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Ambassador Jacobson Visits Akhal Welayat's Production and Agricultural Sites

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Throughout August, Ambassador Jacobson paid a number of visits to farms and production facilities in Akhal welayat to get to know this region's agriculture, food and textile industries. Together with Embassy staff members, she visited a tomato factory in Gypjak village of Rukhabat etrap; the peasants' association named after Myratberdi Sopyev in Gami village of Ak Bugday etrap; the Turkmenbashi Jeans Complex in Herrikgala village of Rukhabat etrap; and the Turkmenbashi Textile Complex in Ashgabat.

During the visit to the "Rukhubelent" tomato factory in Rukhabat etrap on August 3, the Ambassador learned of its important role in supplying the Turkmen market with fresh tomato juice, ketchup, and tomato paste, as well as various other fruit juices. The company processes tomatoes, grown by farmers in the fields of Rukhabat etrap on a contract basis. To produce other types of "Serdar" and "Rukhubelent" juices, the factory uses imported ingredients. Enterprise managers shared their future plans to export fruit juice and tomato products to other countries.

On August 17, the U.S. Ambassador visited another successful enterprise, the Turkmenbashi Jeans Complex, which produces denim products exported to many countries around the world,



Ambassador Jacobson and Myratberdi Sopyev (in the center) visiting a cotton field in Gami, Akhal welayat.

including the United States and several European countries. The director of the facility gave Ambassador Jacobson a tour of the complex, which includes a spinning factory, denim weaving factory and a garment factory. The Ambassador noted the enterprise's positive contribution to developing Turkmenistan's economy and expanding employment opportunities for Rukhabat etrap residents.

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Native American Trackers Train Turkmen Border Guards to Detect Smugglers

A Native American unit of the U.S. Customs Service conducted a Strategic Enforcement Tracker (SET) training course for 25 officers of the State Border Service of Turkmenistan from August 16-20, in Ashgabat. A group of three Native American Indians, nicknamed "Shadow Wolves," that work to track down illegal smuggling along the U.S.-Mexico border, visited Turkmenistan to share their tracking experience with local border guards. The U.S. Embassy's Export Control and Border Security (EXBS) Program sponsored the trackers' visit and the training course.

"Members of this special unit have built a reputation unequalled in the U.S. We are proud to introduce you to this uniquely American

capability", said Ambassador Jacobson addressing the participants on the first day of the training.

The course included one day of theoretical studies and four days of field trips to areas with surroundings reminiscent of Turkmenistan's border areas. Smuggling detection skills, such as night tracking, counter tracking, tactical awareness of immediate surroundings, and techniques for discovering weapons of mass destruction, were taught during the course. The EXBS program also donated 25 handheld GPS devices, 25 tool kits and 25 flashlights to the State Border Service of Turkmenistan, which were used during the training.

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Native American Trackers Train Turkmen Border Guards to Detect Smugglers

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The Shadow Wolves were founded in 1972 under a program created by the U.S. Congress to track drug smugglers transporting contraband – mostly marijuana – on Indian reservation lands. The Shadow Wolves have also traveled to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to train customs officials, border guards, and national police in those countries to detect and follow the tracks of people who may be transporting narcotics or components of weapons of mass destruction. The Shadow Wolves teach skills they learned on reservations searching for game or tracking their grandparents' free-roaming cattle and horses.

EXBS is an ongoing U.S. Government program supplying equipment and training to assist in increasing the effectiveness of border security, designed particularly to deter the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Previous EXBS assistance to the State Border Guards and State Customs Service of Turkmenistan includes UAZ jeeps, water trucks, X-ray equipment, contraband detection kits and training in detecting weapons of mass destruction.



A group of instructors, organizers and Turkmen border guards that participated in the training.

U.S. Embassy Donates Drug/Precursor Test Kits and Office Equipment to the Turkmen State Forensic Service

The U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan handed over 20 drug/precursor test kits and office equipment to the State Forensic Service of Turkmenistan at a presentation ceremony held at the agency's office in Ashgabat on August 19. Ambassador Jacobson, Turkmenistan's First Deputy Minister of Justice Mr. Batyr Arniyazov and Chief of the State Forensic Service Mr. Anna-mukhammet Misekov participated in the ceremony. The equipment is donated through the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Project (INL), implemented by the U.S. Department of State and administered by the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat, and the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) of the U.S. Department of Justice.

During the hand-over ceremony, Ambassador Jacobson reiterated the "U.S. Government's commitment to working together with Turkmenistan to fight illegal trafficking in persons, narcotics, weapons of

mass destruction and combating organized crime." "We are pleased to support the work of Turkmen forensic specialists and look forward to continued cooperation," the Ambassador said. The First Deputy Minister of Justice thanked Ambassador Jacobson and the U.S. Government for the assistance and noted "this project is another good example of successful cooperation between our governments."

Drug/precursor test kits are intended to provide law enforcement officers with rapid and simple color tests for preliminary identification of drugs and precursors most commonly encountered in the illicit trade.

The INL project is designed particularly to improve the capability of host countries' law enforcement agencies in efforts against narcotics and organized crime. ICITAP works with nations around the globe to improve their forensic capability to resolve criminal investigations and support anti-narcotic efforts.



A representative of the State Forensic Service demonstrates a sample drug/precursor test kit.

Ambassador Jacobson Visits Akhal Welayat's Production and Agricultural Sites

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On August 18, Ambassador Jacobson visited a peasants' association in Gami, a village on the outskirts of Ashgabat. Mr. Myratberdi Sopyev, chairman of the peasants' association, gave a tour of the farm's fields, where mostly wheat, cotton and vegetables are grown. Mr. Sopyev praised the state policy of providing tax-free land and water, fertilizers and agricultural equipment services at privileged prices to farmers. The Ambassador and the reputable Turkmen official also discussed social issues of rural residents.

An August 24 tour of the Turkmenbashi Textile Complex in Ashgabat, another leading production facility of Turkmenistan, was as informative as the previous ones. The Textile Complex includes a yarn spinning mill, a weaving plant, a knit plant, a dye, print and finishing plant,

and a cut and sew plant. The complex produces bedding, sportswear, men's clothes and knitted fabric. The textile production facility exports its products to the U.S., Europe and CIS countries. The Textile Complex director and Ambassador Jacobson both remarked on the famous companies such as Calvin Klein, Sara Lee, Casual Wear, JC Penney, Wal-Mart and others, who are buyers of the facility's products.

Ambassador Jacobson's tours of farms and factories in Akhal welayat are a part of her second round of trips throughout Turkmenistan. She looks forward to continuing to meet the people of Turkmenistan and to get to know the country's infrastructure by continuing her travels around the country.

Alumni Beat

Alumni Bond Through Networking and Fun at National Alumni Reunion

The National Alumni Reunion in Gokdere (formerly Chuli), August 27-29 was a chance for about 60 alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs from all over Turkmenistan to combine networking and brainstorming about future projects with lots of sports and fun. National Alumni Reunions are organized by the Embassy's Public Affairs Section annually to enhance the effectiveness of alumni community outreach projects by fostering networking within the alumni community, as well as to give them a change to relax and have fun.

"The reunion is really a chance to renew your friendships, to learn about what's going on in each other's lives and to build your networks," said Ambassador Jacobson, who visited the alumni in Gokdere. Elaborating on the idea of networking she noted to the alumni, "The networks that you form are not only important for your personal lives and your careers, for example, but also for the development of your country, because this group here represents a lot of power."

One of the sessions alumni had during the reunion was to draw posters that depict their vision of the power of alumni in the future of Turkmenistan. Alumni divided into several groups and presented their views on how they see their power growing and helping to develop in the future of their country. The group with the best poster received prizes from the Embassy.

Representatives of the Public Affairs Section, IREX and ACCELS gave presentations on the numerous resources they have available for alumni of U.S. Government exchanges. Small grants for various community projects,



Alumni discussing how to reflect their vision of "alumni power" on a poster.

travel grants, scholarships for distance learning, the Alumni Labor Exchange website, newsletters and publications, free Internet access and many other resources and opportunities are available to alumni in Turkmenistan.

The recreational part of the Reunion included watching movies, hiking, swimming, playing billiards, basketball and tennis. A disco with live rock'n'roll music on a Saturday night created a relaxing atmosphere for alumni to enjoy their time.

Alumni noted that "this was both a productive and a fun weekend. We can't wait to get together again for the next conference or some joint project."

First Ever International Visitors Program Conference Organized For IV Alumni

On August 6, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) in Turkmenistan, the Embassy's Public Affairs Section organized the first national conference specifically for alumni of this program.

In her welcoming speech to 68 representatives of various Turkmen government institutions, private entities and NGOs, Ambassador Jacobson stressed Americans' fundamental belief in democratic principles. Since 1993, the U.S. Embassy has sent more than 150 community leaders, specialists and professionals to the United States to gain new professional experience and learn more about American culture. The Ambassador pointed out that thirty-nine candidates from Turkmenistan would participate in the program this year, which is a record number for this country. "This number illustrates important progress in our relations with the Turkmen Government and their growing support for the program, which provides opportunities for cultural and professional exchange in various fields – from history and cultural preservation to education, from economics and international affairs to healthcare and community development, from food production to homeland security", the U.S. envoy said.

Several IV alumni representing governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as private businesses shared their experiences in the program and the results of their travels to the U.S. Guest speaker Elise Wilson, who administers the IV program in Washington, D.C., also emphasized the importance of the program and described it in more detail to participants.

The U.S. Embassy presented the grant opportunities that IV alumni can use in implementing their democracy and leadership projects throughout Turkmenistan. IREX and IATP also informed alumni of training opportunities available through the "Development Academy" and "Distance Education" programs. All these resources will help alumni to continue their professional development and foster collaboration with their American colleagues.

After the official presentations, alumni shared some interesting ideas with each other about their future plans



IV alumni share experiences and ideas at the conference.

and projects, including environmental protection, advancement of their English language skills, as well as participation in international conferences and symposia.

IVLP alumni also developed suggestions for program administrators, mentioning the importance of employment issues, small business development, cultural preservation, minority rights, the role of religion in society, emergency response, community development, environmental advocacy and others. A reception in honor of the 10th Anniversary of the IV program in Turkmenistan concluded the conference. During the event, alumni networked and talked about the positive impact that the program had on their careers and professional lives.

The International Visitors Program was designed to increase mutual understanding through communication at the personal and professional level. Since 1940, each year more than 4,400 visitors from around the world participate in the program to meet and confer with their professional counterparts in the U.S. Some come for individual programs and others come as part of single-country, regional, or multi-regional group projects. During their programs, which usually last two to four weeks, International Visitors have an opportunity to experience life in the United States firsthand.

FLEX '04 Re-Entry Seminar Prepares New Alumni for Life Back Home

On August 6, American Councils staff conducted a re-entry seminar to welcome newly returned FLEX alumni back to Turkmenistan. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Jennifer Brush spoke about her own experience with educational exchange programs, both as host family and exchange student herself. Nine alumni volunteered to help facilitate the seminar, bringing their own experiences and realizations to the mix. The new returnees were asked to create photo collages reflecting their impressions of life in America. The posters are

now hanging in the American Center in Ashgabat so that visitors can learn more about the educational system in the United States as well as gender roles and family structures. Re-entry seminars give new Alumni the opportunity to analyse their development during their year abroad, discuss problems they will face re-adjusting to life at home and introduce them to the National Alumni Association and other resources, which can help them to find employment and better adjust to life back in Turkmenistan.

Children's Summer Camp Hosted by Civil Society Support Center

The Civil Society Support Center (CSSC) in Turkmenbashi city hosted a Language Summer Camp on the shores of



Children at the camp enjoyed sea, sun and lots of sports.

the Caspian Sea from July 27 to August 5. Funded by USAID/Counterpart, the camp enrolled 60 children between the ages of 9 and 15. In developing the camp, the CSSC and other organizers had two main goals: to provide recreation and education for campers to increase their English language skills, and to improve the children's communication skills and general outlook. Sea, sun and lots of sports made the children healthier for the start of the next school year and created a fun atmosphere for kids to improve their English. Peace Corps volunteers and local English teachers who ran the camp brought enthusiasm and energy to the program that included English lessons, American history, communication skill building and interactive discussions targeted to develop the children's self-awareness and general outlook. Parents and local businesses raised money for camp tuition fees while the Civil Society Support Center took responsibility for organizational and logistical support including transportation.

SERDAR Camp Bridges Economic and Physical Capabilities Gaps

One hundred and twenty high school students, including children from the hearing impaired orphanage, participated in the SERDAR (Summer English Recreation Development and Adventure Retreat) camp in Turkmenabat July 23-August 3. The camp, funded through the Local Initiative Grants program of the U.S. Embassy, was led by Peace Corps Volunteers and FLEX alumni. Campers participated in numerous educational activities including classes on American slang, Shakespeare, female health issues, Internet search techniques, ecology, and American history and culture.

Under-privileged campers were able to attend summer activities not otherwise available to them, and they all learned to appreciate the challenges of the hearing impaired. Bringing children from different backgrounds and physical abilities together provides an opportunity for all to learn about the value and abilities of each other, without the burden of societal stereotypes.



During the camp, children enjoyed a number of interesting sessions and activities.

Time of Learning and Fun for English Teachers

American Councils (ACCELS) and alumni of the Teaching Excellency Awards (TEA) program and Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP) organized the 6th Annual English Teachers' Conference July 19-28 in Gokdere (formerly Chuli), just outside of Ashgabat. Thirty-six English teachers and their children participated in the camp. The teachers' program included workshops, focus majors, daily electives and evening programs, with topics including Tolerance and Diversity, Student Assessment Techniques, Activities With Short Stories, History of the English

Language, Grammar Games, and Teaching Movies in an ESL Classroom. Evening programs were devoted to various English speaking countries, with presentations prepared by campers and their counselors. Children's activities included sports, arts and crafts, and songs. Leadership and team building skills were also taught as part of various activities during the camp. Participants enjoyed the conference program went back to their hometowns full of energy and enthusiasm to teach English in a new academic year.