of the speech at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. After the screening, U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland moderated a discussion, during which the Uzbek citizens offered a range of opinions and questions about the speech itself and the effects it could have in the Muslim world and in the United States.

"It is clear that these words were coming from his heart," said one young woman, noting that this was the first time a U.S. President had ever reached out in such a way to Muslims. "This is a very important message."

On June 4, Obama delivered a speech entitled "A New Beginning: President Obama Speaks to the Muslim World." He discussed his desire to build a new relationship between the U.S. and the Muslim world based on respect, trust and mutual understanding. He spoke about the influence of Islam on himself as an individual, on the United States, and on the history of the world. He then outlined his Administration's goals for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, relations with Iran, and other issues of particular importance in the Muslim world.

You can read the speech in English, Uzbek or Russian languages on the Embassy website at <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov>.

During the discussion, the reaction among the Uzbek citizens was very positive, although some wondered how difficult it would be to follow up the words with concrete actions that

would ease tensions, while others questioned how well the speech would be received by the American public.

"I'm not sure how it will be taken by Americans themselves," one woman said. "Is there too much emphasis on others?"

Another woman wondered why other presidents in the past have not made such an overture to Muslims, while another said she thought Obama was in a unique position: "He's the first President who can make peace with Muslim countries."

Participants in the discussion were also invited to write down some of their thoughts on the speech. Among these written responses, one person said the speech was a sign of progress yet to come.

"Americans in general will have a greater understanding of the Muslim world. And it will also decrease stereotypes on Muslims and bring two nations closer," the respondent wrote.

The positive response during the discussion reflected the tone of a statement released earlier in the day by Jahon, the official press service of the Government of Uzbekistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "This is an appeal to break the vicious circle of mistrust and confrontation with the Muslim world," the press release stated, adding that the speech reflected "realism and pragmatism. Such a sober and real approach ... will undoubtedly echo in the international community."

Carol Fajardo, then Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, noted that the speech was only a start in building new relationships. She added that the speech was one part of a program of outreach that included President Obama's interview with television channel Al-Arabiya, a message on the Muslim holiday of Nawruz, and town hall meetings in Turkey.



The audience at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent watches President Barack Obama's Address to the Muslim World, delivered in Cairo, Egypt on June 4. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## Forensic Labs Receive Scientific Equipment



Dr. Zaynitdin Giyazov (right), Chief of the Main Forensic Bureau of the Ministry of Health, thanks U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland for donated equipment. (U.S. Embassy photo)

The U.S. Embassy provided nearly \$400,000 worth of sophisticated scientific equipment and computer systems to forensic science laboratories that provide hard evidence in cases in Uzbekistan's justice system.

The equipment is able to detect toxic substances in bodily fluids and tissues, help investigators identify evidence from crime scenes and build an electronic system to ensure that evidence is properly handled and evaluated. The equipment also will be used by medical doctors, particularly in cases where they need to identify toxic substances in a body.

The supplies come through the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

On June 26, U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland signed over the equipment to Dr. Zaynitdin Giyazov, Chief of the Main Forensic Bureau of the Ministry of Health. The scientific equipment will be used in forensics laboratories in Urgench and Ferghana. The laboratory in Tashkent has already received similar equipment from the United States.

"Since we received this equipment, the way we worked in this lab has changed dramatically," Giyazov said. "We are doing work now that we would not have dreamed about."

The INL Bureau and U.S. Justice Department have been working with the forensics laboratories as they strive for accreditation under the International Organization for Standardization. Workers have participated in several programs in the U.S. and in Uzbekistan, and Dr. Ashraf Mozayani, the Crime Laboratory Director of the Harris County (Texas) Medical Examiner's Office, has visited the labs several times to consult on best practices.

Mozayani noted that the evidence analyzed in the forensics laboratories can be used in a wide range of criminal cases,

including cases involving deaths and serious injuries, sexual assaults, and cases involving toxic substances such as narcotics. The goal of the lab upgrades and training is to enhance forensic scientists' ability to provide the hard evidence that is at the heart of many criminal investigations.

Some of the items provided to the laboratories in Urgench and Ferghana were:

- Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectrometer (GCMS) systems, which detect toxic substances and show the amounts in a body. The systems can aid in determining cause of death, while helping doctors treat living patients;
- Ultraviolet spectrometers, which can find and help identify bodily substances that may have been hidden;
- Microscopes and digital cameras to create images of evidence;
- Forensic pathology tool sets.

The equipment is in support of the Government of Uzbekistan's work to upgrade the forensic laboratory system. The Government is constructing a new building in Tashkent to house the Bureau of Forensic Medicine of the Ministry of Health.

Workers in the forensic lab in Tashkent spoke enthusiastically about the impact the new equipment has had on their work, and how the similar equipment would improve the labs in Urgench and Ferghana. One example, they said, was how the GCMS had allowed them to analyze fluids from a child who had fallen into a coma after ingesting an unknown pesticide. The GCMS identified the poison within minutes, something that would have been impossible before, they said.

"This equipment has made our lives much easier," said one of the forensic experts at the Tashkent lab. "Now, one can say we're comparable with other institutions of its kind around the world."



Photo shows the state-of-the-art equipment donated by the U.S. Government to forensic laboratories in Urgench and Ferghana. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## Foundation Works with Scientists in Uzbekistan on Research Projects

Representatives of a U.S. program that funds scientific research in nations of the former Soviet Union visited Uzbekistan in May and June to evaluate projects that could improve air quality, advance medical techniques and lead to new types of digital video screens.

Julie Wilson and Steve Bergen were in Tashkent and Bukhara from May 27 to June 3 for site visits of four projects funded by the U.S. Civilian Research & Development Foundation (CRDF). The foundation, established in 1995 by the U.S. Congress, uses U.S. Government funds to support science projects through grants, technical support and training. Many of the projects are collaborative efforts between U.S. scientists and their colleagues in Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

The support is meant to provide scientists, many of whom previously worked on weapons projects, with civilian research opportunities. The goal is to further non-proliferation efforts while encouraging technical innovations that will help their respective economies.

Nearly 80 percent of the projects result in publications in scientific peer-reviewed journals. Most of CRDF's funding comes from the U.S. State Department, National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health.

This is highly technical scientific research: Among the projects in Uzbekistan is one at the Institute of Nuclear Physics entitled "Nonconventional Tight-Binding Molecular Dynamics Simulations of Silicon Nanoparticles," which CRDF says aims to improve nanotechnology, with applications in photovoltaics and bio-imaging.

Another project, at the Tashkent State Technical University's Center of Science and Progress, is called "Molar Mass Distribution and Structural Parameters of Water-Soluble Polymers and their Derivatives." It has medical applications in anti-viral and anti-bacterial research.

Other projects in Uzbekistan are one that monitors air samples in a study meant to characterize and improve air quality in Tashkent, and another that analyzes strategies for reducing health risks among intravenous drug users.

Wilson and Bergen said they were impressed with the progress of each of the projects in Uzbekistan, and that CRDF has seen very positive results from other projects here. They noted that in a recent evaluation of CRDF-supported research facilities in eight countries, the Regional Experimental Support Center at the Uzbek Heat Physics Institute was rated as one of the top facilities.

They also noted that researchers in Uzbekistan and the U.S. had collaborated on several successful projects.

"U.S. collaborators were highly enthusiastic about the research being conducted, and the site visits demonstrated how the projects offered benefits to both U.S. and Uzbek teams.

Collaborative research projects also allow both Uzbek and U.S. scientists access to technologies or methods that might otherwise have been unavailable," Wilson and Bergen wrote in a report from their visit. "Administrators of funded institutions were extremely supportive of their researchers."

The CRDF representatives said they planned future projects in Uzbekistan, with a particular focus on water and agricultural issues. They said CRDF was eager to expand environmental research in Uzbekistan and has been in discussions with officials in the Government of Uzbekistan about cooperative projects.

### ABOUT CRDF

*The U.S. Civilian Research & Development Foundation (CRDF) is a nonprofit organization authorized by the U.S. Congress and established in 1995 by the National Science Foundation. This unique organization promotes international scientific and technical collaboration through grants, technical resources, and training. CRDF is based in Arlington, Virginia with offices in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia; Kyiv, Ukraine; Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan and Amman, Jordan.*



Steven Bergen (right), a program manager with the U.S. Civilian Research & Development Foundation, speaks with Dr. Mansur Amonov of the Tashkent State Agrarian University near a device that takes air samples at the Hydrometeorological Research Institute. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## U.S. Company Helps with Preservation of Ancient Koran



This photo from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), shows the Usman Mushafi Koran, which has undergone restoration and preservation work.

An American company that specializes in historical documents worked with officials in Uzbekistan on a project to preserve ancient religious texts, including preservation of what is believed to be part of the oldest Koran in the world.

Archivists in Tashkent have been working to preserve a number of ancient manuscripts, including the Usman Mushafi Koran, which is believed to have been compiled a few years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad.

Dr. Richard Smith, the president and founder of a company called Wei T'o near Chicago, Illinois, was in Tashkent in June to work with the archivists as they learned to use preservation equipment designed by his company. The equipment uses a process to wet pages, then freeze and dry them to prevent damage from insects and other organisms, Smith explained.

He worked with officials and archivists from the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, the Uzbekistan Committee for Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Sport Affairs. He said the sessions were a wonderful chance to work with colleagues in Uzbekistan on extremely rare and important documents.

“This experience quietly demonstrates the depth of outreach and cooperation that occur between people and businesses in different countries, societies, government agencies and international corporations,” Smith said, adding that such cooperation and the sharing of knowledge is essential in performing such delicate work. “Preserving the Usman Mushafi Koran is the kind of task where mistakes in judgment simply are not acceptable.”

The Usman Mushafi Koran is said to have been compiled in Medina, present-day Saudi Arabia, by the third Caliph Usman in the year 651, about 19 years after the Prophet Muhammad's death. Usman and his scribes compiled this Koran and several copies, one of which is housed in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul,

using the original texts that had been written down as the holy words were revealed to Muhammad.

Usman was assassinated by a mob while reading this Koran; a stain on the holy book is said to be his blood. After his death, his successor, the Caliph Ali, is believed to have taken the Koran to Kufa in present-day Iraq, where it remained for centuries. When Amir Timur (known as Tamerlane in the West) conquered the area around the turn of the 15th Century, he brought the Usman Mushafi Koran back to his capital of Samarkand. The Koran was taken to St. Petersburg after the Russian conquest in the 19th Century, but later returned to Tashkent, where it is now housed in the Mui Mubarak (“Sacred Hair”) Mosque with thousands of other manuscripts.

The preservation project is meant to maintain the Usman Mushafi Koran and many other historically important texts for use by scholars and others today and in future generations.

### ABOUT WEI T'O® ASSOCIATES, INC.

*Wei T'o, an ancient Chinese god, protects books against destruction from fire, worms and insects, and robbers, big or small.*

Wei T'o is a small, high tech specialty chemical and chemical equipment company with a world-wide reputation.

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The company's customers include over 500 leading archives, libraries, museums, collectors, and paper conservation laboratories throughout the world. It has over 30 distributors in USA and abroad.

Its sales make up approximately \$500,000 per year worldwide primarily in North America, but also in Europe, Asia, Australia, South America, and Africa.

**SOURCE:** Wei T'o company website (<http://www.weito.com>)

## U.S. Scholar Holds Talks on Women's Issues and Religion



Scholar Philippa Strum (front row, second from right), meets informally with members of the Women's Club "Concorde" during her tour of Uzbekistan. (U.S. Embassy photo)

A top U.S. scholar toured Uzbekistan in June, leading discussions on topics such as women's issues and religious diversity in America.

Dr. Philippa Strum is a senior scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, one of the leading institutions in the U.S. for scholarship on issues related to history, political science and international relations. The Center acts as a bridge between research scholars and the government officials who formulate U.S. policies.

Strum, who holds advanced degrees from Harvard University and The New School in New York, has written nine books and edited many others, many of them with a focus on U.S. constitutional law, women's rights and the experiences of American Muslims. She has lectured in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and in the former Soviet Union.

In Uzbekistan, Strum toured the Ferghana Valley, Bukhara and Samarkand. In Tashkent, she met with Islamic leaders, spoke about women's issues with students and teachers from the Social Work Department of the Institute of Culture, met informally with members of the Women's Club Concorde at the Tashkent Hokimiyat (city administration), and led several discussions on religious diversity and women's issues.

"I have learned so much: a great deal about the history of Uzbekistan; a great deal about the women of Uzbekistan, and particularly the important role that women play in the cultural and intellectual life of Uzbekistan," Strum said. In meeting many professional women, Strum said she was struck by how similar the challenges are for U.S. and Uzbek women to balance their professional and family lives.

In talks with students, scholars and journalists, Strum spoke

about religious diversity and the experience of Muslims in the United States. She showed that the number of Muslims and mosques have risen dramatically since 1965, when U.S. immigration laws were changed to allow more immigration from a wider range of nations. Today, the up to seven million Muslims in the U.S. report higher incomes and education than the American average, she showed.

She also showed that most mosques in America are run by boards made up of its members – as opposed to being sponsored by the government or by a wealthy patron – and that women sit on a majority of these boards.

"Muslims in each country interpret Islam for themselves," she said. "American Muslims are fashioning an American Islam to integrate the realities of life in the U.S. with their faith."

Strum was the director of U.S. Studies at the Wilson International Center for Scholars at the time of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. She said she knew that life could become more difficult for American Muslims in the wake of the attacks so she actively sought out Muslim scholars to build relationships with U.S. policymakers. Her scholarly works about Muslim-American communities grew out of that impetus, she said.

Strum's visit was sponsored by the U.S. State Department through its Speaker and Specialist Program, which arranges for experts on important topics to speak with audiences in countries around the world. The program seeks to promote understanding of the U.S., its people and its foreign policies, while giving the experts greater insight into the nations they visit.



Dr. Philippa Strum talks to a group of U.S. Government program alumni about the experience of Muslims in the United States at the conference room of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## United States “Ready to Lead Once More” at United Nations

The Obama administration recognizes that the well-being and security of Americans is “inextricably linked” to that of people everywhere in the world, and it is making “rather dramatic changes” toward multilateralism in its approach to the United Nations, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice says.

“The United States is back,” Rice said August 12 at New York University in New York. “We work with passion and resolve because we know that the change that has come to America can also change the world. The time for action is now. The challenges we face are vast. But the opportunities are even greater. And we will seize them.”

Extraordinary global challenges, such as the dangers of nuclear proliferation, climate change, pandemic disease and the global financial crisis, threaten U.S. security in the 21st century, she said.

“If ever there were a time for effective multilateral cooperation in pursuit of U.S. interests and a shared future of greater peace and prosperity, it is now,” she said. Cooperation requires a greater number of “capable, democratic states” with the political will to tackle transnational challenges.

But Rice, who served as a foreign policy adviser to Obama during the 2008 presidential campaign, said the administration acknowledges the “simple reality” that if the United States wants other nations to cooperate on the threats it is most concerned with, the United States must also cooperate with them on their most pressing challenges.

“For many nations, those threats are first and foremost the things that afflict human beings in their daily lives: corruption, repression, conflict, hunger, poverty, disease and a lack of education and opportunity,” Rice said.

When at its best, the United Nations helps rebuild societies shattered by conflict and disaster, lays the foundations for democracy and development, and creates conditions where people can live in dignity and mutual respect, she said.

At the same time, the Obama administration is aware that the United Nations is imperfect, with divisions in the Security Council, which have affected responses to crises in places like Darfur, Zimbabwe and Burma; distracting “political theater” in the General Assembly, which sees Israel “unfairly singled out”; and a system with “waste and abuse” that must be confronted and still meet “daunting new responsibilities,” Rice said. Rice outlined several approaches that distinguish the new approach of the United States to the United Nations under the Obama administration.

The administration is turning to the United Nations to promote U.S. core national security interests in areas such as nuclear proliferation, promoting stability and development in Iraq and Afghanistan and the use of peacekeepers around the world to prevent violent conflicts from flaring up and destabilizing surrounding countries, she said.

Second, it is now participating in the U.N. Human Rights Council after previously refusing to seek a seat on that body. Rice acknowledged shortcomings of the council, where “dictators were not called to account for their records of repression, abused citizens did not have their voices heard, obsessive, [and] unproductive Israel-bashing raged on.” But the U.S. refusal to participate had achieved nothing, she said.



Ambassador Susan Rice says the Obama administration is making “dramatic changes” in its approach to the United Nations. (© AP Images)

“Real change does not come from sitting on the sidelines. Real change can only come through painstaking, principled diplomacy. So we will work hard to reduce customary divisions. We will demand fair treatment for Israel. We will amplify the voices of those suffering under the world’s cruelest regimes. And we will lead by example through our actions at home and our support for those risking their lives for democracy and human rights abroad,” Rice said.

Only seven months into its term, the Obama administration has reversed several previous U.S. policies by embracing the U.N.’s Millennium Development goals, allowing U.S. assistance to fund programs that support family planning and reproductive health services, contributing to the U.N. Population Fund, signing the U.N.’s Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, backing a General Assembly statement opposing violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation, and ending opposition to language that mentions reproductive health or the International Criminal Court.

The United States will meet its obligations to the United Nations, Rice said. “Our dues to the United Nations are treaty obligations, and we are committed to working with Congress to pay them in full and on time,” she said. Congress is allowing the United States to clear its accumulated 2005–2008 arrears to the United Nations’ regular and peacekeeping budgets, and Rice said the 2009 peacekeeping obligations will be paid in full.

In the Obama administration’s pending budget request to Congress, it has made provisions to keep its payments current and “allow us to move toward ending the practice, started in the 1980s, of paying our bills to the U.N. and many other major international organizations nearly a year late,” she said.

Through responsible leadership, a tone of decency and respect, “pragmatic, principled policies” and abiding by rules it expects other countries to follow, the Obama administration will build the political will of other countries to work with it in addressing global challenges, Rice said.

## Teachers Learn New Techniques from English Language Specialist

An English professor who has taught students from Indonesia to Siberia came to Uzbekistan in June to lead seminars on teaching English through conversation, literature and essays.

Vivian Leskes Ward, a professor of English as a Second Language at Holyoke Community College in Massachusetts, toured Uzbekistan from June 5 to June 16 as an English Language Specialist for the U.S. State Department. Most of her activities focused on working with English teachers on methods to engage students with topics that are important to them, with the goal of improving conversation and comprehension of English texts.



English Language Specialist Vivian Leskes Ward elicits ideas on teaching English pronunciation from her audience in Samarkand. (U.S. Embassy photo)

“The teachers were eager for classroom management techniques to stimulate participation among students and to improve fluency,” Leskes said. “I designed a series of presentations that would ... give the teachers first-hand experience in participatory student-centered classes, so they would be able to create such a culture in their own classrooms.”

Leskes, who holds university degrees from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Barnard College of Columbia University in New York, has been teaching English as a Second Language for about 25 years. Her work has taken her to the Irkutsk State Linguistic University in Russia and to programs in Tajikistan, Ukraine and Indonesia.

Before arriving in Uzbekistan, Leskes spent 11 days teaching in Tajikistan. She also worked in the Republics of Kalmykia and Tatarstan in Russia on the recent tour.

In Uzbekistan, Leskes began her work June 5 with an English-language Chai Chat at the U.S. Embassy entitled “How Can I Improve My Pronunciation?” The next day she led seminars on teaching pronunciation with members of the Uzbek Teachers of English Association (UzTEA) in Samarkand.

Leskes traveled to the Fergana Valley to hold seminars with

UzTEA members in Ferghana and Namangan on the topic “Teaching English with a Communicative Approach.” This method emphasizes real communication about topics that are important to students. The teachers brainstormed about their students’ interests as part of preparing lesson plans that would encourage students to be more active members of the class.

In Tashkent, she participated in UzTEA’s FORUM Conference on the topic “Socio-Cultural Aspects of Teaching English.” Her work wrapped up June 15-16 at the Institute for English Language Teacher Education at the Uzbek State University of World Languages, where she led seminars on teaching reading through literature and original sources.

“Reading through literature rather than textbooks encourages the pleasure of reading, provides direct insight into culture, shows the universality of themes and issues, develops an aesthetic appreciation and an emotional response in the reader,” she said.

The English Language Specialist Program is one of several activities organized by U.S. Embassies in Uzbekistan and other nations to enhance English-language teaching. These include educational exchange programs for teachers, seminars, and curriculum development.

The program is also meant to teach the specialists themselves about the host country. Leskes said she took home wonderful memories from Uzbekistan: the bustle of the Chorsu Bazaar in Tashkent; eating shashlik at a cafe in Ferghana; the architecture of Samarkand; buying apricots and fresh bread along the road to Namangan; and many others.

“I was deeply impressed by the richness of the culture and the beauty of the land,” she said. “The teachers demonstrated great enthusiasm and remarkable skill in English. ... It was an honor and a pleasure to work in Uzbekistan.”



Vivian Leskes Ward (standing) leads a seminar on techniques of teaching English language with English teachers in Ferghana. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## Jazz Quartet Tours Uzbekistan



The Brian Horton Quartet performs at the Turkiston Palace in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

The Brian Horton Quartet played a series of jazz concerts and conducted master music classes during their tour of Tashkent, Samarkand and Guliston in June.

The quartet from Durham, North Carolina, has a sound rooted in blues and jazz sounds as they explore multi-cultural rhythms and improvisation. Saxophonist and composer Brian Horton, drummer Jaimeo Brown, bass player Ameen Saleem and pianist Ernest Turner have played with jazz greats like Branford Marsalis to American popular music icons Stevie Wonder and Carlos Santana.



Brian Horton (right) teams up with performers of traditional Uzbek music. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Their tour of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Azerbaijan was part of the Rhythm Road Music Abroad Program, which is organized by Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York and the U.S. State Department.

The Brian Horton Quartet started the Uzbekistan leg of their tour June 13 with a concert at the Turkiston Palace in Tashkent. On June 14, they played with local musicians at the Jazz Club in the Tashkent Photography House, which regularly hosts jazz concerts on Sundays. That evening, they played at U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland's residence, teaming up with singers and performers of traditional Uzbek music for a memorable performance.

On June 15, the Quartet led master music classes at the Ni-yaziy Tashkent State Music College and at the Uspenskiy Republican Academic Specialized Music Lyceum.

They traveled to Samarkand on June 16 for a performance at the Samarkand Art and Music College, and on June 17 they played at the Guliston Drama Theater supported by the Istiqbolli Avlod non-governmental organization in Guliston.

"Touring is my passion, and we jumped at the opportunity to participate in this year's Rhythm Road tour," Horton said after arriving in Tashkent. "We're always looking for a new ear" with which to hear new music and share theirs with others, he said.



The Brian Horton Quartet jams with local jazz musicians at the Jazz Club in the Tashkent Photography House. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Brown, in particular, said he was looking forward to learning some traditional Uzbek music, which was completely new to him, with the goal of incorporating it into his own percussion work.

The Rhythm Road program sends bands that play American roots music such as jazz, blues, bluegrass and country music on overseas tours. In the last three years, groups have toured 89 countries from Brazil to the Republic of Congo and the Pacific Island nation of Fiji.

The program descends from the Jazz Ambassadors program, which started in the 1950s and included tours by such jazz legends as Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Dave Brubeck.

Alina Romanowski, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Professional and Cultural Exchanges, said the connections made by touring musicians and the countries they visit emphasize nations' similarities while celebrating their differences.

"Cultural diplomacy allows artists and audiences to share in a common experience that reaches beyond differences in culture, religion, language and generations, and to connect as people without borders," she said. "That is what The Rhythm Road is all about."

## Pop Superstar Michael Jackson Created Universal Music



The “King of Pop” Michael Jackson, pictured here in Singapore in 1993, died at age 50 on June 25. (© AP Images)

Michael Jackson, the larger-than-life American singer widely referred to as the “King of Pop,” died unexpectedly June 25. He was in the final stages of rehearsing for a run of 50 sold-out arena concerts in London set to begin in July, with additional international touring to follow.

As news of Jackson’s death spread worldwide, a deluge of tributes emerged — not just from the singer’s home country, but from diverse international sources as well. Former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, for example, described Jackson as “a hero of the world,” reported the *New York Times*, while the Nelson Mandela Foundation, created by the human rights activist and former president of South Africa, stated, “His loss will be felt by fans worldwide.”

Nowhere was the global impact of the singer’s death more evident than on the Internet, which exploded with Jackson-related news following the event. YouTube quickly displayed tens of thousands of homemade tribute videos. One particularly unusual segment showed more than 1,500 inmates in a Philippino prison performing the signature dance from Jackson’s groundbreaking *Thriller* music video, receiving more than 28 million views at the time this article was written. There were news reports that Google News, a leading search engine, initially received so many “Michael Jackson” requests that its computers mistakenly believed it was under automated cyberattack.

The power of Jackson’s music to unite fans from around the globe — seemingly regardless of their political, religious, ethnic, or socio-economic differences — remains unparalleled. “My parents don’t know much American music,” said Rajneil Singh, a 23-year-old whose family immigrated to the United States from the Fiji Islands in the 1970s. “But they know all of Michael Jackson. He transcends not just cultures, but generations — the old people are just as sad as the young people. There aren’t many artists who can have that sort of impact.”

### THE MAN AND THE MUSIC

Jackson crafted a trademark musical style that earned him massive success. “You could say that it was pop or that it was rhythm and blues, but it really was a unique-sounding hybrid,” said Geoff Grace, a California composer who worked for Jackson as an arranger and orchestrator in conjunction with Jackson’s longtime music director, Brad Buxer. “Michael would never imitate someone else’s style. He was always an original.” While maintaining his distinctive voice, Jackson exhibited a wide stylistic range. “There are a lot of

acts known for hard-hitting dance music, or for tender ballads, but Michael was known for both,” added Grace. “People might have been interested in him for something sweet like ‘The Girl Is Mine,’ or a harder, driving song like ‘Jam.’ He had a breadth, as well as uniqueness, of style that captured a lot of people’s attention.”

Key to Jackson’s style was the sonic bedrock that Buxer, Grace and others helped create for his recordings and live performances. “A lot of the instrumental sounds used on Michael’s recordings are larger than life, just like everything else about him,” said Grace. Whether recording pianos, drums, synthesizers or strings, Jackson and his production team took great care to produce tones and textures that were edgy and powerful. “The goal was more than just creating a wide, lush, stereo soundscape,” Grace continued. “It was, ‘What can we use to make an impact?’”

Perhaps more important than the music itself was Jackson’s total fearlessness on stage. The singer’s breakout television performance of the song “Billie Jean” for the *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, and Forever* special in 1983, for example, showcased Jackson’s fiery energy, explosively virtuosic dancing and total commitment to his performance. “Starting in the 1990s, there would be moments when he would just stop and scream during his concerts and videos,” said Grace. “He didn’t hold anything back.”

Jackson grew up in the spotlight as the youngest member of the Jackson 5 singing group, performing with his four older brothers and achieving stardom as a child. And though this early experience can explain much of the appeal Jackson would later develop as a solo artist, other factors contributed as well. “Michael Jackson transcended boundaries,” said Jason Burwen, a world-music radio disc jockey and graduate student in international public policy. “Pop music is about being popular, and he appealed to people with different backgrounds. He was not just music — he was, in and of himself, a fantasy, and people were into that.” Grace echoed the sentiment. “There was nobody who was even remotely like Michael,” he said. “He didn’t fit into anybody’s stereotypes of anything. And people wanted to know what made him tick.”

Indeed, Jackson’s life on and off the stage was one of spectacle and controversy, inspiring both adoration and revulsion from the global public. Jackson’s lavish California “Neverland Ranch,” for example, housed a zoo and amusement park, while his dramatic, plastic surgery-induced appearance changes attracted morbid fascination from fans and media alike. “He was larger than life, and nobody thought he was really human,” said Burwen. “So when he passed away, it was a huge shock. Nobody thought he could actually die.”

Michael Gallant, a musician, composer, producer and author living in San Francisco, serves as senior editor at *Keyboard* magazine.

*The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State.*

## Obama Envisions Sweeping Reform of Financial Regulation

President Obama proposes a comprehensive overhaul of the U.S. financial regulatory system that is designed to address the structural weaknesses revealed by the recent financial crisis and to limit the potential for similar crises in the future.

At the White House June 17, Obama unveiled details of the plan, which would reshape the ways financial institutions do business in the United States and the way government supervises that business. The plan was designed by the administration after consultation with industry representatives, consumer advocates, congressional leaders and government regulators.

"I'm convinced that by setting out clear rules of the road and ensuring transparency and fair dealings, we will actually promote a more vibrant market," Obama said.

The proposal calls for stronger oversight of opaque financial instruments and the financial institutions that designed and sold them. Many economists say that the excessive risks those institutions took exacerbated the financial crisis. By announcing details of the plan, the president opens the way for formal discussion with lawmakers on the final shape of reforms.



A bailout of insurance giant AIG has cost taxpayers more than \$180 billion and caused protests, such as this one in Chicago in March. (© AP Images)

The president's plan would allow the Federal Reserve — the U.S. central bank — to regulate bank holding companies and other large and interconnected financial companies whose failure could pose risks to the U.S. economy. The plan would raise capital and liquidity requirements for companies that in the past were viewed as "too big to fail" and establish a mechanism for their orderly resolution when they do in fact fail. The administration believes that these measures will go a long way to ensure the stability of the financial system.

The proposal also aims to address securitization, or the issuance of securities backed by different classes of assets, a trend that accelerated in the years preceding the current crisis and acquired notoriety when the market for mortgage-

backed securities collapsed. The proposal would impose strict reporting requirements on the originators or brokers of asset-backed securities and require them to retain part of the risk associated with the underlying loans. It also would regulate, for the first time, complex financial instruments such as credit default swaps, which are poorly understood and traded mostly outside the view of regulators.

In addition, the proposal calls for creation of a new agency designed to protect consumer interests across a range of financial products that includes credit cards and mortgages.

Doug Rediker of the New America Foundation, a policy research group, said the proposal will not prevent financial crises in the future because they will be of a nature that cannot be anticipated. But the plan tries to align incentives and risks in a way that would make it more difficult for financiers to exploit the financial system unduly, at least in the short term.

Obama presented the plan as an attempt to modernize U.S. financial regulation — the major tenets of which were established during the Great Depression of the 1930s — in a way that would make it capable of dealing with the sophistication and the global scope of a 21st-century economy. U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and National Economic Council Director Lawrence Summers, in a June 15 commentary published by the Washington Post, write, "Our framework for financial regulation is riddled with gaps, weaknesses and jurisdictional overlaps, and suffers from an outdated conception of financial risk."

The new White House plan, however, refrains from consolidating and simplifying the overly complex structure of federal regulatory authorities, a reorganization that only a few weeks ago seemed to be one of the administration's priorities. Instead, the plan would establish a council of regulators, which in addition to providing a check on the Federal Reserve's expanded authority, would "fill gaps in regulation, facilitate coordination of policy and resolution of disputes, and identify emerging risks in firms and market activities," according to a White House fact sheet.

The president said he also will ask Congress to merge two agencies responsible for bank supervision.

Rediker said the administration is taking a realistic view of what is politically possible, given that Congress, not the administration, will write the final reform legislation.

In a globalized economy, a new regulatory regime will have little effect if international regulatory standards are not aligned around similar goals, officials said. The Obama administration intends to lead efforts to improve financial regulation and supervision around the world. Its proposal calls on an international group of central banks to come up with measures to limit overreliance of the international financial system on debt and to raise capital requirements to offset riskier assets.

## Uzbek Journalists Explore Economic Issues with the Help of Digital Technology

On July 30, the U.S. Embassy sponsored a Digital Video Conference (DVC) for 45 journalists from throughout Uzbekistan with Dr. Robert J. Shiller, Professor of Economics from Yale School of Management, to discuss the current global economic crisis.

Professor Shiller is an American economist, academic, and best-selling author who is ranked among the 100 most influential economists of the world. A representative from the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations opened the DVC by discussing the current state of the economy in Uzbekistan.

“The present world financial and economic crisis is one of the most severe in recent decades. However, recent data which come from leading countries of the world testify that the situation is gradually improving. The world economy is gradually adjusting back from the experience of shock,” said Professor Shiller during the DVC.

Professor Shiller shared with journalists his thoughts on the causes of the current global financial crisis and how Central Asia may be affected. He noted that much of the financial downturn can be linked to upward “swings in confidence” during which “prices were too high to be sustained.”

Professor Shiller argued that there needs to be a “revolution in economic theory” with a greater link to the “emotions and behavior of consumers.” He added that nations heavily dependent on exports should “hedge their risks by diversifying their economies.” He also stressed that the global economy is becoming more and more integrated and, as a result, Uzbekistan – like all nations of the world -- will likely increase its participation in the global economy.



Uzbek journalists gather at the U.S. Embassy to discuss the current global economic crisis with an American professor via DVC technology. (U.S. Embassy photo)

In response to a question about the appropriate level of state participation in the economy, Professor Shiller used an airport to illustrate his point. He argued that government should play the role of air traffic controllers, helping a variety of aircraft land and take off without incident. Without this control tower, chaos and possible accidents are quite likely. In short, he noted that “limited government regulations are needed, but entrepreneurship should always be encouraged.”

The U.S. Embassy hosts a monthly gathering for local media, otherwise known as our “Press Gap.” If you are a journalist and would like to attend future Press Gaps, please contact the Press Office at

[TashkentPressCenter@state.gov](mailto:TashkentPressCenter@state.gov).

## U.S. Central Command Commander General Petraeus Visits Tashkent



General David Petraeus (second from right) lays flowers at the Monument of Mater Dolorosa in Tashkent and pays respect to Uzbekistan's fallen soldiers. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On August 18, U.S. Central Command Commander General David Petraeus laid a wreath at the Monument of Mater Dolorosa in Tashkent during his visit to Uzbekistan.

The CENTCOM Commanding General discussed with Uzbekistan's leadership key regional security issues, particularly related to Afghanistan.

He met with President Islam Karimov and senior Uzbek officials from the National Security Council and the Ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade. Minister of Defense Berdiev and General Petraeus also signed an agreement outlining a program of military to military contact involving educational exchanges and training for the coming year.

Media reports that military bases were discussed are incorrect.

## Orientation Helps Students Prepare for Experience in U.S. Schools



During the Pre-Departure Orientation, students outline their goals and expectations for their educational experience in the U.S. (U.S. Embassy photo)

A group of 28 students and scholars prepared for their upcoming journeys to study and teach at American universities at a recent orientation session, where they learned the nuts-and-bolts of travel logistics, dealing with medical issues, academic expectations and opportunities for acting as cultural ambassadors for Uzbekistan.

Each of the participants is preparing to study in the U.S. through the Global Undergraduate Exchange (Global UGRAD), Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship or Fulbright Foreign Student exchange programs, which are administered by the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. The Pre-Departure Orientation covered many of the issues they will face during their period of study, with the goal of helping them have a successful and productive experience.

“Living and studying in a completely different environment is a big challenge, and we want to give the students all the knowledge and tools we can to ease the transition and make their programs a success,” said Carrie Lee, the Cultural Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. “The Pre-Departure Orientation is our chance to answer questions about everything from where to buy course books to what to wear to class. We want our participants to know from the beginning that we are here to help and support them.”

The orientation outlined expectations and gave all sorts of practical advice: how to set up a bank account; where to go if they have medical problems; how to register with the university and meet with academic advisors; how to choose classes and figure out the right amount of coursework; and ways to deal with homesickness and cultural differences. Speakers strongly encouraged the students to seek out new experiences, from attending American football games to traveling around and participating in academic conferences.

Several previous participants in U.S. educational programs also offered advice based on their own experiences at American universities.

One of the participants, Jalol Nasirov, encouraged the students to seek out an internship that would enhance their studies and lay the groundwork for starting a career when they return to Uzbekistan. Nasirov, who studied Business Administration at Ball State University in Indiana on the UGRAD program in 2006-2007, said his internship with a financial advising company was one of the most important aspects of his experience.

“It took me three or four months of searching to find a good internship, but it was a great thing to jumpstart my career,” he said.

U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland told the participants that they could take pride in the fact that they were selected from the hundreds of students from all regions of Uzbekistan who had competed for spots in these educational programs. The U.S. Government pays for all educational, living, medical and other expenses of the programs.

He stressed that the programs are designed as both education and cultural exchanges.

“You will live in university dormitories and experience American customs; have an opportunity to travel around the country and celebrate American holidays,” he said. “You will also serve as cultural ambassadors for Uzbekistan, explaining your country and culture to your classmates and colleagues.... These scholarships will allow you to pursue your studies in the United States and also work to promote mutual understanding, as well as the economic, social, and democratic development of your country.”

The Global UGRAD Program allows undergraduate students from the nations of the former Soviet Union to study for one year at a U.S. community college or university. The Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program allows graduate students and young professionals to study for one or two years at U.S. institutions of higher education. Most fellows are in fields such as business administration, education, law, journalism and the social sciences.

Four of the orientation participants will study in the U.S. on the Fulbright Foreign Student Program, which is being administered by the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan for the first time. The program is for graduate students, young professionals and artists who want to study in the U.S. for one year or longer. Many students study in the humanities, hard sciences such as engineering, or social sciences.

The U.S. Embassy administers a range of educational exchange programs designed for undergraduate and graduate students, scholars and professionals. You can find out more about these programs at <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/exchanges.html>.

## Students Attend Digital Conference on Business Degree Programs



Students in Tashkent link digitally to Howard Ling, the director of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program at the University of North Carolina-Pembroke, during the conference on MBA programs in the U.S. (U.S. Embassy photo)

About 60 students came to the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent to speak with the director of a business school about studying for a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree at an American university.

The May 28 conference linked the students by video with Howard Ling, the director of the MBA program at the University of North Carolina-Pembroke. Through the video cameras, the students in Tashkent were able to speak with Ling about areas of study within MBA programs, the types of careers such a degree leads toward and the possibilities for scholarships and other types of financial aid.

The digital video conference (DVC) was organized by the Educational Advising Center (EAC) at the Embassy, which provides a wide range of resources to students in Uzbekistan who are considering studying in the United States. The director of the EAC said she plans to hold more DVCs about various topics of higher education in the coming months.

"It was really helpful for the students," she said, as they were able to speak directly with an expert on MBA programs and ask him whatever questions they wanted.

Ling, who also teaches courses on marketing and runs his own business, spoke about the specific coursework involved in MBA programs, the importance of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Graduate Management Admission Tests (GMAT) scores in the admissions process, and gave advice on finding the best scholarships.

During the conference, students were provided other information about MBA programs and directed to websites about business schools and the GMAT.

Colleges and universities in the U.S. have been actively recruiting students from Central Asia (see article about recruiting efforts here). The EAC's Education Advisor said students who score 100 or higher on the TOEFL have a good chance of receiving scholarships and other financial aid for study at institutes of higher education in the United States. The services of the EAC, which are free and open to the public, include help locating financial aid.

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

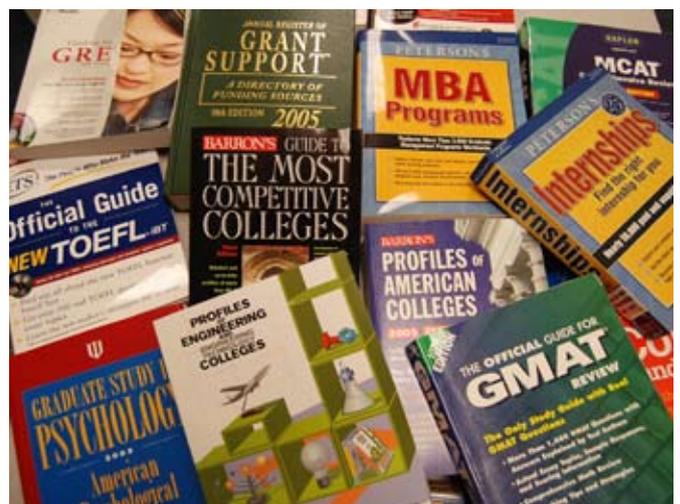


The Educational Advising Center offers the following services free of charge:

- 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](mailto:Tashkent-Advising@state.gov).

## Embroidery Exhibition Celebrates Uzbekistan's Independence and Founding of Tashkent

On August 28, Ambassador Norland participated in the opening ceremony of the exhibition of embroidery artist Markhabo Magdieva.

This program is one of the various events being held to commemorate Uzbekistan's 18 years as an independent nation and the 2200th anniversary of the founding of Tashkent. The exhibition "Glow of My Country in Embroidery" at the Amir Temur Museum in Tashkent displayed dozens of embroidery works of the talented artist including large-scale suzannis, decorations for yurts, and many other ornamental pieces.

Ms. Magdieva explained to Ambassador Norland the history of her creations, noting the traditional techniques she uses and her creative inspirations. Ambassador Norland congratulated the young artist on her first exhibition and wished her continued success.

On the photo: Ambassador Norland and Markhabo Magdieva discuss one of the artist's embroidery works at the exhibition celebrating Uzbekistan's Independence Day and the 2200th anniversary of the founding of Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)



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