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October 2016

MAGAZINE

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Georgia

Building Capacity and Reinforcing Security



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An evening view of Rio de Janeiro from atop Pão de Açúcar (Sugarloaf Mountain).

Photo by sama093



City traffic near the main rail station in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Photo by BriYYZ



On the cover

Sitting at the confluence of the Aragvi and Mtkvari rivers, Mtskheta is home to several of Georgia's most important religious monuments.

Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco

STATE MAGAZINE



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Deadlines

**The submission deadline for the December issue is October 20.
The deadline for the January issue is November 20.**

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Col. Sandra Mora of the Colombian National Police's Human Rights Office poses with Special Envoy Randy Berry in Bogotá.

Photo by Sandra Mora

Embassy Hosts LGBTI Special Envoy

The U.S. Embassy in Bogotá welcomed Special Envoy for the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) persons Randy Berry to Bogotá July 15–16 to recognize Colombia's advances on LGBTI rights and identify opportunities for progress.

Berry led a roundtable discussion with representatives from six LGBTI civil society organizations, who spoke about important legal gains and concerns about police violence, regional disparities and the slow implementation of legal changes. He told the media of his conversation with the mother of a 16-year-old who committed suicide in 2014 following discrimination by school administrators for being gay, saying it's difficult “as a parent, to understand that discrimination and violence and disapproval is so powerful that you have young people who think they have no hope but to end their lives.”

Berry later met with the Colombian LGBTI Chamber of Commerce, to which the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor recently awarded a grant of \$28,956 to develop an online hiring platform and workshops to improve hiring and retention of LGBTI employees.

Meeting with government officials, Berry praised Colombia's pursuit of LGBTI rights and said he sees leadership on LGBTI issues shifting from Europe to Latin America, with Colombia at the forefront. He also praised the work of Col. Sandra Mora of the Colombian National Police, who detailed her decade-plus work to advance LGBTI protections and recognition as a lesbian police officer. ■





National Cyber Security
Awareness Month



The month's logo emphasizes the shared role in security.

Department Highlights Cyber Security Awareness Month

October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month (NCSAM), which this year has the theme “Our Shared Responsibility,” referring to the Internet as a shared resource and its security as a shared responsibility. Throughout NCSAM, the Department’s Information Assurance Directorate, Office of Cyber Security and the Diplomatic Security Training Center will engage in digital activities in line with NCSAM’s theme. The month’s weekly topics are, in order:

- Everyday Steps Toward Online Safety
- Creating a Culture of Cybersecurity in the Workplace
- Recognizing and Combating Cybercrime
- Our Continuously Connected Lives
- Building Resilience in Critical Infrastructure

Al Bowden, acting chief information security officer, said he hopes all employees will use the month to “consider how you ensure that the Department’s information is protected and kept secure each day you work. Then, go a step further and think about your personal information and how you protect it every day at work and at home.”

More information on cybersecurity awareness is available on the Our Shared Responsibility website. [■](#)





Javier Lopez Videla, left, and Hugo Lopez Videla, his father, examine the personal documents of G.E. Church before sending them to Brown University. *State Department Photo*

LES Has Connection to Explorer

The family history of Locally Employed Staff member Javier Lopez Videla, law enforcement and counternarcotics advisor at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz, includes a great-great-great grandmother who fell in love with Col. George Earl Church, an American engineer and explorer who had come to Bolivia to oversee construction of a railroad in the 1870s. Church left the country without knowing this woman was pregnant, but on learning of his daughter years later, he struck up a written correspondence with her that spanned 18 years.

This September, Videla and his family donated more than 50 of Church's letters, along with family photographs, to the George Earl Church Collection at Brown University. The 3,500-volume archive contains monographs, correspondence, newspaper clippings, maps and photographs that Church amassed during his travels in Latin America.

"We read about Colonel Church but it's never mentioned that he left a family behind in South America. We hope to help amend his history and to have something more personal in his archives," said Videla. ■





The Howard University Gospel Choir performs at the *Ánima* school.
Photo by Juan Francisco Casal

Gospel Choir Wows Uruguayans

In July, the Howard University Gospel Choir traveled to Uruguay to participate in the country's first Afro-Uruguayan history month. The U.S. Embassy in Montevideo supported Uruguay in this celebration by inviting the choir, an icon of American music and African-American culture, and sharing this aspect of our common heritage.

The choir performed at the presidential palace in Montevideo for the opening of the month's festivities, sponsored by the ministry of social development. It also performed before an overflow crowd at the AGADU Theater together with an Afro-Uruguayan choir. Their performance combined English and Spanish, African-American and Afro-Latin rhythms, and traditional candombe drums with gospel singing. The two choirs closed out the evening by joining together for an impromptu musical exchange.

The choir also visited local charter schools in economically disadvantaged communities to sing and interact with students and their families.

"This was a unique experience for us," said Howard's choirmaster Reginald Golden, whose singers tour a dozen or more countries every year. "Wherever we go, we find audiences' affinity to gospel music exhilarating."

The program reflected the post's Memorandum of Understanding with the government of Uruguay to help support efforts of social inclusion in that country. Many of these efforts center on the Afro-Uruguayan community, the country's largest minority group, which suffers from low rates of economic and academic success. In the past year, the embassy has focused on capacity building for Afro-Uruguayan organizations by providing U.S. experts to consult with government and civil society on fighting discrimination. ■

Direct from the D.G.

ARNOLD CHACON
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE



The Realities of Today's Foreign Service

As part of our Conversations on Leadership podcast series, I recently hosted a conversation with AFSA President Barbara Stephenson on Foreign Service life today. Ambassador Stephenson and I entered the Foreign Service in the 1980s during the waning days of the Cold War. While the United States then faced the threat of nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union, it was, in some ways, a simpler time. Though diplomacy is still what we do, today's challenges—everything from climate change to failing states—require us to be more nimble and operational than we were even a generation ago.

In the 15 years since 9/11, this has entailed service in conflict areas and high-threat posts, being separated from family for one or more tours and serving multiple hardship tours. I'm proud to say our people have never shied away from meeting the needs of the Service even when it has meant great sacrifice. Department leaders have a responsibility to be open about expectations while working to balance the needs of the individual and those of the Service.

The data tells part of the story: In 2001, about 1 percent of Foreign Service positions overseas were unaccompanied. Today, it's 7 percent. A Foreign Service employee serving in 2001 could expect to serve about four months at an unaccompanied post during a 25-year career. In 2016, the same employee can expect to serve 21 months during the span of a normal career. The number of hardship posts has likewise increased. Today, 58 percent of Foreign Service employees overseas are serving at hardship posts.

This reflects a shift in the needs of the Service in a changing world. As the secretary often says, we're engaged in more places, on more issues, in more ways than at any time in our history. This means we're going to be in places too dangerous for families. Though we work to provide our people options to keep families together, we know these efforts can't address every situation; employees at times will be called upon to make hard choices.

Worldwide availability and Service need are bedrock Foreign Service principles. But we don't take these tenets for granted. We recognize the contributions of employees who serve at priority staffing posts and unaccompanied and hardship posts through appropriate incentives. These are complex, challenging assignments necessary to promote our national interests but also offering opportunities to develop invaluable leadership, crisis management and interpersonal skills while having an impact.

As the father of three Millennial-generation children, I've been struck by the amount of ink devoted to stories about Millennials' supposed aversion to discomfort and sacrifice. That's not what I've witnessed. As I travel to our missions overseas, I'm inspired by the first- and second-tour officers I meet. They want to take on the hard challenges.

Our Foreign Service employees have elected to lead a life of service. Public service and the Foreign Service in particular asks a lot of us. In return, we get the privilege of representing the United States, the chance to advance American interests and values, and to make a difference. I have no doubt we'll meet today's and tomorrow's challenges with the same commitment and steadfastness of previous generations. The times have changed but our principles have not. ■

Arnold A. Chacon

Global Engagement

Center seeks to counter terror groups

By Meagen LaGraffe, chief of staff, Global Engagement Center

The terrorist group ISIL uses social media with a quantity and effect that differ from those of other such groups. Its hateful, nihilistic and violent messages daily seek to recruit fighters and inspire violence by preying on weak individuals online. Its messages may not be the most sophisticated, but nonetheless they ricochet around the globe.

The Global Engagement Center, a new interagency organization housed at the Department of State, is pulling together some of the best minds and operators from inside and outside government to tackle this problem. Established by a March 2016 presidential executive order, the Center coordinates U.S. counterterrorism messaging to foreign audiences. Our goal is to expose ISIL's true nature, diminishing its influence and decreasing its allure to potential recruits and sympathizers.

To do that, we're building an innovative and agile organization, much like a tech startup, and pursuing a fundamentally different strategy from our predecessor, the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications. For example, our partner-driven approach means we're empowering credible voices around the world to counter ISIL's messaging directly. When the family members of ISIL fighters speak out against violence, we've found their messages to be particularly effective. The center is also highlighting the stories of ISIL defectors, those who left to fight in Syria and Iraq and became so disillusioned by the reality of ISIL that they escaped and are now willing to speak out to expose ISIL's hypocrisy.



Meagen LaGraffe is chief of staff of the Global Engagement Center.

State Department photo

Confronting violent extremist messaging is a long-term effort that will continue to see ups and downs. But if we work innovatively across the government and build an agile organization that can adapt and leverage the best and brightest of the public and private sector, I'm confident we'll rise to the challenge. More information is available at www.state.gov/r/gec. ■



Global Engagement Center



Special Envoy Michael Lumpkin is coordinator of the Global Engagement Center. *State Department photo*

We're also making decisions based on the analysis of data and using the latest technologies to better understand online radicalization dynamics. We are using the Quantitative Crisis Response system from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and such Silicon Valley companies as Crimson Hexagon that enable us to track trends on social media, track what groups are saying and reading, and use that information to help tailor our partners' outgoing messages/campaigns. These tools also help identify at-risk populations.

Human talent is still our most important resource, and as chief of staff I oversee a team of roughly 70 information warfare specialists, technical experts, data scientists, and public diplomacy practitioners. Our staff is drawn from both the Civil Service and Foreign Service, experts pulled from the private sector on special hiring authorities, and detailees from the across the interagency, including the Department of Defense, Homeland Security (DHS) and the intelligence community.

Our private sector talent brings unique perspectives on tackling this problem set, and our interagency detailees maintain critical lines of communication with their home offices. Fundamentally, this collaboration and our use of technology are producing a more holistic strategy in the information space. As our detailee from DHS recently said, the center "feels like a tech startup that's landed in government. Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) messaging is an enormous challenge, but we are finally leveraging the talent and technology needed to win this fight."





Why Not Use Mediation to Resolve EEO Matters?

Workplace conflict exists in every organization and sometimes may involve allegations of discrimination protected under Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws. People are often initially uneasy with the idea of using mediation, a form of alternate dispute resolution (ADR), to resolve an EEO allegation because they don't know what it entails. The term itself doesn't exactly capture the true essence of the process—which is actually a proactive dialogue that can restore trust and allow the parties to participate in designing their own outcomes.

October 20, 2016, is Conflict Resolution Day. This is a good time to address some common concerns with actual facts about the EEO mediation process.

1. Concern: My supervisor will never admit that he or she has done anything wrong or discriminatory.

Fact: Third-party neutrals serving as mediators do not decide the merits of a case. They facilitate effective communication, allowing the parties to work toward a mutually acceptable result. The mediator helps the parties jointly explore and reconcile their differences, rather than assigning blame.

2. Concern: Management probably won't participate.

Fact: Management is required to attend. Most importantly, someone with authority to resolve matters on behalf of the bureau involved must be present.

3. Concern: EEO mediation won't change anything. Management knows what's been going on and hasn't done anything about it yet.

Fact: The personal and participative approach of mediation sets the stage for creative, workable solutions to emerge. Last year, more than 70 percent of the cases that were mediated were resolved. The settlement agreements reached by the parties involved are binding contracts.

4. Concern: I will have to be present alone to discuss my EEO issue with others who might believe the awful things that have been said about me.

Fact: You have the right to bring a designated representative to the mediation session, and that can include a friend, spouse or lawyer.

5. Concern: Whatever I say during the process could be used against me later on.

Fact: The ADR process is confidential. The participants sign an agreement not to divulge what is said during the mediation.

6. Concern: I know I was discriminated against, so I'm better off having my day before an EEO administrative judge.

Fact: It can take a long time to get a case before an EEO administrative judge; sometimes, it takes years, and the wait can be emotionally and financially costly. There is nothing to lose by trying mediation. If you are unable to achieve a win-win result through mediation, you can continue to pursue your EEO complaint.

In closing, I'd like to share with you what someone recently told us after observing one of the Department's mediations: "Watching both sides come together, communicate honestly and openly and demonstrate a genuine interest in repairing their relationship was inspiring. It was a great reminder that the process was intended to be, and can be restorative."

That's the kind of win-win facilitated through mediation in the Department's EEO ADR program. It's available to you, should you need it. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CONVERSATIONS ON LEADERSHIP

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Director General Arnold Chacon and Ambassador Kristie Kenney



President of the American Foreign Service Association Barbara Stevenson and Director General of the Foreign Service Arnold Chacon discuss leadership.

Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco



STEAM Power

Camp helps girls gain technology futures

By Aldrinana Leung, global partnerships advisor, and Alice Cosgrove, program analyst, Secretary's Office of Global Partnerships



On the microscope she constructed, a WiSci camper aligns a flower petal with her cell phone. Photo by Aldrinana Leung

State Magazine | OCTOBER 2016

Over the next 10 years, Latin America will need 1.2 million software developers—a great opportunity for adolescent girls. That was the message nearly 100 girls heard at the recent **Women in Science (WiSci) Camp in Lima, Peru**. Hailing from Peru, Mexico, Chile and the United States, the campers spent two weeks exploring opportunities that could lead to careers in science, technology, engineering, art and design, and math (STEAM).

This year's camp was part of a broader **U.S.-led initiative through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)** forum to enhance women's participation and advancement in STEAM fields in the 21 APEC economies. It also reflected the Department's implementation of the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls.

Key partners in the camp's leading hands-on activities were Intel Corp., whose trainers helped campers build heart rate monitors, digital music players and robotic cars, and Google, which enhanced the youths' ability to do computer coding. With that, the girls created Android applications, including one that helps those with difficulties speaking by using text-to-speech technology. Video of campers demonstrating their projects was posted online.

The camp also exposed attendees to such other STEAM topics as microbiology, and mineral engineering, design thinking and 3D printing. Campers constructed microscopes and electrical circuits and debated policy negotiations on renewable energy, a **discussion later placed on the Department's blog**. Representatives of Girl Up, a U.N. Foundation initiative on empowering young women, and camp counselors led activities on sustainable development, advocacy and public speaking—activities that encouraged the campers to hone their leadership skills.

In one eye-opening lesson, Technovation Corp. trainers helped participants create their own personal websites; a camper later said that, though a frequent user of websites and apps, she had never thought about what went into a site's production. Other campers were excited to learn about human-centered design to improve effectiveness of products and services.



Participants cheer at the start of the WiSci 2016 camp. Photo by Aldrinana Leung

Mentorship was a key component, and daily interactions between the campers, facilitators and representatives from various STEAM organizations encouraged career exploration. As most mentors were female, the campers said they were relatable role models. By the end of camp, 88 percent of campers said they had a very good understanding of career opportunities in STEAM—just 37 percent said they did before the camp.

On two excursions to Lima, campers explored the technology behind the operations of the National Theater and **donned safety gear to test potato samples for blight and to examine cryopreservation at the International Potato Center**.

In the camp's final days, participants identified social, environmental and other development challenges they see as important and formed groups to apply their STEAM skills to solutions. Partner organizations' representatives provided advice, and the girls identified a wide range of issues to tackle, from programing sensors for water and air sanitation to apps that aim to prevent alcohol-related sexual assault.



Campers work with a Google instructor on programming an Android app. Photo by Aldrinana Leung

Several camp projects focused on assistive technologies. One group programmed braille to appear on a cell phone case to allow the visually impaired to read messages without sound. A one-stop health clinic offered a low-cost blood analyzer and software whose questions could help with diagnoses. One group developed Walking on Wheels, a geolocation-based app that allows users to rate buildings on accessibility and request help when needed.

A girl named Hannia from Queretaro, Mexico, said she learned “amazing things,” and added, “Science needs to be applied in education, in the home, in fights for freedom, in everything no matter how small or simple. Science can change the world in thousands of ways.”

For many campers, this was their first time away from home. At the camp, where they lived in close quarters, the girls became a tight-knit community with family-like groupings, which promoted learning about others' cultures, backgrounds and interests. During the Chilean culture night, campers showcased the variations in traditions and landscapes across their regions. The Mexican campers shared not only their favorite foods and historic sites, but also provided an overview of social challenges facing their country.



Team Tecladaille displays its final project, a proposed smartphone app to simulate braille for visually impaired users. Photo by Johanna Johnson

“Not only has WiSci provided me with an amazing and innovative education, it has also helped me form friendships that I will forever cherish,” said Jasmin, a camper from Los Angeles. “This experience has helped me find a different meaning of family.”

The WiSci camp is one of the Department's many programs for adolescent girls and to promote their involvement in STEM careers. Part of a **U.S.-led initiative to promote women in STEM**, the camp reflects the Department's implementation of the **U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls** and its need for public-private partnerships. By helping adolescent girls reach their full potential, the effort also expands the potential of communities, economies and countries.

“The world needs all perspectives at the table, from research and education to invention and policy decisions,” said Cheri Varnadoe, the WiSci camp director. “This includes the minds and hearts of women who are underrepresented in STEAM and who tend to reinvest in their communities at higher rates than men. In two short weeks, the girls gained the confidence and a strong skills foundation to help them pursue careers and be catalysts in STEAM.”

More than 100 trainers and guest mentors visited the camp, just part of the many organizations wanting to promote STEAM to adolescent girls. Each partner brought its best to the table and the collaboration resulted in an experience and outcomes stronger than what any organization could achieve solo.

The Department's participation was led by the Secretary's Office of Global Partnerships (S/GP), the Office of the Science and Technology Adviser (E/STAS) and the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI). The three contributed expertise on managing public-private partnerships, tapped industry connections across a range of STEAM fields and **aligned the camp with Department strategies on adolescent girls and women's economic empowerment**. S/GWI and the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP) will share what they learned in managing the WiSci camp with other nations to encourage additional STEAM camps for girls throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

More information on the 2016 WiSci camp is available at www.girlup.org/wisci/apec-2016. Follow the camp on social media with **#WiSci2016**, view more photos on **Flickr** and read blogs written by the campers on the **Huffington Post blog series**. □



Peruvian participants share their national spirit and traditions during a culture night at the camp. Photo by Aldrinana Leung



STEM Careers for Women Endorsed

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Dr. Biden speaks at the first graduation of a Girls Can Code class in Addis Ababa July 17.

Photo by Embassy Addis Ababa

During her July 16-18 visit to Addis Ababa, Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, spoke about girls' education and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) careers for women at the John C. Robinson American Center at Ethiopia's National Archives and Library Agency (NALA).

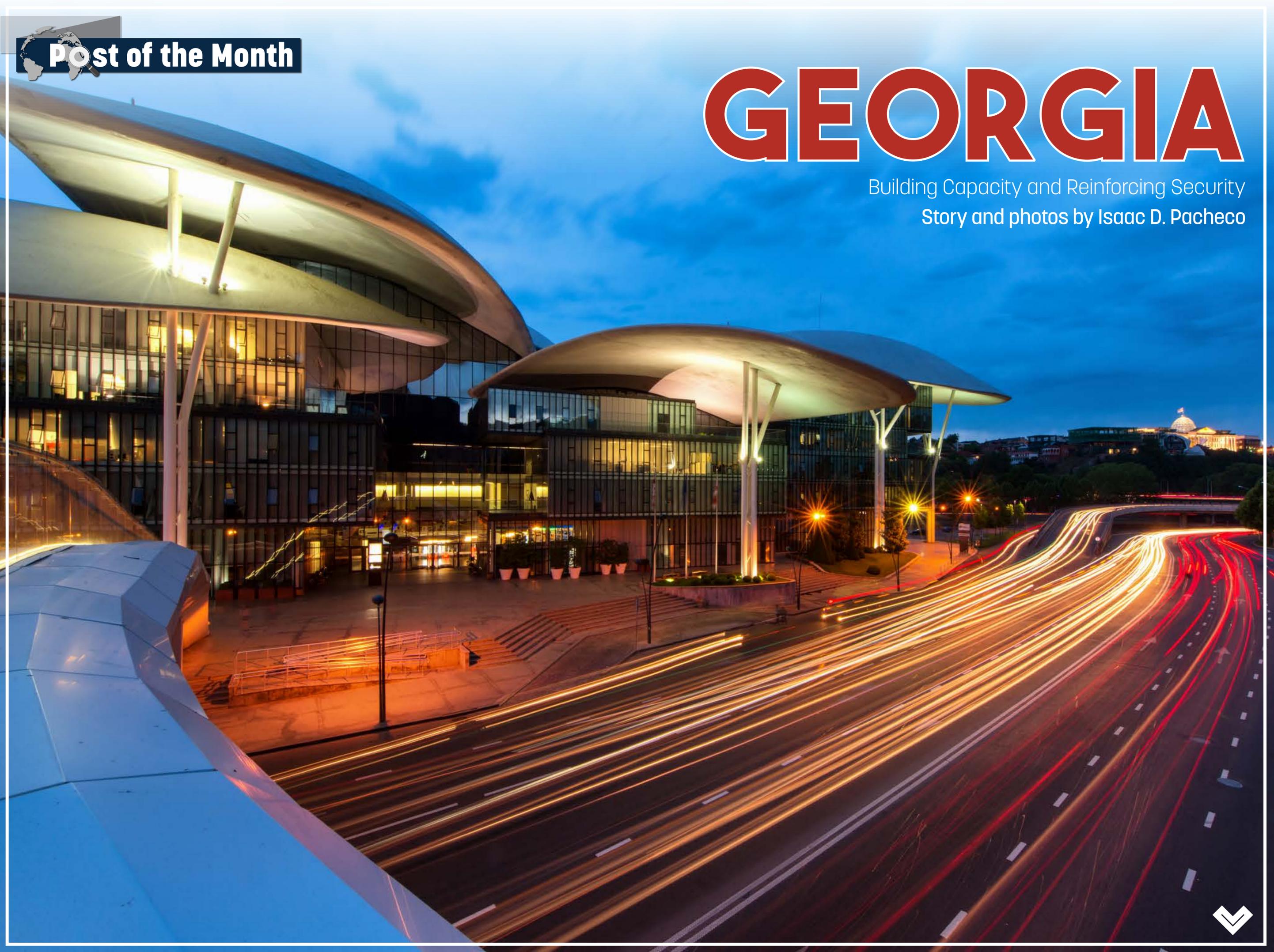
She also presided over the graduation of a class from the Girls Can Code (GCC) project, a nine-month training for high school girls from public schools. The girls learn computer coding and technology, and life and leadership skills; the project is funded through the Secretary's Offices of Global Partnerships and Global Women's Issues and aims to empower and inspire young girls to pursue STEM careers.

Biden told graduates of the crucial role played by educated women in increasing economic output and enriching local communities. In Ethiopia, fewer than 20 percent of university STEM graduates are female. She also noted U.S. efforts to promote education around the world, with special emphasis on STEM curriculums, and later toured examples of GCC computer projects. ▣



GEORGIA

Building Capacity and Reinforcing Security
Story and photos by Isaac D. Pacheco



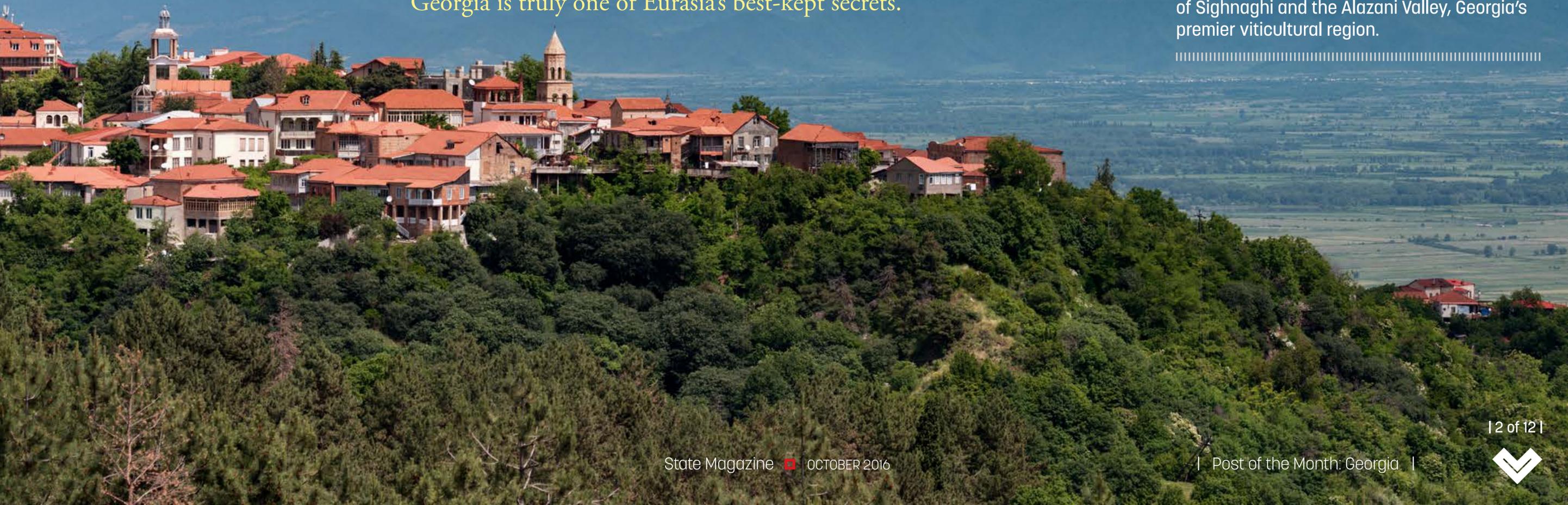
Opening Spread: Traffic whizzes past Tbilisi Public Service Hall at dusk. The modernist structure is sometimes referred to as the “Mushroom Building” by locals.

|||||

The imposing snow-capped peaks of the Caucasus Mountains dominate the Georgian landscape, creating a formidable natural boundary between Georgia and its northern neighbor, Russia, and serving as a symbolic geopolitical delineator between Eastern Europe and Western Asia. To the southeast, the Caucasus ranges transition into verdant hillsides dotted with grazing livestock and lush valleys where grape vines soak in sunshine and sea breezes in one of the world’s oldest wine-making regions. To the west, Georgia’s Black Sea coastline attracts vacationers with its stunning beaches and popular resorts, and its seaports provide important access to international markets. Bordering Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan, southern Georgia boasts an eclectic blend of European, Asian and Middle Eastern cultural influences and serves as a trade portal between the three continents. With its diverse geography, unique language, vibrant culture and growing economy, Georgia is truly one of Eurasia’s best-kept secrets.

A scenic overlook provides a panoramic view of Signaghi and the Alazani Valley, Georgia’s premier viticultural region.

|||||



“Living here is kind of like living in Colorado,” said K. G. Moore, former deputy chief of the political/economic section at the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi. “You’ve got skiing, you’ve got mountains all around and there are a lot of outdoor activities. It has this 8,000-year-old culture of wine making and is sitting really at the crossroads of human civilization. There are a lot of interesting places to visit, great food, and overall, it’s a very welcoming place.”

Despite its beauty and cultural wealth, Georgia has remained relatively anonymous to tourists. However, the country’s strategic location has long made it a popular (and often contested) hub for commerce and trade throughout the region. After the fall of the Russian Empire in the early 20th century, Georgia briefly became an independent nation before being invaded by the Bolsheviks and spending seven decades under Soviet control. During this period of occupation, Georgia’s rich agricultural sector served as one of the primary breadbaskets for the U.S.S.R. The nation regained its independence in 1991 following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

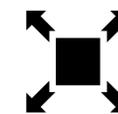
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The snow-capped Caucasus Mountains rise up behind a monastery near Kvesheti.



In 2003, the peaceful Rose Revolution brought about sweeping governmental reforms and a definitive end to Soviet-style leadership. The transition of power resulted in a democratically elected government and improved quality of life for all citizens, but also increased political tensions with Russia. The strained relationship reached a breaking point during the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, during which Russian forces occupied the two formerly autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, displacing nearly 200,000 residents and leading Georgia to sever diplomatic ties with Russia.

Despite its turbulent recent history, Georgia has become an outpost of stability in the Transcaucasia region. Georgians have worked with international organizations to improve the nation's infrastructure and bolster rule of law, while developing closer economic ties with Europe as part of a broader effort to eventually join the European Union. Georgia has also established strategic partnerships with the United States and other NATO members based on shared regional security interests.

“There’s a very important principle here, which is the right of all states to make their own sovereign decisions on security arrangements,” said U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Ian Kelly. “The Georgian government and the vast majority of the Georgian people have expressed the desire to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic community, to join the EU and NATO, so we support them in that.”



TAP image
to enlarge





U.S. Army Soldiers stand in formation during the closing ceremony for the Noble Partner multilateral military training exercise near Tbilisi. [\[Close\]](#)


TAP image
to enlarge



Post of the Month

Soldiers evacuate a role-player from a UH-1 Huey helicopter during the Noble Partner training exercise with Georgian military troops. [Close]



TAP image to enlarge

Post of the Month

U.S. Army tank crew members park an M1 Abrams main battle tank at the completion of Noble Partner 2016 training exercises.
[Close]



TAP to enlarge





Georgia was the largest per capita, non-NATO contributor to the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom, and has remained the largest non-NATO contributor to NATO operations there. The massive Noble Partner military exercise held near Tbilisi each year is one of several annual training events where Georgian military, U.S. Armed Forces and other NATO forces work together to bolster communications and interoperability. Training scenarios like these not only enhance participants' strategic partnerships, but also serve as practical deterrents to outside aggression.

"The U.S. is Georgia's most important partner in terms of stability and peace and security," said Moore. "Russia is really asserting itself in the region, both by occupying 20 percent of Georgia's territory, and through propaganda. They're using a lot of soft power here. The U.S. presence, both security and economic, demonstrates not just to Georgia, but to the region, that we're continuing to embrace them strongly."

A panoramic shot from the Statue of King Vakhtang Gorgasali shows Tbilisi's historic Old City across the Mtkvari River.



[Click to watch video](#)





A scientist conducts research in a laboratory at the U.S.-funded Richard G. Lugar Center for Public and Animal Health Research near Tbilisi, which promotes human and animal health and biosafety.



Post of the Month

Ambassador Kelly and his team make up a cadre of U.S. diplomats who work directly with Georgia's leaders and international partners to provide insight and assistance as the nation pursues Euro-Atlantic integration. Embassy Tbilisi's 156 Americans and hundreds of Locally Employed staff accomplish this mission by focusing on four outreach areas: democracy, security, economy and people-to-people engagement.

"The great bulk of our bilateral assistance, both developmental assistance and security assistance, is designed to make Georgia ready to join the EU and NATO when that time comes. We also are very supportive of Georgia's efforts to reform itself," said Ambassador Kelly. "Georgia is farther along than most other states in this region in terms of free media, multiparty parliamentary democracy and a free-market economy, and I think that's all reflected in the size of our program here. As we look at the region, particularly the post-Soviet region, it's important that there be a virtuous counter-model to the more authoritarian model of government you see all around. We believe that the United States has a real stake in Georgia's success."

One way the United States has demonstrated its commitment to Georgia's continued success is by contributing more than \$1.5 billion since 1992 in assistance via USAID. USAID's engagement has evolved from primarily providing humanitarian aid, during the country's fractious civil wars in the 1990s, to engaging in a more traditional development program aimed at strengthening Georgia's economy and democratic institutions.



Children in Upureti gather in front of the U.S. Embassy Tbilisi-sponsored bookmobile, which travels around the country providing library services to displaced residents.



Teenagers ride bikes down the main road in Upureti, a settlement for some of the Georgians displaced by Russian occupation of South Ossetia.



Post of the Month

Georgian cuisine is one of the nation's best-kept secrets, and includes traditional dishes like khachapuri (a type of cheese-stuffed bread), tomato-cucumber salad with cilantro and walnut dressing and Saperavi (one of several dry red wines originating in Kakheti).





Top to bottom: A shepherd guides his flock across a roadway in Aragvi; a man hawks souvenirs from the hood of his car at the Jvari Monastery; a merchant sells fresh produce at a farmers' market in Sighnaghi.



In the wake of the Russo-Georgian War, USAID rebuilt energy infrastructure, pipelines, electricity stations, irrigation systems and housing for internally displaced persons (IDPs). The agency continues to work with communities along the administrative boundary lines with the occupied regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, providing small-business development grants and training for projects primarily focused on agribusiness.

“We are very supportive and we are trying to help Georgia elevate its game so that it can take advantage of export opportunities to the EU,” said Thomas Morris, USAID Georgia’s acting mission director. “REAP (Restoring Efficiency to Agriculture Production) is a 5-year, \$20 million project where we’re working with agribusinesses throughout Georgia to help them improve the standards of their production so that they can export, make profits and create jobs. Georgia is such a fertile country, and there’s really a lot of need, so that’s why it’s a large component of our program.”

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) has also played a large role in Georgia’s transformation, having engaged in two separate compacts in the past decade. The first, a \$383.3 million infrastructure development campaign, completed in 2011, enhanced regional trade and business opportunities by rehabilitating a 224-kilometer stretch of the primary trade road between Tbilisi and southern Georgia. The five-year campaign also funded repairs for a vital north-south natural gas pipeline and water service improvement projects in five cities. The second compact, a \$140 million initiative, launched in 2014, and is aimed at bridging the gap between education and economic development through STEM education.





A procession of sheep winds its way around a hillside leading to fertile pastures in Kazbegi.

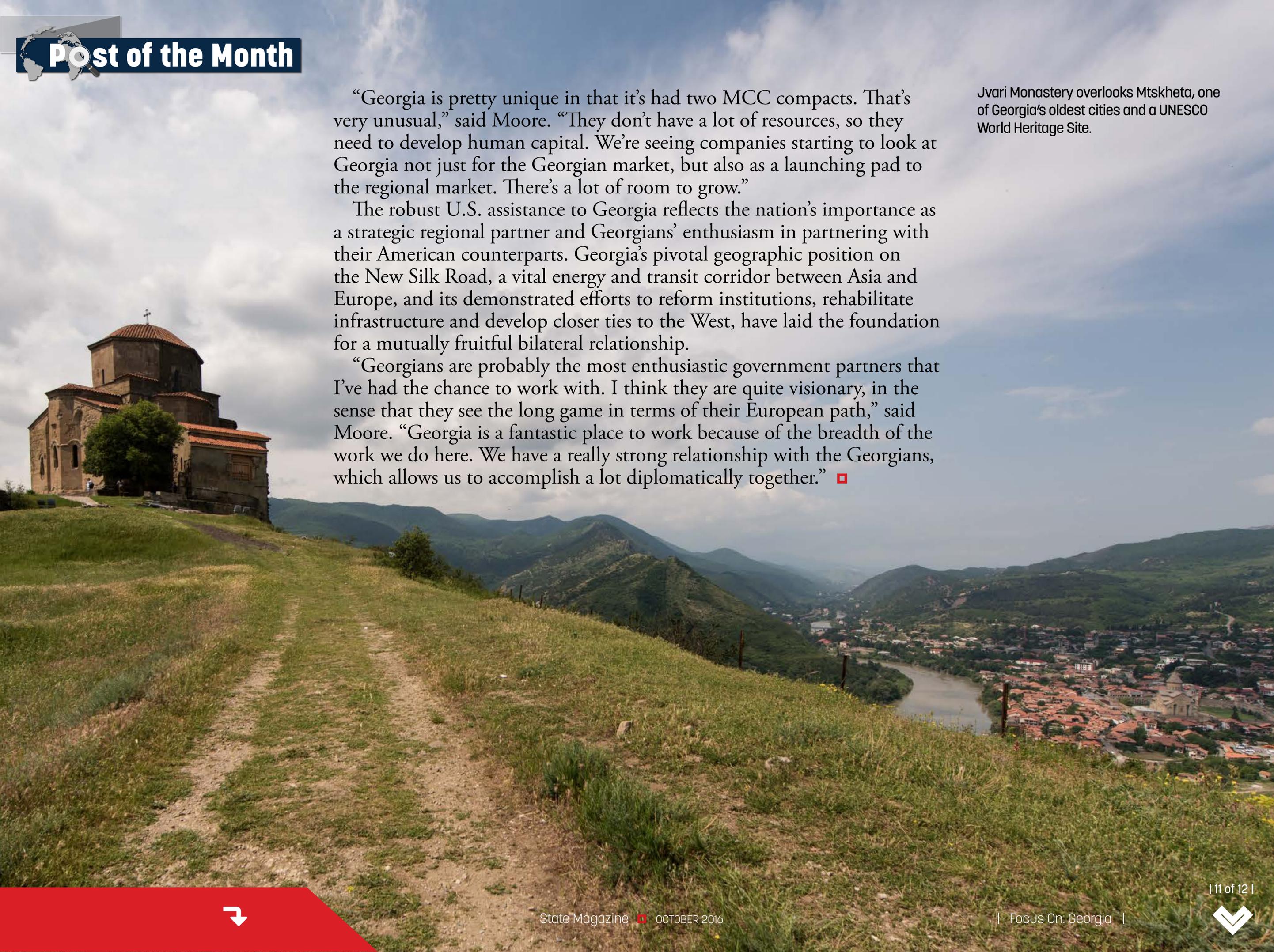


“Georgia is pretty unique in that it’s had two MCC compacts. That’s very unusual,” said Moore. “They don’t have a lot of resources, so they need to develop human capital. We’re seeing companies starting to look at Georgia not just for the Georgian market, but also as a launching pad to the regional market. There’s a lot of room to grow.”

The robust U.S. assistance to Georgia reflects the nation’s importance as a strategic regional partner and Georgians’ enthusiasm in partnering with their American counterparts. Georgia’s pivotal geographic position on the New Silk Road, a vital energy and transit corridor between Asia and Europe, and its demonstrated efforts to reform institutions, rehabilitate infrastructure and develop closer ties to the West, have laid the foundation for a mutually fruitful bilateral relationship.

“Georgians are probably the most enthusiastic government partners that I’ve had the chance to work with. I think they are quite visionary, in the sense that they see the long game in terms of their European path,” said Moore. “Georgia is a fantastic place to work because of the breadth of the work we do here. We have a really strong relationship with the Georgians, which allows us to accomplish a lot diplomatically together.” ■

Jvari Monastery overlooks Mtskheta, one of Georgia’s oldest cities and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Post of the Month

At a Glance

Georgia

Capital:
Tbilisi

Government Type:
Semi-presidential republic

Area:
69,700 sq km

Population:
4,931,226

Major urban areas:
Tbilisi 1.147 million

Ethnic groups:
Georgian 83.8%, Azeri 6.5%, Armenian 5.7%, Russian 1.5%, other 2.5%

Languages:
Georgian (official) 71%, Russian 9%, Armenian 7%, Azeri 6%, other 7% note: Abkhaz is the official language in Abkhazia

Religions:
Orthodox Christian (official) 83.9%, Muslim 9.9%, Armenian-Gregorian 3.9%, Catholic 0.8%, other 0.8%, none 0.7%

Exports (commodities): vehicles, ferro-alloys, fertilizers, nuts, scrap metal, gold, copper ores

Export partners:
Azerbaijan 10.9%, Bulgaria 9.7%, Turkey 8.4%, Armenia 8.2%, Russia 7.4%, China 5.7%, U.S. 4.7%, Uzbekistan 4.4%



Imports: fuels, vehicles, machinery and parts, grain and other foods, pharmaceuticals

Import partners: Turkey 17.2%, Russia 8.1%, China 7.6%, Azerbaijan 7%, Ireland 5.9%, Ukraine 5.9%, Germany 5.6%

Currency: Georgian lari
Internet country code: .ge

* The CIA World Factbook

Olympic Gold

Mission's preparedness met citizens' needs

By Ronald Rhinehart, consular officer, U.S. Consulate General in Rio de Janeiro

Every four years, the Olympic and Paralympic Games place extraordinary demands on U.S. Missions in the host countries. The 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics—spanning 17 days, followed two weeks later by the Paralympics, spanning 12 days—was no exception. The games were expected to attract approximately 100,000–200,000 U.S. visitors during August and September, and involved venues throughout the Rio area and soccer matches in five other Brazilian cities.

Complicating this was the fact that Brazil was also experiencing an economic and political crisis, a far-reaching corruption scandal, an ongoing Zika epidemic and impeachment of its president. Recent terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States also contributed to the mission's concern.

Two years before the games began, Mission Brazil established an Olympic Coordination Office (OCO) at Consulate General Rio for missionwide planning. Ambassador Liliana Ayalde wanted a “whole of mission” approach, with the top priority being the safety and security of American citizens in Brazil.

Mission preparations encompassed an enormous range of activities and interests. Each section and agency had to balance its mission objectives with the need to work collaboratively with each other in support of the games. The OCO and the Olympic Security Coordination (OSC) unit coordinated all aspects of this effort, serving as the principal interlocutors with Rio 2016 organizers, the U.S. Olympic Committee, Brazilian government planners, Brazilian and Olympic security officials, and others, while helping synchronize the overall mission team.

Security planning was a logistically complex matter. As with past Olympic events, the Diplomatic Security (DS) Office of

Protection worked with the mission to establish and staff the OSC unit that offered the full range of needed security. The OSC worked with the mission's regional security offices (RSO) and DS's Office of Protection's Major Events Coordination Unit, to coordinate security planning. The OSC also worked with the country team and mission interagency representatives to identify opportunities to aid and train Brazilian security agencies, and facilitated Brazilian law enforcement visits to security operations at several major U.S. sporting events, including the U.S. Open tennis tournament.

The mission held numerous crisis management exercises (with assistance from the Operations Center, FSI and the Bureau of Public Affairs) that refined its emergency response plans and external relationships. Mission officials also met with Brazilian officials and representatives of more than a dozen foreign missions and co-hosted a barbecue with 10 foreign missions that was attended by more than 100 police officers.

A key aspect of security was the DS-OSC joint 24/7 Joint Operations Center at Consulate Rio for information sharing during the games. The mission provided the center with air conditioning, improved electrical capacity and backup power, digital video conferencing capability, telephones and computer workstations. More than a dozen U.S. agencies' representatives worked at the center, as did Brazilian law enforcement and military

representatives. They were assisted by more than 100 DS agents and support personnel and more than 100 interagency personnel from numerous U.S. agencies.

DS agents were also deployed to act as field liaison officers at competition venues in Rio, U.S. women's soccer competition host cities in Brazil and at Brazilian International Police Cooperation Centers.

These opportunities strengthened the U.S.-Brazilian security relationship and



Screenshots show the smartphone application developed by Mission Brazil.

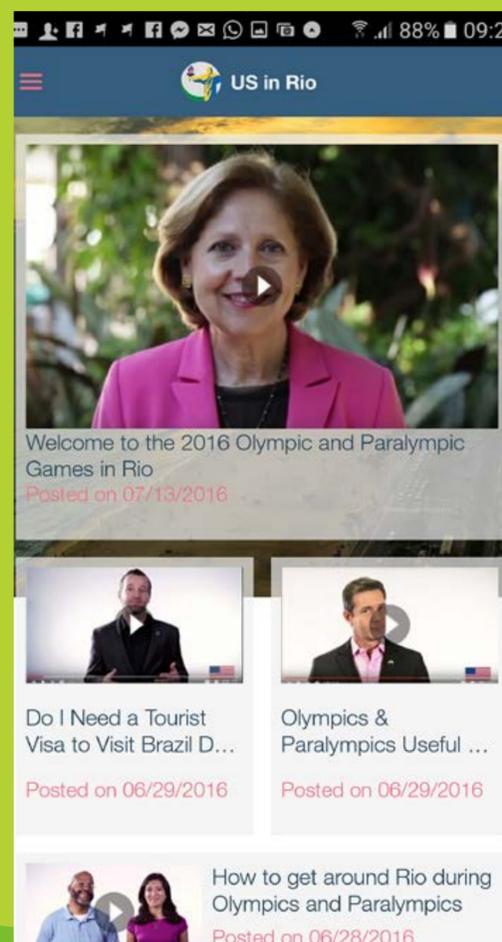


Photo by Mission Brazil



highlighted the strong interagency cooperation among U.S. law enforcement agencies. As the Brazilian armed forces had a significant role in supporting security, the mission's Department of Defense team developed a long-term strategy of active engagements with the Brazilian military that included exchanges of experts and joint training.

At Consulate Rio, the pol/econ team contributed reporting cables initially focused on security cooperation, keeping Washington apprised of Brazilian preparations for Olympic security. The team's cables on health, transportation and venue construction gave context to some of the negative reporting coming from international media.

Meanwhile, the mission public affairs section (PAS) led production of a crisis communications strategy and public and press messaging, sports diplomacy programming and other activities. Its #USinRio social media campaign showed sports empowering youth and encouraged education and English language learning. PAS at Consulate General Rio and the Bureau of International Information Programs developed several videos. One featured U.S. athletes learning about Brazilian culture, another showed U.S. athletes during their test events in Rio and still another had Rio Consul General Jimmy Story and other consuls general in Brazil celebrating the games. The videos are viewable online.

Mission PAS and Consular Team Brazil (CTB) together developed outreach tools to help U.S. citizens get information for a safe and enjoyable visit, including a smartphone app (Android and Apple), a video series in English, a brochure that Delta and American Airlines and Starbucks distributed to their customers, and a #USinRio Games blog (see related story). Officials developed the tools to inform visitors, reduce demand for emergency services and provide a way to reach visitors in the event of a serious accident or security incident. CTB also delivered routine and emergency American Citizen Services (ACS) during the games, with help from Locally Employed staff.

Because consular staff was to be deployed to multiple sporting venues and one million visitors were expected for the games, the mission had to address transportation, housing, facilities, communications and other logistics



A map shows the Games' chief venues.

Map by Olympic Coordination Office

dilemmas. In response, mission sections gained leases for secure offices near the major venues, found lodging for dozens of TDY staff from other Mission Brazil posts and the U.S., and arranged shuttles that could transport multiple shifts of staff between the consulate and the sporting venues daily. To ensure the safety of TDY staff, the Mission RSO prepared briefing materials for them on the security environment in Rio and collaborated with consular subject matter experts brought in from Washington to deliver ACS-specific training.

The 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games challenged Mission Brazil's commitment to serving U.S. citizens, demanding that existing operations be maintained while new resources and solutions be offered. The "whole of mission" approach developed in the two years leading up to the games built upon the mission's relationships and extended its capabilities to new heights. The enhanced coordination and cooperation across the mission with representatives from local and national Brazilian security agencies and the host nation's businesses, policy and civil society communities, will provide an enduring legacy for Mission Brazil. While U.S. visitors to the games were the first beneficiaries of this legacy, those who visit here in the future will find the Mission Brazil team even better prepared to receive them. ■



Visiting the Olympic Park site are, from left, Celina Leyraud Campello, Institutional Relations manager at Empresa Olimpica Municipal; Charles Grover, of the Olympic Coordination Office; Ambassador Liliana Ayalde; Ambassador Agemar Santos, director of Institutional Relations at Rio 2016; Mark Russell, principal commercial officer at the Foreign Commercial Service; and Michael Yoder, consular chief, Consulate General Rio de Janeiro. *Photo by Mission Brazil*

Social Media Reaches American Visitors

By David Fogelson, information officer, U.S. Consulate General Rio de Janeiro

To help U.S. citizens have a safe and enjoyable stay in Brazil, U.S. Mission Brazil developed travel information resources that included an ACS Olympics and Paralympics Web page with information about mission services for citizens and security and travel information, and an ACS Olympics/Paralympics brochure that travelers could print to have ACS information at hand.

PAS also used SMS notifications sent to travelers' phones during their stay. (To sign up, travelers sent a message from their U.S. or local phone number to optinrio@state.gov.) On Twitter, there was @USCitsBrazil, which citizens living and traveling in Brazil could follow. Smartphone users could install the USinRio app, which offered essential information travelers needed to stay safe, plan their journey and contact the mission, if needed.

There were also six American Citizen Olympics/Paralympics videos, including a welcome video from Ambassador Ayalde with tips for an enjoyable and safe visit, and the #USinRio blog, which offered practical and fun details for visitors. On Facebook, the USinRio event let travelers keep up to date while in Brazil; to sign up they just added an "RSVP" when following the event.

Travelers can still keep up with Mission Brazil and Consulate General Rio de Janeiro by following their Facebook pages, <https://www.facebook.com/EmbaixadadosEUA.BR> and <https://www.facebook.com/consuladoeuarj.br>. ■



NEW PARTNERS

FLO, MED support separated families

By Ilene Smith, unaccompanied tours support officer, Family Liaison Office

For employees and families experiencing a service-related separation, the Family Liaison Office's (FLO) Unaccompanied Tours (UT) team and the Bureau of Medical Services Deployment Stress Management Program (DSMP) have teamed up to share with affected staff and families information about their services and resources. It was a natural fit, since the UT team provides guidance, support and referrals to employees and family members affected by a UT or other service-related separation, while DSMP provides assessment, education and counseling for those experiencing a UT or assigned to a high-threat post.

FLO's UT assistance for the growing number of employees and their families affected by separation includes ongoing

and confidential outreach and support through phone calls, emails, in-person contact and FSI briefings. The UT team also works closely with other Department offices to propose and advocate for changes to policy, regulations and allowances that will ease the impact of a separation.

Nearly all FSOs will at some point experience at least one UT, and many will serve several. Furthermore, the increasing prevalence of terrorist incidents means there are now more critical-threat posts, where families might choose a voluntary separation. Additionally, there are medical, educational, and elder care reasons that may cause a family to involuntarily or voluntarily undergo separation.

Before undertaking a UT, FLO encourages employees,

and their families and friends, to fill out a contact sheet, to stay informed of the available resources and of any updates made to regulations affecting a UT. FLO's resources include the Foggy Bottom Rambles blog and a decision tree template to help families decide where to live during a UT. FLO also has an awards program that recognizes children with a medal and certificate signed by the secretary of state, and age-appropriate workbooks for children.

One employee who recently used FLO's UT services called them "an incredible resource," while another employee returning from a UT sent FLO a thank-you note for "the consistent contact from FLO."



Members of the FLO and DSMP team that presented the Reintegration after a Separation webinar include, from left, Ilene Smith, Christiana Montminy, Johanna MacGillivray and Ellen Millner.

Photo by Jane Cawley



Kathy Gallardo is the deputy director of MED Mental Health.

Photo by Joseph LeBlanc

“This organization is blessed to have this outreach and support,” the note added.

As for the DSMP, it centrally coordinates and strengthens the clinical support for those serving, preparing to serve or who have previously served at a high-threat post. MED created this program, in part, due to concerns regarding high levels of stress-related symptoms among those at such posts, including insomnia, irritability, poor concentration and strained interpersonal relationships.

DSMP supports the psychological health of the Foreign Affairs community through education, assessment, counseling, referral services and resilience-building before, during and after deployment. In Washington, D.C., it provides employees and family members with face-to-face counseling; elsewhere, it offers counseling via video-conferencing and telephone, and has social workers in health clinics in Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan.

A client who used the counseling services told DSMP she appreciated the constructive feedback and “felt comfortable sharing in an environment that was free from judgment and full of acceptance and practical solutions.”

Self-assessment surveys of those affected by a UT show that stress reduction and coping skills are their most sought-after resources. The FLO and DSMP teams therefore strive to reach separated employees and family members to ensure they are aware of the available services. Together, they are developing webinars on reducing stress and increasing coping skills that let them reach the maximum number of employees and family members worldwide. The webinars also provide families with the opportunity to interact with representatives from FLO and DSMP, providing answers to questions in real

time. Many webinars will be accompanied by a workbook and will be recorded for future viewing.

The first webinar, Reintegration after a Separation, took place in August and discussed aspects of reintegration including relationships and family life and work issues. A participant from the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad praised the webinar’s live chat and question time, where “other participants asked questions that I never thought about and shared multiple experiences and points of view that I found to be extremely valuable.” Another family member there said homecoming was different than expected and found the information on supporting children very useful. Generally, attendees showed an improved understanding of family and organizational issues underlying the re-entry process.

Future webinars will be on building stress resilience for children and coping with the stress of change; their dates and times will be announced in cables, Department notices, the FLO Weekly newsletter and the Foggy Bottom Rambles blog.

FLO Director Susan Frost said the two organizations’ partnership means “bureaus working together to bring employees and families the highest level of support and resources can improve morale.” Kathy Gallardo, director of MED Mental Health, said the “collaboration embodies the commitment to ensuring employees and their family members have the best and most useful information available for a successful reintegration.”

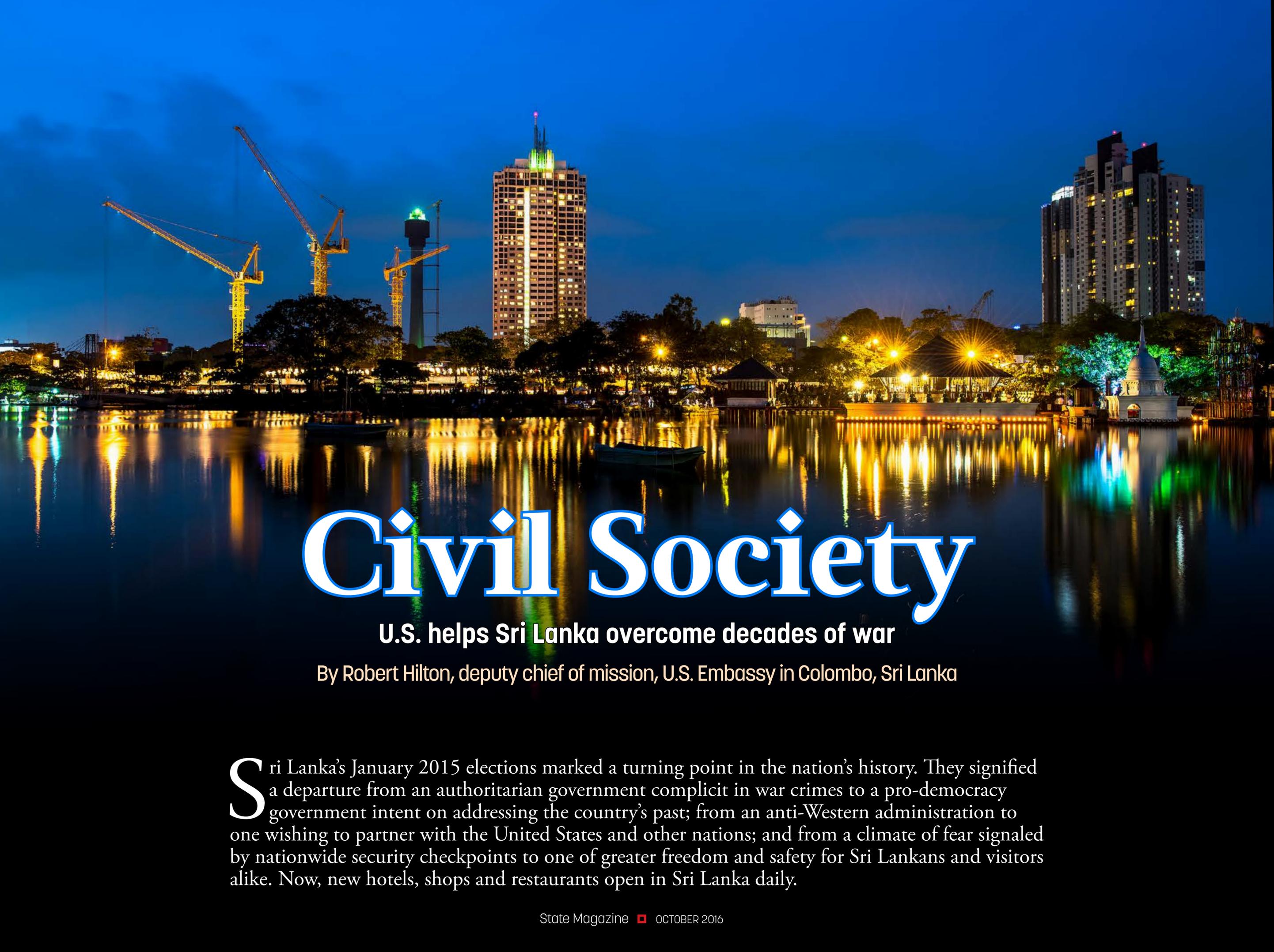
Employees and family members can learn more about the partners’ resources and services provided by visiting the FLO and DSMP Web pages at state.gov. They may also contact DSMP by emailing MEDDSMP@state.gov and FLO UT by emailing FLOAskUT@state.gov. ■



Susan Frost is the director of the Family Liaison Office.

State Department photo





Civil Society

U.S. helps Sri Lanka overcome decades of war

By Robert Hilton, deputy chief of mission, U.S. Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's January 2015 elections marked a turning point in the nation's history. They signified a departure from an authoritarian government complicit in war crimes to a pro-democracy government intent on addressing the country's past; from an anti-Western administration to one wishing to partner with the United States and other nations; and from a climate of fear signaled by nationwide security checkpoints to one of greater freedom and safety for Sri Lankans and visitors alike. Now, new hotels, shops and restaurants open in Sri Lanka daily.

For civil society activists, the change was equally marked. Not long after my arrival as DCM, the public affairs section and USAID arranged for me to meet with a cross-section of activists who partner with the embassy on small grants, educational programs and outreach efforts. In one room we had representatives from the groups Equal Ground, the Center for Disability Research and Education, and International Alert, plus a media-freedom crusader and a human rights lawyer. For me this was an excellent introduction to the good work of the embassy and Sri Lankans themselves to advance fundamental rights and freedom in a country where they have



Ambassador Keshap and Rosanna Flamer-Caldera show their support for Equal Ground after it was attacked on social media by extremists, prior to Sri Lanka's PRIDE celebration. *Photo by Roshani Perera*



Lawyer and activist Sudarshana Gunawardana speaks to the media. *Photo by Prasad Perera*

long been limited, or at best overshadowed by decades of civil war and terrorism.

For the guests at that meeting, it was a networking opportunity. Although this is a small country, many of them had not met one another. They swapped business cards while also pocketing mine. The event highlighted the power of the Department of State to bring people together, not just in the public diplomacy sense but for practical problem-solving. In Colombo, as at other U.S. diplomatic posts, we create the space where people can meet in safety and confidence and find like-minded partners, both among the American community and their own countrymen and women.

A reflection of how much has changed in Sri Lanka, with help from the U.S. Mission, comes through the anecdotes of those working to make the nation a better place. For instance, despite receiving threats, Sri Lankan lawyer



War widows take part in group therapy, lighting lamps in memory of the deceased. This simple ceremony both honors the memory of the deceased and helps the widows come to terms with their loss.

Photo courtesy of the Professional Psychological Counseling Center

Sudarshana Gunawardana has worked hard as an advocate for rule of law and equal rights, both individually and as the director of Rights Now – Collective for Democracy, an NGO. An International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) participant in 2013, he returned to implement a Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) grant to build capacity of journalists and civil society.

In 2014, under the previous regime, Rights Now workshops were frequently disrupted and forced to cancel in the face of organized threats from the government. After the January 2015 change in government, Rights Now members have emerged as leading advisors to the prime minister and participate in several government advisory committees, including on drafting the new constitution. Gunawardana now moderates a weekly political program on state-run television highlighting issues of reconciliation,

democratic rights and government policies.

Another stellar example of those working with the mission to improve the nation's civil society is Rosanna Flamer-Caldera, executive director of Sri Lanka's leading lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) advocacy organization, Equal Ground. A tireless advocate for the LGBT community in a country in which the penal code still criminalizes homosexuality, Flamer-Caldera has been a strong partner of Mission Sri Lanka in advancing its goal of the decriminalization of what is, ultimately, personal behavior. Under the auspices of a DRL small-grant award, Equal Ground persuaded one of Sri Lanka's largest business conglomerates to adopt a nondiscrimination clause in its human resources policy. Flamer-Caldera has met with U.S. Ambassador Atul Keshap, who supported Equal Ground after it was attacked on social media by extremists prior to the nation's June PRIDE celebration.

Another example is a woman who preferred to be referred to as "Vanitha" to protect her privacy. She was 13 years old when the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) forced her into service for two and a half years. When the hostilities ended, she was sent to a government rehabilitation camp. When she was eventually released and returned to her parents, they were unable to fully understand their daughter's deep psychological trauma. Within months, her parents arranged for her to be married.

"When I returned home, I went through mental agony and depression," Vanitha recalled. "I couldn't handle my marriage. I was frightened. My capture by the LTTE, my experience in the



Ambassador Keshap, fourth from right, poses with civil society and business leaders in Jaffna, Northern Province.

Photo by Prasad Perera

rehabilitation camp and my forced marriage completely destroyed my self-image and my confidence and made my life meaningless. I wanted to commit suicide.”

Vanitha’s story is not uncommon. Sri Lanka’s conflict left a society deeply affected by physical and psychological scars. This is especially true for widows, families of the disappeared, and ex-combatants and their families; all experience a range of issues associated with post-traumatic stress. To respond, the nation’s Professional Psychological Counseling Center (PPCC), with the support of USAID’s flagship civil society project, the Support for Professional and Institutional Capacity Enhancement (SPICE),

has helped address these victims’ long-term psychological needs. The PPCC is also offering ongoing support to the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in the nation’s war-affected districts of Batticaloa and Ampara in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka.

Today, Vanitha lives in Arayampathy in Batticaloa District with her husband and children. With the help of a PPCC counselor, she began the long process of psychological healing. “Once I understood the power of relationships,” she said, “life began to get better. My self-esteem improved.”

PPCC has supported the psychological well-being of 246 ex-combatants, war widows, people with disabilities, families of those who went missing in the conflict and families of ex-combatants.

A common thread among these stories: Sri Lankans, as individuals and as a national community, need to heal from the trauma of 26 years of armed conflict. Motivated by courage, hope and commitment, they are doing so, with valuable assistance and support offered by the United States. The activists I met expressed their collective wish for America and its people to continue to help them achieve the vision of an inclusive society transformed by genuine reconciliation among Sri Lanka’s mosaic of ethnicities, cultures and religions. ■

YOUTHS SUCCEEDED

Post offers alternatives to gangs

By Travis L. Tucker, vice consul, U.S. Consulate General in Nuevo Laredo

To offer alternatives to young people in an area rife with gangs, the U.S. Consulate General Nuevo Laredo's Youth Council has encouraged more than 40 of the city's youths to become leaders, reflecting the dedication of consulate volunteers and youths who want to improve their community. In its four-year existence, the council has shown how "we as the U.S. government are able to interact with local citizens that we would not otherwise reach on such a close and frequent basis, and we are able to discuss issues that they care about deeply," said former Youth Council mentor Joseph Carnes.

The council's work is particularly impressive, given the city's challenging security environment. Since the early 2000s, Nuevo Laredo has been a battleground of turf wars between rival cartels. Violent crime, including homicide, robbery and kidnapping, threaten everyone in the region, and consulate staff members' movements are restricted within the city. A Department of

State Travel Warning urges U.S. citizens to defer nonessential travel to the entire state of Tamaulipas, with Nuevo Laredo, on the banks of the Rio Grande, representing the busiest border crossing with the United States.

Such an environment makes outreach activities difficult. Nonetheless, Nuevo Laredo's Youth Council has thrived, largely due to the perseverance of the council members themselves. The consulate selects new members each year through a competitive application process. Many applicants are often already community leaders, due to their work, studies or extracurricular activities. Former Youth Council presidents Adriana Contreras Espinoza and Gizell Gonzalez Zamora run their own nonprofit organization called Somos Gigantes (We are Giants), which educates low-income children and combats bullying. Some council members work for the Nuevo Laredo city government, while



A member of the 2015 Youth Council finishes a mural at a Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, school depicting the close ties of U.S.-Mexico border communities.

Photo by Ethel Gonzalez Zamora

to their work, studies or extracurricular activities. Former Youth Council presidents Adriana Contreras Espinoza and Gizell Gonzalez Zamora run their own nonprofit organization called Somos Gigantes (We are Giants), which educates low-income children and combats bullying. Some council members work for the Nuevo Laredo city government, while

others are pursuing advanced college degrees or work as teachers, factory workers, psychologists or in other careers.

In all, the council represents the diversity of Nuevo Laredo's youth.

In Nuevo Laredo, the council's work focuses on community outreach. One of its most successful events is its annual posada celebration. At this traditional Mexican Christmas event, council members play games with children from a local orphanage, provide them lunch and give Christmas gifts sought by the children in their Dear Santa letters. At last year's event, the council hired two lucha libre (freestyle) wrestlers to perform and then speak about healthy lifestyles and safety.

For those at post who serve as Youth Council mentors, this event is the highlight of the year. "I love that the posada is an idea the Youth Council came up with independently, and that it is a traditional Mexican event," said former mentor Monica Davis. "I also like the message and the symbolism of youth helping other youth."

Held since 2015, the council's clothing drive has provided clothing to 285 people in Nuevo Laredo, hosted a mock Model U.N. session (to prepare 40 local students for the Model U.N.

competition in New York City), painted a mural depicting the bond of U.S.-Mexico border towns, visited area elementary schools to read stories to more than 360 children, and hosted a soccer tournament that encouraged gender equality and raised money for a local charity.

Youth Council members face daily risks, living in a city with high levels of violence, yet often take on projects in some of Nuevo Laredo's most vulnerable neighborhoods. Last year, members cleaned a children's park in a neighborhood on the outskirts of the city, where drug cartel presence and security incidents are more prevalent. Although the area is off limits to consulate employees, Youth Council members went there anyway. Such dedication shows how Youth Council members are making Nuevo Laredo a better place for all.

The city's enthusiastic youth have found, through the Youth Council, a means to use their adaptability and creativity to make a difference. As council mentor and Public Diplomacy Assistant Ana Serrano puts it: "It is extremely important to lead young people and encourage them to do things to benefit their community—the Youth Council gives them that opportunity." ■



Members of the 2015 Youth Council fix up a Nuevo Laredo park, an event that consulate staff could not attend due to security concerns.

Photo by Ethel Gonzalez Zamora



Consul General Philip Linderman, fourth from left at rear, poses with members of the 2016 Youth Council at the consulate's fourth of July party.

Photo by Ana Serrano

Mentoring Makes It

DOS-USAID effort helps Civil Service staff soar

By Maureen L. Whitsett, program manager,
State-USAID Civil Service Mentoring Program

The Department of State-USAID Civil Service Mentoring Program leads to 10-month mentor-mentee partnerships—it facilitates selection of the mentoring pair, hosts a half-day orientation for them and provides periodic check-ins to keep the partnership on track with its goals. With the program, mentors and mentees get all they need to start a successful career-enhancing relationship.

In February, the 13-year-old program hosted the Department's first Mentoring Awards Program ceremony, where mentors were thanked for their support by Deputy Secretary Heather Higginbottom and Bureau of Human Resources leaders. Among those mentors honored, several, including E. Betty Swope, later spoke of the

effectiveness of their partnership and the challenges they overcame.

Swope, a senior advisor in the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA), was matched as a mentor with Liana Mirea, a realty specialist in the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations. Mirea had reached out to Swope in advance, after learning about the program from a colleague who had Swope as a mentor.

Although Swope had limited time, "she still found the time to work well with me through the program," Mirea recalled. One small challenge: Swope was a part-time annuitant working in HST while Mirea was located in Rosslyn, so they agreed to do most of their mentoring sessions by phone or over breakfast or dinner.

"Probably the most important element of a successful mentor-mentee relationship is trust and

confidentiality," Swope observed, adding that the mentee also should get agreement from his/her supervisor since mentoring can take participants away from their offices.

Looking back, Mirea said her mentor helped her better understand how the Department works and what she needed "to do to get anywhere I wanted to be in the future." She lauded Swope's experience, saying Swope "has shaped the lives of many other women for better and more fulfilling careers along the way."

Almost two years later the two partners are still in touch, and Mirea said that Swope continues to encourage her to pursue her ideas and career plans, help her expand her network and build confidence.

Mirea also praised the program's job shadowing and said its webinars and the face-to-face activities helped her to better network within the Department.

For her part, Swope, who received a mentoring award at this year's ceremony, said each of her mentoring relationships has been

different, but all were rewarding. "I think mentors learn as much as mentees from participating in the program," she said. "A good mentoring relationship does not end at the termination of the formal program, but continues long after."

Another mentoring partnership set up by the program involved Mark Biedlingmaier, deputy executive director in the Bureau of African Affairs, and Travis Mayo, a Presidential Management Fellow at USAID. Mayo said he selected Biedlingmaier "because he has such an enormous range of experience and also has non-work related interests and hobbies that closely match my own."



Posed at the February Civil Service Mentor Ceremony are, from left, Liana Mirea and her mentor, E. Betty Swope.

State Department photo



At a Washington Nationals baseball game, Travis Mayo, left, poses with his mentor, Mark Biedlingmaier, and the Nationals mascot. *State Department photo*

“... A good mentoring relationship does not end at the termination of the formal program, but continues long after.”

- E. Betty Swope

But Mayo said he was concerned whether a Department of State FSO would be a suitable mentor for a USAID employee who's in the Civil Service. “That skepticism quickly evaporated after I met Mark and we had the opportunity to get to know each other,” he continued, adding that he found Biedlingmaier's FS experiences and skills “incredibly

relevant and useful in helping me with both day-to-day problems as well as long-term career planning.” Biedlingmaier, in turn, said he'd been matched with two USAID officers, Mayo and LeighAnn McChesney, and he at first found this unusual, “but I then came to realize that good mentoring, leadership and management know

no boundaries between agencies or offices.” The relationship helped him learn more about USAID and “share experience from my career with two very accomplished and talented officers.”

Looking back, Biedlingmaier said the mentorship experience was vigorous, enriching and enjoyable. “We quickly established a synergy to shape common goals and outcomes for the year ahead, and have maintained active communication since our initial meetings,” he observed.

Mayo was also positive about his experience, saying Biedlingmaier quickly “offered a perspective into State and USAID that I've never seen before.” Through mentorship, he experienced events such as an ambassador's swearing-in ceremony, to which he would not otherwise be exposed, and

gained “an incredibly valuable career coach,” who is also “a gifted listener who has helped me to prepare for key presentations and guided me through steps for having difficult conversations.” Mayo lauded his partner's warmth and enthusiasm, and said “it makes me wish I had joined the mentoring program years ago.”

Mentors, according to Biedlingmaier, have a good reason to get involved in the program: They're “sharing knowledge accumulated over a career” and are “proud to be a part of the future growth and development of our best and brightest.” When senior staff members get involved in mentoring, he continued, “We too may learn something from our young peers.”

More information is available at the Mentoring at State portal or by emailing CSMentoring@state.gov ■



FSI's SANDBOX

Where technology and diplomacy meet

By Laura Leinow, former director, Business Applications, FSI School of Applied Information Technology, and Martha Fessenden, acting BA director

Ten years ago, few people would have imagined the rapid advances in technology that have occurred since. Revolutions in hardware and software have permeated every facet of our personal and work lives, from shopping, banking and communications, to travel and education. Through social networking and mobile computing we have easier access to information than ever before. The Department has kept up with the pace of change, incorporating many innovative technologies into the workplace (iPads, iPhones, offline group meetings, blog-based online communities, virtual internships, TechCamps, webinars), yet it remains a challenge for most of us to identify the latest technologies or imagine how they could impact our future. Enter the Sandbox—FSI's “imaginarium” where the future is today and where we explore how technology will help or hinder diplomats.

The Sandbox is part of the School of Applied Information Technology (SAIT) and launched in September 2015, when FSI Director Ambassador Nancy McEldowney laid out her vision for how FSI could focus on innovation to improve business application processes throughout the Department.

The Sandbox first looked outside the Department to build a network of external contacts from the private sector, academia and other government agencies to discuss the challenges and successes of launching innovative technology programs. One of the leading educators from the University of Southern California's Annenberg Innovation Lab, Professor Jonathan Taplin, who specializes in international communications, spoke to the Sandbox team on how to start an innovation initiative and pitfalls to avoid. In turn, we sought out companies with successful track records in innovation, such as MetLife, Adobe, Google and Citicorp. Representatives of those organizations gave presentations at FSI on the private sector's approach to innovation, including the concept of “fail fast” in order to achieve success. In other words, make mistakes, get up and try again. It often takes multiple failed experiments before a success hits.

Now, after a year, the Sandbox is regularly invited to attend Tradecraft and Orientation courses at FSI, and our team members pass on what they've learned from these outside experts. The Sandbox “flipped the script” for classrooms' use of technology, listening to student feedback on where and how the Department needs to innovate, interviewing FSOs for lessons learned and best practices on using technology overseas and consulting with students in management training, language studies and information technology tradecraft through focus groups and one-on-one encounters. Employees shared success stories about the nexus between information technology and diplomacy, telling of how they use iPads for public diplomacy outreach and touch screens in consular waiting rooms, and how political sections have worked with host-nation contacts to promote technology to digitize legal case files and bolster rule of law. Some of the stories are highlighted on our community website; many more will be uploaded.

The Sandbox also tried to discover the “pain points” of implementing new technology and the limitations of existing systems that make it difficult to engage in effective diplomacy. We expected to find security at the top of the list, but surprisingly communications and collaboration issues held equal importance. The lack of easy access to stakeholders or to a creative space in which to engage them contributed to the challenges of embarking on projects that involved new technology.

With so many new and uncharted technologies on the horizon, such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality and autonomous vehicles, the future looks promising for U.S. diplomats. The FSI/SAIT Sandbox will play a key role in contributing to building a culture that embraces change and innovation.

To participate in a focus group or personal interview with the Sandbox staff, send an email to: SAITInnovationSandbox@state.gov. ■

LYING IN STATE:
MEETING
MANIA!

AMBASSADOR
BLUESTONE IS
MEETING THE
MINISTER OF
BREAKFAST AFFAIRS
AND WANTS ONE
NOTETAKER TO
JOIN HIM.

THE BACON
AFFAIRS
OFFICE
MUST BE
THERE!

BUT WE DON'T KNOW
WHAT KIND OF BACON
THEY'LL DISCUSS -
CANADIAN AFFAIRS
SHOULD BE THERE!

BUREAU OF
BREAKFAST RIGHTS
NEEDS TO HAVE
VISIBILITY ON
THIS!



WE DON'T WANT
TOO MANY
PEOPLE IN
THE MEETING...

BUT BACON'S NOT JUST
FOR BREAKFAST - I HAVE
TO INSIST THAT SOMEONE FROM
THE GLOBAL DELICIOUSNESS
INITIATIVE ATTEND!

AMBASSADOR BLUESTONE,
MAY I ASK HOW YOU SETTLED
ON SUCH A SIZEABLE
DELEGATION FOR OUR
MEETING?

MR. MINISTER,
I WAFFLED...



AGGIER 2016

Art & BookFair Opens This Month



A shopper examines the wares at the 2015 Art & BookFair of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, which raised \$53,613 for Foreign Service community projects and scholarships. This year, on Oct. 7 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Oct. 11–14 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., the event, in Main State's exhibit hall, will be open to Department of State badge holders, spouses and escorted guests. On Oct. 8–9 and Oct. 15–16 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the sale is open to the public. The fair features thousands of used books, stamps, coins, international art, collectibles, textiles, jewelry, CDs, DVDs, records, maps and more. ■

Photo by Mark Stewart

TAP Image
to Read Story



Soccer Envoys Visit China



A player on the women's soccer team at Guangzhou Sports University takes a selfie with other players and Soccer Envoy Lauren Gregg, in sunglasses, during a program featuring Gregg and another member of the 1991 U.S. Women's World Cup team. The soccer stars were in China on a Department-sponsored Sports Envoy program visit to engage with new audiences, media markets and institutions. They conducted youth programs in Shanghai and held the first cultural program in Tibet sponsored by the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu in almost a decade. ■

Photo by Li Bin



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to Read Story

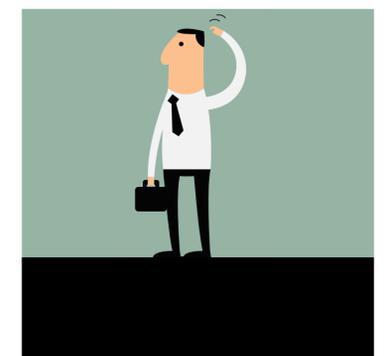


VIP Visits Western Passport Center



Congresswoman Martha McSally, of Arizona's 2nd District, visited the Western Passport Center (WPC) in Tucson, Ariz., in August to speak at the center's observance of Women's Equality Day about her experiences as a military and government leader. Afterward, she posed with center staff. Shown from left are Marianne Kuhr, adjudication manager; Dianne Cag, EEO counselor; Congresswoman McSally; Lisa Baxter, assistant director of the Tucson Passport Center; and Debbie Posey, the WPC customer service manager. ■

Photo by Mitchell D. Alderson



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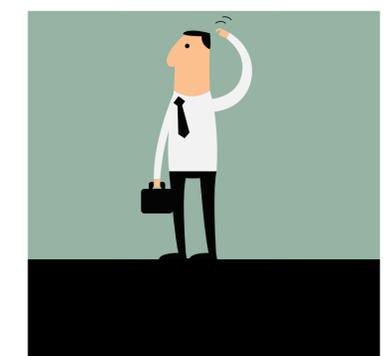


Exchange Alumni Aid DRC School



A volunteer fixes a desks repaired by volunteers during Community Service Day, a post-sponsored event involving alumni of the Department's exchange programs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The alumni group refurbished a school in an underprivileged area of Kinshasa, cleaning and replacing the floors of two classrooms and repairing 80 desks. The event is an ongoing monthly alumni-led outreach initiative to promote volunteerism in the DRC. ■

Photo by Arlly Mangelele



 **TAP** Image
to Read Story



Open Season Next Month



The Federal Benefits Open Season runs Nov. 14–Dec. 12, offering employees an opportunity to change their Federal Employee Health Benefits coverage or enroll in dental and/or vision coverage through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program and federal Flexible Spending Account program. ■

 **TAP** Image
to Read Story

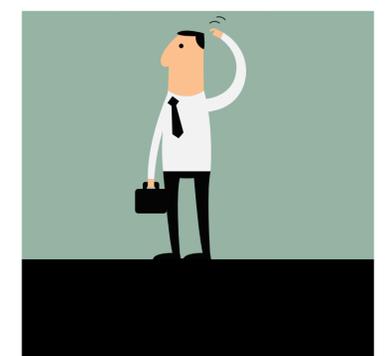


Event Celebrates South Asian Cultures



Dancers showcase styles from North and South India at a celebration at Main State co-sponsored by the South Asian American Employee Association and the Office of Civil Rights. The seventh annual South Asian Cultural Event, Aug. 18, also featured performers from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. ■

Photo by Bruce Cole



TAP Image
to Read Story



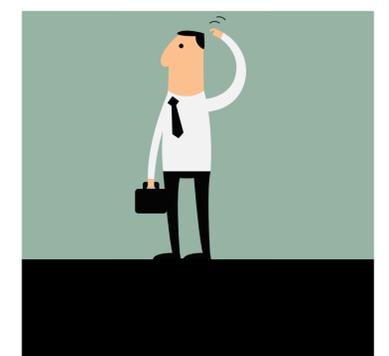
Ethics Answers

Q: I am thinking of leaving the Department and applying for a job outside of government. What should I keep in mind as I begin my job search? Do I need to tell my supervisor?

A: As soon as you send your resume to or have any discussions with a potential employer, you are seeking employment with that employer. Thus, you must stop working immediately on any matters you are personally involved with that directly affect that employer. You cannot work on those matters again until you have firmly rejected the offer, the employer has rejected you or you have not heard from the employer for two months after applying. We recommend that you promptly inform your supervisor of any matters you cannot work on because you are seeking employment. If you file a Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE 278e), you must file a Negotiation Notice within three days of starting negotiations with any prospective employer.

More information can be found at:
<http://l.s.state.sbu/sites/efd/Pages/PostEmploymentRestrictions.aspx>.

Ethics Answers presents hypothetical ethical scenarios Department employees might face. For help with real ethics questions, email EthicsAttorneyMailbox@state.gov.



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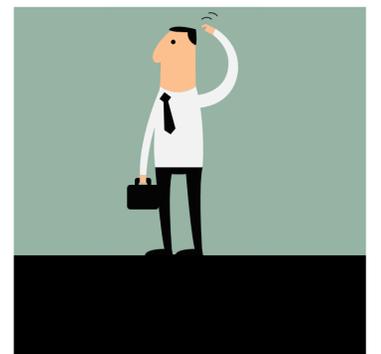
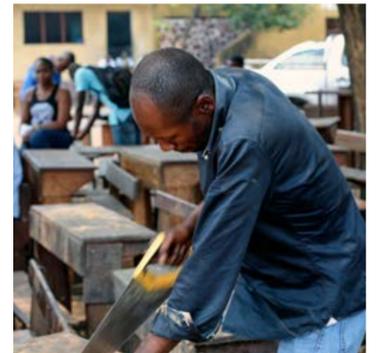
Retirements

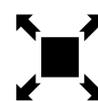
Civil Service

Addison, Arlene
Buttrick, Brandon Arthur
Cooley, Barbara N.
Dolce, Nancy Long
Fulwiler, Nancy R.
Kress, Cecelia M.
Lay, William G.
Maier, Christina A.
Moeller, Patricia A.
Nielsen, Darlene M.
Pearson, Russell L.
Phillips, Norman Neal
Robinson, Twana M.
Roderick, Judy Carol
Wieseneck, Michael
Williams, Elise E.
Zawada, Lydie

Foreign Service

Anderson, Bridgette S.
Archabal, Tedd A.
Curry, William K.
Davis, Gregory Edmund
Dougherty, J. Thomas
Drobot, Mark D.
Entwistle, James F.
Hart Jr., Clifford A.
Haycraft, Thomas K.
Heg, James Thomas
Herndon, Roger A.
Kelley Jr., Lonnie
Kohanski, Daniel D.
Leiterman, Mary A.
Maloney, Steven Scully
May, Wayne E.
McGuigan, Heidi A.
Murphy, Raymond H.
Olson, John E.
Pike, Steven
Pometto II, Paul P.
Prock, Benton
Quick, William H.
Traub III, Herbert S.
Walz, Mary K.
Wang, Robert Shiao
Word, George
Yeager III, John B.



 **TAP** Image
to Read Story



In Memoriam

Donnelly

Handyside

Hobgood

Jeffries

Murphy

Sablosky

Solis

Wick

Questions concerning employee deaths should be directed to the Office of Casualty Assistance at (202) 736-4302. Inquiries concerning deaths of retired employees should be directed to the Office of Retirement at (202) 261-8960. For specific questions on submitting an obituary, please contact Michael Hahn at hahnmg@state.gov or (202) 663-1688.



In Memoriam

James Joseph Donnelly

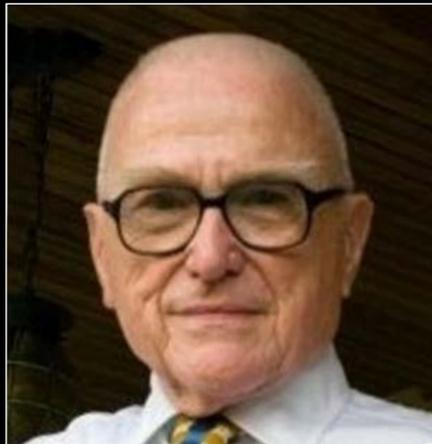


James Joseph Donnelly, 55, an office management specialist, died following a heart attack on June 30 at his home in Livorno, Italy. After a 25-year career in the Navy, he joined the Department in 2012, serving in Kuala Lumpur, Sanaa and most recently in Pretoria. His wife, Sylvie Van Hoorebeke, works for the U.S. Mission to the EU in Brussels.



In Memoriam

Holsey Gates Handyside

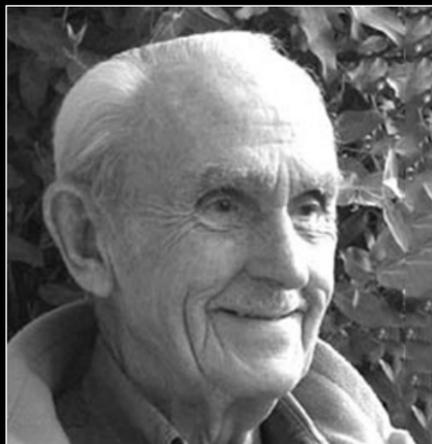


Holsey Gates Handyside, 88, a retired FSO and former ambassador to Mauritania, died June 29 in Bedford, Ohio. After serving in the U.S. Army Air Corps, he joined the Department in 1955. He also worked briefly for the Department of Energy. His overseas posts included Cairo, Baghdad, Beirut and Tripoli. After his retirement in 1985, he remained active as an expert and advisor on Middle Eastern affairs and was a sustaining member of The Middle East Institute. More recently, he worked on philanthropic endeavors including preservation efforts on his 1890s family home in Bedford for the Western Reserve Historical Society.



In Memoriam

Harlan Haines Hobgood



Harlan Haines Hobgood, 85, a retired FSO, passed away unexpectedly on July 18 in San Luis Obispo, Calif. He served in the Army before joining USAID in 1965. He worked in El Salvador, Ecuador, Bolivia, Honduras, Côte d'Ivoire and finally as director of the USAID Mission in Haiti. After retiring, he was president of the Freedom from Hunger Foundation and continued consulting around the world. He was also an active fellow with the National Academy of Public Administration and contributed to a number of community organizations.



In Memoriam

Allan K. Jeffries



Allan K. Jeffries, 75, a retired FS communications specialist, died peacefully at home Oct. 3, 2015, in Garrett, Ind., after a brief illness with glioblastoma. He proudly served his country for over 30 years, including with the Air Force and the Navy, and as a civilian for the Department of the Army, before joining the Foreign Service in 1985. His posts included Beijing (twice), Monrovia, Ankara, Douala, Bonn, Sofia and Managua. He retired in 1998 and continued to work part-time for the Department until 2007. His daughter, Laura (Scott) Ingram, is a Foreign Service Medical Practitioner in Mexico City.



In Memoriam

Olga Murphy



Olga Murphy, 80, a retired FSO, died Aug. 12 in Las Vegas, Nev. With a degree in special education, she joined the Department in 1978, retiring in 2000. She served in Karachi, Mexico City, Ankara, Port-au-Prince, London, Jakarta and Antwerp. Subsequently, she worked as a civilian for the U.S. Army in Heidelberg and lived in Vicenza before settling in Las Vegas. She is survived by her husband, Thomas F. Murphy, also a retired FSO.



In Memoriam

Irving Lee Sablosky



Irving Lee Sablosky, 92, a retired FSO, died Aug. 3 at home in Washington, D.C. He joined USIA in 1957 after serving in the Army during World War II, working as music critic for the Chicago Daily News, producing radio programs and teaching music criticism at DePaul University. He practiced cultural diplomacy in Seoul, Cebu, Hamburg (as director of the Amerika Haus), Bangkok and London. After retirement, he lectured widely in Europe and at American University in Washington. He volunteered at several organizations, wrote books on American music, and was an accomplished poet and avid photographer.



In Memoriam

Amparito “Rita” T. Solis



Amparito “Rita” T. Solis, 77, a retired FS specialist, died July 25 in Rockwall, Texas. She lived an adventurous, spiritual and fulfilling life traveling and working in the Foreign Service. She proudly served her country in the Air Force and then joined the Department in 1989. Her posts included Bogota, Bern, Tallinn, Brunei, Micronesia and Sao Paulo. She retired in 2001 and was an active parishioner at her church in Rockwall. She enjoyed studying Catholicism and loved to sew, play the piano, read, listen to music, create handicrafts, play with her dog, Gizmo, and spend time with her grandchild, Sydney.



In Memoriam

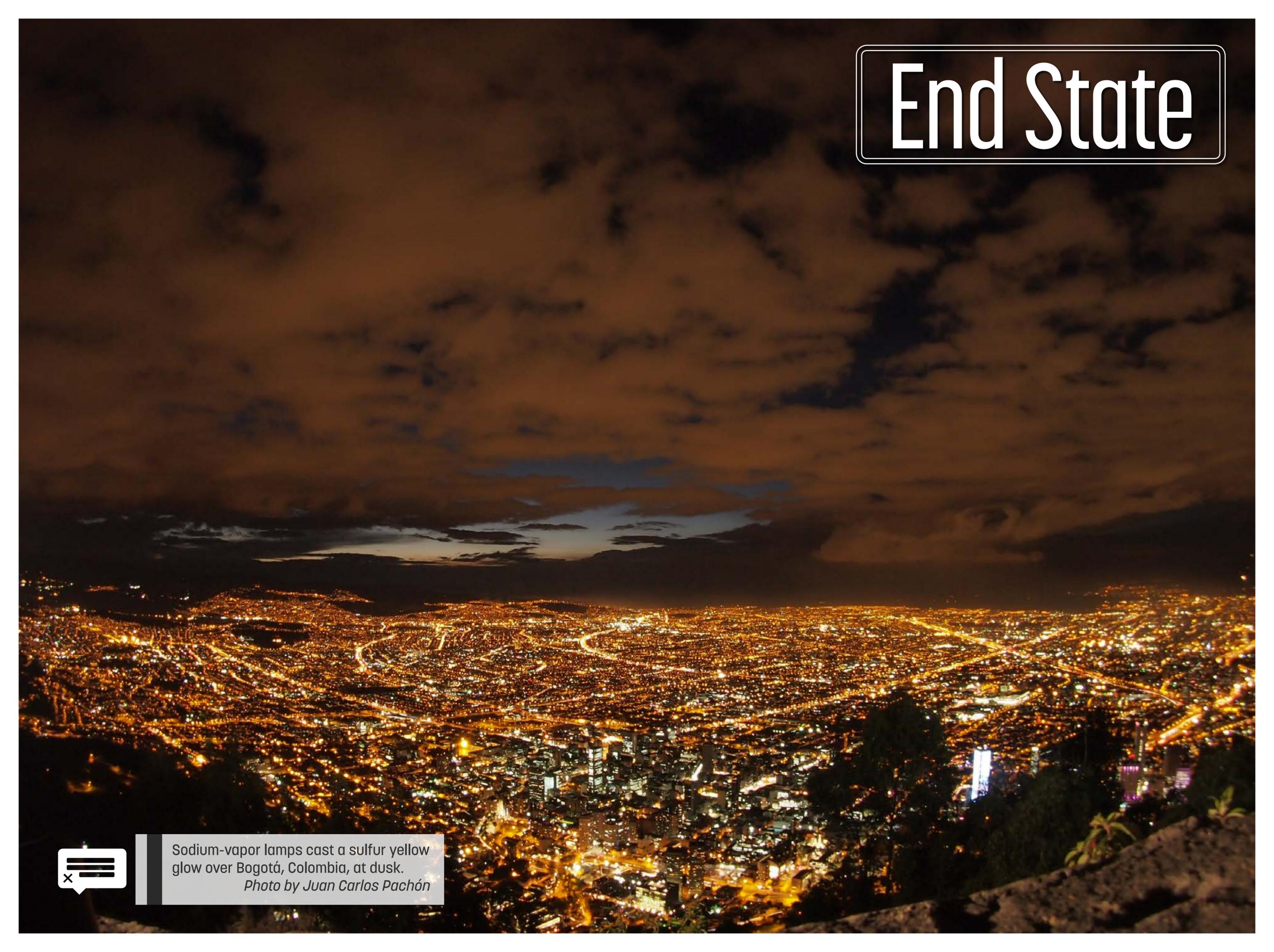
David Steven Wick



David Steven Wick, 73, a retired FSO, died March 6 at his home in Lewes, Del. He retired in 2004 after serving more than 30 years for the Department. His assignments took him to many countries, including Laos, Germany, Kenya, Mozambique, Trinidad, Lebanon, Ukraine, Iraq, Yemen and Pakistan. He was an avid bike rider, and a member of the American Legion, Sons of the American Revolution and the Lewes Yacht Club. Always a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye, he was a friend to many.



End State



Sodium-vapor lamps cast a sulfur yellow glow over Bogotá, Colombia, at dusk.

Photo by Juan Carlos Pachón

