

Embassy Celebrates 15th Anniversary of U.S.-Vietnam Relationship

To commemorate the 15th anniversary of the normalization of United States relations with Vietnam, the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi held several activities, including a July luncheon where Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said, “We have dedicated ourselves to the hard work of building peace [and] consistently moved in the direction of engagement and cooperation.”

Also that month, the embassy held a two-day symposium for scholars, officials and past and present U.S. and Vietnamese ambassadors on the early challenges of building the U.S.-Vietnam relationship and opportunities for better cooperation.

In June, the embassy hosted concerts of works by George Gershwin at Hanoi’s historic Opera House, and in August, former prisoner of war Senator John McCain sent video greetings to a crowd of Vietnamese and U.S. VIPs on board the *USS John S. McCain* when it made a port call in Da Nang.

Over the 15 years, the United States has negotiated the recovery of the remains of U.S. soldiers and airmen missing in action. Propelled by a bilateral trade agreement in 2000 and Vietnam’s 2007 accession to the World Trade Organization, the United States is now Vietnam’s largest export market, third-largest overall trade partner and leading foreign investor. Fifteen years ago, fewer than 800 Vietnamese studied in the United States; today, more than 13,000 do so.

The United States has provided Vietnam \$420 million to support the prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS; engages in regular policy dialogues on security and defense issues; and cooperates on disaster relief, search and rescue, and dioxin remediation.

Another of the embassy’s activities, a contest to design an anniversary logo, was won by architect Nguyễn Trần Dương. U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Michael Michalak said Dương’s kite design “symbolizes the hope for even loftier and more successful relations between our two countries in the future.”

Dương could not attend the unveiling—he was away on business travel in the United States.



Manila Hosts Gay Pride Event

“Discrimination is a waste of talent,” said Ambassador Harry K. Thomas as he welcomed more than 100 Filipino guests to the U.S. Embassy in Manila’s first Gay Pride Month reception. The event, hosted and organized by Public Affairs Counselor Rick Nelson and his wife Pinky, was proposed by the Manila chapter of the State Department employee affinity group Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies.

Ambassador Thomas said the event was intended to show respect for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community in the Philippines and recognize its contributions to the nation’s culture and society. Although the Philippines has a sizable LGBT population, many of its members face societal discrimination.

Guests at the two-hour event came from Philippine arts, cultural, education and business groups, and from the government,

media and nongovernmental organizations. They included prominent Philippine television personalities and fashion designers, reporters from the country’s largest newspapers and television networks, and officials of the Commission on Elections, National Police and Department of Foreign Affairs. Highlights included remarks from Ambassador Thomas and the GLIFAA’s representative at post, Michael Pignatello, and a brief documentary about the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City.

Guest Danton Remoto, a former Fulbright Scholar and the first openly gay man to run for office in the Philippines, noted President Barack Obama’s declaration of June as LGBT Pride Month. “We are no longer in the closet,” Remoto said. “We are now at the center of the room.” Remoto’s LGBT political party earned a significant number of votes in the nation’s recent election, but not enough for a seat in the Philippine House of Representatives.



Philippines



FSI Adds Online ePerformance Training

The Foreign Service Institute and Bureau of Human Resources have launched a distance-learning course titled ePerformance for Civil Service (PA 449), which teaches Civil Service employees and their managers how to plan, review and approve performance appraisals online.

The course provides role-based online training that models the Department of State’s performance management system and the roles of rating and reviewing officials and employees. The course mirrors the Civil Service appraisal process and teaches employees every step of the process, from entering work commitments into ePerformance to depositing the appraisal into the employee’s Official Performance Folder. The course can accommodate Department-specific business rules.

“We are committed to the Civil Service employees’ success in ePerformance,” said Ruben Torres, executive director of HR’s Executive Office. “We wanted to provide another helpful training tool for Civil Service employees, their rater and reviewing official, and HR to assist them in the performance appraisal process.”

Employees may register for PA 449 at <http://fsi.state.gov/rd.asp?ID=774>.



Gathered at the Gay Pride Month reception are from left U.S. Embassy in Manila Public Affairs Counselor Richard Nelson, U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Harry K. Thomas and television host Eugenio “Boy” Abunda Jr.

Secretary Clinton Opens Expanded FSI Facilities

In June, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton cut the ribbon to open an expansion of the Foreign Service Institute that added almost 100 classrooms and a high-tech modular multipurpose space where FSI can hold events for more than 400 people.



The increased training space allowed FSI to relocate its information technology training operation from Warrenton, Va., to the School of Applied Information Technology on the institute's main campus in Arlington, Va. The project expanded FSI's cafeteria and child care facilities and added a new wing on the main Building F and a new Building K.

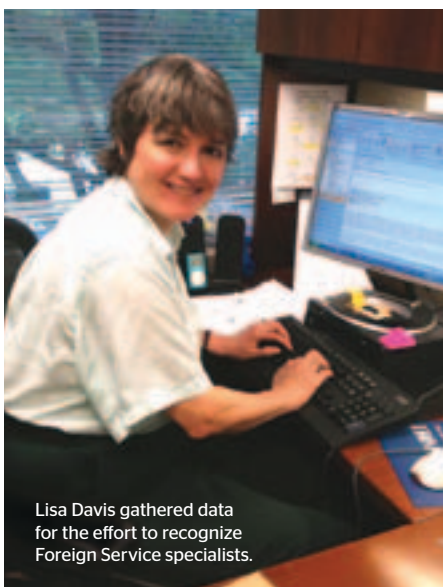
At the ribbon-cutting were representatives of the Department's partners on the project, including General Services Administration Senior Counsel Stephen R. Leeds and senior representatives from the architectural firm, construction company and construction management firm.



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton prepares to cut the ribbon inaugurating the new FSI facilities.

In her remarks, Secretary Clinton noted the need to expand training in response to the increases occurring in Department hiring. She said the expansion was timely, "because we not only can, we must provide the same high-level training that is adaptable to the situations we face, and I have great confidence in the leadership and the staff here at FSI to do whatever is necessary to make sure that every man and woman who we send out from this training center is fully prepared to face the challenges and seize the opportunities of the 21st century."

Foreign Service Specialists Get Recognition



Lisa Davis gathered data for the effort to recognize Foreign Service specialists.

Where Foreign Service specialists once only received a cable announcing they had achieved tenure, they have this year begun receiving individual certificates of recognition for that milestone.

Certificates signed by the Director General were first distributed to the newly tenured in 2008. Then the program was recommended for extension to all specializations. It was also recommended that certificates should be signed by the Secretary of State and sent to all of the more than 4,000 specialists with tenure, not just those newly tenured.

The new program, announced in March, required identification of each specialist's tenure date. The Bureau of Human Resources said this major undertaking, done by Office Management Specialist Lisa Davis, was complicated by the fact that the Department's computerized personnel

system only came into existence in 1998. To identify those tenured earlier, Davis worked with the Diplomatic Research office to retrieve archived cables, which were available only back to 1984. For 250 earlier tenure announcements, she worked with the Records Department.

Gathered over several months, the resulting data constitute a complete database of tenure information for HR's future use, the bureau said. Using this information, Davis, James Hsu and summer intern Mulki Ahmed printed the certificates and obtained the Secretary's signature on each. The certificates were also embossed with the official State Department seal.

Certificates for specialists tenured in 2010, 2009 and 2008 have been mailed to employees, and the rest are expected to be sent by the year's end.

Singapore FSN Helps Prevent Blindness

An estimated 18 million people suffer from blindness, and 48 percent of all blindness is caused by age-related cataracts, according to the World Health Organization. Yet many people lack access to early cataract detection or cataract surgery.



However, a Foreign Service national at the U.S. Embassy in Singapore is making a difference. Teo Yew Kiat recently used his annual leave to help battle eye disease in a remote village in Sri Lanka.

As a volunteer, he helped set up specialized ophthalmology equipment and performed pre-operative tests on 70 candidates for eye surgery who were among the 1,000 people receiving medical, dental and ophthalmology care in the village.

The services were provided by the group Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation. Yew Kiat, a seven-year member of the group,

has made three similar excursions with the organization to remote parts of Indonesia. In Sri Lanka, he helped the group set up a free clinic in the village of Karawanella.

"We had support from the local health ministry, and while communication was a problem, some English-speaking locals helped us do translations," he said.

Yew Kiat, who has worked in the regional security office for seven years, said he volunteers for these missions because the only thing more miserable than getting sick is "knowing that there is a cure but you cannot afford or gain access to treatment."

During his trip, Yew Kiat said he met an old man who had been blind for 10 years due to a cataract infection and had never seen his grandchildren.

"After we removed the cataract from one eye, we brought his grandchildren in," Yew Kiat recalled. "Now he is a very happy man because he can finally see his grandchildren."



Singapore

Lahore Holds 1st Child to Work Day

In June, the U.S. Consulate General in Lahore, Pakistan, celebrated its first Bring Your Child to Work Day, during which 25 Pakistani children between ages 6 and 16 participated in several educational activities.

The management section provided a tour of the compound, including stops to see the fully armored vehicles and the warehouse. There were briefings on staying healthy and cyber security, and a question-answer session with the regional security office.

The children also conducted a radio check at Post One, in which they practiced radio jargon, and underwent marksmanship training using "super soaker"-type water guns. Each child received a personalized visitor badge, marksmanship certificate and water gun.

The public affairs section held a mock press conference and digital videoconference where the children, divided into separate rooms, took turns introducing themselves on screen.

The political and economic sections discussed political and economic topics,

including how a bill is passed in Pakistan's legislature and how to conserve water and electricity to help alleviate Pakistan's drinking water and electrical shortages.

For lunch, attendees dined on pizza and cake. They then spent time in their parents' offices and later joined in a group photo with Consul General Carmela Conroy.



Pakistan

Regional Security Officer Bill Wommack shows attendees the protective gear used by Bureau of Diplomatic Security agents.





Combined Federal Campaign Begins This Month

During the current economic recession, charities that support those in need are struggling to support such groups as Haitian earthquake survivors and Pakistani flood victims, and to provide meals and education for families in our own communities. Federal employees can make a difference this fall by supporting the charities of their choosing through the Combined Federal Campaign, which kicks off October 4 in the Harry S Truman Building.

The annual campaign reflects the collective generosity and compassion of federal employees. And now it is easier to participate using online tools and credit card donations. Donors can support more than 4,000 nonprofit organizations, including schools and charitable groups, each of which has a unique number in the CFC's 2010 Catalog of Caring, available at www.cfcnc.org. Employees can give to one or more of the organizations in the catalog through a lump-sum donation or a payroll deduction.

Each year, volunteers help coordinate the campaign, which runs through mid-December. Employees can also participate in bureau and office fund-raisers, such as last year's Fun Run. In the 2009 campaign, the Department raised roughly \$2.2 million from more than 2,000 donors. This year it hopes to increase employee participation.

The Department's CFC Coordinator, Judy Ikels, said all employees are urged to participate. Directing her comments at new employees, she said, "We are anxious to demonstrate our culture of sharing and invite them to participate at whatever level they can. The strength of our community is measured in part by our compassion for others."

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, honorary chair of the CFC's national capital area campaign, has regularly endorsed CFC giving. Noting the challenges charities face in the current economic climate, she said in November that "By making a contribution to the CFC you're giving charitable organizations the resources they need to help make lasting progress against these and other challenges."



DS Participates in National Night Out

The Bureau of Diplomatic Security brought an entire diplomatic motorcade to a recreation center in Northeast Washington, D.C., to celebrate the annual National Night Out in August.

Motorcades are a familiar sight in Washington, but families and children at the event enjoyed a rare opportunity for a close-up look and a chance to meet the men and women behind the dark sunglasses and learn about the DS role in protecting U.S. interests worldwide.

"The face of Diplomatic Security is people just like you and me," DS Assistant Director for Domestic Operations Barry Moore told the crowd.

National Night Out is a national evening event involving anti-crime activities that brings together citizens, police, firefighters, civic groups, businesses, neighborhood organizations and local officials to strengthen community-law enforcement partnerships.

At top, Diplomatic Security Service Special Agent Amanda Austensen shows how to turn on the lights and sirens in a DS armored Ford Explorer, while below DSS Supervisory Special Agent Christopher Tremann helps a youngster try on body armor.

Social Skills

Looking for more news and information?
Follow us through our social media sites:



Facebook
www.facebook.com/statemagazine

Twitter
www.twitter.com/statemag

