



# United States Mission in Turkmenistan

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## President Niyazov and President Bush Encourage New Peace Corps Volunteers in Turkmenistan

On November 13, 2003, President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Niyazov sent a congratulatory message to Peace Corps volunteers on the 10th anniversary of U.S. Peace Corps in Turkmenistan. "Turkmenistan highly appreciates the Peace Corps' activities and supports their noble aspirations aimed at carrying out humanitarian projects and expanding and

deepening friendly contacts between the peoples of our countries," President Niyazov wrote.

The next day, on November 14, inspired by the Turkmen President's encouraging message, 56 new Peace Corps volunteers were sworn in to begin their two-year service in Turkmenistan.



The 12th group of Peace Corps volunteers in Turkmenistan are being sworn in.

In her remarks at the ceremony, U.S. Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson welcomed President Niyazov's support for the Peace Corps mission in Turkmenistan and outlined three reasons why she believes the volunteers will succeed in Turkmenistan. The Ambassador stated that along with the volunteers' energy and the Turkmen people's hospitality and commitment to develop their community, "the third reason is a very special reason, and that is the very strong support from the government of Turkmenistan, including the President himself, for the work that you do here in Turkmenistan." ([page 5](#))

## A Turkmen Exchange Student "Teaches" Her People's Culture and Values to Secretary Powell

Minara Ismailova, an exchange student from Turkmenistan currently studying in the United States, had an exclusive opportunity to speak with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and tell him about her country. Minara, a 15-year-old Future Leaders Exchange Program participant currently studying at a high school in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, was invited to the State Department's annual Iftaar dinner on November 5, 2003. The Turkmen girl sat at Secretary Powell's right hand the whole evening.



Secretary Powell and foreign exchange students, including Minara Ismailova (left), during a lively conversation at the Iftaar dinner.

"I wanted to pack my table with nothing but young people tonight, and so I especially welcome the young high school students and Fulbright scholars at my table as representative of so many other young people who are here in the United States learning, but above all, teaching us as they complete their education," said Secretary Powell making his speech before the guests.

Minara, from the city of Turkmenabat, had the

privilege of "teaching" Secretary Powell about the Turkmen people's culture, religion, traditions and values. Recalling her impressions of the Iftaar evening, Minara Ismailova later said, "It is the highlight of my visit to the United States so far." ([page 3](#))

## U.S. Ambassador Visits Mary and Tejen

Ambassador Jacobson continues visiting the provinces to meet people living in various towns and villages across the country. On November 12-13, the U.S. Ambassador visited Mary welayat and the city of Tejen and had meetings with local government officials, artists, entrepreneurs, community activists, alumni of U.S. Government-sponsored exchange programs and Peace Corps Volunteers.

### Visit to Agribusiness Enterprise

On November 12 in Mary, Ambassador Jacobson and the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs staff met with the Ilkinjiler Limited Liability Partnership, a Democracy Commission grantee that is also active in the USAID-funded Winrock Farmer to Farmer program. Ambassador Jacobson expressed the value of small agricultural firms to the creation of prosperity and economic development in Turkmenistan, as well as the U.S. commitment to supporting agribusiness growth with technical assistance and people-to-people exchanges.



Visitors from the U.S. Embassy with owners and employees of the Ilkinjiler LLP.

### NGO Roundtable

The same day, Ambassador Jacobson attended a roundtable of regional NGO leaders and community

activists, hosted by the Mary branch of the Nature Protection Society of Turkmenistan. Roundtable participants were outspoken as they described activities they currently undertake and assistance they require to carry out civic society programs in Turkmenistan. The Ambassador stressed U.S. interests in supporting their work, through financial and technical assistance, underlining their role in Turkmenistan's democratic and economic development.

### Ambassador Hosts Alumni Roundtable

The Ambassador met with alumni of U.S. Government-funded educational exchanges in Mary on November 13. She answered targeted questions from alumni, ranging from the new Turkmen NGO law, to U.S. sponsorship of exchange programs, to why the U.S. Government lacks a Ministry of Culture. One regional scholar shared his contributions to manuscript writing at Harvard University, while others discussed the impact of their experiences on local communities, in the areas of cultural preservation, mutual understanding, and educational and civil society development.

### English Resource Center Opens in Tejen

On November 13, Ambassador Jacobson and the Embassy Public Affairs staff attended a pre-opening ceremony for the Azatlyk English Language Resource Center in Tejen City before its official November 18 unveiling. The center represents a Democracy Commission-sponsored project, co-managed by a Peace Corps volunteer and her local counterpart. The center will offer many educational services to the community in addition to English language courses, such as American cultural events, technology courses, and sports clubs, as well as a safe and positive environment for students to socialize.

### USAID/EDP hosts U.S. Ambassador

On 4 November 2003, Enterprise Development Project (EDP) Turkmenistan hosted its first meeting with U.S. Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson. Accompanying the Ambassador were Bradford Camp, USAID Country Director, and Patty McCabe, USAID Enterprise and Finance Project Manager in Ashgabat. During her visit, the Ambassador highlighted the U.S. Government's support for EDP and entrepreneurial initiatives in Turkmenistan. She was interested in learning about current EDP initiatives in country, as well as opportunities for project expansion in support of the private sector in the future.



The Ambassador posing for a photo with USAID and EDP staff.

## A Turkmen Exchange Student "Teaches" Her People's Culture and Values to Secretary Powell

The U.S. Secretary of State learned about traditions of celebrating Oaza Bairam in Turkmenistan and other countries represented at his table, thus showing his respect for Islam and demonstrating his solidarity with Muslims in America and all across the globe.



Secretary of State Colin Powell addresses guests at the State Department's annual Iftar dinner.

During the Iftar dinner, Secretary Powell outlined his vision for the future of peace and mutual understanding that young people can help achieve, "Young people are the bridge to a better future, a future we all dream about, a future in which Muslims and Christians, Jews and Hindus, Buddhists and people of all faiths work together to end strife, to lift our brothers and sisters out of despair, and build a world where respect for the sanctity of the

individual, the rule of law, and the politics of participation grow stronger day-by-day."

Two weeks later at the U.S. State Department's Educational Exchanges Fair, resounding Secretary Powell's vision, Minara said, "We're all people, and we all have the same problems and the same dreams, even though we live in different countries and speak different languages."



Minara posing for a picture together with the U.S. Secretary of State and her regional coordinator Laura Puckett.

## International Education Week Activities in Turkmenistan



The American Councils for International Education (ACCELS), U.S. Embassy Ashgabat and the IREX Internet Access Training Program (IATP) joined the world education community in celebrating International Education Week (IEW), November 17 -22, 2003, through various educational activities across Turkmenistan.

### ACCELS and EAC Continue to Promote Education

ACCELS and the U.S. Department of State-funded Educational Advising Center held a variety of events in Ashgabat, while American Corners in Dashoguz,

Turkmenabat and Turkmenbashi also arranged a number of educational activities. On the first day, FLEX alumni in Ashgabat, Dashoguz and Turkmenabat organized a photo exhibition entitled "My Year in the U.S.", which featured photos, high school yearbooks and other mementos alumni brought from the U.S. Alumni told visitors about their American host families, high school, friends, sports they played and places they visited in the U.S.

Presentations and roundtables in all four cities covered a wide range of educational topics, including American high schools and universities, educational opportunities in the U.S. and Eurasia, interview skills, taking the TOEFL test, writing grants for educational projects, and various English teaching techniques. The Dashoguz American Corner conducted a workshop on debates to train alumni and other local students to conduct debates, defend their point (*page 4*)

of view and persuade by effectively expressing arguments. Alumni who participated in the recent International FLEX Alumni Summit in Kiev, Ukraine, shared activities conducted by alumni in other NIS countries during a panel discussion in Ashgabat.

Additionally during IEW, semi-finalists of the Teaching Excellence Awards program in the regions were awarded prizes - office equipment, English teaching materials and visual aids. Thirty people participated in a quiz on the USA held in Ashgabat; and seven of them received prizes from ACCELS. A conference highlighting the importance of tolerance and diversity concluded the week's events on November 23 with a reflection on how acts of tolerance and celebrations of diversity are themselves instruments of education.



ACCELS Country Director Matthew Mulherin handing certificates to TEA semi-finalists in Turkmenabat.

### **U.S. Embassy Diplomats and Local Staff Join In**

The U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section organized several well-attended events, for groups of exchange program alumni as well as local teachers and students. A roundtable on "Educational Exchange from the Reverse Prospective - an American Overseas" held on November 18 featured Embassy General Services Officer Joshua Baker, who spoke with 25 students about his experiences as an American graduate student in Moscow. Participants enthusiastically responded to his remarks with questions about the differences between American and Russian higher-education systems. On November 19, Consular Officer Jennifer Hall-Godfrey provided information about visa regulations, and new rules and requirements for obtaining U.S. visas for educational purposes to those anxious to study in the United States.

On November 21, Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO) Natalie Ashton organized a roundtable discussion on home schooling at the ACCELS office in Ashgabat. Stephanie Tansey, founder of the Chinese International School in Beijing, China, and Zohra Meredova, founder of a home school in Ashgabat, spoke at the roundtable and discussed home schooling opportunities with students, including how to self-study for university entrance exams and strategies for developing a learning enrichment program at home.

Information Resource Center Specialist Azat Myradov hosted two interactive presentations on U.S. educational online resources and distributed various publications on education in English, Russian and Turkmen. Dinara Matkarimova, the Embassy Alumni Coordinator, traveled throughout Turkmenistan during IEW, conducting grant-writing workshops for active alumni.



IRC Assistant Azat Myradov gives a presentation on online educational resources.

A week before Thanksgiving Day, on November 22, CAO Natalie Ashton hosted a turkey dinner for FLEX and FSA/Undergraduate alumni. The CAO and alumni designed the pre-Thanksgiving Day event to celebrate Friendship In Education and cross-cultural awareness during IEW.

### **IATP Promotes Computer Literacy**

As part of IEW, IATP Access Site Administrator Alexander Khan and FSA Undergraduate 2002 alumnus Yhlas Babajanov led a two-hour computer basics seminar for six regional police officers on November 19, at the IATP access site in Dashoguz. During the seminar, the police officers learned to use computers recently received by the regional police department. Yhlas and Alexander walked the participants through turning a computer on and off, how to work with text editing, how to work with creating, saving, deleting, and moving files and folders.

IATP also conducted an online chat on distance learning opportunities for six FLEX and Muskie alumni on November 20. Alumni Coordinator Aysenem Tuylieva, who moderated the event, used the chat platform to introduce basic concepts of distance learning to alumni, who had very little previous understanding of the online teaching method. She explained the structure and advantages of distance learning and provided links, such as [www.greenstone.org](http://www.greenstone.org), [www.hrea.org](http://www.hrea.org), [www.pnoyenix.edu](http://www.pnoyenix.edu), [www.hoyle.com/distance.htm](http://www.hoyle.com/distance.htm), and [www.e-learn.ru](http://www.e-learn.ru), where alumni could search the Internet for courses of interest.

### **Peace Corps Volunteers Share America**

U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers across Turkmenistan participated by conducting many of the IEW events. It was a good opportunity for them to share their U.S. education experiences with Turkmen youth. On the first day of the week, Peace Corps Volunteers working in and around Ashgabat held a roundtable discussion with Turkmen citizens on a wide range of topics. (Continued on Page 5)

In Dashoguz, Julia McGregor held a presentation on high schools and colleges in the United States and described the structure of a school year and a credit system, while Rafael Murphy introduced visitors to the U.S. Government structure and Emily Ptacek spoke about American culture.

Tom Lee gave a presentation on diversity in the U.S. Government to a Turkmenabat audience. Ian Cornel, also based in Turkmenabat, gave a series of lectures entitled "Around the World in 15 Minutes", in which he gave an overview of different countries' political systems. Laura Booher and Nicole Droscholl, also working in Lebap welayat, discussed the state of women's education worldwide.

## Turkmen Media Boost IEW Celebration

Local media outlets widely publicized the week's activities, carrying event schedules and positive articles in support of future programs. The Turkmen State News Service (TSNS) released an article, picked up by "Turkmenistan" and "Mugallymlar Gazeti" newspapers on November 20, which highlighted the significance of International Education Week events for "further deepening Turkmen-American cooperation in education". In its article, which appeared on November 19, "Neutralniy Turkmenistan" also reported on IEW activities in the United States involving Turkmen exchange students, "During these days, FLEX students from Turkmenistan are making presentations aimed at introducing Americans and exchange students from other countries with the Turkmen nation, its rich cultural traditions and customs, and independent neutral Turkmenistan's current achievements in various fields."

Peace Corps

## President Niyazov and President Bush Encourage New Peace Corps Volunteers in Turkmenistan

As the 56 volunteers were getting ready to depart for Turkmenistan, they were encouraged by the American president's attention to the Peace Corps program. On August 26, 2003, during his visit to St. Paul, Minnesota, United States President George Bush met a senior couple getting ready to leave for Turkmenistan as Peace Corps volunteers. Edward and Jane Bardons had an opportunity to speak privately with the President of the United States about their family, Peace Corps service for older Americans and their upcoming assignment in Turkmenistan. President Bush expressed his appreciation for the Bardons' service and wished them success in their mission to increase mutual understanding between the two countries' peoples.

During the past two months since their arrival on September 11, 2003, the volunteers have gone through a two-month orientation course in communities near Ashgabat and are now beginning their professional work in



Newly sworn-in Peace Corps volunteers will work in Turkmenistan for the next two years.



Ambassador Jacobson presenting Edward Bardon with a swearing-in certificate.

different parts of Turkmenistan. Twenty-seven Community Health Volunteers will work with medical establishments under the Ministry of Health to provide training in healthy lifestyles, reproductive health, and nutrition to community members. Twenty-nine Education Volunteers will co-teach English with local teachers and conduct regular seminars on English teaching methods. In

fact, many of them have already played an active part in celebrating International Education Week in Turkmenistan by conducting presentations and seminars for English teachers and young people in the cities and provinces they live in.

Currently, 94 volunteers are sharing their professional skills across Turkmenistan and contributing to promoting better mutual understanding between the American and Turkmen people. "Today you will assume a new role, in addition to becoming a Peace Corps volunteer; you will become an ambassador from America to your town or village in Turkmenistan," Peace Corps Country Director Sharon Sugarek reminded the 12th group of volunteers about their responsibilities before swearing them in.

## USAID Enterprise and Finance Officers Visit Mary Private Enterprises

On November 17, 2003, Kimberly Rosen, Deputy Director of the Office of Enterprise and Finance (EF)-USAID Central Asia, and Patty McCabe, USAID EF Project Manager in Ashgabat, attended a business short-course entitled "Preparing a Business Plan" presented by EDP in Mary. Following a short introduction to course participants, USAID was eager to understand the impact EDP courses had on course participants and private sector development. Participants conveyed that these courses enhanced their knowledge of a free market economy, as well as allowed a venue to discuss new private sector opportunities. Several new business ideas emerged during this training: opening a bakery to produce bread and confectionary products, establishing and operating a fitness center, and expanding rug and handicrafts production. As well as sharing business ideas, participants provided recommendations as to how EDP could extend additional services to the business community; the biggest constraint and therefore greatest assistance would be microcredit and technical assistance to SMEs.

Following the visit to the short-course, EDP Turkmenistan and USAID officers visited two private enterprises in Mary, the first of which was "Senagat Gurlyshyk", a private chemical enterprise under the directorship of Bayram Mameturdyev. Producing 300 kg/day of hydrochloric acid, oxide magnesium, and copper sulfate, used in the chemical industry, for a customer base across the country, this firm's primary customers include Turkmengeologiya, Turkmenpagta and others. The company hopes to diversify its product line and install new equipment that will increase the efficiency and overall profitability of the enterprise.

The second site visit was to "Shishe Merwazi", a glass manufacturing operation under the directorship of Djamshid Agzamov. The company produces products on demand - glass jars of different volumes are sold primarily to agro-processing facilities in Mary welayat. Djamshid detailed his operations, cost structure and the challenges of his business. He hopes that EDP can assist his company in improving quality, finding additional customer bases, and increasing profitability.

## OPEN COMPETITION FOR J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT AMERICAN STUDIES

Fulbright American Studies Institutes are six-week academic programs for multinational groups of 18-30 university faculty and educators from abroad. The Fulbright American Institute Program provides opportunities for outstanding Turkmen scholars, educators and faculty members to strengthen curricula and improve the quality of teaching about the United States in academic institutions overseas.

**The following Fulbright American Studies Institutes seminars are available for open competition in the 2004 academic year:**

### **U.S. POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM**

*Mid-June to end of July 2004.*

### **RELIGION IN THE U.S.: PLURALISM AND PUBLIC PRESENCE**

*By the University of California, Santa Barbara,*

*from June 22 to August 2, 2004.*

### **U.S. FOREIGN POLICY: FOUNDATIONS AND FORMULATIONS**

*By the Walker Institute of International Studies at the University of South Carolina,*

*June 28 to August 8, 2004.*

### **CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE**

*Northern Illinois University,*

*Mid-June to end of July 2004.*

### **AMERICAN STUDIES FOR FOREIGN SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATORS**

*University of Illinois,*

*Mid-June to end of July 2004.*

### **THE CIVILIZATION OF THE U.S.**

*Mid-June to end of July 2004.*

Candidates should have an excellent command of English (Institutional TELP is required).

**Application deadline: March 1, 2004**

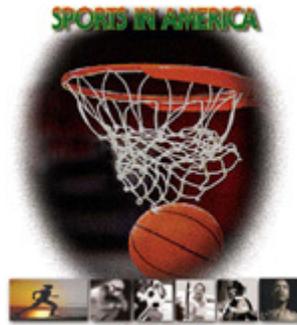
Application forms and consultations are available at the Public Affairs Section, located at the U.S. Embassy, 9 Pushkin Street, Ashgabat, tel: 35-00-45.

## Sports in America

Whether poet or politician, carpenter or cardiologist, Americans from all walks of life share an abiding interest in athletic games and contests. The freedom to invent, adapt, and create - central to the American experience - are integral to the proliferation of sports activities in the United States and the tremendous popularity they enjoy.

Sports are both a social glue bonding the country together and a vehicle for transmitting such values as justice and fair play, team work and sacrifice. They have contributed to racial and social integration, and even to the development of language, as sports terms and expressions slide into everyday usage. Sports also have been a popular focus for the arts, particularly novels and films.

Now you can read all about this in a new electronic journal. Three distinguished essayists bring unique and very personal



observations to the meaning and value of the games that Americans play. Other articles provide contrasting views of the influence of sports across the American landscape and around the world. You will learn more about current social trends and developments, such as the growing involvement of women and persons with disabilities in competitive athletics, an outgrowth of federal legislation and an expanding national consciousness. You can explore how coaches and players at two secondary schools in the suburbs of Chicago made

provisions for Muslim team members to fast during Ramadan. For those who are interested in the financial aspects of sports, the journal offers an article that dispels some of the myths surrounding the "bottom line" component in professional and collegiate athletics.

You can find a bibliography of books and Internet sites and a large collection of quotes, idioms, films, and statistics that give additional insight to the phenomenon of sports in America.

*This journal is available in English through the IRC at the U.S. Embassy. Please call 35-00-45 or send an e-mail to: [irc-ashgabat@iatp.edu.tm](mailto:irc-ashgabat@iatp.edu.tm).*

*It can also be accessed online at the following URL address: <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/1203/ijse/ijse1203.htm>.*

**If you have any comments on the newsletter, please contact us at:**  
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