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In this issue:

Deputy National Security Advisor Denis McDonough's Travel1

Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Grossman Visits Uzbekistan1

U.S. Embassy Honors Participants in Logo Contest2

Alumni Go Green To Get the Mountains Clean3

Representatives from Smithsonian Institution in Uzbekistan4

U.S. Embassy Holds Documentary Film Festival6

Clinton Calls for More Education for Women and Girls7

Building Communities of Faith and Diversity8

Summer Work & Travel Alumni Share Their Experience9

The Obamas Celebrate Poetry ..9

New Regional Diagnostic Laboratories Open in Andijan and Ferghana10

Why Is Soccer Becoming Popular in the United States?11

The National Atlas of the U.S. 12

The State of Nebraska14

U.S. Robots Sent to Assist in Japan's Recovery Efforts16

Social Media Help Americans Donate for Japanese Quake Recovery17

Embassy Official Discusses Bilateral Scientific Cooperation 18

Scientists Detect Record Depletion in Arctic Ozone Hole18

U.S. Invests in Energy Innovation, Promise of Breakthroughs19

American Documentary Film20

Chargé Butcher Speaks on U.S.-Uzbek Ties at Academy of State and Social Building22

USAID's Local Development Initiative Launches in Uzbekistan22

Deputy National Security Advisor McDonough's Travel



Deputy National Security Advisor Denis McDonough met with President Islam Karimov at the Oqsaroy Presidential Residence on May 31. (U.S. Embassy photo)

From May 28 to May 31, Deputy National Security Advisor Denis McDonough travelled to Afghanistan and Uzbekistan to underscore the United States' commitment to Afghanistan and to a long-term relationship with Central Asia.

In Afghanistan (May 29-31), Mr. McDonough held meetings in Kabul with

U.S. and international civilian and military officials, as well as with key Afghan counterparts and Afghan citizens, including members of the business community.

In addition to meetings in Kabul, he traveled outside the capital to locations in Regional Commands North, East and South. During his discussions, Mr. McDonough exchanged views with his interlocutors about how the United States and our partners can best support the transition and Afghanistan's economic future.

In Tashkent, Mr. McDonough met with the U.S. Embassy team and with President Islam Karimov. During their meeting, the two sides discussed a wide range of issues of mutual concern, including the situation in Afghanistan. Mr. McDonough thanked President Karimov on behalf of the United States for Uzbekistan's ongoing support, including reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Grossman Visits Uzbekistan

Ambassador Marc Grossman, the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, visited Uzbekistan on May 20, 2011. During his visit, Special Representative Grossman thanked Foreign Minister Ganiev for Uzbekistan's contributions to international efforts to promote security and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

He also emphasized America's long-term commitment to enduring partnerships with Afghanistan and Central Asia.

After his visit to the Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Grossman visited the Hasti-Imam Complex, where he expressed his great respect for Uzbekistan's culture and Islamic heritage.

This was Ambassador Grossman's first visit to Uzbekistan in his capacity as Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.



SRAP Grossman visits the Hasti-Imam Complex in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

U.S. Embassy Honors Participants in Logo Contest



Logo contest first place winner Rustam Babadjanov with Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Duane Butcher. (U.S. Embassy photo)

During the month of March, the U.S. Embassy Tashkent held an open contest for a new logo design to represent the Embassy on social media platforms, including Facebook.

The contest, open to Uzbekistan residents over the age of 18, drew over 300 submissions. Of these, three finalists were chosen, and first place was awarded to Rustam Babadjanov.

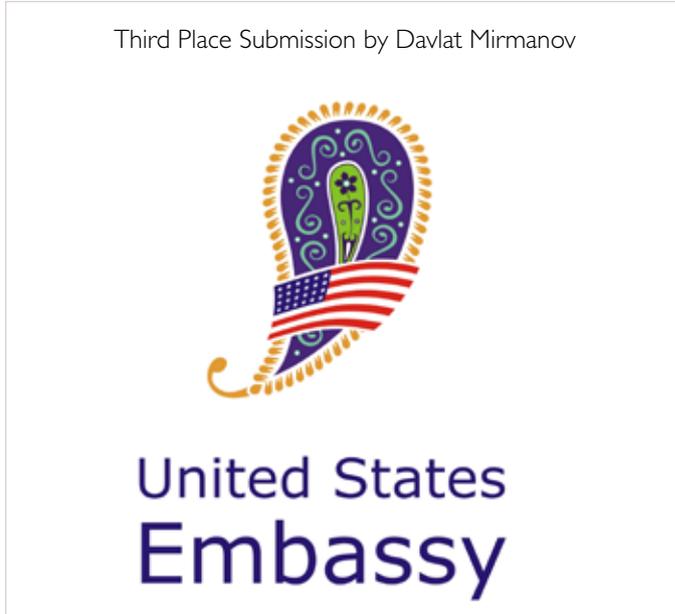
On March 31, the Embassy recognized all contest participants, and in particular the three finalists, in an awards ceremony at the U.S. Embassy.

During his opening remarks at the awards ceremony, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Duane Butcher noted that “With so many creative and thoughtful submissions, it was difficult to choose a winner. But I believe that our new logo will honorably represent the U.S. Embassy in all our social media platforms.”

During the ceremony, all participants received a certificate of appreciation and a photo opportunity with the Chargé d'Affaires. Afterwards, Chargé Butcher commended all contest participants for submitting designs which demonstrated an understanding that “the Embassy’s logo should reflect one of the Embassy’s core missions - promoting greater understanding between the people of our two countries.”

First place winner Rustam Babadjanov is a graphic designer and illustrator from Tashkent. Second place was awarded to Akbar Tadjimov and third place to Davlat Mirmanov. The three finalists each received an Ipad for their winning submissions.

The three finalists’ submissions can be seen on the right side. First place winner Babadjanov’s logo is also already employed on the Embassy’s Facebook page, which can be found here: www.facebook.com/usdos.uzbekistan.



Alumni Go Green To Get the Mountains Clean



Collecting and taking out the garbage to make the Bulaksu area clean. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Approximately 15 alumni of U.S.-sponsored education programs joined a group of environmentally aware people for a two-day program commemorating Earth Day.

On April 23-24, 40 people took a trip to Khojикent, north-east of Tashkent, to clean up the Bulaksu River area. The environmental project was initiated back in 1982 by the Eremurus environmental club. Over the years, the Youth Environmental Network of Uzbekistan (YEN) and U.S. government alumni have joined the movement. For the third consecutive year, the U.S. Embassy supported the program through a Democracy Outreach Alumni Grant.

The program agenda differs each year, depending on the participants. In 2009, the project's theme "educating the younger generation" involved many elementary and high school students and featured numerous environmental awareness sessions.

Last year, university students played an important role in implementing the project. This year, the alumni and YEN activists reached out to campers and hikers, and explained the importance of staying environmentally friendly and conserving natural resources.

Despite different approaches to the program agenda each year, the core project activity always remains the same – cleaning up the territory.

Last year, in order to promote accumulation of garbage in designated places, the participants installed six big trash bins across the territory. They also set up colorful and informative signs to encouraging people to keep the territory clean by depositing garbage in the trash bins.

So, this year's project started with emptying and cleaning those trash bins – more than 300 kilograms of garbage was removed. On the second day, the alumni and activists held informational meetings with various campers who planned to picnic on the Bulaksu River. Together, they continued the clean-up activities of the mountains, with the most active tourists being awarded with eco-friendly t-shirts at the end of the day.

"People's environmental awareness is improving," said Aleksandra Maleyeva, the YEN Coordinator, who organized this year's project.

"Many factors contribute to this: local and international media's attention to the problem, various environmental projects across the country, support of the local government for cleaner energy resources. We hope to believe that our network also makes its small but valuable contribution in teaching people to be more eco-friendly. There is still so much to do."

Earth Day is April 22. Founded in 1970 by Wisconsin's Senator Gaylord Nelson, Earth Day initially pushed environmental issues onto the U.S. national agenda, yet now it raises environmental awareness worldwide.

The Earth Day clean-up activity is one of many events planned by alumni and YEN activists. Throughout the year they will return to the banks of the Bulaksu river, empty the trash bins, talk to the locals and campers, and teach children at a summer camp about preserving the environment. People's perceptions about protecting nature change slowly, but with efforts like this change is happening.



Schoolchildren receive t-shirts as a token of appreciation for their efforts in the clean-up project. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Representatives from Smithsonian Institution Consult with Museums in Uzbekistan



Public Affairs Officer Molly Stephenson and Dr. Carol Neves admire a work at the exhibition of the Fine Art Gallery in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

For one week in January, a team of professionals from the renowned Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC had the opportunity to visit Uzbekistan. The three-person team visited museums in Tashkent, the Ferghana Valley, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Nukus, and gave their impressions of the trip during a news conference in Tashkent prior to their departure, where they expressed hope for collaborative efforts in the future.

Dr. Carol M.P. Neves, Director of the Office of Policy Analysis at the Smithsonian since 2000, led the delegation, which included Dr. Paul M. Taylor and William Bradford Smith. Dr. Taylor serves as the Director of the Asian Cultural History Program and Curator of Asian, European, and Middle Eastern Ethnology at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. Mr. Smith is a researcher responsible for information technology at the Smithsonian Institution.

"Uzbekistan is this place I've always wanted to go," said Dr. Taylor, and they worked for two years to make this visit a possibility. Why expend so much time and effort to come to Uzbekistan? According to Dr. Taylor, much of it has to do with the "tremendous importance of Uzbekistan in the cultural history of the world, which is not as well known as it should be." There is enormous potential for museums in the country to work with international partners and enjoy great success, the representatives agreed.

The delegation began in Tashkent at the Fine Art Gallery, speaking on mu-

seum management, project integration and planning, and information technology to an audience of museum specialists and librarians. Dr. Neves also presented a short history of the Smithsonian, and examined the role of collections in different aspects of museums as well as the steps of developing a good exhibit.

Along with these and other presentation topics, the team allowed time for open discussions on various topics of interest to the audience. Similar lectures and discussions were conducted at the Fergana Local Lore Museum, the Savitsky Museum in Nukus, and the Bukhara State Museum of History and Architecture. The delegation also met with Hasan Radjaby at the Yunus Radjaby Museum in Tashkent, and spoke with the director of the Afrosiab Museum in Samarkand.

After conducting the series of lectures, presentations, and discussions, the delegation spoke to assembled journalists at the State Museum of Art in Tashkent about their impressions of Uzbekistan and the potential for future collaboration.

"I give you a lot of credit for how much progress has been made in the last 20 years. It's a tremendous amount," said Dr. Taylor. Their goal, he continued, was to help in providing ideas that will increase and build upon that progress. "You have many worthwhile projects to support here," he commented. They also hoped to bring back ideas and lessons for the Smithsonian from the museum specialists in Uzbekistan.

When asked about the potential areas for improvement and progress in Uzbek museums, Dr. Neves noted the impressive breadth and depth of handicrafts in the country and the



The Smithsonian team takes questions from journalists at the State Museum of Art Conference Room in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)



Dr. Taylor, Dr. Neves, and Brad Smith learn about the tombs of the Timurid dynasty at the Gur-e Amir Mausoleum in Samarkand. (U.S. Embassy photo)

enthusiasm of directors. In addition she said that she was “very impressed with the staff service and capability, and also with the willingness of volunteers.”

Dr. Neves mentioned the significant role that volunteers play in American museums, where often there are more volunteers than paid staff. Students, pensioners, and average citizens spend their free time and weekends helping the museum because they enjoy the social gathering, have an intense interest in history, or are simply enthusiastic about learning and collaborating with museums.

In particular, Neves said that she sees great potential in the area of visitor services and outreach, particularly regarding children. “I didn’t see many children in the museums. One possibility is to get the children involved through doing their own exhibits; not just producing art or crafts for the museum, but taking responsibility for the design, concept, and execution of the exhibit.” This would draw parents, family, and neighbors who perhaps have never been to a museum. “We suggested many different activities to museums for reaching out to the community,” she said.

One of the largest areas of concern, however, was the maintenance of historical artifacts in Uzbekistan, many of which are housed in older buildings. Conservation in such circumstances can be very difficult and expensive, said Dr. Taylor, and though it is being done, it takes a great deal of time and investment. “The real thief,” he said, “is the temperature, level of humidity, and the passage of time.” The tremendous amount of work to be done here is a reflection of the massive amount of history that one can find in Uzbekistan. That, they stressed, is a good problem to have.

Neves, Taylor, and Smith spoke with museum directors about possible sources of funds and

collaborative projects to help with the restoration and presentation of materials in museums, and also offered advice on information technology: the production of databases, collection management, and the presentation of materials on websites and the internet.

One of the more interesting ideas discussed during the trip centered on the possibility of using social media to promote museum collections throughout Uzbekistan. In Nukus, the team worked together with Director Marinika Babanazarova and the museum’s Information Technology staff to develop the concept of a Facebook page for the Savitsky Museum, hoping to generate ideas and a future forum for the unique and precious collection.

The Savitsky Museum houses over 82,000 pieces of art and includes the second largest collection of Russian and Uzbek avant-garde in the world, sheltered from destruction during the Soviet era by Igor Savitsky and the remoteness of the desert.

As for other possible joint projects between Uzbek museums and the Smithsonian Institution, they said that big exchange exhibits can take years to plan, but there are plans to explore new avenues in internet-based exhibiting. “We can serve as a catalyst and connect you with other specialists at the Smithsonian Institution,” said Neves, noting the more than 6,000 workers at the museum complex that love to collaborate with international museums.

“We are really looking forward to working with you again and again,” she told the journalists and specialists in Tashkent. “We’ll try very hard to match your hospitality, but that may well be impossible... You were wonderful.”

The Smithsonian Institution is the largest museum and research complex in the world, consisting of 19 different museums and galleries and the National Zoological Park.



The team listens with delight to Hasan Rajabiy playing traditional melodies on the tanbur at the Yunus Rajabiy Museum in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

U.S. Embassy Holds Documentary Film Festival



Diana hands out autographed photos of herself and Kathy after a screening of the film. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On March 9, a delegation arrived from the United States to participate in the American Documentary Showcase in Uzbekistan. The events were part of a program funded by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and administered by the University Film and Video Association, designed to offer a unique, broad perspective on American society and values through the vehicle of documentary film.

This year's delegation to Uzbekistan included documentary director and producer David O'Shields, filmmaker Alice Elliott, and Diana Braun, the star of Elliott's recent award-winning effort, *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy*. Both O'Shields and Elliott have impressive resumes in the documentary film community, and were able to provide a glimpse into the world of filmmaking for their Uzbek audiences.

"Short documentaries are very useful tools for...outreach," according to Elliott. "The films can tell a multi-layered story, make an impact, and still have time for discussion." The director, who is also an advocate for those with disabilities, made quite an impact with this year's selection.

Body & Soul is the powerful story of Diana Braun, a woman with Down syndrome who worked for almost 40 years as the personal assistant to Kathy Conour (1943-2009), a human rights advocate who had cerebral palsy. The film chronicles their lives together and the work that they have done on behalf of the rights of disabled people in the United States. Diana has received the Justin Dart Award and the Illinois Human Rights Award for her efforts.

At the film festival in Tashkent, the embassy screened a number of films in addition to *Body and Soul*, including *Trouble the Water*, a 2008 film about a family's struggle with Hurricane Katrina, *Notes on Liberty*, a film about xenophobia in America, and *Whiz Kids*, a 2009 film about three young scientists participating in a prestigious national competition.

The festival also included two other films dealing with the trials and triumphs of minority groups in the United States. One film, entitled *The First Kid to Learn English from Mexico*, follows a young Mexican-American boy through the struggles of assimilation and learning a new language in a new country. The other, *New Muslim Cool*, about a Puerto Rican American drug dealer-turned-Muslim hip-hop artist, follows the struggles of this new Muslim rapper through urban America.

All of these films dealt in different ways with the vast and colorful canvas that is American culture, and presented a unique opportunity to share that canvas with people around the world, perhaps opening their eyes to new aspects of a very diverse America. "The film *New Muslim Cool* gave me the opportunity to see with my [own] eyes the life of Muslims in the United States," was the response of one viewer.

The subject matter expert, David O'Shields, was able to offer insights into the process of documentary filmmaking and help the viewers better understand the material presented at the Showcase. He founded his own production company, New Light Media, in 1995 to "develop a diverse and distinctive body of documentaries." Information and copies of the films are available for all to screen in the Embassy's Information Resource Center.

While the U.S. Embassy planned to organize screenings throughout Uzbekistan, the Government of Uzbekistan denied this request. As a result, the American delegation traveled around Uzbekistan just as tourists before presenting their films and expertise to various groups in Tashkent.

"I thought the country was really beautiful," said Elliott after the trip was over. "We so enjoyed our cultural orientation and learning the exciting and intriguing history...I never thought I would ever get the chance to come."

Diana Braun certainly never thought she would be able to come to Uzbekistan, either. As an independent woman with



Alice Elliott and Diana Braun talk with students after the screening of their film. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

Down syndrome, a common chromosomal condition that affects cognitive and physical development, she spends most of her time working on behalf of people with disabilities in the United States. She wasn't about to pass up an opportunity to bring her potent message to Central Asia, however.

Despite her difficult financial situation, Diana was able to attract more than enough support through a fundraising effort started by Elliott. According to her, Diana is the perfect "ambassador [for] the largest minority in the United States – people with disabilities," and "her enthusiasm and eagerness to share her story made her a star on this trip."

For her part, Elliott became an advocate for those with special needs after working with the inimitable Larry Selman on *The Collector of Bedford Street*, which garnered 13 awards at various film festivals around the world. Fittingly,

it was at a screening of this film in Ohio that Diana and Kathy approached Elliott about making a film about their lives – Kathy's lifelong dream.

There is no doubt that Diana was the star of the trip, along with the film depicting her life with Kathy. They screened the film during several events at the U.S. embassy open to students, activists, and the general public. One viewer was inspired by the film, saying that Diana and Kathy provided a perfect example of "how a person can be strong and determined and achieve independence and freedom." Another was brought to tears, saying, "I was touched; an outstanding film."

The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent received much praise for its organization of the Showcase. Many of the audience members expressed a strong desire for another such festival in the future.

Clinton Calls for More Education for Women and Girls

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told an international conference that educating women and girls helps them substantially contribute to their communities.

"The evidence shows conclusively that even one extra year of schooling leads to significantly higher wages for women and girls, which allows them to lift up themselves, their families, and contribute to their communities and countries," Clinton said May 26 at the Paris launch of the UNESCO Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education.

"We have seen that when women and girls have the opportunity to pursue education, GDP [gross domestic product] grows for entire societies," she said.

Clinton is the first secretary of state to visit the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The secretary said the reason for educating women and girls is not only economic.

"Birth rates, HIV infections, incidents of domestic violence, female cutting all decline when education rises," Clinton told the conference. "Fully one-half of the drop in child mortality achieved between 1970 and 1990 can be attributed to increased education for women and girls."

At the conference, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the opportunity to acquire knowledge creates a new generation of mothers who raise educated and empowered young women.

"Education sends a message — a message of confidence and hope," Ban said. "It tells that child, 'You have a future, what you think matters.'"

According to UNESCO, there are an estimated 39 million girls of lower secondary school age across the world not enrolled in either primary or secondary school. Two-thirds

of the world's 796 million illiterate adults are women, and only about a third of countries have achieved gender parity in secondary school enrolment, UNESCO says.

Clinton said that in the poorest communities, girls who are out of school today are more likely than boys never to start school. This contributes to economic and social stagnation for those communities, she added.

"No society can achieve its full potential when half the population is denied the opportunity to achieve theirs," Clinton said.

The United States has joined UNESCO in a new study that aims to examine education for women and girls around the world. Clinton said this study will focus on two critical areas: adult literacy and secondary education, which experts believe is the critical juncture in women's and girls' education.



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton gives a speech at the launch of the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education at UNESCO on May 26. (© AP Images)

Imam Khalid Latif: Building Communities of Faith and Diversity



New York-based Imam Khalid Latif, 28, is among a new generation of American spiritual and community leaders. (Photo courtesy of Imam Khalid Latif.)

At age 28, Imam Khalid Latif is — by most standards — quite young to be shouldering major leadership responsibilities. But since age 24, he has been chaplain and director of the Islamic Center at New York University (ICNYU) and also Muslim chaplain for the New York Police Department, serving the needs of a wide-ranging constituency.

“The university and police department are obviously very different,” Latif said. “But they’re also very similar, as American institutions with growing Muslim populations who are trying to find their way.”

Latif is deeply committed to interfaith dialogue and community service as an integral part of what it means to be Muslim in a modern, multicultural world. “Each of these interactions can be an opportunity for spiritual growth,” he said.

As head of ICNYU, Latif is conducting a fundraising campaign he hopes will generate funds to allow him to hire a full-time staff and appoint a scholar-in-residence. “Our goal is \$20 million,” he said, “which would create scholarships as well as research and fellowship opportunities.”

However, Latif never forgets he is, above all, the spiritual leader of a young and varied congregation. Most are students seeking to find their spiritual path as Muslims while facing the challenges of college-age people anywhere.

Through the Islamic Center, students can seek advocacy, counseling and mediation services, and participate in interfaith activities. The center works with Bridges: Muslim-Jewish Interfaith Dialogue, a New York University student-run venture that offers dialogue, community service and weekend retreats. Additionally, ICNYU members can participate in community service programs with groups such as Habitat for Humanity.

In 2007, Latif was named as only the second Muslim chaplain to the New York Police Department. Latif, who serves with Catholic, Protestant and Jewish clergy, has been called to hospitals several times to comfort injured officers and their families, none of whom happened to be Muslim. These experiences, he said, have enriched him. “Any interaction I have with any individual broadens my own worldview,” he explained. “You have your values challenged and reinforced, and you begin to understand what you have in common with others.”

INQUIRY INTO FAITH

Latif grew up in Edison, New Jersey, the son of Pakistani-born parents and one of only a few Muslim students at his school.

He sought out leadership positions, becoming student council president and captain of his football and track teams.

Latif majored in Middle Eastern and Islamic studies at New York University and continued his inquiry into his faith and his role as an American Muslim in perhaps the most ethnically and religiously diverse metropolitan area in the world. He also began to perceive the extraordinary diversity of Islam itself. “As a freshman, I met an Indonesian with a scraggly beard — and a surfboard. That was something new. But I also met Muslims who were African American, African, converted Muslims and the children of converts.”

At age 18, Latif was cajoled into giving his first sermon. “It seemed to go fairly well, and I was asked to give them on a regular basis,” he said.

In 2005, after graduating from New York University, Latif entered the Islamic Chaplaincy Program at the nondenominational Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, the only accredited program of its kind in the country. He also volunteered as the first chaplain of NYU’s Islamic Center and co-taught courses on conflict resolution at Abraham’s Vision, a Muslim/Jewish interfaith organization for young people.

SCHOOL CHAPLAIN

Latif is a pioneer at a time when the growing Muslim student population, coupled with large numbers of international students, has greatly increased the need for Muslim chaplains on campus. One of his most successful undertakings was almost an afterthought: podcasts of his 20-minute Friday sermons. A friend suggested they record and post them on the Islamic Center website.

The response has far exceeded expectations. Latif’s podcasts have attracted 30,000 listeners a month, from all over the globe. In addition, Latif records his Friday sermons on video and posts them on YouTube. “Our focus is now on videos, so our last podcast update was in 2010. But by this summer, we’ll have a mechanism in place to support both formats,” he said.

Although temporarily in hiatus, Latif’s podcasts retain a strong following. “The podcasts are more easily accessible in some parts of the world because the files are smaller,” he said. “I’ve heard from a teacher in Abu Dhabi who plays the podcasts for her classroom of 60 students each week.”

Latif regards his commitment to interfaith activities as central to his mission as an imam. He cites a trip to New Orleans with members of the Islamic Center and NYU’s Bronfman Center for Jewish Life to help with Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts. The two groups overcame their mistrust, he said, “and they all learned not to define students, by religion or background, as the ‘other.’”

“This is real, effective change,” Latif said, “change that can emanate into the broader community.”

Summer Work and Travel Alumni Share Their Experience



An alumnus of the Summer Work and Travel Program talks about his experience in the U.S. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On April 26, 2011, the Embassy hosted a panel discussion with local alumni of the Summer Work and Travel (SWT) program. The panel was open to all, and drew a large crowd of attendees, both students and their parents. The five panel members were all local students or recent graduates who had participated in the SWT program during their university years.

During the event, the alumni panelists spoke openly and honestly about their experiences in the U.S. as SWT program participants. While each of them admitted that they experienced challenges in the U.S., they all also said that they gained immeasurably from the program. One of the panelists, Timur Makhkamov noted, "The SWT program is one of the best chances for you to get a real American cultural experience. You'll get to meet a lot of Americans plus people from other countries." Other panelists focused on the work experiences

that they gained while participating in the SWT program. They noted that those experiences have helped them find jobs in Uzbekistan.

Another alumni panelist, Anastasiya Ni, addressed some attendees' concerns that the SWT program was somehow too dangerous for females—a notion with which Ms. Ni emphatically disagreed. She stated that she and her female friends who participated in the program had safe experiences in the U.S., and that while at first it wasn't easy for some participants to adjust to life in the U.S., all returned to Uzbekistan with wonderful memories and new skills. Ms. Ni stated that "you certainly won't regret" participating in the SWT program.

Yet another panelist, Umar Mamadjanov, focused on the personal benefits of the SWT program. He told the audience that participating in the SWT program helped him grow as a person. He said that the program "helped him see things from different angles" and broaden his viewpoint. Vitaliy Emelyanov also commented on the number of friends and contacts he gained during his time on the SWT program. The panel discussion was followed by a lengthy question and answer session in which the alumni panelists and Vice Consul Grant Morrow took questions from the audience.

The SWT program allows post-secondary students to enter the United States to work and travel during their summer vacation. SWT is not a U.S. government-sponsored program; however, the U.S. Embassy issues J-1 visas for participants of the program. More information on SWT can be found here: <http://exchanges.state.gov/jexchanges/programs/swt.html>.

The Obamas Celebrate Poetry



President Obama and first lady Michelle Obama arrive to host a celebration of American poetry and prose at the White House on May 11. (© AP Images)

event that included an afternoon poetry workshop led by first lady Michelle Obama, during which groups of students from across the country who had been invited to the White House read their work and received advice from a group of poets that included former poet laureates Rita Dove and Billy Collins as well as popular performers Common and Aimee Mann. These writers presented their own work during the evening event, following remarks by President Obama.

From his campaign speeches to his choice of reading materials, President Obama has made his appreciation of poetry clear.

On May 11, the White House hosted a "Celebration of American Poetry," an all-day

"A great poem is one that resonates with us, that challenges us and that teaches us something about ourselves and the world that we live in," the president said. "Poets have always played an important role in telling our American story." The president said that he himself had written poems as a young man — and said the audience should be glad he would not be reading them that evening.

But American poets have expressed delight at Obama's appreciation of poetry, noting his inclusion of lines from June Jordan's "Poem for South African Women" in campaign speeches and his carrying The Collected Poems of Derek Walcott just after the election. Poet Elizabeth Alexander told the Poetry Foundation it was extraordinary that, during those tumultuous days, the president chose "to find the time for contemplation that poetry provides."

"Whenever our nation has faced a great tragedy," the president remarked in his comments at the Celebration of American Poetry, "whether it was the loss of a civil rights leader, the crew of a space shuttle, or the thousands of Americans that were lost on a clear September day — we have turned to poetry when we can't find quite the right words to express what we're feeling."

New Regional Diagnostic Laboratories Open in Andijan, Ferghana

On Friday, March 25, representatives of the U.S. Government and the Government of Uzbekistan participated in the opening ceremonies of two new, modern diagnostic laboratories designed to enhance Uzbekistan's capability to detect and monitor disease outbreaks and protect public health.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony for these state-of-the-art facilities, located in Ferghana and Andijan, was merely the latest in a long history of productive collaboration between the United States Government and the Government of Uzbekistan in the area of public health threat reduction.

This collaboration began with the Soviet Nuclear Threat Reduction Act of 1991, designed to dismantle and store nuclear and biological weapons, and prevent the proliferation of such weapons, in the successor states of the Former Soviet Union.

By 1993, this legislation had evolved into a Cooperative Threat Reduction Program whose primary objectives included chemical weapons destruction and biological weapons proliferation prevention, both of which have been pursued aggressively in Uzbekistan.

Since 1997, The United States Departments of State, Defense, and Energy have cooperated with the Government of Uzbekistan on several major projects, and Uzbekistan has cooperated with international efforts to dismantle and secure facilities that were left on its territory following Soviet collapse.

Joint achievements have included the removal of chemical weapons from the Chemical Research Institute in Nukus, provision and maintenance of Radiation Portal Monitors, decontamination of Vozrozhdenie Island in the Aral Sea region, upgrades to bio-safety and security facilities throughout the country, collaborative biological threat research and training, and renovation of 10 regional diagnostic laboratories and 17 epidemiological support units.

This latest project in Andijan and Ferghana was completed in December 2010 at the cost of approximately 1.3 million USD, and required sustained cooperation among the participants.

During the ribbon cutting ceremony, Chargé d'Affaires Duane Butcher noted that the completion of the two laboratories was the "culmination of over a year of joint effort by the Government of Uzbekistan and the U.S. Government's Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and its contractor Bechtel National Incorporated," a global engineering, construction, and project management company headquartered in San Francisco.

The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), with offices throughout the U.S. and eight locations globally including Tashkent, is responsible for administering the the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program called the Nunn-Lugar Global Cooperation Initiative, named after the senators who authored the original 1991 legislation. The initiative calls for greater cooperation in the development of bio-safety and bio-security measures, as well as surveillance and detection technologies, to respond to the changing threats in the 21st century.

The two new diagnostic laboratories will advance the goal of enhancing Uzbekistan's security against biological threats and help to protect public health. However, these will not be the end of the project. "We anticipate continued cooperation on this project," said Chargé Butcher at the ceremony, "In coordination with the Government of Uzbekistan, the U.S. plans to provide training on laboratory safety and security, use and maintenance of laboratory equipment, and other topics."

"The United States looks forward to a deepening and expansion of our bilateral relations across the wide range of our mutual interests," he continued, noting that the opening of these two new regional diagnostic laboratories represents only one of the myriad projects on which the U.S. and Uzbekistan are now collaborating.



Chargé Duane Butcher and Ministry of Health representative Marufjon Madaminov open the new Regional Diagnostic Laboratory in Andijan. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Why Is Soccer Becoming Popular in the United States?



Players vie for the ball during the girls' secondary school state championship tournament in West Virginia. Soccer is as popular among U.S. girls as among boys. (© AP Images)

Almost every child in the United States now plays in youth soccer leagues

Soccer is one of the great businesses of the world. Players are bought and sold at tremendous expense; television rights to games cost billions of dollars; every major global corporate brand wants to attach its name to this phenomenon.

This is, in one view, an opportunity that the United States should greedily covet. Yet, where are the North Americans?

For several generations the United States has been the curious exception to the world's mania for the beautiful game. Sure, North Americans have momentarily thirsted for soccer, as when they imported Pele to play for the New York Cosmos. But even that experiment ended badly, with the North American Soccer League ingloriously folding in 1984.

And the North Americans weren't just passively resistant to the charms of the game. For a time, they were downright hostile. You could tune into sports radio and find the shock jocks heaping disdain on soccer, describing it as a communist incursion on our shores. Back in the 1990s, Representative Jack Kemp, who once ran for the Republican presidential nomination, took to the floor of Congress to denounce the game: "[A] distinction should be made that football is democratic, capitalist, whereas soccer is a European socialist [sport]." Or as one columnist for USA Today wrote: "Hating soccer is more American than apple pie, driving a pickup, or spending Saturday afternoon channel surfing with the remote control."

Why should there have been such widespread ill will towards the sport? To understand this story, we must jettison some of the conventional wisdom about the United States. In the traditional telling, the United States exports its culture to the world through the likes of Hollywood movies, "Baywatch" and McDonalds [see the Department of State publication *Pop Culture versus Real America*]. Those forces are simply irresistible, trampling every indigenous culture they encounter. There's obviously some truth in that version, but it's not the whole story.

With sports, the United States has its own customs and cultures, developed in isolation from the rest of the world. We play baseball and our own peculiar version of football. These games are very much part of the fabric of U.S. life, a vehicle for the transmission of values and heirlooms passed

down through the generations. They are also threatened by soccer's arrival.

Almost every child in the United States now plays in youth soccer leagues, a boom that has come very clearly at baseball's expense. Television ratings for baseball have declined over time for many reasons — but, in no small measure, due to the toll that youth soccer has inflicted on Little League baseball, a critical gateway for new fans. These growing hordes of children chasing after balls on Saturday mornings has been accompanied by several decades of immigration from the soccer-playing world — a demographic combination that has made the United States the single most promising growth opportunity for soccer on the planet.

In short, we are witnessing the globalization of the United States — multinational corporations and big media are all pushing for soccer's success here, even if it comes at the expense of our national pastimes. These sorts of transitions are always painful and always provoke angry reactions. But those reactions won't last long. Soccer may have already passed a cultural tipping point here.

U.S. players have begun to flood the ranks of European teams. The Walt Disney Company — the owner of ABC and ESPN — is deeply invested in the promotion of the game. Its television networks broadcast the World Cup in spectacular fashion and now broadcast English Premier League games weekly. And U.S. billionaires have discovered the financial opportunity represented by the game. In recent years they have gobbled up shares of clubs like Manchester United, Arsenal, and Liverpool.



Boys compete for acceptance to the Chicago Fire Soccer Club's Youth Development Academy. Of the 18 million Americans who play soccer, 78 percent are under the age of 18. (© AP Images)





United States of America

Source: www.wikimediacommons.org



The State of Nebraska – The Cornhusker State



Nebraska is a Midwestern state that lies near the center of the United States. The name comes from the Oto word “ne-brathka,” meaning “flat water.”



The Great Platte River Road Archway, which spans Interstate 80 just east of Kearney, Nebraska. (© AP Images)

Nebraska rises gradually from the Missouri River in the east to the far western section of the state, known as the Panhandle. The state’s two main regions are the Dissected Till Plains and the Great Plains. The Till Plains are a fertile land of low, rolling hills. The Great Plains area covers the rest of the state. It is part of a broad region that stretches from Texas to the Canadian province of Alberta. Much of Nebraska is covered by a windblown material called loess, deposits of fine-grained sand, silt, and clay that are the source of the state’s fertile soils.

The most unusual region of Nebraska is the Sand Hills in the north-central part of the state. Covering approximately 50,000 sq. km, it is the largest sand-dune area in the Western Hemisphere. The dunes, formed during the past 8,000 years, are covered with grasses that bind the sand.

Nebraska is known for its extreme weather conditions, with blizzards in wintertime and heavy thunderstorms in summertime. Temperatures may change dramatically within a single day. The driest part of the state is the Panhandle, where less than 380mm of rain falls each year. The wettest part of the state is the southeast corner, where as much as 915mm of rain falls annually.

PEOPLE

Nebraska’s first inhabitants were Native Americans of the Oto, Omaha, Missouri, Ponca, and Pawnee peoples. In the 1850s pioneers began to settle in the region. Most of them came from Illinois, Iowa, and Ohio. Between 1870 and 1890 they were joined by one million European immigrants, notably Germans, Irish, Czechs, Swedes, and Danes, whose descendants make up the majority of today’s population. Native Americans make up only 1 percent of the state’s population. Most live on reservations.

HISTORY

Hunters settled in the area more than 10,000 years ago. By 1100 A.D. these peoples were growing corn, beans, squash,

and sunflowers, and making pottery. Spanish and French explorers were the first Europeans to reach the area in the 1500s. They traded with the Native Americans.

The vast Louisiana Territory, which included Nebraska, twice changed hands between Spain and France before France sold it to the United States in 1803. The following year the Lewis and Clark expedition explored the region and reported back on its nature and resources.

In 1840 thousands of pioneers in wagon trains began to follow the Oregon Trail through Nebraska on their way westward. But permanent settlement of the state did not begin until 1854.

In 1862 Congress passed the Homestead Act. Anyone who was the head of a household and at least 21 years of age was qualified to receive a free 65-hectare parcel of land on which to settle. Thousands moved to Nebraska, and within 10 years the population had increased fivefold. In 1867 Nebraska became a state. In 1869 the Union Pacific Railroad was completed, and Omaha became a major railroad center. By the 1960s manufacturing and service industries had developed, and farms became fewer, larger, and more specialized.



Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman speaks about why he chose Chimney Rock, at left, to be on Nebraska’s official quarter, near Bayard, Nebraska. (© AP Images)

ECONOMY

As a state located in the heart of one of the world’s greatest grasslands, Nebraska specializes in crops that are naturally suited for such a region – corn, wheat, grain sorghum (milo), and hay – but corn is by far the most important. In addition, Nebraska is a leading producer of alfalfa, soybeans, dry edible beans, and sugar beets. Because Nebraska lies in a sub-humid region, it makes extensive use of irrigation systems.

Hay, like corn and grain sorghum, is used to feed Nebraska’s livestock. Cattle and hogs are the major sources of cash receipts in agriculture. Nearly half of all the land in Nebraska is grassland and forms the basis for the state’s extensive cattle production, especially on ranches in the Sand Hills.



Tim Bryson leads a group of tourists on an airboat tour of the Platte River in Nebraska. (© AP Images)

The processing of food and related products account for about one third of the value of manufacturers in Nebraska. Other industries that add significantly to the state’s economy are printing and publishing, the manufacturing of machinery, chemical and pharmaceutical products, electric and electronic equipment, and fabricated metal products.

RECREATION AND PLACES OF INTEREST

Although Nebraska has great natural beauty, it has little of the kind that appeals to those who idealize mountains and seashores. Even so, Nebraska has dramatic scenic attractions, particularly in the Panhandle, where the famous formations of Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff on the North Platte River beckoned 19th century Americans westward as they plodded along in their oxdrawn wagons toward Oregon and California. Today Nebraskans celebrate such aspects of their history with a variety of historical parks and museums.

National and State Parks

Scotts Bluff National Monument, which celebrates the westward movement in the 19th century on the Oregon Trail, is the most frequently attended of the national parks in Nebraska. Homestead National Monument near Beatrice commemorates the first 65-hectare farm that passed into private ownership under the terms of the famous Homestead Act of 1862. The most-visited state historical park is Arbor Lodge,



Concrete seagulls overlook the depleted Lake McConaughy in western Nebraska. (© AP Images)

in Nebraska City, which was the home of J. Sterling Morton, a prominent political leader and founder of Arbor Day.

Recreational Areas

The state maintains about 50 recreational areas throughout the state, the best known of which is on Lake McConaughy, the state’s largest reservoir, located near Ogallala. Such areas attract large numbers of visitors (usually residents of the state rather than tourists), especially in the more populous eastern part of the state. Most provide facilities for camping, fishing, swimming, and boating.

- Sources: <http://www.ne.gov>
<http://factfinder.census.gov>
<http://www.50states.com>
 Grolier Student Encyclopedia, V.12
 Encyclopedia Americana, V.20



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

QUICK FACTS

Abbreviation: NE

Capital City: Lincoln

Governor: Dave Heineman

Date of Statehood: March 1, 1867 (37th state)

Population: 1,796,619; 38th largest

Area: 200,350 sq. km; 16th largest

Origin of State’s Name: From the Oto Indian name for the Platte River, “Nebrathka,” which means “flat water”

Largest Cities: Omaha, Lincoln, Bellevue, Grand Island, Kearney, Fremont, Hastings, North Platte, Norfolk, Columbus

Economy:

Agriculture: Cattle, corn, hogs, soybeans, wheat, sorghum
Industry: Food processing, machinery, electric equipment, printing and publishing

U.S. Robots Sent to Assist in Japan's Recovery Efforts



An iRobot Warrior robot shifts rubble. (Courtesy photo)

They can see around corners, traverse rugged terrain and pick up materials too dangerous for humans to handle.

The unmanned robots recently sent by two American companies and a government laboratory are intended to aid workers at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in northeastern Japan, which was damaged following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami. Japanese officials asked their U.S. counterparts what technology was available to help when reactor cooling systems in the plant overheated and leaked radiation.

“Robot systems typically are used in situations where you don’t want to take the risk of putting a human in place,” said David Miller, director of science and engineering at the Idaho National Laboratory in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

“We’re making tools available to people on the ground in Japan so they can decide which they want to use,” he said.

Twenty days after the tsunami, four robots were on their way from robotics maker iRobot in Bedford, Massachusetts. With them were six experts sent to train Japanese officials in how to use the units.

The battery-powered robots are outfitted with a variety of cameras and sensors that wirelessly relay information back to an operator at a game-style console a safe distance away. Two of the company’s robots are 22.3-kilogram PackBots used to detect chemical, biological and radiological contaminants.

The U.S. military, the Department of Homeland Security, foreign military and state and local police departments use PackBots for bomb disposal and search and rescue work, said Tim Trainer, a company vice president.

The other two units are the heavier Warrior model. At nearly 160 kilograms, a Warrior can travel at 13 kilometers an hour, climb stairs, carry fire hoses and lift 52.3 kilograms with an extended mechanical arm.

DETECTING HAZARDS, PROTECTING LIVES

Shortly after iRobot’s shipment, six robots from Virginia-based QinetiQ North America, ranging from lightweight surveillance machines to heavy construction vehicles, also were headed to Japan.

QinetiQ’s 6.3-kilogram Dragon Runner is designed to investigate in small spaces like tunnels and culverts. Its 52.3-kilogram TALON, also used by the U.S. military, can detect up to 7,500 environmental hazards, including toxic chemicals, volatile gases and radioactivity. It has night vision and can relay audio and visual feeds up to 1,000 meters away from a controller. The company sent two of each to Japan.

It then sent two Bobcat front-loading trucks equipped with QinetiQ robot kits that provide audio and visual feeds and allow the loaders to be remote-controlled, said QinetiQ’s Jennifer Pickett. The loaders can handle land mines and unexploded ordnance.

The Idaho lab has readied for shipment to Japan a TALON configured with radiation detection and a global positioning system that can help operators map the locations of contamination.

“If debris gets shifted, that might expose radiation that might not have been exposed the day before. Our system would help them make a map about where [contamination is],” Miller said.

Robots have been used at other disaster scenes. At the site of the World Trade Center, which was destroyed in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack in New York, robots gave recovery crews an understanding of the state of the environment and if it was secure to enter.

A maritime unmanned unit from iRobot called the Seaglider was used to monitor seawater quality in the Gulf of Mexico following a months-long oil spill in 2010.



An operator remotely maneuvers a TALON robot. (Courtesy photo)

Social Media Help Americans Donate for Japanese Quake Recovery



American Red Cross Chairwoman Bonnie McElveen-Hunter told Ambassador to the United States Ichiro Fujisaki that the U.S. group is giving an additional \$50 million to Japan. (Photo courtesy of Department of State)

Americans are embracing social media to raise money for survivors of the March 11 Japan earthquake and Pacific tsunami.

Five hours after the earthquake struck March 11 and sent a deadly tsunami toward northern Japan, American Red Cross staff members began arriving at their offices. They found Twitter flooded with messages about Japan relief and people eager to text donations, said Suzy DeFrancis, the group's chief public affairs officer.

So far, more than 4 million Americans each have donated \$10 to the American Red Cross, through texting, of the total \$120.5 million pledged, said Bonnie McElveen-Hunter, American Red Cross chairwoman.

On March 29, she announced that the American Red Cross will give an additional \$50 million to Japan, bringing its total gift so far to \$60 million.

As the rest of Americans' \$120.5 million in pledges comes in, the American Red Cross will send more funds for relief and recovery efforts, McElveen-Hunter said.

Many large corporations now offer spaces on their websites to help employees and customers pledge donations to help the people of Japan. Some companies are matching pledges dollar for dollar.

Most of the money American individuals and businesses have donated to the American Red Cross will be directed to the Japanese Red Cross, which is providing emergency relief, medical care and emotional counseling for survivors at evacuation centers, hospitals and mobile clinics, said McElveen-Hunter.

"As part of the world's largest humanitarian organization, the American Red Cross is eager to support our counterparts in the Japanese Red Cross, whose staff and volunteers

are working tirelessly to meet the immense needs of their people," she said.

The U.N. World Food Programme will receive \$500,000 of the donated funds for delivery and storage of relief items.

AMERICANS CONTINUE TO PLEDGE DONATIONS

Almost three weeks after one of the most devastating earthquakes in history, American giving continues at a steady pace.

Some donations as small as a few cents are sent by schoolchildren, but most pledges are between \$10 and \$100. Several have been as high as \$1 million, McElveen-Hunter said, calling Americans' response to the disaster "extraordinary."

At the Japanese Embassy in Washington March 29, McElveen-Hunter told Ichiro Fujisaki, Japan's ambassador to the United States, "The American people and the American Red Cross have not forgotten the generosity of the Japanese people when we suffered tremendous loss after the 9/11 attacks and, more recently, after Hurricane Katrina." In total, the Japanese Red Cross sent around \$30 million after those events, she said.

"You do not stand alone during these challenging times," said McElveen-Hunter. "It's wonderful to see the response from every spectrum of the American public."

Fujisaki extended "heartfelt gratitude" for the donation. He said that 11,000 people so far have been confirmed dead in Japan as a result of the quake, 17,000 people are missing, and those "totals are rising every day."

In addition, he said, the people of Japan now are also coping with the effects of the destabilized Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

"We value this friendship and solidarity with the American people," he said.



Condolence cards made by American schoolchildren hang in the lobby of the Japanese Embassy in Washington. (Photo courtesy of Department of State)

Embassy Official Discusses Bilateral Scientific Cooperation



Economic Officer A. Diego Rivera speaks at the Fourth Republican Fair on Innovative Ideas, Technologies, and Projects. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On April 14, U.S. Embassy Economic Officer A. Diego Rivera spoke about renewable energy at Uzbekistan's Fourth Republican Fair on Innovative Ideas, Technologies, and Projects. Mr. Rivera was one of several conference participants to address the crowd of around one hundred scientists, government officials, and members of the diplomatic corps at the UzExpo Center.

In his remarks, Mr. Rivera highlighted the history of cooperation between the United States and Uzbekistan on renewable energy, and science more broadly. Over the last three years, he noted, more than seventy representatives of Uzbek scientific institutions have participated in various research activities in the United States. According to Mr. Rivera, these and other exchange programs have allowed Uzbek and American scien-

tists to share knowledge and technology in renewable energy-related fields of study.

Mr. Rivera also pointed to other examples of recent bilateral scientific cooperation: The Department of Agriculture has sponsored bilateral research projects that aim to improve water efficiency in farming while improving harvest yields; The U.S. State Department has funded a small grants program through which a botanic greenhouse in Samarkand was recently renovated. These and other cooperative efforts have "a significant direct benefit towards finding solutions and initiatives that provide sustainable economic growth while promoting scientific research," Mr. Rivera noted.

Opportunities for continued bilateral scientific cooperation were further enhanced in December of last year when the United States and Uzbekistan signed a Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement. As Mr. Rivera described, the agreement "serves as a legal and institutional framework for scientific cooperation in areas of mutual interest and benefit. The agreement also establishes a framework whereby cooperation and projects can be initiated and carried out by individual scientists without requiring further approvals."

The Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement has garnered much interest throughout the scientific community, in both the U.S. and Uzbekistan. Furthermore, as a result of the agreement, a number of U.S. federal agencies have expressed their interest in initiating new projects with their Uzbek counterparts, suggesting that we can expect to see a further deepening and expansion of bilateral scientific cooperation.

Scientists Detect Record Depletion in Arctic Ozone Hole

The depletion of the ozone layer over the Arctic is more severe than scientists have ever seen it, with a 40 percent loss occurring from the beginning of winter to late March.



"This is pretty sudden and unusual," said Bryan Johnson, a research chemist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in Boulder, Colorado.

But depletion of the ozone that protects the Earth from the sun's harmful rays is not a complete mystery. Scientists have previously predicted

that significant Arctic ozone loss would occur in the event of an unusually cold winter in the Arctic stratosphere. And the depletion is a common winter-to-spring event in Antarctica, where extreme cold in the stratosphere and ozone-depleting chemicals create what's come to be known as the ozone hole.

The stratosphere is the second layer of the Earth's atmosphere, beginning about 10 kilometers above the surface. We live in the first layer of atmosphere, the troposphere. Most ozone resides in the stratosphere, and that ozone is called the ozone layer. Scientists have been watching its depletion for some time. Certain air pollutants eat away at ozone in conditions of very low temperatures and the increasing sunlight of springtime.

An international treaty, the Montreal Protocol, was adopted more than 30 years ago when nations of the world agreed that the ozone layer was diminishing and compounds called chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) — widely used as refrigerants and solvents — were the cause.

Balloons help scientists gather data on the atmosphere. NOAA's Bryan Johnson deployed this balloon in Alaska. (Photo courtesy of NOAA)

Continued on page 19

Continued from page 18

Since the 1987 protocol, CFC use and manufacture has been slowly phased out, but the ozone-depleting compounds are long-lived and will linger in the atmosphere for decades to come. The ozone layer is expected to recover to pre-1980 levels outside the polar regions by 2030 or 2040. A complete restoration of the ozone layer over the poles is expected to take as much as 20 years longer.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has made the same observations about the Arctic ozone depletion this year. Secretary-General Michel Jarraud said, "The degree of ozone loss experienced in any particular winter depends on

the meteorological conditions. The 2011 ozone loss shows that we have to remain vigilant and keep a close eye on the situation in the Arctic in the coming years."

A WMO press release ventures that this year's Arctic ozone depletion might have been worse had it not been for the phase-out of CFCs.

In Antarctica, the depletion of the ozone layer is an annual occurrence because of the extremely cold winter temperatures in the stratosphere. The Arctic winters, on the other hand, are usually not so severe and in some years, scientists detect no ozone losses in the northern regions. Before this year, the highest seasonal loss in the Arctic ozone layer was 30 percent.

U.S. Invests in Energy Innovation, Promise of Breakthroughs



Pacific Gas and Electric Company operates a solar energy site in California, a state now requiring electricity production with renewable sources. (© AP Images)

Invention is widely viewed as one attractive route to find energy solutions that will wean the United States off carbon-based fuels, and the Department of Energy increased its support for the pursuit of invention with an announcement April 20.

Secretary of Energy Steven Chu announced investments in five new program areas, which, it is hoped, could produce innovative technologies in clean energy.

"Breakthroughs in clean energy technologies can reduce our country's dependence on foreign oil, decrease the cost of clean electricity and build a sustainable infrastructure for future generations of Americans," Chu said.

One program focused on biofuels aims to develop new plants that will yield greater amounts of energy per acre than those currently grown for conversion into fuel. Another area of research will strive to develop "revolutionary, cost-effective thermal-energy storage technologies" that will allow, for example, the use of solar energy at night.

These new programs will be managed through the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E), which will work with partners from universities, business and nonprofit

organizations. A government initiative only a few years old, ARPA-E is modeled after the successful Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the agency responsible for technological innovations such as the Internet and the stealth technology used in modern fighter aircraft. Specifically, ARPA-E is committed to invigorating the field of energy research with a focus on transformational projects that may be too high-risk for the private sector to explore.

In announcing an ARPA-E partnership with a private electric utility company April 14, Chu explained his hopes for the way these innovative programs might push energy research into new areas.

"ARPA-E technologies have the potential to lower utility customers' energy costs and strengthen the reliability of the electric grid," he said. "This partnership with the utility industry will move promising technologies from the lab into the marketplace at a much faster pace."

The partnership between ARPA-E and Duke Energy, headquartered in North Carolina, will work to develop mechanisms to bridge the gap between the existing power grid and newly emerging energy technologies.

"ARPA-E is spurring innovation in a way that could help transform not just the energy sector, but the economy as a whole," said Duke Energy Chief Executive Jim Rogers. "Our nation is at an energy crossroads, and we must develop and deploy advanced sources of clean, reliable, affordable energy more rapidly."

The other new energy research programs announced April 20 will focus on more efficient electricity-delivery methods and alternatives for rare earth minerals, used in emerging energy technologies because of their unique magnetic properties.

The final new ARPA-E program will pursue designs for solar power systems, which would allow the distribution and delivery of solar energy on the scale of a public utility. That is not possible with the solar-generating methods currently in use in the United States.

American Cinematographer Discusses Documentary Filmmaking with Local Journalists and Filmmakers



John Hazard (right) and local cameramen shoot a documentary film about Imam Hadji Abdulgafur Razzak Buhari. (U.S. Embassy photo)

American Cinematographer John Hazard visited Uzbekistan from April 27 to May 4. During his visit, Hazard met with journalists and filmmakers from around the country. Hazard spent several days leading interactive workshops at the National Association for Electronic Mass Media (NAESMI). During these workshops, Hazard demonstrated how to shoot high-quality documentaries, and discussed his personal experiences and adventures as a cameraman.

Hazard has shot many films for National Geographic and Discovery, and has worked on projects for Home Box Office (HBO) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). His work has taken him all over the world to make films. "I like to say, I'm always a guest in someone else's world. Being a cinematographer on these films has literally given me a front row seat to some really interesting stuff," said Hazard of his experiences.

Hazard's visit to Uzbekistan was his first. "I had never been to Uzbekistan, and I had never been asked to give a full week of presentations before distinguished audiences. In a sense, I accepted this as an assignment as challenging as following nomads in the Sahara on the ancient salt trade, or ascending top Peruvian peaks to film a search for human remains. I instantly agreed," stated Hazard.

In addition to holding workshops in Tashkent, Hazard also travelled to Bukhara with several journalists to demonstrate documentary film techniques in a real-life setting. Firdavs Abdukhalikov, Chairman of NAESMI, also accompanied the group. During their first day in Bukhara, Abdukhalikov took Hazard to the home of Imam Hadji Abdulgafur Razzak Buhari – Imam of the Bahauddin Naqshbandi Complex and the author of several books about Sufism and Islamic epigraphy.

Hazard was so impressed by the history of the Imam that he suggested creating a film about him. Hazard told the group, "Our film is sitting here with us. We should tell the story of the Imam."

The next day Hazard worked with four local journalists to create the film. The team captured video footage of the Imam in his home, among his family, and with his family's treasures. Hazard showed the cameramen how to position themselves to collect the best shots, to simplify the editing processes, and to retain the natural fluidity that is a hallmark of documentary-style camerawork.

During his week in Uzbekistan, Hazard conducted numerous seminars and workshops and spoke as much as seven hours per day. But what really impressed Hazard were the local journalists themselves.

"Those young journalists were as committed to their own personal improvement as any group I can imagine. They really wanted me to share what I knew with them, and they motivated me to try and really drill down with them. They were like sponges. They just kept absorbing more and more," said Hazard.

According to the Embassy's Public Affairs Officer, Molly Stephenson, the Embassy was happy to facilitate Hazard's discussion with these young journalists and hopes to see further collaboration. "Embassy Tashkent was pleased to share the United States' tradition of open, creative dialogue through this experienced filmmaker. We've compiled a collection of John's film in the Embassy's Information Resource Center, and look forward to welcoming our new friends from diverse institutions in Uzbekistan to screen these documentaries and continue this discussion," said Stephenson.



John Hazard (third from right) at a workshop with the National Association for Electronic Mass Media (NAESMI) in Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

U.S. Embassy launches its new Kino Klub with the documentary film “New Muslim Cool”



Kino Klub participants choose handouts on filmmaking. (U.S. Embassy photo)

U.S. Embassy launched its new Kino Klub with a screening of the documentary “New Muslim Cool” followed by a surprise live discussion via Skype with the film’s co-producer Hana Siddiqi. About 20 Uzbek filmmakers and students participated in this new club, which the Embassy created due to popular demand for more programming on documentary films and filmmaking after the recent successful American Documentary Showcase program in Uzbekistan.

Participants discussed Muslim life in America, filmmaking, and documentary films during the lively conversation with Ms. Siddiqi. Club members greatly enjoyed this opportunity to interact with an American film producer and to hear first-hand about Islam in America, and have requested more such discussions for future club events.

The award winning documentary film “New Muslim Cool” features a Puerto Rican American rapper Hamza Pérez who ended his career as a drug dealer in New York City 12 years ago, and started down a new path as a young Muslim. Now he’s moved to Pittsburgh’s tough North Side to start a new religious community, rebuild his shattered family, and take his message of faith to other young people through his uncompromising music as part of the hip-hop duo M-Team. This movie was produced by Jennifer Taylor. Taylor’s works often explore the connection between the personal and the socio-political, and frequently feature Latino themes and Spanish-language content.

Through various documentary and feature films, Kino Klub is intended to offer a broad, diversified look at life in the United States and the values of democratic society as seen by American filmmakers, as well as to demonstrate the role of films in fostering understanding and cooperation.

American Documentary Filmmaker Connects with Uzbek Filmmakers through a Video Conference



Tom Shepard answering questions during Kino Klub. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On May 31, PAS Tashkent’s monthly Kino Klub gathered 40 Uzbek amateur filmmakers to screen the American documentary Film “Whiz Kids” and to participate in a Skype discussion with the film’s director Tom Shepard. Tom has directed and produced documentaries for over 12 years. His film, Scout’s Honor, won the Audience Award for Best Documentary and Freedom of Expression Award at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival. Tom also has personal experience with the Science Talent Search competition; he was a finalist in 1987.

At a time when American teens lag behind other countries in math and science, Whiz Kids is a coming-of-age documentary that tells the story of three remarkably different yet equally passionate 17-year-old scientists who vie to compete in the nation’s oldest, most prestigious science competition – the Intel Science Talent Search, in which over 2,000 students compete for prizes totaling more than \$1.5 million. In the end, 40 finalists travel to Washington DC to present their research to top scientists and vie for a \$100,000 grand prize. Win or lose, these “whiz kids” raise questions about class, courage, personal sacrifice, success and failure. In the process, they learn as much about themselves as they do about science.

The audience asked many questions regarding the creation of this film and regarding the three Intel Science Talent Search finalists. The Uzbek guests were immensely curious about how Tom found such talented students for the film, and how he successfully captured the emotional roller coaster of the competition. Tom responded that documentary filmmaking is challenging yet very rewarding work because the results of the film are not known until the end. He said that it took them two years to shoot this film with over 400 hours of video footage. The students became accustomed to having filmmakers around them. They opened their lives and even shared important events. Inspired by the film and discussion, the Uzbek filmmakers recommended that such films be produced in Uzbekistan to encourage teenagers to study science and realize their education and professional goals.

Chargé Butcher Speaks on U.S.-Uzbek Ties at Academy of State and Social Building

On April 19, 2011, Chargé d'Affaires Duane Butcher discussed U.S.-Uzbekistan relations with students at Uzbekistan's Academy of State and Social Building. Chargé Butcher's visit to the Academy came one year after Ambassador Norland spoke to students at the same Academy.

Chargé Butcher's visit continues the tradition of engagement between the U.S. Embassy and the Academy, and reflects the importance which the Embassy attaches to engaging with Uzbekistan's emerging leaders.

Chargé Butcher began his address to the Academy by noting the U.S. government's determination to strengthen ties between the U.S. and Uzbekistan. He stated that much progress has been made in this regard over the past few years, as the U.S.-Uzbekistan relationship has continued to expand and deepen across a wide range of areas of mutual interest.

In particular, Chargé Butcher identified four key areas in which the two sides have engaged. These four areas include the political, security, economic, and human dimension.

In regards to security, Chargé Butcher praised the "highly valued" contribution which Uzbekistan has made to reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan's provision of reasonably-priced electricity to Afghanistan has "dramatically increased the amount of power supplied to the north of the country," he said. Uzbekistan's construction of an important railroad line linking Khairaton to Mazar-e Sharif, Chargé Butcher stated, "not only supports Afghanistan reconstruction efforts, but will also help boost trade between Central Asia and Afghanistan."

On the economic front, Chargé Butcher confirmed that "there are some important opportunities here in Uzbekistan

for greater trade and investment for American companies." He also said that there are a number of "relatively small steps" that the Government of Uzbekistan could take to build a more investment-friendly business environment and thus attract more foreign companies to Uzbekistan. In particular, he noted that the exit visa requirement for foreign residents should be examined.

Regarding politics and the human dimension, Chargé Butcher said, "Democracy and human rights are very much a part of our dialogue with Uzbekistan, and with every country with which we have ties." "As with our dialogue with any country," he stated "we know that we do not necessarily see eye-to-eye on every issue. However, being able to discuss these issues, even when we disagree, is a sign of our maturing relationship."

Following his remarks, Chargé Butcher took several questions from students of the Academy. Demonstrating their keen awareness of global issues, students posed questions on topics ranging from the future of Afghanistan to U.S. support of free speech.



Prior to his speech, Chargé d'Affaires Duane Butcher (left) tours the Academy of State and Social Construction with Deputy Director Dr. Saifiddin Juraev. (U.S. Embassy photo)

USAID's Local Development Initiative Launches in Uzbekistan

Tashkent, April 27, 2011 – USAID's Local Development Initiative, in coordination with the Institute for Study of Civil Society and the Academy of State and Social Construction, celebrated its launch at the Radisson Hotel today.

Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Duane Butcher, provided opening remarks. His remarks were followed by Mr. Abdulkarimov, Acting Director of the Institute for Study of Civil Society.

The Initiative's main objective is to build the capacity of local governments, in communication and collaboration with constituents, to provide improved local government service delivery and governance.

The Local Development Initiative's efforts will focus on: (i) building local government capacity; (ii) providing support to

local governments in the delivery of improved services; and (iii) supporting local governments in facilitating citizen involvement in planning and project implementation. The project will run until September 2012.

"Improvement of local government capacity in providing public services is critical to Uzbekistan's long-term prosperity. By working together at the local level, communities and their government officials can find sustainable solutions to many of their problems," said Ms. Marilynne Davis, the Initiative's Chief of Party.

The Local Development Initiative is one of many assistance projects implemented by USAID on behalf of the American people in Uzbekistan. Since 1993 the American people through USAID have provided more than \$330 million in assistance programs in Uzbekistan.

U.S. Embassy Tashkent on Facebook

The U.S. Embassy has its own page on the popular social networking website Facebook. Currently, the page has over 4,000 members, a number that is growing day by day.

The page contains useful information about the Embassy, its programs and activities in Uzbekistan, the Information Resource Center (IRC) and its services and resources.

It also publishes information about Embassy events, important announcements, 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 *U.S. Embassy 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 "Like" button at the very top. Easy!



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

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

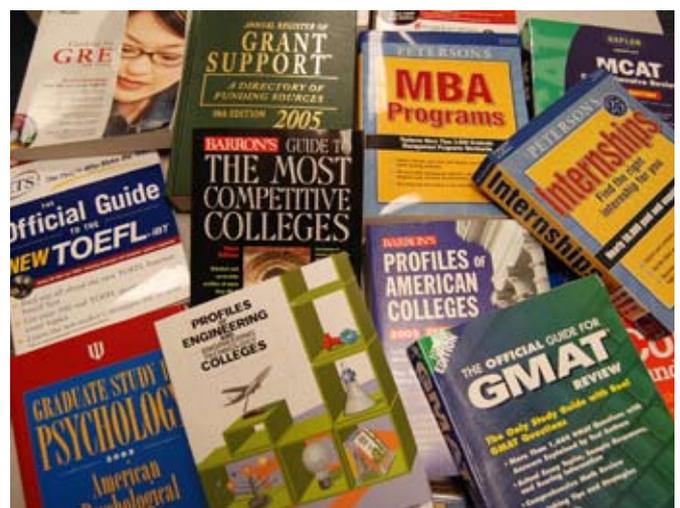


The Educational Advising Center offers the following services free of charge:

- 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.

A promotional poster for 'Kino Klub' at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. The poster features a film strip border at the top and bottom. The background is blue with silhouettes of film equipment like a camera and a projector. The text 'EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA' is at the top in red. Below it, 'KINO KLUB' is written in large, white, stylized letters. To the right, it says 'film screenings and video conference discussions with American film directors'. At the bottom right, it says 'EVERY MONTH' in red, slanted letters, next to a camera icon. The U.S. Embassy seal is in the top left corner.

Kino Klub is a monthly event for amateur and professional filmmakers that screens American documentary films and carry out discussions of the films with the filmmakers at the U.S. Embassy. To sign up please contact (+99871) 140-2441; 140-2445.



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