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Embassy Commemorates Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with Partners in Uzbekistan

U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland welcomed nearly 100 people, including representatives of civil society and the human rights community, as well as officials of the Government of Uzbekistan and diplomats, who joined him at the Ambassador's Residence to commemorate the life and work of civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Ambassador Norland welcomes guests at his Residence to commemorate the life and work of civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Among the many guests at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration on Jan. 19 were Sayora Rashidova, the Human Rights Ombudsman of the Oliy Majlis (Legislative Chamber of the Republic of Uzbekistan) and Begzot Kadyrov, the Deputy Director of the Religious Affairs Committee of the Cabinet of Ministers. Other guests included

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Uzbek Novelist Participates in International Writing Program

Salomat Vafo, the writer whose 2004 novel *The Empire of Mystery* broke new ground in Uzbek literature through its exploration by a woman of the private relationships between men and women, recently returned from a program for international writers at the world-famous creative writing program at the University of Iowa.

The International Writing Program brings together about 30 leading writers from around the world each year for three months of workshops and lectures at the university in Iowa City, Iowa, which has been named



In the photo: Fiction writer Salomat Vafo speaks at a workshop during the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. (Photo courtesy of Salomat Vafo)

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EMBASSY COMMEMORATES, continued from front page

representatives of political parties and human rights organizations such as Ezgulik and the Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, human rights lawyers, and journalists.

Martin Luther King, Jr. led non-violent protests against racial discrimination in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. As support for those protests grew, schools and other institutions were desegregated, discriminatory laws were abolished and the political process was opened to African-Americans. Tragically, Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

The work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his followers is seen as one of the great steps forward in the continuing process of building a society in America where full civil and human rights are respected. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a federal holiday celebrated in the third week of January.

Dr. King's work has international ramifications as well. "It was he (King) who dreamed of a world in which all people could realize their full potential under protection of the law and without fear of persecution. That is the dream to which we all aspire," Norland said in his speech. The Ambassador outlined the Obama Administration's approach to advancing human rights around the world, as summarized in Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's "Remarks on the Human Rights Agenda for the 21st Century" speech delivered at Georgetown University on Dec. 14, copies of which were distributed to the guests.

He observed that the United States and Uzbekistan have put civil society and human rights high on their bilateral agenda, noting that Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Posner discussed the issues during their meeting in Washington in December.

During the reception, guests watched video clips from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech delivered at the 1963 March on Washington.



Ambassador Norland speaks with Human Rights Ombudswoman Sayora Rashidova. (U.S. Embassy photo)

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

(January 15, 1929-April 4, 1968)

King's grandfather began the family's long tenure as pastors of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, serving from 1914 to 1931, when his father took over. From 1960 until his death Martin Luther acted as co-pastor. Martin Luther King attended segregated public schools in Georgia, graduating from high school at the age of fifteen; he received the B. A. degree in 1948 from Morehouse College, a distinguished Negro institution in Atlanta, from which both his father and grandfather had graduated. After three years of theological study at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, where he was elected president of a predominantly white senior class, he was awarded the B.D. in 1951. With a fellowship won at Crozer, he enrolled in graduate studies at Boston University, completing his residence for the doctorate in 1953 and receiving the degree in 1955. In Boston he met and married Coretta Scott, a young woman of uncommon intellectual and artistic attainments. Two sons and two daughters were born into the family.

In 1954, King accepted his first pastorate at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Montgomery's black community had long-standing grievances about the mistreatment of blacks on city buses. Heading the year-long bus boycott against segregation in buses, King soon became a national figure.

In 1957, he was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization formed to provide new leadership for the now burgeoning civil rights movement. In the 11-year period between 1957 and 1968, King traveled over 6 million miles and spoke more than 2,500 times, appearing wherever there was injustice, protest, and action. In these years, he led a massive protest in Birmingham, Alabama, that caught the attention of the entire world, providing what he called a coalition of conscience and inspiring his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," a manifesto of the Black American revolution; he planned the drives in Alabama for the registration of Black Americans as voters; he directed the peaceful march on Washington, D.C., of 250,000 people, to whom he delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, he conferred with President John F. Kennedy and campaigned for President Lyndon B. Johnson; he was arrested upwards of 20 times and assaulted at least four times; he was awarded five honorary degrees; was named Man of the Year by Time magazine in 1963; and became not only the symbolic leader of American blacks, but also a world figure.

At the age of 35, Martin Luther King, Jr., became the youngest man to have received the Nobel Peace Prize. When notified of his selection, he announced that he would turn over the prize money of \$54,123 to the furtherance of the civil rights movement.

On the evening of April 4, 1968, while standing on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead a protest march in sympathy with striking garbage workers of that city, he was assassinated.

Source: <http://nobelprize.org>

Black History Month Honors Legacy of Struggle and Triumph

Obama inauguration significant as African Americans honored in February



A man and his son look at the bus in which Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in 1955, a landmark moment in the civil rights movement. (© AP Images)

Each February, Black History Month honors the struggles and triumphs of millions of American citizens over the most devastating obstacles — slavery, prejudice, poverty — as well as their contributions to the nation's cultural and political life.

In 2009, the inauguration of Barack Obama, America's first African-American president, lends Black History Month a special significance. Obama took the oath of office January 20, the day after Americans honored the memory of Martin Luther King Jr. with a federal holiday and national day of service. The late civil rights leader would have turned 80 on January 15.

In his inaugural address, President Obama acknowledged the historical importance of a moment in which “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.”

HONORING ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF BLACK AMERICANS

Black History Month was the inspiration of Carter G. Woodson, a noted scholar and historian, who instituted Negro History Week in 1926. He chose the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and the abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

The celebration was expanded to a month in 1976, the nation's bicentennial. President Gerald R. Ford urged Americans to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.”

Woodson, the son of former slaves in Virginia, realized that the struggles and achievements of Americans of African descent were being ignored or misrepresented. He founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), which supports historical research, publishes a scholarly journal and sets the theme for Black History Month each year.

The theme for 2009, “The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas,” honors the centennial of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and highlights “the problem of race and citizenship in American history, from the experiences of free blacks in a land of slavery to the political aspirations of African Americans today,” according to the ASALH Web site. “The centennial also provides an opportunity to explore the history of other nations in the Americas, where former slaves also sought the fruits of citizenship.”

John Fleming, ASALH president and director emeritus of the Cincinnati Museum Center, said Obama's heritage — a black father born in Kenya and a white mother born in the United States — “continues to reflect the contributions Africans and Europeans have made to American history from the very beginning.”

Fleming said he believes Black History Month should focus on positive as well as negative aspects of the black experience. “Certainly, struggle has been an ongoing theme in our history from the very beginning. However, we were not slaves prior to being captured in Africa — and while slavery was part of our experience for 250 years, we have a hundred-and-some years in freedom that we also need to deal with.”

He said he has seen “substantial progress on many fronts,” but “at the same time there are still major problems that have to be addressed, one being the permanent underclass in urban areas now. We don't seem to be able to break that cycle of poverty. And there are still some major rural pockets of poverty” such as in the Mississippi Delta.

“I'm glad to see the National African American Museum being developed on the Mall, which will tell a much broader story,” said Fleming. In 2003, President Bush signed legislation to establish the new museum, which will be located on the National Mall near the Washington Monument. Although the new museum has not yet been built, it launched a photo exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery late in 2007 that is traveling to museums around the country through 2011.

“I think that African-American history gets more attention during February than during any other time of year,” Fleming said, “and I think it's an opportunity for us in the field to emphasize that it is something that should be studied throughout the year.”

Each year, the U.S. president honors Black History Month, or African-American History Month as it is also called, with a proclamation and a celebration at the White House. States and cities hold their own events around the country, and media feature topics related to black history.

ASALH has its headquarters in Washington, where Woodson lived from 1915 until his death in 1950. His home is designated a national historic site.

Embassy Staff Spread Gifts and Goodwill During Holiday Season

One boy held onto a new soccer ball and wouldn't give it up, and a little girl couldn't stop smiling as she hugged volunteers from the U.S. Embassy who delivered toys and blankets to the center where the children live.

Several U.S. Marines and others from the Embassy brought boxes of toys and about 90 blankets to the 156 children who live at the Semurg Rehabilitative Center for Children with Disabilities in Tashkent. The gifts were part of the Marines'



U.S. Embassy staff brought the children toys and blankets as part of the Toys for Tots program. (U.S. Embassy photo)

annual Toys for Tots program, in which Marines stationed in the United States and around the world collect toys to give to children during the Christmas and New Year holiday season.

Officials at the Semurg Center told the organizers that the children could also use blankets, so the Marines also raised money from Embassy staff to buy the blankets in bulk. "There are a lot of kids here who we can help, so we collected money to get them some things they need," said one of the Marine organizers. "It's really nice to see the kids happy."

Farida Husanova, the director of the Semurg Center, said the Marines' gesture was about more than bringing the children holiday cheer. "It's not only about gifts; it's about the friendship between us," she said.

The Toys for Tots program was one of several efforts coordinated through the U.S. Embassy to distribute toys and other goods that can help those in need during the holiday season. Such gift drives and charitable giving are a tradition around Christmas in the U.S., and many Embassy staff wanted to continue it in Uzbekistan.

The Community Liaison Office (CLO) at the Embassy organized a drive to raise money to buy a washing machine for the Children's Leukemia Hospital in Tashkent. American and

local staff of the Embassy donated enough money to buy the washing machine and to contribute to other needs at the hospital.

The CLO also organized donations of clothes and toys to be distributed to families through the Russian Orthodox Church, the Society of Blind People, and the Society of People with Disabilities. Staff in the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) organized a similar drive to distribute toys to children at the Tuberculosis Hospital in Tashkent.

Alumni of U.S. Embassy-sponsored cultural and educational programs collected bags of clothes, candy, and more than 1 million Uzbek soum (nearly \$700) to donate to an orphanage in the Buka District of Tashkent Region and a center for children with disabilities in the Qibray District near Tashkent.

At Orphanage No. 15 in the Buka District, where more than 100 children between the ages of 3 and 12 live, the children performed national dances and recited holiday poems when Embassy staff and alumni arrived. The alumni made sure that each child got a share of the warm clothes and candy, which they happily ate on the spot.

In the Qibray home for children with disabilities, the children performed a holiday show for the alumni and Embassy staff. Some children who had only recently learned to speak recited poems by heart.

"It was the best way to wrap up this year of alumni programs – by helping bring a little joy and happiness to the ones who need it most," said Alumni Coordinator Sardor Djurabaev.



Youth Exchange Opportunity alumna Anastasiya Ni (standing) helps out with holiday decorations at Orphanage No. 15 in the Buka District of Tashkent Region. (U.S. Embassy photo)

English Language Program Receives Reference Materials

Faculty and students at the Institute for English Language Teacher Education (IELTE) can now use the 14-volume Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, a set of authoritative reference books for study in the field of linguistics.

The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics contains more than 3,000 articles from linguists around the world on subjects including language acquisition, linguistic anthropology, translation, and writing systems, among many others. The 11,000-page set has been called “the field’s standard reference work.”

“This encyclopedia is an incredible resource, and I am sure the IELTE is the only institution in Uzbekistan that has it now,” said Mukhamadavas Iriskulov, the director of IELTE.

The U.S. Embassy in Tashkent gave the encyclopedia, which costs about \$5,600, and popular study guides for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to IELTE as part of their ongoing partnership. The Public Affairs Section of the Embassy worked with the Uzbek State University of World Languages in 2000 to create IELTE, a four-year program of study in English for future English teachers. IELTE, which is part of the University of World Languages, has about 330 current students studying a curriculum modeled on top language universities around the world.

The Embassy and the U.S. Government’s Regional English Language Office based in Astana, Kazakhstan, have supported IELTE since its inception through resources and training.

On December 29, Public Affairs Officer Molly Stephenson and Cultural Affairs Officer Carrie Lee delivered the refer-



Public Affairs Officer Molly Stephenson (middle), along with the Dean of the First English Philology Department Tulaboy Madrahimov, IELTE Director Mukhamadavas Iriskulov and faculty and students look through the Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics. (U.S. Embassy photo)

ence materials and met with Abdulla Ismailov, the rector of the University of World Languages, and IELTE Director Iriskulov. They assessed the current collaboration and discussed future plans for cooperation.

IELTE currently hosts English Language Fellow Dennis Johnson, who teaches classes and helped IELTE develop a new curriculum for teaching English writing, which had not been taught as a distinct discipline before at any university in Uzbekistan. The university and Embassy officials discussed the possibility of hosting other English Language Fellows in the future, as well as other potential avenues of supporting the education of future English teachers.

Embassy Teams Observe December 27 Parliamentary Elections

Staff of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent served as observers of the December 27 parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan.

Five teams made up of Embassy staff and members of American families visited district elections offices, the national press center and polling stations in Tashkent, Guliston, rural Syr Darya Region, and towns in the Tashkent Region. Their observations will be included in the Embassy’s overall evaluation of the elections and their place in the ongoing efforts to strengthen democratic institutions in Uzbekistan.

“It was interesting to observe Uzbekistan’s election firsthand. My team returned to many of the Tashkent-based polling sites I visited during the 2007 presidential election. I appreciated the opportunity to compare and contrast the two elections and to better my understanding of Uzbekistan’s electoral process,” said Public Affairs Officer Molly Stephenson.

Candidates from the four officially registered political parties in Uzbekistan vied for 135 seats in the Lower House

of Parliament (Oliy Majlis). The remaining 15 seats will be filled by representatives from the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan. Voters also cast ballots for candidates for regional and local offices. It was the first national election since the 2007 presidential elections.

The U.S. teams were among about 270 international election observers registered by Uzbekistan’s Central Election Commission. Representatives from the political parties – the Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party, the People’s Democratic Party, the Adolat (Justice) Party, and Milliy Tiklanish (National Revival) Party – were also present at polling stations and election offices.

The U.S. observers watched the voting process and spoke with election and party officials about issues such as the security of ballots, voter identification, the process of reporting results and whether they had encountered any sort of difficulties. The observers found the election officials to be helpful and hospitable.

Grant Supports Restoration, Improvements at Tamara Khanum Museum in Tashkent

Recent upgrades at the Tamara Khanum Museum in Tashkent enable visitors to get a better, more personal look into the life of the famous dancer who brought Uzbek music and culture to the world.

In 2008, the museum received a \$34,000 grant from the U.S. Ambassadors' Fund for Cultural Preservation to revitalize and expand exhibits. The museum has used the funds to restore 75 costumes the dancer wore as she performed around the world, create a new exhibit of hundreds of historical photographs, record an audio guide for visitors to learn about the life of Tamara Khanum, and to improve the display of the museum's exhibits.

The results are impressive. A brightly lit sign now adorns the intricate woodwork outside the museum. The main exhibition area sparkles with dozens of the restored costumes that Tamara Khanum collected as she performed in countries around the world.

A new exhibition area displays hundreds of photographs with captions in Uzbek, Russian, and English. The photos include pictures of the young dancer and the musicians with whom she performed, black-and-white scenes of life in Uzbekistan in a bygone era, and posters advertising her international performances. Together they tell the story of the dancer's life, as well as that of a changing cultural landscape as Uzbekistan evolved throughout the 20th Century.

Tamara Khanum was born in 1906 in the Ferghana Valley to a family of Armenian descent. She began dancing at a young age, moving to Tashkent and later to Moscow to study ballet and other dance forms. As her professional career advanced, she became a cultural icon of a modern woman free to dance in public – without a veil – something that was previously not done in Uzbekistan, according to Gulsum Khamraeva, the director of the Tamara Khanum Museum.

“She was one of the founders of modern Uzbek dance. She was the first to step on the stage with an open face,” according to the audio history at the museum.

Tamara Khanum performed in countries around the world, bringing the beauty of Uzbek music and dance to audiences who had never before been exposed to it. She was awarded the Soviet Union's highest honors for artistic expression.

The museum also has published Tamara Khanum's autobiography and built a website with photos and information about the museum and her life.

On Nov. 4, U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland and his wife, Mary Hartnett, toured the museum. Khamraeva explained how Tamara Khanum collected traditional costumes from so many nations and regions by offering to perform a traditional dance at each stop on her international tours.

“Well, of course she needed something to wear for the per-

formance,” Khamraeva said. The result is the collection of dozens of costumes from countries and regions as far-flung as Albania and Indonesia, Korea and Karakalpakstan.

Since 2001, the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) has contributed about \$125,000 to support seven projects that help preserve Uzbekistan's rich history and culture. These include:

- Preservation and microfilming manuscripts at the Abu Raykhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies in Tashkent;
- A project to preserve and better display 20 Korans dating back to the 11th Century at the Samarkand Cultural History Museum;



Tamara Khanum Museum Director Gulsum Khamraeva speaks with Ambassador Richard Norland. (U.S. Embassy photo)

- Equipping workshops in Tashkent where master potters share techniques of traditional pottery making;
- Protecting excavations at Kampir-Tepe, a desert fortress dating to the 4th Century B.C. near the Amu Darya River near Termez;
- A grant to the Afrosiab Museum in Samarkand to preserve and better display artifacts taken from excavations at Afrosiab, a major trading city near Samarkand that was destroyed around the time of the Mongol invasions in the 12th Century;
- Preserving and restoring the Friday Palace Mosque in the historic Ark Citadel in Bukhara.

The website of the Tamara Khanum Museum can be accessed at <http://thanum.uz/>.

For more information on the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) go to <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/ambfund.html>.

Dance Troupe Integrates Disabled and Non-disabled Dancers into Single Expression of Art



U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland and his wife, Mary Hartnett, speak with Visage dancer Sasha Plotnikova at a performance in January. (Photo courtesy of OrexCa.com.)

The scenes from the Visage Movement Theatre's modern dances are both stunningly beautiful and deeply moving.

Set on a nearly empty stage against a black background, one piece from "I Dream that I'm Walking" features a woman who is deaf incorporating the movements of sign language into a dance that flows as gently as wind whispering through a forest. Another, from "Ivory Gull Over the Blue Sea," shows a mother and father twirling a child who has difficulty walking in a dance that embodies the beauty of movement and familial love.

Another powerful piece from "Improvisation from Life" opens with a young man struggling to pull himself out of a wheelchair and onto a ladder. He then begins an almost symbiotic duet with another dancer who lifts the young man into flight.

These are just a few of the many pieces in which the Visage Movement Theatre combines the movements of highly trained modern dancers with other dancers with a range of physical and mental disabilities. At the beginning of a show, audience members may see two sets of dancers: those with disabilities and those without. But by the end of the performance, said Visage art director Liliya Sevastyanova, they see just one group of dancers – one group of people – using dance as a way to express who they are.

"What I want to show is a message that comes from my own heart, something from deep within me," said Sevastyanova, the choreographer who in 1982 founded Visage as the only modern dance troupe in Uzbekistan. "That's what I try to teach my students: to pass their feelings through their movements."

Over the years, Visage has received support from private donors and the artistic community, the Uzbekistan Ministry of Culture and Sport, and the embassies of several nations, in-

cluding France, Italy, Switzerland and, recently, the United States.

With support from the U.S. Embassy, Sevastyanova attended two weeks of workshops in August on integrating people with disabilities in modern dance productions. The Axis Physically Integrated Dance Summer Intensive Workshop under the leadership of Judith Smith in Oakland, California, and the Integrated Dance Intensive Summer Course at the University of Washington in Seattle, focused on techniques, improvisation and composition in creating modern dances.

The Axis and University of Washington integrated dance programs are renowned in the U.S. dance communities not just for their work with people with disabilities, but for the sophistication of the productions. "The quality of the dancing takes your breath away," wrote arts critic Allan Ulrich of the Axis group in a review in the San Francisco Chronicle newspaper. The fact that some of the dancers have disabilities is secondary to the meaning and beauty of the art, he wrote.

Sevastyanova's participation in the workshops came about from contacts she made through the Seattle-Tashkent Sister City program. A friend from the Seattle sister-city delegation, Rich Hawkins, put her in contact with Jurg Koch, the director of the University of Washington's integrated dance programs. He invited her to participate in the workshop and urged her to take part in the Axis program.

For Sevastyanova, it was a chance to share ideas and learn how other integrated dance troupes develop. "I felt a great need to learn how professionals work in this area," she said, adding that she had never had formal training in using dance as a form of rehabilitation. "We share a common goal: to help those with disabilities through art, to help themselves live in modern society."

U.S. Ambassador Richard Norland said he was deeply moved when he saw that art in action as the Visage dancers performed January 8 in Tashkent.

"This was a 'first' for me – I had never before seen this combination of disabled and able-bodied dancers performing together, and the effect was emotionally magical, extremely powerful," said Ambassador Norland. "I hope we will be able to arrange a visit to the U.S. for this group soon."

Visage has about 30 dancers, of whom about 20 have special needs ranging from blindness and deafness to use of wheelchairs and developmental disorders. They rehearse two times a week or more when they are preparing for the seven or eight performances they give each year. When they dance, they are a single unit, whatever their individual needs and abilities may be, Sevastyanova said.

"Every person is gifted by God. By performing, you share that gift," she said. "This is what I believe is the harmony in human relationships, that we share our gifts with others."



The State of Michigan - The Great Lakes State



Michigan is a state in the Great Lakes region in the mid-western United States. Its two major land areas, the Upper and Lower Peninsulas, are separated by the Straits of Mackinac, which have been spanned since 1957 by the Mackinac Bridge.

Michigan's Lower Peninsula contains all the state's large cities and 97 percent of its population. The Upper Peninsula is sparsely settled; its forests and extensive lake-side beaches make it an attractive destination for tourists. Michigan's boundaries include parts of four of the five Great Lakes, and it has more coastline than any state except Alaska.

The automobile is the single commodity with which Michigan is most identified. The state is home to General Motors, Ford and Chrysler - the "Detroit Three" and the nation's largest automakers.

The state has had an outstanding reputation in higher education, and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and Michigan State University are helping to foster its high-tech industries. But the state's heavy reliance on auto manufacturing makes it vulnerable to economic downturns, reflected recently in one of the nation's highest unemployment rates.

PEOPLE

Following the prehistoric inhabitants, Michigan's residents were the tribal groups of Ojibwa, Ottawa and Potawatomi Native Americans. The first Europeans were the French and French- Canadians in the 1600s and early 1700s, followed by the British in the late 1700s. The great waves of immigration into Michigan began in the early 1800s, as New Englanders moved into Michigan's southern counties in large numbers. Attracted to the state's lumber, mining and automobile industries, at least 40 national and ethnic groups arrived in sizeable numbers during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Dutch, Germans and Poles were among the largest of these later groups.



A tall ship passes beneath the Straits of Mackinac bridge near Mackinaw City, Michigan. (© AP Images)

In more recent migrations, many African-Americans and people of Asians, Near Eastern or Spanish origin have made Michigan their home. There are so many ethnic groups present in the state that weekly cultural festivals begin in May and continue through September each year in Detroit.

ECONOMY

The three largest income-producing industries in Michigan are manufacturing, tourism and agriculture.



Ford Verve concept cars are displayed at the North American International Auto Show Tuesday, Jan. 15, 2008, in Detroit. As automakers come closer to parity on quality, safety and technology, the only thing left to distinguish them is the way their cars and trucks look, both inside and out. In recent years, design has been elevated from an afterthought to a prime consideration of most automakers. (© AP Images)

Manufacturing

In the early 1900s, Henry Ford started producing simple, cheap cars on a moving assembly line in a factory near Detroit. Michigan quickly became a world leader in the production of automobiles. However, the Great Depression of the 1930s hit the motor industry hard, resulting in mass unemployment. During World War II (1939-1945) the factories recovered by producing tanks and military planes.



University of Michigan graduates celebrate after their spring commencement ceremony, Saturday, April 26, 2008, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. (© AP Images)

Besides automobiles, Michigan currently manufactures a wide variety of other products. These include non-electric machinery, furniture and appliances, cereal, baby food, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and lumber.

Tourism

The tourist business is one of Michigan's largest income producers. Tourists primarily come in summer, along with several weeks of bird and deer hunting in the fall. Winter brings skiing, skating, ice fishing, small game hunting and snowmobiling. Spring means trout and bass fishing, and getting the boat ready for summer and its traditional sports.

Sightseeing at both historic and natural landmarks continues to increase. Among the best known tourist attractions are:

- Cranbrook Educational Community
- Detroit's auto plants
- Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village
- Holland's Tulip Festival and Windmill Island
- Isle Royale National Park
- Pictured Rocks
- Porcupine Mountains
- Sleeping Bear Dunes
- Soo Locks
- The State Capitol
- The Straits area, which features Fort Michilimackinac, the Mackinac Bridge and Mackinac Island
- Tahquamenon Falls.

Agriculture

In spite of urban expansion into farm acres, the state still has about 52,800 farms, which total about 10 million acres. The state ranks first nationally in the production of:

- Blueberries
- Dry beans: black, cranberry, and small red
- Tart cherries
- Pickling cucumbers

- Flowering hanging baskets, impatiens and geraniums

In addition to beans and wheat, principal field crops are oats, hay, corn, rye, potatoes, soybeans and sugarbeets. The state is also a major producer of apples, plums, grapes, carrots, sweet cherries, fresh-market and processing vegetables, and spearmint.

Sources: <http://www.michigan.gov>
<http://www.census.gov>
<http://www.50states.com>

The New York Times 2007 Almanac
 Grolier Student Encyclopedia, V.11
 Encyclopedia Americana, V.19



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

QUICK FACTS

Abbreviation: MI

Capital City: Since 1847 Lansing; Detroit prior to that

Governor: Jennifer Granholm

Date of Statehood: January 26, 1837 (26th)

Population: 10,112,620 (8th highest, 2004 estimates)

Area: 250,493 sq. km, 11th largest

Origin of State's Name: Derived from the Indian word *Michigama*, meaning great or large lake.

Largest Cities: Detroit, Grand Rapids, Warren, Flint, Sterling Heights, Lansing, Ann Arbor, Livonia.

Major industries: Motor vehicles and parts, machinery, fabricated metal products, food processing, chemical products, mining, agriculture, tourism.

Uzbek Novelist Participates in International Writing Program

UZBEK NOVELIST, continued from front page.

the UNESCO City of Literature. Vafo joined poets, screenwriters, novelists and non-fiction writers from nations as diverse as South Korea, Armenia, New Zealand, and Liberia.

The result was a fascinating mix of ideas about writing and literature and the role they play in the different cultures of the world, said Vafo, whose participation was sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent.

“This program totally changed my viewpoint as an intellectual writer,” she said after her return to Uzbekistan. “It was so interesting to meet with writers from throughout the world, and to learn about contemporary world literature from the writers themselves. ... For two weeks after I returned home, it was difficult for me to come back to myself.”

The workshop exposed her to many opportunities for writers, and she hopes the contacts she made there will help her as she tries to get her works translated and published for an English-speaking audience, she said.

Vafo is from the Khorezm Region of western Uzbekistan. She has written two novels, several collections of short stories, and has directed documentary films and television programs. She also has been active in protecting women's rights in the villages of rural Uzbekistan.

During the International Writing Program, she discussed her 2004 novel *The Empire of Mystery* in a workshop called “The Literature of Desire.” The book deals with the intimate relationships between men and women in an ancient society of female warriors near the Aral Sea.

With its publication, Vafo said she became the first female novelist writing in Uzbek. She said members of the Uzbekistan Writers Union tried to prevent the book's publication because, by exploring issues that have been off-limits, the novel did not have the firm grounding in traditional Uzbek literature that is seen as necessary in contemporary literature.

The publisher Sharq (East) did publish *The Empire of Mystery*, however, and the book became popular especially among younger readers, was applauded as the best Uzbek novel of the year, and has been translated into Russian, she said.

Much of Vafo's writing revolves around the inner dialogue and perceptions of her characters, such as in this excerpt from her short story “9/1”:

“An angel-like woman named Lyudmila had been living peacefully in this apartment building. She didn't get involved in other people's affairs, and there was no gos-

sip about hers. She always smiled at me when we met, her smile spreading like light across her face. She was a nice, simple, kind-hearted woman. A while back, she died all of a sudden.

I had never attended a Christian funeral before. There was poor, small Lyudmila lying in a black box. You could see how thin she was, as if she had died a thousand years ago. I dared to come close and hoped I'd see – for the last time – her face that beamed such light, but instead, an ugly woman was lying in the coffin. I was so frightened! I didn't know who that woman was.

Since then I have been afraid to go past her door. It seems like one of these days, smiling Lyuda will come out of her apartment. I don't understand why people are so afraid of dead bodies. Is it because they've been deprived of everything, or just because they're dead?

For a long time, no one lived in Lyudmila's apartment, but at night it seemed as if someone was playing a joke: Strange lights were turned on and off inside. ...”

Vafo was the third writer from Uzbekistan to participate in the International Writing Program, following poets Aazam Abidov and Sabit Madaliev, who took part in 2004.

Each of them participated in workshops, spent time writing, traveled, and introduced American and international audiences to the rich literary traditions of Central Asia, Abidov said. The program was a rich and fulfilling experience which continues to influence him today, he said.

“I am still in contact with writers from every corner of the world,” Abidov said.

Secretary Clinton Lays Out Agenda on Human Rights

Support for democracy and the fostering of economic development are the cornerstones of the Obama administration's agenda for promoting human rights around the world, says Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In a speech December 14 at Georgetown University in Washington, Clinton presented the president's goals for human rights in the 21st century. She said human rights must be seen in a broad context that recognizes both "negative and positive requirements."

People everywhere, Clinton said, should be free from tyranny in whatever form and they must also be free "to seize the opportunities of a full life." For human rights to be fulfilled, she said, people must be "free from the oppression of want — want of food, want of health, want of education, and want of equality in law and in fact."

The Secretary said democracy fosters human rights by allowing people to fulfill their potential through the freedom to choose laws and leaders, to share and access information, to speak, criticize and debate. "They must be free to worship, associate, and to love in the way that they choose," she said. "And they must be free to pursue the dignity that comes with self-improvement and self-reliance, to build their minds and their skills, bring their goods to the marketplace, and participate in the process of innovation."

"Democracy has proven the best political system for making human rights a human reality over the long term," Clinton said. She added that the Obama administration will promote democracy "not because we want other countries to be like us, but because we want all people to enjoy consistent protection of the rights that are naturally theirs, whether they were born in Tallahassee or Tehran."

Human rights, democracy and development are not three separate goals with three separate agendas. "To make a real and long-term difference in people's lives, we have to tackle all three simultaneously with a commitment that is smart, strategic, determined and long-term," she said.

While acknowledging that there is no single formula for fostering human rights, democracy and development that can be applied to every situation, Clinton outlined critical elements in the Obama administration's plan for action.

Holding all nations accountable to universal standards of human rights is a priority, she said. The United States will assess its own performance, she said, by participating through the United Nations in the Universal Periodic Review of its own human rights record.

"By holding ourselves accountable, we reinforce our moral authority to demand that all governments adhere to obligations under international law," Clinton said.

In enforcing human rights standards, the United States will balance pressure and incentives in a pragmatic approach that

does not compromise its principles, she said, and will work for positive change within multilateral institutions. In the search for innovative ways to achieve results, the secretary said she has commissioned the first-ever Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review to develop a forward-looking strategy.

Human rights, she said, cannot be just a project for governments — change must be driven by citizens and their communities. Among the tools to promote grass-roots efforts is the Global Human Rights Defenders Fund, which last year provided targeted legal and relocation assistance to 170 human rights defenders around the world. Spotlighting human rights activists' efforts and supporting civil society leaders help lay the foundation for change from the bottom up, she said.

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

Secretary of State (01/21/2009 - present)

On January 21, 2009, Hillary Rodham Clinton was sworn in as the 67th Secretary of State of the United States. Secretary Clinton joined the State Department after nearly four decades in public service as an advocate, attorney, First Lady, and Senator.



U.S. Secretary of State
Hillary R. Clinton.

Secretary Clinton was born in Chicago, Illinois, on October 26, 1947, to Dorothy Rodham and the late Hugh Rodham.

She graduated from Wellesley College and Yale Law School. In 1974, Secretary Clinton moved to Arkansas. A year later, she married Bill Clinton and became a successful attorney while also raising their daughter, Chelsea. She was an assistant professor at the University of Arkansas School of Law, and in 1977 she began to serve on the board of the Legal Services Corporation, which she later chaired.

In 1992, Governor Bill Clinton was elected President of the United States, and as First Lady, Hillary Clinton became an advocate of health care reform and worked on many issues relating to children and families. She also traveled to more than 80 countries promoting human rights, democracy and civil society.

In 2000, Hillary Clinton made history as the first First Lady elected to the United States Senate, and the first woman elected statewide in New York.

In 2006, Senator Clinton won reelection to the Senate, and in 2007 she began her historic campaign for President. In 2008, she campaigned for the election of Barack Obama and Joe Biden, and in November, she was nominated by President-elect Obama to be Secretary of State.

Secretary Clinton is the author of best-selling books, including her memoir, *Living History*, and her groundbreaking book on children, *It Takes A Village*. She and President Clinton reside in New York.

Experts Conduct Training on Locating Radioactive Materials

A team of experts from the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) was in Uzbekistan in December to lead a training course in locating and securing radioactive materials.

The course, which was organized in cooperation with the Uzbekistan Institute of Nuclear Physics and held from Dec. 14 to Dec. 18 at the Customs Institute of the State Customs Committee, was designed to train people to use high-tech meters, probes and other equipment to find and identify high-activity radioactive sealed sources. Once the searchers know the nature of the source, they can determine how to package and remove it to a safe location.

About 25 people from the Institute of Nuclear Physics, Republican Central Isotope Laboratory, State Inspectorate "Sanoatkontekhnazorat," State Customs Committee, and the Ministries of Public Health, Defense and Emergency Situations participated in the training.

They are involved in maintenance of detection devices at Customs and border control stations, public safety programs, emergency response, and inspections of medical and industrial sites where radioactive materials may be used.

At the end of the training, the equipment worth more than \$130,000 was distributed among the trainees' agencies to use in searching sites throughout Uzbekistan that could contain radioactive sealed sources.

Radioactive sealed sources are used in a wide range of medical and industrial activities, including treatment of cancer and other diseases, powering remote stations such as navigation beacons, and use in equipment that gauges depth and density in industrial processes.

Such radioactive material – which could be cesium-137, cobalt-60, strontium-90 or other isotopes – can pose public health or security dangers if they are abandoned, lost, stolen, or never were under anyone's regulatory control. Locating them has clear public health and safety benefits, as well as being part of anti-terrorism efforts.

"This training highlights the cooperation between the United States and Uzbekistan to prevent orphaned radiological sources from falling into the wrong hands," said Andrew Bieniawski, NNSA's assistant deputy administrator for Global Threat Reduction. "Searching and securing these types of radioactive materials helps ensure that they cannot be used to build a radiological dispersal device, or 'dirty bomb'."

NNSA's Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI) has provided similar training in more than 30 countries. Following the training and equipment donations, searchers in other nations of the former Soviet Union have found and secured radioactive materials in a variety of locations.

The training provided an opportunity to network and exchange ideas about pooling resources to search for radioac-

tive sealed sources for many participants in Uzbekistan who had not previously met.

The search-and-secure training was the latest activity in the ongoing partnership between the NNSA and its counterparts in Uzbekistan.

In 2006, the NNSA's GTRI worked with the Government of Uzbekistan, Russia, and the International Atomic Energy Agency to remove 63 kilograms (139 pounds) of highly enriched uranium (HEU) spent nuclear fuel from the Uzbekistan Institute of Nuclear Physics. The HEU had been provided during the period of the Soviet Union to fuel a nuclear research reactor at the Institute.



Participants in training for locating and securing radioactive materials use detection equipment during a mock search at the Customs Institute of the State Customs Committee. (U.S. Embassy photo)

The HEU, which could be used in an improvised nuclear device, was transported in 2006 by train under heavy security to a facility near Chelyabinsk, Russia, to be reprocessed.

GTRI has also been assisting the Institute of Nuclear Physics convert its research reactor from the use of HEU fuel to the use of low-enriched uranium fuel, which cannot be used in an improvised nuclear device. GTRI also has worked with Uzbekistan to construct a secure storage facility for radioactive sources found in Uzbekistan.

The training, reactor conversion, nuclear material removal, and protection of radioactive sources are all part of GTRI's mission to reduce and protect high-risk nuclear and radiological materials located at civilian sites worldwide.

The NNSA was established by the U.S. Congress in 2000. It is responsible for ensuring the safety and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, is prepared to respond to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad, and works to reduce the global danger from weapons of mass destruction.

Remote School Receives Computers, Solar-Power System



Students at School No. 37 in Nakurt, Samarkand Region, sit at the computers installed at the school. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Students at a remote school in Samarkand Region can now learn to use computers through a joint project between the U.S. Embassy, the Technology Transfer Agency of Uzbekistan and a U.S. firm that designs solar-power systems.

In November, the Embassy gave five computers to School No. 37 in Nakurt, a desert settlement in the Payariq District about 80 kilometers from Samarkand. The approximately 270 students, ranging from age 7 to 15, can now, for the first time, learn to use computers through a curriculum approved by the Uzbekistan Ministry of Education.

“Because of your assistance, our students will start learning about computer technologies, and this will help them achieve a lot in the future,” wrote the school’s teachers in a letter to the Embassy.

The installation of the computers is the latest part of a pilot project to bring technology and a permanent power supply to the school.

Earlier this year, representatives from Enviromation Inc., a renewable-energy company based in the U.S. state of Virginia, installed a 4.14 kilowatt solar-power system at the school. The system has the capacity to power eight computers and eight lights for 15 hours a day in the winter, and without limit in the summer.

The school will be able to use the solar-power system when it can secure the necessary eight 12-volt/100-amp batteries. Officials with the school and the Technology Transfer Agency of Uzbekistan are searching for a way to get the batteries, which would cost about \$3,000, to complete the project.

The solar-power system has the capacity to run eight computers and eight lights at the school

Currently the school receives electricity through a power

line for one hour during the daytime, during which the computers can be used.

Enviromation worked with the Technology Transfer Agency of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector to install the solar-power system at the school and a solar-powered water pump in Nakurt, said Robert Bennett, the president of Enviromation. It is seen as a pilot project to show that construction of solar-power systems can be an economically feasible way of providing reliable electricity in remote areas, he said.

The total cost of the power system was about \$31,000. But as the pilot project developed, the organizers learned that by using locally available materials, the cost could be cut in half, Bennett said.

“We strove to minimize costs, provide high quality, and overcome the logistic hurdles in implementing such projects to demonstrate that remote solar energy projects can be implemented cost effectively,” Bennett said, adding that he has worked on similar projects in Tajikistan. “We have a strong interest in building the economic well being of Central Asia through the adaptation of renewable energy.”

Bennett was optimistic that such solar-energy systems could be replicated in other remote villages if the design remained simple and costs kept down by using locally or regionally available materials. The potential benefits coming from using the sun to power reliable water sources and electricity at schools are clear.

“Through these projects, the village has the opportunity to elevate both its educational standard as well as its economic standard,” he said.



The solar-power system has the capacity to run eight computers and eight lights at the school. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation



Employees sort AIDS medicine at a lab in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, a country that opposes strong patents for such medicine. (© AP Images)

An effective system for protecting patents, copyrights, and other intellectual property promotes innovation by balancing exclusive rights with accessibility. Michael Gollin is a partner with the Venable LLP law firm in Washington, D.C.; chairman of Public Interest Intellectual Property Advisors, and author of Driving Innovation: Intellectual Property Strategies for a Dynamic World. This article appears in the November issue of eJournal USA, "Roots of Innovation."

By Michael A. Gollin

Innovation feeds on the known and converts it into the new. Creative people successfully build old ideas into new ones, put them into practice, and build on them again. Innovation challenges the establishment, creating winners and losers, and causes many ventures to fail.

The tumultuous developments in communications and economics, the spread of cell phones, AIDS medicine, popular music, and textbooks all share the fundamental dynamics of this innovation cycle.

The United States recently announced a national innovation strategy, joining a growing group of countries seeking to harness innovation to serve their national interest. An effective innovation strategy must focus on the most important, but least understood, of the forces driving innovation — the complex system of institutions, laws, and practices referred to as intellectual property (IP).

IP rights include patents, copyrights, trademarks, and trade secrets, each of which is subject to separate laws in every country. IP laws evolved over centuries as a tool to derive public benefits from the innovation cycle. Because it is so tightly linked to innovation, intellectual property holds a key to our future.

Intellectual property rights apply to innovative endeavors as diverse as computer technology, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, music, and publishing. IP systems capture, channel, and shape innovation. In an effective, well-balanced IP system,

exclusive rights serve as incentives that amplify the innate human will to create.

That exclusivity also establishes a framework for collaboration and investment in creative ideas to push them out into society. But the exclusivity and control available to creators and their investors is carefully limited so that other people can access and build on new products and ideas, and the innovation cycle can move forward.

A balanced IP system promotes innovation. Innovative companies rely on their own IP rights, and their ability to steer around the rights of others. If exclusivity is too weak or too strong, imbalances in the IP system can limit innovation and its benefits.

FINDING BALANCE

IP rights have expanded from wealthier countries into poorer countries over the past decade. But extensive research, debate, reform, and training about intellectual property in recent years show no signs of leading to a global consensus on the impact of current IP systems on human welfare, much less how potential reforms would help or hurt larger society.

When Venice's leaders passed the first patent law in 1474 with 116 votes, there were 10 votes against it. In the late 19th century, there were fierce debates about whether countries should join the first round of international IP treaties established at that time, and entrenched groups argue today both for and against stronger IP rights.

The inevitable tendency of IP systems to go out of balance explains the intense and ongoing debates about IP rights over the years. Patient advocates in Brazil, South Africa, and elsewhere argue that patents on AIDS medicines are too strong to permit fair access to existing drugs, while drug researchers counter that weaker patents would destroy the incentive to invest the fortunes necessary to discover new drugs. Unlicensed software, music, and videos are downloaded freely on the Internet, to the dismay of industry. Meanwhile, the sudden rise of the Pirate Party in Swedish politics, with its platform of free music file-sharing and no patents, shows that we cannot predict the future of IP rights with any confidence.

To illustrate why IP systems tend to get out of balance, imagine a simple society including you and me. You want free access to my innovations (with no IP restrictions), but you want to limit my access to yours (with strong exclusivity). I want free access to your innovations, but I want exclusive control. If I invent a new drug and you record a new song, you want to use my drug, and I want to listen to your song. We could try to block each other out by keeping the innovation secret. But we would have problems attracting investors, and we might not innovate again.

There is an inherent conflict between our opposed desires — for exclusivity over our own innovations and for access to the other person's. We might be able to make a deal with



A vendor looks at the display of video CDs of Hollywood blockbusters at a mall in Hong Kong. (© AP Images)

each other; then again, we might not. The only certain resolution makes neither of us completely happy, but works for society: The win-win outcome is a balanced IP system, with each of us being able to obtain limited exclusivity as innovators, and with limited access assured as well.

Balancing IP systems make sense in a world with globalized innovation. For example, movies are produced in Hollywood, Bombay (Bollywood), and Nigeria (Nollywood). Hollywood producers advocate for stronger enforcement of copyright overseas because the uncontrolled duplication of hit movies undercuts their profits. But it is not very convincing for them to argue, in essence: "Protect my rights in your country because it is good for me." There is a more persuasive argument: "Support an effective, balanced system of IP rights because it will help you."

Indeed, I have spoken with both Indian and Nigerian movie producers who, too, are protesting the rampant piracy of their movies — in stores in the United States! There is a global interest in a balanced IP system that promotes innovation everywhere.

Whether for life-saving drugs or cultural expressions such as music and movies, an effective IP system includes mechanisms to balance access and exclusivity, case by case. The legal and procedural details differ for each type of innovation, for each type of IP right, and in each country, but the common thread is that there are ways for innovators to gain exclusive rights, and paths for others to gain access to the innovations protected by those IP rights, including negotiation and legal proceedings. Unfortunately, these mechanisms can be very expensive and frustrating. Hence, companies and organizations working within the system seek greater efficiency as part of an effective IP system.

EXPRESSING INDIVIDUAL CHOICE

Intellectual property rights can be viewed as instruments of competitiveness and economic growth, with patenting and trademark activity linked to gross domestic product. But IP systems can also be seen as instruments by which innovators express individual choices regarding their creations. In this light, intellectual property contributes not only to commercial

interests, but also to human development — freedom of choice in personal expression and how we lead our lives. One author may be happy to give an open-access license to her work on Wikipedia, but another may choose to publish a copyright-protected article. Innovators should have that choice.

Innovation and IP laws have always created winners and losers and always will. This is, of course, unsettling. But rather than choosing the winners, government's role should be to ensure that the IP system maintains an effective balance between the freedom of an innovator to exclude others and the freedom of others to access the innovation. An IP system can provide a higher degree of individual freedom, and more competition, than a centralized system of grants, incentives, and prizes awarded by governments and philanthropies. Centralized systems can drive innovation in a particular state-sanctioned direction, but at the cost of individual choice and flexibility.

The inventor's enthusiasm, the author's pride, the entrepreneur's confidence, competition — these are forces we can build on with innovators around the world. In doing so, we must meanwhile ensure that people of all walks of life can enjoy access to the fruits of innovation in medicine, food, information, entertainment, and education.

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.



Visitors look at examples of counterfeit products violating intellectual property rights during an exhibition in Beijing, China. (© AP Images)

Muslim Americans Strive to Help Earthquake-Ravaged Haiti

U.S. Muslim relief organizations partner with non-Muslims for quake aid

As governments and communities worldwide mobilize to help earthquake-stricken Haiti, Muslims in the United States are doing their part by raising funds and partnering with organizations — both religious and secular — to aid earthquake victims.

This spirit of cooperation in Haiti's greatest time of need is highlighted by Islamic Relief USA's ongoing interfaith aid partnership with the Mormon Church.



Naeem Muhammad of Islamic Relief USA helps gather aid for Indonesia after the 2004 tsunami. Islamic Relief USA has started a campaign for Haiti, and Muhammad plans to travel to the earthquake-ravaged country.

“We are partnering with the Mormon Church on shipments of aid including hygiene kits and temporary shelters,” Naeem Muhammad of Islamic Relief USA told *America.gov* of relief slated for Haiti. “We do a lot of partnerships with them, such as in Indonesia with the tsunami and in Pakistan with the earthquake.”

Impoverished Haiti is familiar territory for the Zakat Foundation of America. Zakat Foundation Executive Director Khalil Demir told *America.gov* his organization has partnered with California-based What If? Foundation to support a meal program for Port-au-Prince's children. What If? Foundation's chairwoman of the board, Margaret Trost, told *America.gov* she is grateful for the Zakat Foundation's support.

“The Zakat Foundation has made it possible to feed these children in large part because of their grant to us last year,” Trost said. Now, both organizations are working together to send earthquake relief to Haiti.

The Zakat Foundation aims to send two chartered cargo planes laden with supplies to Haiti. Muhammad of Islamic Relief USA said he hopes his organization will have an assessment team on the ground within days.

Fundraising for Haitian earthquake relief efforts is of utmost importance to these and other Muslim-American organizations. Islamic Relief USA launched a worldwide appeal for

\$1 million in aid and the Zakat Foundation pledged \$50,000 in immediate assistance.

“There has been a huge response from people to our request for aid. It is the same here as it would be in Muslim countries — we have been receiving donations nonstop,” said the Zakat Foundation's Demir.

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) has established a special Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund (HERF). “We established the fund because we realize the magnitude of the devastation and feel we are morally compelled to contribute to alleviate the suffering in Haiti,” said ISNA Secretary-General Safaa Zarzour in a press release.

Muslim Americans at the local level are donating earthquake aid to Haiti through ISNA and other large Muslim-American organizations. In the Chicago area's 400,000-strong Muslim community, fundraising efforts are under way to help Haitian earthquake victims, according to Kiran Ansari, interim executive director of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago.

“We have set up a fund at the council where we will send funds to organizations like the Zakat Foundation and Islamic Relief USA,” Ansari said. “We have sent out a request to all the khatibs in area mosques to make the situation in Haiti part of their Friday sermon.”

Ansari and other Muslim-American community leaders have made it clear that relief efforts in Haiti need as much support as possible.

“This does not have to be a Muslim-centric cause; [Chicago's Muslims] can open their wallets to all of their neighbors,” Ansari said.



A man is rescued by U.S. volunteers from a collapsed building three days after the earthquake in Port-au-Prince. (© AP Images)

Entrepreneurs from Muslim World Sought for Washington Summit



The 2010 summit follows up on President Obama's pledge in Cairo to find ways to deepen ties between the U.S. and the Muslim world. (© AP Images)

Approximately 150 entrepreneurs from Muslim-majority countries and Muslim communities around the world will be invited to a two-day summit in Washington in spring 2010 to meet with their peers and U.S. officials to explore areas of partnership and ways to drive economic and social innovation.

Deputy Secretary of Commerce Dennis Hightower told reporters at Washington's Foreign Press Center on November 23 that the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship is a "direct follow-up" from President Obama's June 4 commitment in Cairo to "identify how we can deepen ties between the business leaders, foundations and social entrepreneurs in the U.S. and Muslim communities around the world."

The 150 delegates can be nominated "by businesses, governments, academic institutions, [and] social entrepreneurship institutions" throughout the world's Muslim communities and Muslim-majority countries. "Or you can self-nominate," Hightower said. Non-Muslims in Muslim-majority countries are also encouraged to apply.

The Obama administration views the summit as "an unprecedented historical opportunity both to support and highlight

the leaders and drivers of economic and social innovation" and to "really craft a new model for a new basis for relationships based on mutual respect and partnership around common challenges," Hightower said.

The goal is to enhance partnerships that would "link capital, business development, [and] market access," enabling entrepreneurs to build "high-growth and high-impact ventures," as well as continue to look at ways to sustain the existing U.S. focus on other types of partnership programs.

Hightower reflected on his career in which he helped open businesses in Kuwait, Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Istanbul, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, and elsewhere in the Middle East region.

The underlying rationale driving his ventures was determined by "what is going to be mutually beneficial" in terms of job creation in those countries along with what would be good for a U.S. company. Both benefits, he said are "equally compelling."

"The unifying theme of how we are more alike is certainly at the core of why this makes sense now," Hightower said. At the end of the day, "good business is good business."

U.S. embassies and consulates in the countries where the delegates will likely be coming from have been told about the summit and will be processing the visas and other paperwork necessary for the 150 participants to come to Washington.

Along with the Department of Commerce and its Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development will be playing key roles in implementing the summit.

There is a broad and diverse platform from which to get "the best possible range of participation," Hightower said. "You just never know where the next best or good idea is going to come from."



With a rapid increase in computer use by Indonesians over the past year, local entrepreneurs are racing to set up Internet portals and e-commerce sites to cash in on the Asian Internet boom. (© AP Images)

U.S. to Have Strong Civilian Presence in Afghanistan, Pakistan



Secretary Clinton held talks in Kabul recently with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. (© AP Images)

The United States will maintain a strong civilian presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan long after military forces are withdrawn from the region, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says.

“While our military mission in Afghanistan is not open-ended, we are committed to building lasting partnerships with Afghanistan and Pakistan,” Clinton said January 21 with the release of a new *Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy*.

The new strategy, which stems from President Obama’s objectives announced in a speech at West Point on December 1, said the core U.S. goal remains to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida and eliminate its safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Obama also announced that he was sending an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan to bolster the efforts of the 68,000 already there, and NATO allies also announced plans to add forces.

In addition, Obama said the United States could begin the withdrawal of military forces in Afghanistan in 2011 if conditions in the country improve to the extent that the additional security can be provided by a revitalized Afghan army and police forces. To support the increase in forces, Obama is expected to request an additional \$33 billion in emergency war funds from Congress when the fiscal year 2011 federal budget is sent to Congress in early February.

While Clinton acknowledged that the challenges in both nations are immense, she said this strategy is shaped politically, economically and diplomatically by those realities. “Far from an exercise in ‘nation building,’ the programs detailed here aim to achieve realistic progress in critical areas,” she added in a prepared statement that accompanied the release of the new strategy.

AFGHANISTAN FOCUS

In Afghanistan, the focus of the U.S. strategy is to build the ability of Afghan institutions - its national and local governments’ ministries and agencies - to diminish the threat posed

by the Taliban insurgents and to deliver economic assistance, especially in the farm sector - which would create jobs, reduce the funding the Taliban receives from illicit poppy cultivation, and draw insurgents off the battlefield, according to the strategy.

“We are focusing our support at the national level on Afghan ministries that can have the most direct impact on service delivery,” the strategy says.

The strategy is directed toward reconstruction and development, improving government, enhancing the rule of law, reintegration of former insurgents who renounce violence, regional diplomacy and communications.

“Aligned with our national security objectives, civilian assistance will help build Afghan capacity in key areas and also reassure Afghans that our commitment is long-term,” the strategy says. “Our civilian effort must be sustained beyond our combat mission so that Afghanistan does not become a failed state and safe haven for al-Qaida.”

The strategy, which was prepared by the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, says there will be a significant increase in civilian experts to accompany the increased civilian assistance. The number of U.S. civilians in Afghanistan will be tripled from 320 to nearly 1,000 by early 2010. They will come from a broad range of U.S. government agencies including Agriculture, Justice, the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Treasury and Homeland Security.

PAKISTAN ASSISTANCE

Coupled with the enhanced security effort in Afghanistan is additional assistance for Pakistan that includes the Kerry-Lugar-Berman legislation, which authorized \$7.5 billion in U.S. nonmilitary assistance over five years.

Part of the focus in Pakistan is in helping address immediate needs for energy, water and related economic crises; supporting broader economic and democratic reforms; and helping Pakistan build on its ability to eliminate insurgent sanctuaries that threaten the country and the region, according to the strategy.

The United States is taking this “whole-of-government strategy” to protect its vital interests in the region, Clinton said.

“We have no illusions about the challenges ahead of us,” she added. “The Afghan and Pakistani governments have endorsed this strategy and are committed to achieving our shared objectives.”

The full text of the new *Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy* can be found at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/135728.pdf> (PDF, 570KB).

Agriculture Is Top U.S. Nonsecurity Focus in Afghanistan

The Obama administration is coordinating assistance to the Afghan agricultural sector as a means of providing greater security in the country and income opportunities for Afghan farmers, and is doing so in cooperation with the Afghan government's agricultural framework, U.S. officials said Jan 7.

Speaking at the State Department, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said the approach will result in "stabilizing the country, making opportunities outside of illicit activity more meaningful and of greater availability."

Vilsack said that agriculture accounts for 80 percent of Afghan income and 35 percent of the country's gross domestic product, and that 50 percent of Afghanistan's arable land is currently under cultivation.

"There is a tremendous opportunity, not just in the growing of wheat but also in horticultural crops, for this economy to be strengthened and for greater stability to be created as a result of a stronger agricultural presence," he said. "I think it's fair to say that agriculture is the top nonsecurity priority for the United States government in Afghanistan," the secretary said.

Civilian experts from the Department of Agriculture are working with their counterparts in the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in the country, he said. But their efforts are "Afghan-led," Vilsack noted, and U.S. assistance is being aligned with the Afghan government's recently announced agricultural framework. The secretary is planning to travel to Afghanistan to discuss the project with Afghan officials.

"We look forward to helping increase agricultural productivity, regenerate an agribusiness economy, rehabilitate natural resources, with a particular emphasis on watersheds and irrigation systems. And we hope to be able to assist the Afghan government in their new change-management effort to build capacity," Vilsack said.

To develop a relationship of trust with the Afghan government and farmers, concrete results are needed, he said. For that reason, "we're spending a lot of time ... trying to listen to precisely what the Afghans need of us."

Depending upon the region, the most pressing needs could be irrigation assistance, promoting crop diversity, reforestation, or helping to create means of storing produce to help stabilize agricultural markets, he said.

The U.S. civilian effort is focused on the goals of creating a stronger rural economy to help reduce the unemployment rate, reducing poverty, promoting confidence in the ability of the central government to deliver services, and responding to the country's food security needs, he said.

"If we develop these relationships and confidence in the approach, then I think we take a very significant step forward in making areas of this country far more secure, and we give people a reason to resist the arguments and the activities of

the Taliban," Vilsack said.

USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, who was sworn in to his appointment earlier on January 7, said the focus on agriculture stems from the principle that "you have to focus your resources on what you think are the transformative areas of change or social change and improvement."

The Obama administration will be heavily focused on achieving results by setting targets for agricultural productivity, identifying the most valuable crops for export-oriented development, and measuring the impact upon job creation and economic stability in rural Afghanistan, he said.

"The vision of success is to have a vibrant and diverse agricultural economy, a more productive agricultural sector, opportunities for small farmers in particular ... to engage in higher-value production so they have sources of income and wealth and can begin to rebuild their economies and their communities," Shah said.

Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke said the Obama administration is convinced that its decision to phase out U.S. support for poppy crop eradication is "on the right track." Destroying what had been "the best cash crop" for some Afghan farmers was alienating them and "driving them into the hands of the Taliban," he said. Instead, the United States is targeting the traffickers and drug lords in the country, and Holbrooke said that approach has hurt the Taliban's recruiting efforts.

Secretary Vilsack said improving market access and educating Afghan farmers about the market values of agricultural produce can help convince them not to grow poppies.

"Roughly \$2,500 per hectare is generated from the sale of poppies. But if that same hectare was put in table grapes, it could be as much as \$18,000. If it's put in apples, it could be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$3,000 to \$4,000 per hectare," he said.



U.S. and Afghan efforts to prompt market expansion and economic growth have benefited vegetable traders. (USAID photo)

Returned UGRAD Students Tell of Rich, Varied Experience

Jaloliddin Nasirov didn't know that an internship with a financial management firm would become one of the most important parts of his education during a year in an American university. Zarema Kokieva didn't expect that her dormitory roommate would feel personally responsible for making sure that Kokieva enjoyed her year of study in Michigan.

And Hilola Suleymanova simply could not believe how cold it got in the state of Minnesota. "Bemidji [Minnesota] is a place where in winter it is -40 Celsius. Can you imagine?" said Suleymanova, who studied Criminal Justice at Bemidji State University in the 2004/2005 academic year. "In the beginning it was fun to see snow, but when it is snowing for more than seven months, it's not funny."

Nasirov, Kokieva, and Suleymanova each took part in the U.S. State Department's Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (UGRAD), which provides undergraduate students from the nations of the former Soviet Union the chance to study for one year at a college or university in the United States. They spoke recently about their experience on the UGRAD program, both the difficulties such as homesickness and culture shock, and the chance it gave them to broaden their education, make new friends from around the world and strengthen their backgrounds as they look ahead to building careers in Uzbekistan.

Kokieva, a third-year student at the Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, spent the 2008/2009 academic year studying education at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Michigan. She said the first two or three months were difficult, in part because it could be hard to understand everything when people spoke so quickly. Her professors opened their doors to her, though, and she did not hesitate to ask questions about any topic she was struggling with.

She became friends with her roommate, a group of Spanish-speaking students and some of her professors, she said. She began an internship in which she spent time in a classroom of 5th-grade students at a local elementary school. And she took advantage of the opportunities at a public university campus that hosts about 2,000 other international students, she said.

"I really tried to get as much out of it as I could," Kokieva said. "I know Eastern Michigan is not as popular at the University of Michigan (whose main campus is in the city of Ann Arbor), but I thought it was great. ... I could always ask questions, and the professors were very open. "It was a very good experience for me to have," she said.

Students in the UGRAD program stay in dormitories or with host families. They do not have a choice in which college or university they are placed in, so many find themselves at institutions in towns or small cities they may have never heard of.

Nasirov studied business administration at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, during the 2006/2007 academic year. He lived in an international student dormitory, where he got to know students from around the world, including Turkey, Spain, China, Japan, and Taiwan, he said. He still stays in

touch with three of his professors, he said, although he ran into problems with a different professor in a political science class: They had heated discussions about U.S. foreign policy, conflict in the Middle East, and relations with the former Soviet Union, Nasirov said. "In the end, though, that was a good experience, too," he said, referring to the wide-ranging classroom debates.

Nasirov, a graduate of Westminster International University in Tashkent, said one of the most important parts of his UGRAD program was an internship at a financial management company. That internship gave him valuable experience for when he returned to Uzbekistan. He said it was important for UGRAD students, who are required to do an internship as part of their program of studies, to start looking for that internship right from the beginning and to make the most of the opportunity.

UGRAD students really need to make an effort to connect with the American and other international students, he said. When you make that effort, you'll find they have all sorts of experiences and knowledge that you can learn from, he said.

Suleymanova echoed that sentiment as she offered several pieces of advice for prospective UGRAD students. "The most important thing: Make a lot of friends!" she said.

Suleymanova, who studied International Law at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent, attended Bemidji State University in Minnesota in the 2003/2004 academic year. While there, she got an inside look at the criminal justice system through an internship with the area's public defender's office.

Her UGRAD year was difficult, she said. But it got better as it progressed, and eventually she realized just how much she had gotten out of it, Suleymanova said.

"In the beginning, I was thinking it was the worst experience of my life. But in the end, I understood that it was the most challenging experience in my education," she said. "I learned a lot, not only in terms of attending classes, but also from people. It was a life lesson."

She said she came away with many memories. She likes to cook, so the kitchen in her dormitory was always very popular among the international students. During her internship, she spent time with police officers, visited a prison, and attended court proceedings. She gave a recipe for plov to the chef at a restaurant on campus, but the plov he made was so bad she wanted to cry, Suleymanova said.

Such a wide range of memories shows what a rich experience a year on the UGRAD program can be. Each of the returned students who spoke about the program said they were happy to share their experiences with others who might be considering the program.

"I really want others to get as much information as they can," Kokieva said.

Ben Franklin Institute Builds Leadership and Understanding



Akmal Khaydarov points to his hometown of Termez, Uzbekistan, during the 2008 Ben Franklin Institute in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. (Photo courtesy of Akmal Khaydarov)

About 45 teenagers from Uzbekistan, the United States and nations of South and Central Asia will gather in the U.S. this summer for nearly four weeks of intensive courses in leadership, cross-cultural understanding and community service.

Seven people from Uzbekistan between the ages of 16 and 18 will be selected - along with their peers from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the U.S. - to join the Benjamin Franklin Summer Institute. The annual institute is made up of activities designed to build teamwork, foster communication and increase the understanding and acceptance of different viewpoints on global issues. Participants learn to work toward resolving conflicts and building consensus among their groups.

Bobur Rasulov, a 4th-year economics student at Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, said those are great skills to have as he looks ahead to the start of his career. He participated in the Ben Franklin Institute in 2008 and said it was a wonderful educational experience. The Institute, held at Wake Forest University in the state of North Carolina, was full of lively discussions and debates about the history and importance of social movements, U.S. and Russian foreign policies, and the role of media in society, he said.

They had sessions on using the Internet, playing the role of leaders of political parties as they crafted legislation in a fictional country, and as diplomats negotiating appropriate responses to a humanitarian crisis in Africa, he said. His group also spent a week visiting Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia.

"I'm sure that the knowledge I gained on policy-making and decision-making will help me greatly," said Rasulov, who plans to work in business and finance. "I consider myself someone who will contribute to the economy of Uzbekistan. ... This type of foreign experience is really needed as we enrich our knowledge and methods."

The U.S. Embassy in Tashkent accepts applications to participate in the Benjamin Franklin Summer Institute. The U.S. Government pays for travel and living expenses and runs the program. Go to http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/franklin_2010.html for more information about the program and the application process.

Both Rasulov and Akmal Khaydarov, who also participated in 2008, said they stay in contact with the friends from other countries that they met at the Institute. Khaydarov, an 18-year-old student at the Academic Lyceum in Tashkent, said his favorite part of the Institute was just getting to know the young people from so many different backgrounds and learning from their different perspectives.

"It was one of the best experiences I've ever had," he said.

"It was a challenge to see these people from all over the world, some of them smarter and more experienced than I."

He said he enjoyed learning about American history during a tour of Washington, D.C., and learned a lot about the media environment in the U.S. during a visit to the Washington Times newspaper, where they compared recent editions with those of a competing newspaper, the Washington Post.

The Ben Franklin experience pushed him to participate in the Model United Nations program at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, even though he had to submit a proposal and be accepted to the program because he is still a lyceum student, he said.

Khaydarov said he plans to study engineering at university, but that he is certain the lessons in communication and consensus-building will help him as he advances in his career.

The Institute is named after Benjamin Franklin, who signed both the 1776 Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution in 1787. He was a prominent diplomat, helping to secure France's support in the Revolutionary War, and successful printer and writer who supported American independence and the abolition of slavery.



Bobur Rasulov (left) and fellow program participants pose for a photo during a tour of National Public Radio studios in Washington, D.C. (Photo courtesy of Bobur Rasulov)

Number of Students from Uzbekistan Studying in U.S. Increases Dramatically

The number of students from Uzbekistan studying in U.S. colleges and universities increased 28 percent in the 2008/2009 academic year over the previous year, the greatest increase recorded among any of the nations of Central Asia, according to a report from the Institute of International Education (IIE).

About 688 students from Uzbekistan were studying in colleges and universities in the U.S. in 2008/2009, up from 539 in the 2007/2008 academic year, according to the IIE's Open Doors 2009 report. Each year, the IIE works with the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to compile the Open Doors report, which documents the number of international students enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education.

The IIE attributed the big increase among students from Uzbekistan in part to increased activity by the Embassy's Educational Advising Center (EAC) in Tashkent and greater efforts by U.S. colleges and universities to attract students from Uzbekistan and from throughout Central Asia.

Molly Stephenson, the Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, said the increase also shows a growing interest in international educational opportunities among Uzbekistan's students.

"We are thrilled that 28 percent more students from Uzbekistan are now studying in the United States compared to last year," she said, adding that the EAC has been very active in reaching out to these students. "This office gives students the tools and information they need to successfully apply to American educational institutions."

The EAC hosts regular informational sessions on how to successfully complete college applications, research financial aid or scholarships, and prepare for life on an American campus. The office also provides one-on-one consultations with students interested in studying in the U.S. and supports a reference library.

"We hope these free resources will give students the information they need to pursue their educational goals," Stephenson said.

The Tashkent EAC is one of about 400 U.S. State Department EducationUSA advising centers around the world.

U.S. colleges and universities actively recruit international students, saying they are often among the best students, and that they improve the educational environment for all students on campus. The schools often provide attractive financial aid packages and a range of services to help international students adjust to life in the U.S.

More than half of the undergraduate students from Uzbekistan are enrolled in 2-year community colleges, which provide a relatively low-cost way to gain accreditation in

specific professional fields or to begin coursework toward a four-year university degree. About 28 percent of the students from Uzbekistan are enrolled in the Lone Star College System, a group of five public community college campuses in the Houston, Texas, area.

The highest number of graduate students from Uzbekistan are enrolled at the University of Nebraska-Omaha; Johnson and Wales University, which has campuses in four cities around the U.S.; and Indiana University-Bloomington, which has a prominent Central Asia studies program.

Overall, the number of international students at U.S. higher education institutions increased about 8 percent for the 2008/2009 academic year. There are now about 670,000 international students in the U.S., almost 15 percent more than in 2002/2003, which at the time had the highest number of international students ever.

"American higher education continues to be highly valued throughout the world. U.S. campuses offer unparalleled opportunities for creativity, flexibility, and cultural exchange," said Allan E. Goodman, the president of IIE. "The steady increase in the number of international students in the United States reflects actions taken by the U.S. government and many individual colleges and universities to ensure that international students know they are welcome in the United States, and that we appreciate how they contribute to the intellectual and cultural environment on campus and in the wider community."

The number of students from Central Asia has more than doubled from 1,339 in the 2004/2005 academic year to 3,242 in 2008/2009. That number grew by 16 percent in 2008/2009 from the previous academic year.

For more information about the Educational Advising Center of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, go to <http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/eac.html>.



Students met with recruiters from colleges and universities in the U.S. and other countries during a higher education fair in Tashkent last year. (U.S. Embassy photo)

IRC Tashkent on Facebook

The U.S. Embassy's Information Resource Center (IRC) has its own page on the popular social networking website Facebook. Currently, the page has over 650 members, a number that is growing day after day.

The page contains useful information about the IRC, its work hours, services and resources. It also publishes information about current and future Embassy programs and events, the updated schedule for the weekly Chai Chat Club and so on.

Additionally, the page provides information and the link to the *IRC Visitor Registration System* - a Facebook application that helps visitors who want to go to the IRC to request appointments online. To check out the system, go to <http://apps.facebook.com/ircvisitor/>.

Registered members, also known as *fans*, can post questions or comments on the notice board (the *Wall*) of the page. They can also leave their feedback on IRC services and discuss Embassy programs.

Anyone who wants to become a member (*fan*) of the *IRC Tashkent* page first needs to get a free Facebook account (if you don't have one yet) and then go to <http://www.facebook.com/usdos.uzbekistan> and click on the 'Become a fan' button at the very top. Easy!



<http://www.facebook.com/usdos.uzbekistan>

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

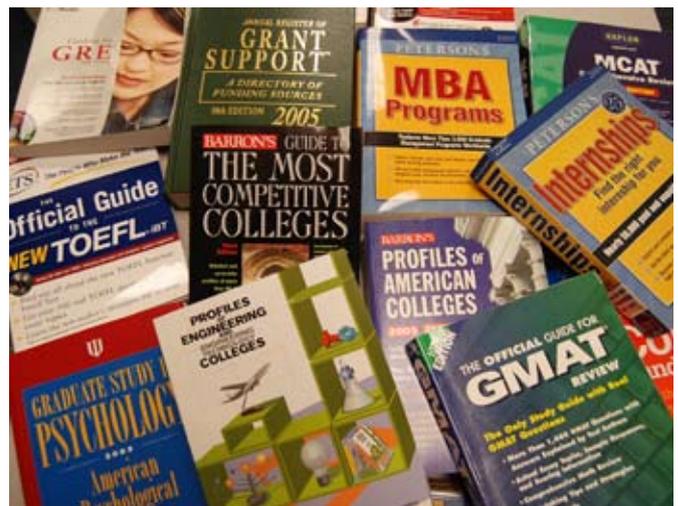


The Educational Advising Center offers the following services free of charge:

- 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.

Uzbek Artist Donates Sculpture Commemorating Victims of Hurricane Katrina

Well known Uzbek sculptor Rashit Suleymanov met with Ambassador Richard Norland at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent and viewed the display of a sculpture he made in memory of the people who died when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, Louisiana, on August 29, 2005.

The approximately 25 cm bronze cast is prominently displayed at the front entrance of the Embassy between the flags of the United States and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The sculpture depicts a globe encircled by a whirling storm while a line of winged spirits rises up. The abstract piece sits on a base inscribed with the word "Katrina."

More than 1,800 people died in Louisiana, Mississippi, and other southern states in what has been called the largest and costliest natural disaster in U.S. history. Hurricane Katrina devastated coastal regions and led to the failure of the levee system built to protect the low-lying city of New Orleans. As a result, 80 percent of the city flooded in the aftermath of the storm.

Suleymanov said he was deeply touched by images of people desperately appealing for help when they were left stranded in the flooded city. Those feelings and a desire to help the victims became the impulse for the artistic creation when he later made the sculpture, he said. For his part, Ambassador Norland expressed deep appreciation for Suleymanov's sympathy and his gesture in donating this work to the Embassy.



Ambassador Richard Norland talks with sculptor Rashit Suleymanov and his wife Nazira Suleymanova during their recent visit to the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Suleymanov presented the sculpture to Ambassador Norland during a visit in July to the artist's studio. Suleymanov explained the ideas and motivations behind many of the dozens of sculptures in the studio.

The sculpture "Katrina" joins other works of art by American and Uzbek artists that are displayed throughout the Embassy.



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