

# DO'STLIK

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# iLuminate

## Lights Up Uzbekistan!

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THE U.S. EMBASSY NEWSLETTER

# DO'STLIK

## State Department Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Mike Hammer Visits Ancient Bukhara Synagogue



Assistant Secretary Hammer visits the Bukhara Synagogue. (U.S. Embassy photo)

After a series of public events in Bukhara, State Department Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Mike Hammer visited the 16th century synagogue at the heart of Bukhara's Jewish culture. A member of the Synagogue described for Secretary Hammer the history of the Synagogue and the Jewish community in Bukhara.

He took pride in showing the ornate decorations inside the Synagogue, and pulling aside the Uzbek silk curtains, he showed Assistant Secretary Hammer the Synagogue's 500 year old Torah scrolls.

Assistant Secretary Hammer listened attentively to the story of the Bukharin Jewish community. There has been a Jewish community in Bukhara for more than 13 centuries, and it often provided a place of refuge for Jews persecuted in other lands.

It is reputed that before the construction of the current Bukhara Synagogue, Jewish and Muslim worshippers peacefully shared the Magok-i-Attari Mosque for their separate services. The Magok-i-Attari still exists, as does

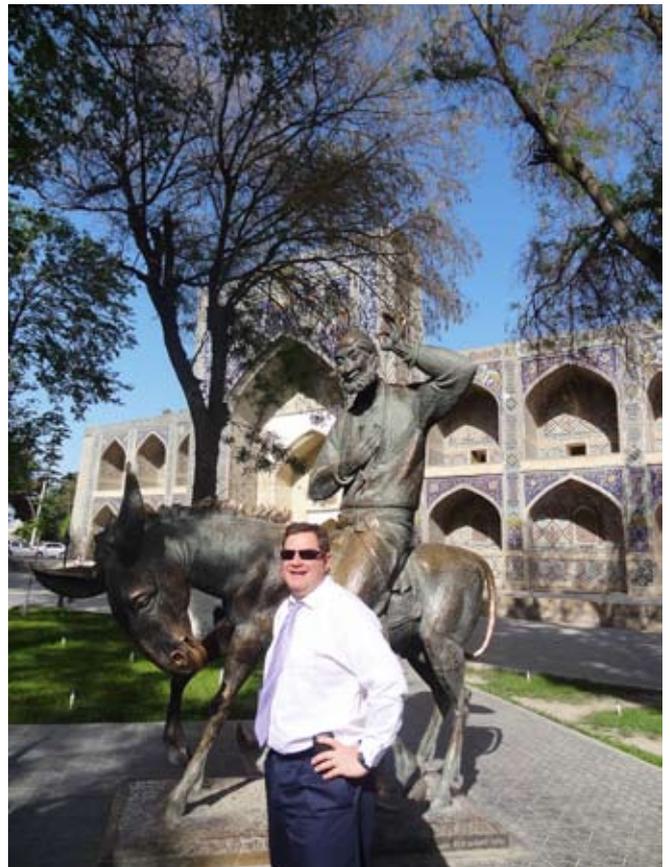


Assistant Secretary Hammer in Lyabi-Haus, in Bukhara. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Bukhara's tolerance for members of the Jewish religion.

During his time in Bukhara Assistant Secretary Hammer spoke to students and faculty at Bukhara State University, and participated in an English Access Club class.

He also engaged with local press while visiting the famous Bukhara Ark Citadel, which the State Department has supported with a \$42,000 grant from the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) to the Bukhara State Architectural Museum.



Assistant Secretary Hammer visits ancient Bukhara. (U.S. Embassy photo)

The museum used the funds to restore the intricate calligraphy and paintings on the interior walls and ceilings of the mosque.

This was Assistant Secretary Hammer's first visit to Uzbekistan. In addition to his events in Bukhara, Assistant Secretary Hammer gave speeches at universities in Tashkent and Samarkand, and participated in a conference on government transparency.

The Assistant Secretary used these public events to promote government transparency, press freedom, and tolerance.

# iLuminate Lights up Uzbekistan!

iLuminate, a popular entertainment technology company that combines state-of-the-art technology with electrifying entertainers who perform in the dark to create the ultimate performing arts experience, presented their unique program in Tashkent.

The main performance took place at the Turkiston Winter Hall on April 14 at 19:00. Additionally iLuminate performed and served as judges for a dance contest at the Youth Creativity Palace on April 12 at 19:00.

Founded by dancer and software developer Miral Kotb, iLuminate enables performers, choreographers, engineers, technicians, stylists and artistic directors to produce explosive performances with customized wireless lighting programs. The results are extraordinary lighting effects choreographed with phenomenal dance moves that take viewers



iLuminate dancers talk about their visit in Uzbekistan during an interview after a show. (U.S. Embassy photos)



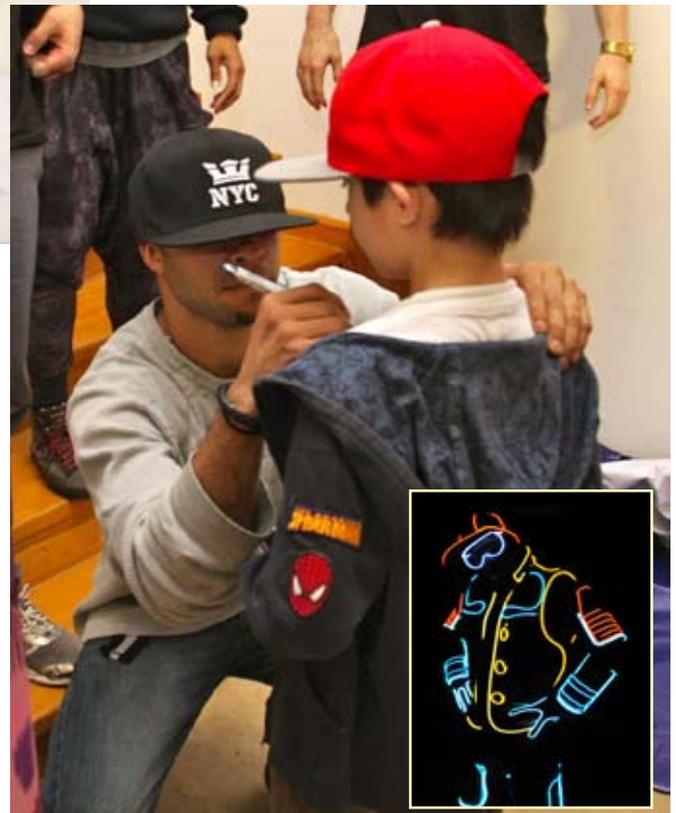
Director of Zlotnikov Dance Centre with the iLuminate team. (U.S. Embassy photos)

on an exhilarating ride. Since launching in 2009, iLuminate's patent-pending technology has been used in numerous performances by Grammy-winning superstars such as Chris Brown, Christina Aguilera and The Black Eyed Peas.

It has also been featured on hit television shows including America's Got Talent (in which the



JRock of iLuminate gives master classes at Pop Circus College. (U.S. Embassy photo)



iLuminate fan gets an autograph from Trevor Harrison, a dance group member, on his shirt. (U.S. Embassy photos)

# ILUMINATE



iLuminate dance group members lead Conversation Club at the U.S. Embassy Tashkent. (U.S. Embassy photo)

dance troupe took third place last summer), Dancing with the Stars and The X Factor, as well as such awards shows as the American Music Awards, MTV's Video Music Awards, BET Awards and the Nickelodeon Awards.

In addition to the public performances, the artists held master classes and jam sessions at State School of Choreography, Pop Circus College and Zlotnikov Dance Center. iLuminate also visited Samarkand and held master classes at Samarkand Art College during their tour. This was iLuminate's first tour of Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) within the framework of the U.S. State Department's Arts Envoy Program.

Arts envoys share the best of the U.S. arts community with the world in order to foster cross-cultural understanding and collaboration and to demonstrate shared values and aspirations.

American arts professionals – including performing artists, visual artists, poets, playwrights, theatrical and film directors, curators, and others – travel overseas to conduct workshops, give performances, and mentor young people.

Programs seek to connect with international audiences who might not otherwise have the opportunity to engage with American arts professionals. U.S. Embassy Tashkent partnered with the Forum of Culture and Arts of Uzbekistan Foundation and Zlotnikov Dance Center to present iLuminate for the first time in Uzbekistan.



iLuminate lights up Tashkent with their amazing performance at Turkistan Art Palace on April 14, 2013. (U.S. Embassy photo)

# Official Biography of Secretary of State John Kerry

## John Kerry

### Secretary of State

**Term of Appointment: 02/01/2013 to present**

On February 1, 2013, John Forbes Kerry was sworn in as the 68th Secretary of State of the United States, becoming the first sitting Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman to become Secretary in over a century.

Secretary Kerry joined the State Department after 28 years in the United States Senate, the last four as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Secretary Kerry was born on December 11, 1943 at Fitzsimons Army Hospital in Aurora, Colorado, one of four children of the late Rosemary Forbes Kerry and Richard Kerry, a Foreign Service Officer.

Shortly before he graduated from Yale University, John Kerry enlisted to serve in the United States Navy, and went on to serve two tours of duty. He served in combat as a Swift Boat skipper patrolling the rivers of the Mekong Delta, returning home from Vietnam with a Silver Star, a Bronze Star with Combat V, and three Purple Hearts.

Back in the United States, Kerry began to forcefully speak out against the Vietnam War. Testifying at the invitation of Chairman J. William Fulbright before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he asked the poignant question, "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?" He also began a lifelong fight for his fellow veterans as a co-founder of the Vietnam Veterans of America, and later as a United States Senator who fought to secure veterans' benefits, extension of the G.I. Bill for Higher Education, and improved treatment for PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

In 1976, Kerry received his law degree from Boston College Law School and went to work as a top prosecutor in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, where he took on organized crime, fought for victims' rights, and created programs for rape counseling. He was elected Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts in 1982, and two years later, he was elected to the United States Senate where he served for 28 years.

As a Senator, Kerry served as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman from 2009 to 2013, where he became a Senate leader on key foreign policy and national

security issues facing the United States including Afghanistan and Pakistan, nuclear nonproliferation, and global climate change. His service as Chairman built on his previous Senate work that included helping to expose the Iran-Contra scandal and leadership on global AIDS.

As chairman of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, he worked to learn the truth about American soldiers missing in Vietnam and to normalize relations with that country.

In 2010, as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, John Kerry was instrumental in the ratification of the

New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) Treaty, a vital nuclear arms reduction agreement with Russia that helps steer both countries away from dangerous nuclear confrontations. The *New York Times* wrote that through his service as Chairman, "Kerry now practices his brand of diplomacy as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee but also, remarkably, as a kind of ex-officio member of Obama's national security team, which has dispatched him to face one crisis after another in danger zones like Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sudan."

In his 28 years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Kerry chaired the Asia and Middle East subcommittees where he authored and passed major legislation on international drug trafficking, international money

laundering, humanitarian aid, and climate change, and he helped negotiate the UN's genocide tribunal to prosecute war crimes in Cambodia.

He also held senior positions on the Finance, Commerce, and Small Business Committees, as well as served as a member of the bipartisan Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction, where he worked across party lines to try and reduce the country's debt and strengthen the economy. Prior to his departure from the Senate, Kerry was the seventh most senior Senator. Kerry was the Democratic nominee for President of the United States in 2004.

Secretary Kerry is the author of best-selling books, including *A Call to Service: My Vision for a Better America and This Moment on Earth*, a book on the environment which he co-authored with his wife Teresa Heinz Kerry. Together they are proud of a blended family that includes two daughters, three sons, and three grandchildren.



John Kerry, Secretary of State

## Secretary Kerry Meets with Uzbek Foreign Minister Kamilov

Uzbekistan and the United States are working together for peace in Afghanistan, a message underlined during the March 12 meeting in Washington between Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. Speaking to the press shortly before their meeting, Kerry noted the important security and assistance relationship between the two countries. "Uzbekistan is providing very, very important help with respect to the distribution network of aid to Afghanistan," Kerry said, "and they are involved, happily, in some very important infrastructure construction projects, a railroad into Afghanistan and major electricity power provision." Kamilov said Uzbekistan and the United States "have very close cooperation" on Afghanistan and that Uzbekistan plans to continue its cooperative efforts "to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan and to the region of Central Asia."

### REMARKS

Secretary of State John Kerry and Uzbekistani Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov | Before Their Meeting

Washington, D.C. | March 12, 2013

**SECRETARY KERRY:** Good morning. It's my great pleasure today to welcome His Excellency, the Foreign Minister

Kamilov from Uzbekistan. We're going to have a chance to talk about the important security and assistance relationship that we have. Uzbekistan is providing very, very important help with respect to the distribution network of aid to Afghanistan, and they are involved, happily, in some very important infrastructure construction projects, a railroad into Afghanistan and major electricity power provision. And we also have other issues – human rights – other issues to talk about. But we're delighted to welcome His Excellency here, and we thank you for the important cooperation.

**FOREIGN MINISTER KAMILOV:** Thank you. Mr. Secretary, first of all, on behalf of the delegation of Uzbekistan, I'd like to thank you for a warm welcome. Today, during our negotiations, we are going to exchange views on the state of our bilateral relations and our cooperation in political, economic, and humanitarian areas. Of course, we are going also to raise the problem of Afghanistan. We have very close cooperation with the United States, and we will continue this kind of cooperation to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan and to the region of Central Asia. And this is our agenda, and of course we have a lot to speak about. Thank you very much.

**SECRETARY KERRY:** Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you, Minister.



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov prepare to address reporters before their bilateral meeting at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., on March 12, 2013.  
(State Department photo)

## American Writers Build Cultural Ties with Uzbekistan

From May 17-22, 2013 critically acclaimed American writers Christopher Merrill, Ann Hood, Stephen Kuusisto and Chinelo Okparanta visited Uzbekistan. The writers traveled under the auspices of the International Writing Program (IWP) at the University of Iowa.

The IWP connects writers around the world with different literary cultures. The writers shared their experiences with Uzbek colleagues and students while visiting the cities of Tashkent and Samarkand.

Their visit in Uzbekistan kicked off with a meeting at the Writers' Union where they met with leading Uzbek writers and learned about the rich history of Uzbek literature.

They also conducted readings of their works at the Sergey Yesenin Museum. The Museum hosted a "poetry slam" where five Uzbek writers read poems and sang songs.

The writers also participated in a series of meetings and panels with the students and faculty at the Samarkand Foreign languages Institute, National University of Uzbekistan and the Foreign Languages University.

Meetings at the universities provided students with an opportunity to interact with American writers and acquire knowledge about modern American literary trends as well as to discuss issues related to translations.

The writers also enjoyed themselves at the Uzbek National Library where they read their works to over one hundred eager listeners. While there, local students read excerpts of Uzbek works by Zulfija and Oybek.

Ann Hood described the scene: "I can't believe how marvelous it was to watch their hands go up eagerly to ask questions about American literature and to share with us about Uzbek literature."

Another highlight of the visit was a workshop led by Stephen Kuusisto, author of the *Planet of the Blind*, for people living with disabilities. Stephen, being blind himself, spoke with young handicapped people on leadership and building self confidence. He shared his personal story and encouraged the participants to believe in their dreams and work hard to achieve them.

In addition, Stephen discussed legal conditions for disabled people in the U.S. These programs, coordinated by the Public Affairs Section, provide an invaluable experience for both Americans and Uzbeks alike.

They offer an opportunity to share ideas as well as past experiences. It is important to continue such interactions in order to foster understanding between Uzbeks and Americans and to facilitate future changes for the better.



(From left to right) American writers Christopher Merrill, Stephen Kuusisto, Ann Hood, Chinelo Okparanta pose at the Registan Square in Samarkand after meeting with students and faculty at Samarkand State University. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## The U.S. Embassy Hosts a Photo Exhibition “Women in Search of Inspiration”



The U.S. Embassy in Tashkent held a photo exhibition in recognition of International Women’s Day. The exhibition entitled “Women in Search of Inspiration” sought to portray the outstanding achievements of women in Uzbekistan.

The event took place at the Art&Fact Gallery, on the evening of March 7th in order to coincide with Women’s Day.

The showcase featured women from a wide range of backgrounds from all across the country.

“Women in Search of Inspiration” was a photo essay about faith and commitment to a profession, despite life’s obstacles. The women were selected because they serve as symbols of inspiration for other women because of their accomplishments throughout their lives.

The photos that were on display were the works of photographers Hassan Kurbanbaev and Nargiza Matyakubova. Both are graduates of the Tashkent State Institute of Arts and studied the work of fashion photography masters of the 20th century and see photography as an instrument of self-expression.

\* \* \*

**Hassan Kurbanbaev** and **Nargiza Matyakubova** are graduates of the Tashkent State Institute of Arts named after Mannon Uygur.

They work as a team and draw their inspiration from different kinds of art, having worked as directors and script writers

for short films, launched several successful radio projects on Tashkent radio channels, and worked in advertising.

Today, Hassan and Nargiza are professional photographers. Both artists studied the work of fashion photography masters of the 20th century. Hassan and Nargiza see photography as an instrument of self-expression and believe that one of its great qualities is the constant discovery of something new.

“Women in Search of Inspiration” features Tashkent women who are both well-known and unknown to the public. All of these women have taken an active stand in their lives and achieved a great deal in their professions, which represent the source of their inspiration and optimism.

“Women in Search of Inspiration” was made possible by the support of the United States Embassy in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.



This photo exhibition was presented in celebration of Women’s History Month. In 1987, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution designating March as National Women’s History Month, which is followed by a special Presidential Proclamation issued every year. Women’s History Month recognizes the extraordinary accomplishments of women throughout history and celebrates the power of women and

their vital contribution to the development of all nations.



Visitors look at the works of photographers Hassan Kurbanbaev and Nargiza Matyakubova at the photo exhibition. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## Fulbrighter Brings Uzbek Language and Culture to College



Mufarrakh performs a traditional Uzbek dance in costume for students at Indiana University. (Photo courtesy of Indiana Daily student/C.Moore)

Muparrakh (“Mufarrah”) Bahromovna Musaeva, a talented 23-year-old Uzbek woman, is a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. The FLTA program that Mufarrah is engaged in provides an opportunity for international teachers in their 20s to refine their teaching skills, increase their English language proficiency and extend their knowledge of U.S. culture and customs.

While FLTA offers bright international students a chance for higher education in the United States, it can also reward American university students with a look into other cultures, especially in the language they have chosen to learn. Since September 2012, when Mufarrah’s Fulbright teaching position began, she has helped promote the Uzbek Student and Scholar Association (UzSSA) founded on Indiana’s campus in 2011. She is now vice president of the association. UzSSA sponsors Uzbek cultural events, most recently an exhibition of traditional Uzbek music and dance in which Mufarrah took part and even sewed the costumes for the performance.

The Institute of International Education, an independent, nonprofit international education and training organization based in Washington, which helps to administer the FLTA program, reports that there were 486 Uzbek students studying in the United States during the 2011–2012 school year.

The Fulbright FLTA Program is designed to develop Americans’ knowledge of foreign languages by supporting teaching assistantships in more than 30 languages at hundreds of U.S. institutions of higher education. Since 1968,

the program has offered educators from nearly 50 countries the opportunity to teach and learn in the United States.

Indiana University, which has a prominent Central Asia studies program, is one of several U.S. colleges that enroll the majority of Uzbek graduate students. These include the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Johnson & Wales University, and the Lone Star College System, a group of six public community college campuses in the Houston area.

Last year, Mufarrah explained, she and fellow Uzbek students, along with 21 other country associations, took part in the annual Indiana University World’s Fare festival. Although it was the first time the Uzbek team had taken part in the event, they won first place for their display of traditional Uzbek food, songs and dances.

The campus visit of Ilhom Nematov, the Uzbek ambassador to the United States, was another event that has highlighted Mufarrah’s Fulbright year. She and her instructor hosted a coffee hour for the ambassador that included Indiana and University of Michigan students. Nematov discussed the cultural events, language learning and Uzbek history that Mufarrah and the UzSSA provide for the university and the community at large.

In December 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton addressed the latest Fulbright FLTA class in Washington. “I’m convinced that with your help, students across the United States are now learning new languages, including Mandarin or Farsi or Arabic — even Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek, languages that I heard during my recent trip to Central Asia,” she said. “Now, some of your students will continue to study these languages for years. But even though they may never become fluent, they will still benefit from your instruction in terms of vocabulary and grammar, but there will be a much deeper lasting effect: that sense of fellowship, of better understanding between people.”

“These bonds have the potential for such a lasting impact on your lives and the lives of everyone you meet,” Clinton said. “And I know that Senator Fulbright, when he first proposed this program 65 years ago, in his own words, said that he hoped it would bring ‘a little more knowledge, a little more reason, a little more compassion in world affairs.’”

Mufarrah says the FLTA Fulbright year has been one of hard work and memorable experiences that will last a lifetime. She hopes to return to her home in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to continue her language teaching with a renewed sense of purpose and with friendships that will also last a lifetime.

# Embassy Tashkent Celebrates Earth Day



The Boy Scouts pick up trash by the canal. (U.S. Embassy photo)

In honor of Earth Day, and in collaboration with local NGO Eko-Maktab, Embassy Tashkent organized a series of events to highlight the importance of the Chirchik River in Tashkent and to promote community action. On April 21, Ambassador Krol was joined by 50 volunteers, including Embassy staff, local volunteers, journalists, and PAS alumni, for a cleanup of the Chirchik floodplain outside of Tashkent.

The Chirchik River, which originates in the Chimgan mountains, is considered the lifeblood of many cities along its course, including Tashkent; all the waterways of the city are fed by the waters of the Chirchik River. During Sunday's cleanup participants cleaned a large area of the Chirchik floodplain. The trash was then taken away in a municipal garbage truck.



Deputy Chief of Mission Philip Kosnett volunteers at the Chirchik River cleanup. (U.S. Embassy photo)

On April 22, the Ambassador opened a photo exhibition, "The Chirchik Calls for Help" at the Art+Fact Gallery in Tashkent. Over 40 photos of the Chirchik River, taken by professional photographers and mountaineers, were on display. The photos showed the river's journey from the snows in the mountains above Tashkent to its confluence with the Syr-Darya River, and all of its uses in between—from fishing, to recreation, to farming – as well as some of the negative human impacts on the river, such as pollution. In his remarks, Ambassador Krol expressed the hope that the Embassy's Earth Day activities would help bring attention to the Chirchik River, and that its waters "can be used as an instrument of peace to ensure a better future for all."



Volunteers celebrate a job well done. (U.S. Embassy photo)



Ambassador Krol shares his impressions of the photo exhibit with journalists. (U.S. Embassy photo)



Eko-Maktab's Natalia Shivaldova discusses the photo exhibit with Ambassador Krol. (U.S. Embassy photo)



# USA

The United States of America

## Landmarks & Industry

★ National capital    ★ State capital  
Note: Alaska and Hawaii are not to scale

### The West

- Bald Eagle
- Polar Bear
- McKinley Denali
- Oil Production
- Surfing
- Palm Trees and Palmetto
- Golden Gate Bridge
- Route 66
- Technology Industry
- Movie Making
- Vineyards
- Apples
- Timber
- Mount St. Helens
- Rocky Mountains
- Glacier National Park
- Elk Herds
- Potatoes
- Beaches

### The South

- Arch National Park
- Barrel Racing
- Yellowstone National Park
- Historic Railroad
- Las Vegas
- Hoover Dam
- The Grand Canyons
- Indian Culture
- Balloon Fiesta
- Indian Pueblo
- Horse Herds
- Route 66



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BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS  
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### The West

- The Alamo
- Longhorn Cattle
- Cowboys
- Oil Production
- Cattle Ranches

### The Midwest

- Mount Rushmore
- Chrysler Rock
- Indian Heritage
- Dairy Products
- Rubber Industry
- Route 66
- Gateway Arch
- Wheat
- Farming
- Corn
- Sunflowers
- Looms

### The Southeast

- Wills Tower
- Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Museum
- Hotels Museum
- Indy 500
- Automotive Industry
- Colonial Capital
- Horses
- Bluegrass
- Great Smoky Mountains
- Peanuts
- Coal
- Wright Brothers
- Kennedy Space Center
- Citrus Farms
- Ozark Waterfalls
- Fruites
- Riverboats
- Cape Hatteras Lighthouse
- Azcs
- Kentucky Derby
- Base Fishing
- Theme Parks
- Beaches

### The Northeast

- The Capitol
- The Liberty Bell
- Selling
- Blue Crab
- Oysters
- Dairy Cattle
- Statue of Liberty
- Baseball Hall of Fame
- Empire State Building
- Electric Lamp
- Roll Film Camera
- Sewing Machine
- Niagara Falls
- The Mayflower
- New England Lighthouses
- Mount Washington
- Moose



# The State of Kansas – the Sunflower State



The Kansas State Capitol building in Topeka. (Wikimedia Commons)

Known for its golden wheat fields and tall sunflowers, Kansas lies on the Great Plains in the very center of the continental United States. The east of Kansas is mainly low prairies. They rise to high plains in the west. Much of the state's landscape consists of flat ground or rolling hills cut by river valleys or streambeds. Kansas has no important natural lakes, but the federal government has constructed about 20 large reservoirs to prevent some of the rivers from flooding. Summers are hot, and winters are dry and sunny. In the state capital, Topeka, the temperature averages 26°C in July and -2°C in January. Most of the rain falls from April through September. Severe storms, such as blizzards, tornadoes, and blowing dust, occasionally hit the state, leaving great destruction in their wake.



Built in 1932 as part of a Works Progress Administration project, the castle at Coronado Heights stands 300 feet above the surrounding valley floor in Salina County, Kan. (AP photo/Rodrick Reidsma)

## PEOPLE

Before the arrival of European settlers, Kansas was inhabited by Native American tribes including Kansa, Osage, Pawnee, and Wichita. Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, and Kiowa hunted on the plains. In the

early 19th century displaced Native Americans from the Great Lakes region arrived. Today only three small reservations remain in Kansas. Most of the state's 23,000 Native Americans live in urban areas. When the territory of Kansas was created in 1854, it attracted settlers from other states. After Kansas entered the Union in 1861, about 12,000 African Americans migrated to the state to escape slavery in neighboring Missouri. Settlers from Iowa and Missouri moved to central and western Kansas as railroads were built across the state after the Civil War (1861-65). They were joined by immigrants from Europe, including some 30,000 German-speakers from Russia who were recruited to work on the railroads.

## ECONOMY

More than 70 percent of all Kansans are employed in service industries including health care, finance, insurance, real estate, wholesale and retail trades, transportation, communication, utilities, and government. Transportation equipment, especially small airplanes and aircraft parts, ranks first among the products manufactured in the state. Good soil and progressive farming methods make Kansas an important agricultural state. More than 90 percent of the land is devoted to farming. Kansas is the country's leading producer of wheat and the second leading pro-



Hawker Beechcraft employees in Wichita, Kansas are working on the Hawker 4000 jet. (AP Photo/Molly McMillin)

ducer of sorghum. Corn and hay are also important crops. Cattle, raised on the abundant grazing lands, constitute the most profitable agricultural commodity. Meatpacking and the dairy industry are major economic activities, although food processing is surpassed in value by the production of transportation and computer equipment and nonelectrical machinery. Kansas is the country's leading producer of helium and also extracts petroleum, natural gas, and salt.

## GOVERNMENT

The constitution (adopted 1859) provides for a governor elected for a four-year term. The legislature consists of a senate with 40 members serving four-year terms and a house with 125 members serving two-year terms. Kansas is represented in the U.S. Congress by two senators and four representatives and has six electoral votes.

## HISTORY

When the Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado visited the area in 1541, it was inhabited by Native Americans, including



Warmer and dryer weather will move the Kansas wheat harvest into full swing. (AP Photo/Orlin Wagner)



About 500 kayak and canoe paddlers head down the Missouri River from Kaw Point in Kansas City, during the Missouri American Water MR340 endurance race to St. Charles, Missouri. (AP Photo/ Fred Blocher)

the Kansa, Wichita, and Pawnee, whose nomadic life, based on buffalo-hunting, was transformed after the Spanish introduced the horse. The U.S. acquired the land through the Louisiana Purchase (1803). As settlement proceeded during the 19th century, Kansas became the center of national controversy on the question of slavery, and by the 1850s sentiment reached the level of armed warfare among settlers, including the abolitionist John Brown, earning it the name "bleeding Kansas." Kansas fought with the Union in the civil war and suffered the highest rate of fatal casualties of any northern state. After the war, thousands of new settlers arrived to farm the prairies. As part of the dust bowl, Kansas sustained serious land erosion during the drought of the 1930s. During World War II, airplane manufacturing became very important, and industry continued to grow into the 1980s. As the state has become increasingly urban and suburban, however, more emphasis has also been placed on the financial and service sectors concentrated in and around its major cities.

## RECREATION

Kansas has more than 20 state parks, most of them centered on federal reservoirs. They offer swimming, boating, camping, fishing, picnicking, and hiking facilities. The largest reservoirs are Tuttle Creek in Riley and Pottawatomie counties, Milford in Geary and Clay counties, Perry in Jefferson county, and Cheney in Sedgwick, Kingman, and Reno



The Skywheel ride leaves a colorful design as it spins at the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson, Kansas. (AP Photo/Travis Morisse)

counties. There are also a number of state, county, municipal, and private lakes.

The Kansas Fish and Game Commission oversee most activities associated with these recreational areas. It issues licenses for hunting and fishing and registers boats. The funds are used to maintain fishing lakes and game preserves, enforce regulations, and develop additional facilities. Camping at state parks is under the jurisdiction of the Kansas Park and Resources Authority.

## Sources:

<http://www.kansas.gov>

<http://quickfacts.census.gov>

<http://www.50states.com>

Encyclopedia Americana, V.16

Grolier Student Encyclopedia, V.9

The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia



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

## QUICK FACTS

**Abbreviation:** KS

**Capital City:** Topeka

**Governor:** Sam Brownback

**Date of Statehood:** January 29, 1861 (34th state)

**Population:** 2,885,905; 32nd largest

**Area:** 213,110 sq.km; 15th largest

**Origin of State's Name:** From the Sioux Indian for "south wind people"

**Largest Cities:** Wichita, Overland Park, Kansas City, Topeka, Olathe, Lawrence, Shawnee, Salina, Manhattan, Hutchinson

### Economy:

**Agriculture:** Cattle, wheat, sorghum, soybeans, hogs, corn. **Industry:** Transportation equipment, food processing, printing and publishing, chemical products, machinery, apparel, petroleum, mining.

# Assistant Secretary Blake's Remarks at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy

Tashkent, 4:00 P.M., April 24, 2013



The staff of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED) welcomes Assistant Secretary Robert Blake. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Thank you for that warm welcome, and for inviting me to say a few words regarding the United States' strategic relations in Central Asia. I understand that our Ambassador George Krol and my Washington colleague Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Mike Hammer have recently spoken at your university, and I am honored to follow in their footsteps.

Before I begin, allow me to express what a pleasure it is to be in Tashkent again with good friends. As you know, I co-chair our Annual Bilateral Consultations with Foreign Minister Kamilov. This process, along with several other regular meetings we hold, has helped bring our two countries closer together. We thought it appropriate that one of Secretary Kerry's first meetings in Washington was with Minister Kamilov last month. I salute my counterparts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their hard work in forging what we have today – a respectful, open dialogue between friends.

This process has given me the opportunity to travel to Tashkent several times, and also to get outside of the capital to see some of the important, historic, and beautiful areas that exist throughout Uzbekistan. Seeing these ancient sites reminds me of our shared responsibility to build something that will stand the test of time. I welcome all of you—as the next generation of your country's diplomats and civil servants—to an important and rewarding career, and I hope each of you has an opportunity to contribute to future progress, whether in Uzbekistan, Central Asia, or beyond.

With that, I'd like to speak a bit about the United States and our interests in the region. There can be little doubt that we are in the middle of an extremely dynamic time. Historians may well look back at the results of our actions as an important inflection point in history. No doubt they will do so with the clarity that comes with time. Today,

however, the future is not so clear. As the political, economic, and security transitions in Afghanistan continue, many commentators are already recasting the story of the region in terms of a renewed "Great Game" while also forecasting diminished U.S. interest in the region. But I reject this narrative. Our engagement with, and commitment to, Central Asia and its people will continue far beyond 2014. And to be clear, I am speaking not only of Afghanistan, but of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. We have enjoyed strong relations with each of the five Central Asian nations and their people since their independence and will continue to work together in the years ahead. Certainly, we hope the bilateral relationship with Uzbekistan will only deepen and mature with time.

And rather than a new "Great Game" – a concept best left to the history books – we believe that our engagement can instead help achieve "great gains" across the entire region. The "Great Game" was something imposed from without that led to conflict. "Great gains" will be achieved through rising cooperation and increased trade and lead to mutual benefit, which in turn will underpin the regional stability and prosperity your government seeks. We see in Central Asia deep economic and human potential that can help forge physical, cultural, and commercial links that will be the building blocks for a more secure and prosperous future.

From the perspective of the United States, we are working to facilitate such a future through our regional engagement in several arenas. Today, I want to touch on three major focus areas:

- First, our support for the vision of greater regional economic integration;
- Second, our encouragement of meaningful, sustainable progress on human rights and democratic reforms; and
- Finally, our security cooperation, including support for counter narcotics, border security, and regional stability.

Of course, our cooperation and engagement with Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian states reach beyond these three areas, including important educational and cultural exchange programs, as well as science and technology cooperation, just to name a few.

Let me begin by discussing the economic possibilities for the region.

## The New Silk Road Vision

The United States strongly supports the efforts of the Central Asian states and their neighbors to promote greater

economic integration. Increased trade and commerce among Central Asian, Southern Asian, and European states would contribute greatly to the region's security, stability, and prosperity. This is especially true for Afghanistan, where an important economic transition is underway and where increased economic integration with the wider region would support efforts to improve security and bring a political end to the war in Afghanistan.

This goal of building greater regional integration and prosperity has two important and inter-connected elements.

The first is increased infrastructure connectivity – the physical roads, pipelines, and electric transmission lines that connect people and markets. Uzbekistan has been a leader in this regard, and today we can begin to see those linkages taking shape:

- Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan are providing electricity to meet rising energy demand in Afghanistan. Through multi-country projects such as CASA-1000, electrical lines running through Afghanistan could someday transfer surplus hydropower from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- New rail links are being developed between Afghanistan and its neighbors. Uzbekistan constructed the first railway into Afghanistan, which already reaches Mazar-e-Sharif and could be extended to Herat.
- Uzbekistan now exports growing quantities of gas to China in addition to its traditional export markets in Russia. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India, or TAPI, gas pipeline could transform the region's energy markets by connecting the surplus energy supplies of Turkmenistan with the energy hungry markets of South Asia. While challenges remain, TAPI is closer to reality today than many skeptics thought possible just a few years ago.

Second, and equally important, is trade liberalization. By this I mean the steps taken by countries in the region to facilitate the movement of goods, services, and people



Rector N. Jumaev (left) greets Assistant Secretary R. Blake (right) and U.S. Ambassador G. Krol (center) at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy. (U.S. Embassy photo)

across borders. These steps can take the form of reduced non-tariff trade barriers, improved regulatory regimes, more efficient border customs processes, and currency convertibility.

Already we are seeing positive signs of movement on these fronts. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan formalized a Cross-Border Transport Agreement, and Afghanistan and Pakistan are working to implement a transit-trade agreement which will reduce costs and delays. I understand Uzbekistan is close to joining the CIS Free Trade Zone. And a number of Central Asian countries are stepping up efforts to strengthen protections for their workers abroad.



Assistant Secretary Blake delivers remarks at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy about American foreign policy in Central Asia. (U.S. Embassy photo)

For many years Kyrgyzstan was the sole member of the World Trade Organization in the region. Now Russia and Tajikistan are members and Kazakhstan and Afghanistan are making solid progress on their accession bids. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have recently expressed interest in joining the WTO. We strongly support these aspirations, because we all benefit from open and inclusive trade regimes in the region. International businesses see WTO accession as a sign that countries, and in this case a whole region, are open for investment.

Allow me to deviate from my speech for a moment to encourage Uzbekistan to reengage on accession talks. We appreciate Uzbekistan's desire to protect strategic industries in order to ensure their future competitiveness. Such matters can be addressed in a thoughtful and sophisticated way during the Working Party negotiations, which are an integral part of the accession process. The United States would be pleased to offer technical assistance to deal with this and other accession-related issues.

We see that the Central Asian states are increasingly agreeing on the importance of greater coordination, with each other and with international organizations. They are

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# Assistant Secretary Blake's Remarks at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy

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engaging in regional mechanisms like the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program, or CAREC. CAREC is facilitated by the Asian Development Bank and led by the countries of the region. It includes Afghanistan and Pakistan and by 2020 will have mobilized \$20 billion to improve six transportation corridors linking Central Asia with Europe, South Asia, Russia, and the Middle East.

We are working with our local partners to expand cooperation on science and technology issues, building on our 2010 U.S.-Uzbekistan Science and Technology Agreement. For example, a team of researchers from both the U.S. and Uzbekistan is working with farmers in the Aral Sea basin and Kyzylkum desert to explore how the use of halophytes – salt loving plants – may be able to restore marginalized, salinized farmland and act as a source for biofuel production.

Regional economic growth must also be fueled by engaging and empowering the people of Central Asia, especially the region's women, who can play an important role in fostering growth

and development. The group of Aral Sea researchers I just mentioned was led by a woman, as one example. On a larger scale, in the summer of 2011, we hosted 200 dynamic women business leaders from across Central Asia at the Women's Economic Symposium in Bishkek, and we have subsequently invested more than \$2 million to provide training and promote women-run business networks and trade hubs. These networks are now fostering entrepreneurship across the region: for example, over 150 new women-owned businesses have been started in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, a regional women's business association was launched, and a Fergana Valley international textile trade hub was established.

Obstacles to the economic integration of the broader region certainly remain, but we believe the region's increased connectivity and mobilization of its natural and human resources provides a way forward. And we will continue to support the countries of Central Asia as they broaden and deepen the network of economic activity linking their markets to each other and to the markets of Russia, China, India, and beyond.



Assistant Secretary Robert Blake (left) answers the questions of the students at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## The Future of Democracy in Central Asia

Regional economic growth is intertwined with the promotion of democratic governance and human rights, because no society can reach its full potential if people are denied basic freedoms. We raise these important topics in our discussions with each of our Central Asian partners, including in the Annual Bilateral Consultations, or ABCs. These meetings provide an opportunity to review the full range of our relationship with senior leaders and to deepen our engagement with civil society. During the last ABCs in Tashkent in August 2012, Senator Safaev and I co-chaired a remarkably thoughtful conversation with civil society leaders in which members of the parliament and government spoke frankly about legislative oversight and

greater citizen involvement. We hope to see more engagement with, and operating space for, a broad range of Uzbekistan's civil society representatives to facilitate their contributions to the development of their country.

We remain focused on encouraging democratic reforms and progress on human rights. President Karimov discussed

in a 2010 speech his vision for democratic reform and strengthening Uzbek civil society, and we support these ideals. The recent announcement of a pilot program to test a draft law on government transparency is a positive step. We support efforts to put into practice the values enshrined in countries' OSCE commitments, in the UN human rights treaties to which they have acceded, and in their own domestic laws. We believe respecting human rights and enshrining legitimate and responsive democratic processes are necessary conditions for long-term peace and prosperity. This is a lesson we in the United States have learned repeatedly over the course of our independence, and something we continue to grapple with, quite frankly.

We therefore continue to urge the government of Uzbekistan and governments across the region to address human rights concerns by ensuring space for peaceful exercise of the fundamental rights which undergird democratic societies, including those of assembly, expression, and movement. Fundamentally, we believe people should be treated with equal dignity and protection whether they

are following a majority religion or a minority religion -- or no religion at all. This is one of our most basic principles. We urge open space for civil society and the media to discuss and critique governments.

We also continue to emphasize that respect for the right to free speech and free media, including internet freedom, and peaceful worship reduces the appeal of violent extremism and contributes to effective governance over the long-term. Again, these are issues the United States grapples with as well. We respect the sovereignty of our Central Asian partners and their responsibility to maintain peace and stability within their borders. However, our experience teaches us that free speech and assembly do not promote extremist views. Instead, they diminish such views by allowing people see how faulty such ideas really are. Open discussion limits the appeal of the shadowy figures who promote these views. Likewise, strengthening the ability of citizens to hold their governments accountable will not scare off investors. Rather, it will lead to greater transparency and rule of law. Predictable political and investment climates with sound governance attract more foreign investment.

We are also exploring ways to increase our people-to-people ties with Central Asia and among Central Asians. Our exchange and visitor programs touch everyone from parliamentarians to NGO workers. We were quite pleased to host Senator Sifaev and a delegation of Uzbek parliamentarians in 2012, which visited local and state governments in North Carolina as well as federal legislators in Washington, DC. We look forward to continuing these exchanges.

Although these programs can often seem small, over time the number of participants can add up dramatically and build a long-term foundation for our bilateral relations. These exchange program participants are at the heart of our people-to-people relationships, and we hope to increase such programs with our Uzbek friends and colleagues.

### Security Cooperation

Just as we support the region's economic growth and encourage respect for human rights, we are also focused on supporting Central Asia's security and stability. This is an important strategic interest of the United States and all the Central Asian states. And it is a subject that is particularly resonant today as we look ahead to the "transition decade" in Afghanistan.

Our Central Asian partners have provided vital support for international efforts in Afghanistan, and we will remain closely engaged there even as our military presence is reduced. Our message is clear: our support for Afghan transition efforts and for regional security remain strong. Our commitment to Afghan security, stability, and economic development remains steadfast. Part of this security transition requires the sustained engagement of the region in solving regional problems.

We have worked closely with our partners in the region to counter narcotics trafficking and improve border security, including non-proliferation. The Taliban and Al-Qaida finance their insurgent campaigns against the people of Afghanistan, partly through illicit trafficking. Strengthening the border protection capabilities in Central Asia will disrupt the flow of narcotics and other illicit goods coming out of Afghanistan. We count Uzbekistan as a strong partner in this effort as evidenced by the recent agreement between our Drug Enforcement Administration and the Ministry of Interior to work together jointly in the fight against illicit narcotics.

Our security cooperation with Uzbekistan, and all the Central Asian countries, does more than just help our partners deal with security challenges. It bolsters our bilateral ties. Experience has shown us that cooperation in the sphere of national security can lead to broader engagement across the full range of bilateral issues.

### Conclusion

Over the last twenty years, since Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian states achieved independence, we have built strong bilateral relations in Central Asia. We have worked together to enhance stability, sovereignty, and prosperity. Today we continue this work. While we know we cannot agree on everything, we are committed to work together to address the common threats posed by trans-national terrorism and narcotics trafficking, and to achieve our common goal of supporting a secure, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan within a secure, stable and prosperous region.

As Foreign Minister Kamilov has said to me, in this region, the Uzbeks and the Afghans drink from the same river, the Amu Darya. Increased coordination can lead to increased trade and increased prosperity for all. We see the promise of "great gains" that will provide the people of Central Asia with increased stability, greater security, more open societies, and mutual understanding.



Rector N. Jumaev (right) presents a gift to Assistant Secretary R. Blake (left) at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy. (U.S. Embassy photo)

## Remarks by Assistant Secretary Mike Hammer at the Conference on Transparency and Press Freedom

Thank you very much. Assalomu Alaykum! Good afternoon.

It is an honor and a pleasure to be at this conference on "The Transparency of the Activities of Government Authorities." The subjects of government transparency and media access to government agencies are extremely important to the American government, to the American people, and to me professionally and personally. In fact, I was planning to come to Uzbekistan for my first visit and found out through our Embassy about this conference and I really wanted to participate and I greatly appreciate that the conference organizers, the National Democratic Institute, and I see a colleague, Oskars Kastens, is here, and the National Association for Electronic Mass Media, were able to accommodate my schedule and allow for me to share some views and learn from you.



Assistant Secretary Mike Hammer gives an interview to local journalists. (U.S. Embassy photo)

I would also like to recognize our Ambassador, Ambassador George Krol, who is here with us with some of the members of our Embassy team. Brian Penn, our Public Affairs Officer, and other who have helped put this program together.

I also see that yesterday and today you've had a number of speakers. I was happy to hear our French colleagues and I also see a Finnish flag here, and you mention Germans and Slovenes, as well. That fact that you are bringing these people to a conference to speak about the importance of press freedom shows how important it is to a democratic society, as well as to the universality of the right of freedom of expression.

So, let me first set your expectations right. Being the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the State Department – our Foreign Ministry, does not automatically make one as eloquent as your great poet Alisher Navoi, or as entertaining as Hodja Nasareddin. I am a government bureaucrat after all. But I do hope that I can impart some information today that you will find interesting and useful as you consider the critical issues of transparency and press freedom.

I am not an expert on Uzbekistan, so rather than talk to you about your system, I will speak from my own experience and I will share insights with you that I have also spoken about around the world, from Honduras to Uganda to Mongolia and China. I believe I can speak about these areas in which we share goals, interests, and principles

because we share them as world citizens because they reflect universal aspirations and values. In America, we are extremely proud of our democracy and the laws that keep it free and representative. Yet, as you may have heard President Obama or Secretary Kerry say, we are always looking for ways to improve and strengthen our young democracy. You are, no doubt, also looking for ways to improve Uzbekistan, as evidenced by events like this one.

As the head of Public Affairs, I am always conscious of the mission of my Bureau, of my team, and that is to advance America's interests through effective, accurate, and timely communication of American foreign policy. Successful execution of this mission means not only explaining our policies to audiences abroad, but also communicating them to Americans at home, and getting their feedback. It also means being accessible to press and being accessible to citizens who want to learn more about American foreign policy.

In the very First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, our most important document that is the supreme law of our land, America's Founding Fathers protected freedom of speech and freedom of the press. It affirmed the fundamental rights of citizens to be informed about all sides of an issue without government interference. And I repeat that: without government interference. The primacy of a press free of governmental control has remained constant throughout American history. It is critical and vital to our democracy. It is the reason why, among other things, the United States has no ministry of information to regulate the activities of journalists; no requirement that journalists be registered; and no requirement that they be members of a union. In fact, if you look at America today, anyone can blog and express their opinion. You may wonder if they are true journalists, but they are able to express their views and critique our government and other policies.

The United States also has a tradition of valuing public opinion. The U.S. system of government depends on a well-informed citizenry that is active in civic affairs. Therefore is it important that U.S. citizens know what their government is doing, and that the government is sensitive and responsive to public opinion. In the U.S., public opinion can, and does, change U.S. policy, often quite rapidly. The people can affect policy and they should affect policy, as we are a democracy.

The Obama White House has a policy, for example, that an individual or organization has the right to submit a petition on any issue via WhiteHouse.gov, and you can go to WhiteHouse.gov and perhaps see some of the petitions that have been put forth. Through these petitions, the White House guarantees a timely response to any proposal or inquiry that receives 100,000 signatures. And, through internet access, these petitions can gather momentum quickly. In fact, since January of this year, the White House has responded to petitions on a wide range of issues including budget proposals, cost-savings measures for the Postal Service, lobbying reform, and a demand that the White House release its secret recipe for Ale to the Chief, its in-house honey beer (which it did, in response to the petition!).

The United States Congress is also heavily influenced by public opinion. Because Members of Congress and Senators are elected by members of their district or state, their continued service in public office depends on their being responsive to the concerns of their electorate. In 2002, for example, Congress passed the Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act in response to public outrage and frustration over corporate accounting scandals. Currently, Congress is reviewing several gun bills in response to the public demand that Congress address the recent rash of horrible gun violence that has taken the lives of innocent and young Americans in recent weeks and months.

The importance of public opinion can also be seen by our national obsession with polling; we'll poll on a wide variety of topics; any group that can be polled and will be polled. By gathering information about public opinion, the government can work towards being as representative of its citizens as possible.

Beyond taking public opinion into consideration, our government strives to be transparent. President Obama affirmed in his recent public memorandum that, and I quote from him, "My Administration is committed to creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government. We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration." This reflects that President Obama has made transparency a high priority of his Administration.

However, we recognize that achieving government transparency is not easy, and that the press often serves as the primary conduit of information between the government and our citizens. It is for this reason that we often refer to the press as our unofficial "fourth branch" of government, in addition to our legislative, judicial, and executive branches. Knowing that the press contributes to our transparency, we strive to proactively engage media and inform them.

The Department of State, like the White House, holds a daily press briefing, at which both domestic and international journalists are welcome, and believe me, they ask tough questions. Each day, our spokesperson takes to the podium to present and explain our policies on a whole

range of foreign affairs topics and breaking news items to American and international press what it is that the United States is doing, and to make it clear why it is that we are doing what we are doing. That said, there remains a natural tendency for some in government to want to resist transparency, believing that it creates problems or invites unwanted criticism by people who do not understand our government's work. After stories critical of government policies—or worse, stories revealing scandals—it's easy to start viewing journalists as the enemy, but in fact, it is part of my job to remind my colleagues that there is more to be gained than lost by being transparent. In fact, our experience in Washington is that it is usually the cover-up or the unwillingness to speak the truth about a problem that becomes the bigger problem than admitting a mistake or that a situation needs to be fixed. We may not always be happy with the stories the media produces, but I have learned that over time, that if you inform the media, if you treat them as professionals, if you do your best to make sure they are educated and informed in what you do, how you do it, and why you do it, they will produce better and more accurate stories – and even the tough stories can help improve the work that we do by exposing problems and making us rethink our approach or find a solution.

A few years ago, for example, the Washington Post, one of the United States' most respected newspapers, published a series of articles exposing that U.S. military personnel were being subjected to poor treatment at a U.S. military hospital. While the initial story was embarrassing to the government and might have temporarily damaged the credibility of our military in the eyes of Americans, the government took the exposé as a call to action. Rather than punish those who published the article, top level Defense Department officials, including Secretary Gates, investigated the claims made in the articles. When they confirmed that wounded soldiers had in fact been neglected and that hospital conditions were substandard, they replaced the hospital administrators, improved the conditions of the hospital, and initiated a comprehensive analysis of the whole veteran's healthcare system. That is good and that is how things should work.



Assistant Secretary Mike Hammer in the courtyard of Kalon Mosque, in Bukhara. (U.S. Embassy photo)

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# Remarks by Assistant Secretary Mike Hammer at the Conference on Transparency and Press Freedom

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We know that democratic governments are not infallible and they must be accountable to their people. The press serves as an important check on our government, which may not always effectively police our own internal processes. Journalists are often the first to uncover corruption and to highlight missteps by the government. Again, this is a good and positive thing. It is actually necessary in a vibrant and healthy democracy.

Engaging with the press is, to us, an opportunity to show that we have nothing to hide. In the U.S. and in many places around the world, the press fosters active debate, providing investigative reporting, and serves as a forum to express different points of view, particularly on behalf of those who are marginalized in society. To Americans, the government clamping down on journalism and journalists would be a sign of insecurity and abuse, not—not—a sign of confidence.

I'm no stranger to press scrutiny myself. When I was working as spokesperson for the National Security Council at the White House, I can remember countless times when I braced myself for our briefings and faced a room full of journalists all eager to ask tough questions about some recent development and I wished that I could just hide under my desk and not have to talk, but through their exchanges we learn to communicate and, in fact, make sure that our policies are defensible and transparent.

Just as we owe the media – and the public – transparency, likewise, the media journalist also has a responsibility to be accurate, balanced, and objective in its reporting. American journalistic standards are extremely high, and we are proud of that. Journalists strive to report the truth and honor the anonymity of sources who do not wish to be named. It is because of this integrity that government officials like myself can deal with the press in a good faith manner, believing that their information will be reported accurately, and that both the press and lawmakers have the best interests of the American people at heart.

We, as spokespeople of the government must always recognize that our currency is the truth. We must never lie to our citizens because if we do, it only undermines our credibility, and in fact our ability to govern effectively. The U.S. government has systems in place to make information directly accessible to individual citizens as well. Every agency has a website, on which individuals can read about policies, events, and remarks made by government officials. In fact, it probably won't be long before this presentation is on our Embassy web site and our web site back home. Individuals can also track the progress of legislation as it moves through Congress. Constituents can see how a lawmaker votes on a particular bill, which may



Assistant Secretary Mike leads Conversation club at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent on April 10, 2013. (U.S. Embassy photo)

determine whether or not he or she votes to reelect that lawmaker in the future.

In addition, U.S. law requires that the government respond in a timely manner to citizens' request for information. In the United States, the primary law concerning transparency at the federal level is the 1966 Freedom of Information Act. Under the Freedom of Information Act, the U.S. government is required to respond to a citizen's request for government records, so long as the information does not seriously jeopardize national security. President Obama has specifically called upon federal agencies to be as open as possible when responding to Freedom of Information Act requests. Even if we didn't fervently believe in transparency, the reality is that technology is making it difficult to operate behind closed doors. I understand your government recently decided to conduct an experiment to test in practical terms its draft law on transparency of government bodies that would provide citizens and mass media greater access to information.

Modern governments must accept that even if they wish to hide their activities, in a world of electronic networks and connectivity, transparency will triumph; things will come to be seen by the world. The reality is that no secret is bound to stay secret forever and no problem is likely to stay uncovered. Therefore, governments need to be prepared to explain their actions publicly and by being prepared to be transparent, it will produce better decisions and better policy. Also, if a government does not explain what it is doing, if it does not explain its decisions, then others will. The conversation will take place, whether we like it or not, and we believe it is better to participate in those discussions.

In the Public Affairs Bureau I challenge my colleagues to stay on top of technological innovation for just this rea-

son: we always want to be part of the conversation. Discussions about U.S. policy are taking place on every conceivable platform: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube; you name it; we want to participate. We want our voice, the voice of the U.S. government, heard, lest someone else, possibly with ill intentions or inaccurate information, speak for us.

Younger audiences in particular expect all organizations – including government organizations – to be technically savvy and accessible on digital platforms, and I was just briefed by our Ambassador how a large percentage of Uzbeks are young and this is the generation that we are all dealing with around the world. A very youthful population. We are always trying to reach new audiences and create broader audiences. We post on Facebook, we tweet, we blog, you name it, and we're there! In fact, our Embassy has a Facebook page that is quite popular, with over 30,000 likes. These new platforms have also given people across the country and around the world the opportunity to interact directly with high-level government officials. I have made myself available to answer the public's questions through real-time call-in and write-in programs over Google+, Facebook, and Twitter. In just about an hour we'll be doing a Facebook session here with Uzbek citizens. In fact, when I was in Washington, a young man in Tajikistan asked about how he could collect the documents for his visa interview. So, we can very much connect. I've had an opportunity to tell a Syrian Facebook user what the U.S. policy is toward Syria and what our hopes and aspirations are for a post-Asad Syria, and that the United States will support a multi-ethnic democracy that protects minorities in Syria. And we talked directly to a Venezuelan student about U.S. policy toward his country and the hemisphere.

Beyond the principals of press freedom and transparency, Americans value a more general freedom of expression. Under U.S. law there are very narrow and limited circumstances in which expression can be restricted. One such exception is when expression rises to the level of incitement to imminent violence – a very narrow exception because under such a standard the expression has to be specific in its call for imminent violence.

This standard protects expression of even the most distasteful of views, as long as they are not advocating for imminent violence. The U.S. Government cannot prevent an individual from carrying out such an act even though we find it abhorrent.

As President Obama explained at the UN General Assem-

bly, "We do so because ... the strongest weapon against hateful speech is not repression; it is more speech — the voices of tolerance that rally against bigotry and blasphemy, and lift up the values of understanding and mutual respect." Protecting the right of expression does not mean endorsing everything that people say. There are billions of people on earth, some of them will say terrible things, and the rest of us should use our own expression to challenge, reject, and condemn hateful or purposefully offensive speech.

Violence, however, is never, ever, an acceptable response to speech.

President Obama has also made clear his commitment to protecting freedom of expression and transparency in the United States. As he recently said, "Our Constitution protects the right to practice free speech. Here in the United States, countless publications provoke offense...As

President of our country and Commander-in-Chief of our military, I accept that people are going to call me awful things every day —and I will always defend their right to do so."

Again, being transparent isn't easy, but we believe firmly that we stand to gain more than we stand to lose by being transparent. Thus, we will continue to strive to be as accessible to our people as possible, and to always provide fertile ground for a robust press corps.



Assistant Secretary Mike Hammer answers the questions on Facebook of the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent on April 11, 2013. (U.S. Embassy photo)

Let me conclude again by thanking you for inviting me to speak here today at the "The Transparency of the Activities of Government Authorities" conference. I am very happy to have this chance to visit this new nation and ancient land. Unfortunately, too few Americans know a lot about the peoples of Uzbekistan, or your ancient histories and traditions. I am looking forward in the next few days to learning more about your country, and sharing what I learned with my friends and colleagues back in the United States. Besides visiting and exploring Tashkent, I will have an opportunity to visit Samarkand and Bukhara. And when I return to the United States I will be able to speak knowledgeably about the wonders of the ancient Silk Road cities of Uzbekistan. I hope you, too, will have an opportunity to visit the United States, see our natural beauty, meet our people, and experience our culture and diverse democracy. I thank you for listening and I will be around for taking your questions, hearing your comments, and perhaps your criticism. I ask you also to reach out to Americans, and let them know about your country, and encourage them to visit here.

KATTA RAKHMAT! Thank you very much.



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