



The Highlighter

U.S. Embassy Bangkok's Public Affairs Update

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Week ending August 26, 2011

Ambassador Kenney conducts Chiang Rai outreach




ABOVE: Ambassador Kenney discussing customs inspections and counter-narcotic efforts in front of an x-ray machine at the Thai-Burma Friendship Bridge II near Mae Sai, Chiang Rai.



ABOVE: Ambassador Kenney with a group of Mae Fah Luang University students following her town hall meeting. Mae Fah Luang strives to be an international institution, and is the only public university in Thailand that uses English as the primary medium of instruction. Some of the university's foreign student population, including from Burma, Cameroon, and China, were active in the Ambassador's conversation.

RIGHT: Ambassador Kenney addresses a reception with key Chiang Rai contacts at the Rai Mae Fah Luang Art and Cultural Park. In her remarks, the Ambassador highlighted the strong relationship between the United States and northern Thailand. She also noted upcoming U.S.-sponsored events in Chiang Rai, including ConnectUSA, which will promote U.S. products and sourcing of goods, and a performance of the U.S. band Earth Strings.

Ambassador Kenney spent an action-packed day in Chiang Rai on August 24. Staff from U.S. Consulate Chiang Mai arranged a number of activities to provide her opportunities to learn firsthand about important issues affecting Thailand's northernmost province, strengthen ties with key contacts, and promote a positive image of the United States. The Ambassador had the chance to observe Chiang Rai's increasingly educated population and diverse economy, deep historic and cultural roots, and ongoing counter-narcotic efforts. 



ABOVE: Ambassador Kenney visits a weaving factory at the Doi Tung Development Foundation in Chiang Rai. Products from the foundation are distributed to domestic and international customers, including the American company Amway.





JUSMAGTHAI inaugurates English language lab



ABOVE: An ROTC cadet leads an English class at the newly inaugurated language lab located at the Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School.

On Friday, August 19, members of JUSMAGTHAI traveled to Nakhon Nayok to dedicate an English language laboratory and to thank the Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School and Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy for supporting twenty-one ROTC cadets for six weeks this summer.

JUSMAGTHAI sponsored the installation of a new English language learning laboratory in mid-August in order to improve the Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School's capability to provide state-of-the-art English language instruction to future generations of Thai military and police officers.

From July 8 - August 19, twenty-one U.S. Army ROTC cadets conducted English language instruction at both the Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School and Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy as part of an Army ROTC international outreach and cultural exchange program. 🇹🇭

Movie club helps Thai students with English language skills



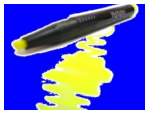
ABOVE: USAID Officer Richard Marshall incorporated YOUTUBE videos in his discussion on Pocahontas with Yala Rajabhat University students.

USAID Officer Richard Marshall took time out of his busy schedule to participate in a movie discussion with 37 Yala Rajabhat University English language students on August 25. The students viewed the Disney film "Pocahontas" in their classroom, and later transitioned to the university's American Corner where they were joined by Mr. Marshall via the embassy's digital video conferencing equipment to discuss the film. Mr. Marshall engaged the students on various issues which the film raised, ranging from the representation of Pocahontas in the film versus the actual historical figure to the conservation theme that is

predominant throughout the Disney classic. The students enjoyed discussing the film with Mr. Marshall, and especially welcomed the opportunity to practice their English with a native speaker. 🇹🇭

RIGHT: Yala Rajabhat University students utilized the American Corner's digital video conferencing equipment to connect with USAID Officer Richard Marshall in Bangkok.





Spotlight on AFCP Grant “Preserving Akha Culture through Documentation, Literacy and Cultural Education Programs: A Pilot Project”

The 700,000 members of the Akha tribe, a Tibeto-Burman ethnic group, are distributed across the border mountain regions of China’s Yunnan Province, Myanmar’s Eastern Chan State, Northern Laos, Northwestern Vietnam, and Northern

Thailand. Over 70,000 Akha reside in 271 villages throughout Northern Thailand. Recent ethnographic research reveals that the Akha’s customs and traditions of ancestor worship and animist beliefs are in danger of dying out. The 2010 Ambassador



ABOVE: An Akha priest performs an inner house purification ceremony.



ABOVE: Doi Chang villagers take part in a village gate renewal ceremony.

Fund for Culture Preservation (AFCP) grantee Mekong Akha Network for Peace and Sustainability aims to conduct a three-year conservation project to preserve the Akha’s culture through documentation and cultural education programs. The Network’s project, “Preserving Akha Culture through Documentation, Literacy and Cultural Education Programs: A Pilot Project” is now in its second year, and is continuing to record all annual animist religious rituals, documenting family genealogies, and preserving dances, games, traditional songs, and folk tales which have been orally transmitted over centuries. The pictures accompanying this article capture some of the Akha practices project members have documented. Since 2001, the AFCP has funded eleven projects in Thailand totaling more than \$300,000, which are preserving unique aspects of Thai cultural heritage.



ABOVE: Elderly Akha women enjoy a banquet after the completion of an irrigation ditch ceremony.



ABOVE: Akha youth perform a traditional dance.



AFS program provides teachers a “window” to U.S.

On August 26, 2011, Counselor for Public Affairs Ken Foster gave opening remarks on “US Embassy – Public Affairs and Promoting Mutual Understanding” to six Thai high school teachers from Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Nakhon Panom, Hat Yai, Narathiwat, and Phetburi. The six teachers were selected by the American Field Service (AFS) to travel to the U.S. and participate in an intensive three-week exchange program designed to give them an all-access pass to discover, explore and experience American society first-hand. Mr. Foster encouraged the teachers to take full advantage of the program, and expressed hope that the experiences and knowledge gained by them will allow them to communicate an accurate portrayal of the U.S. to their students when they return. It will also be an opportunity for them to discuss Thai culture and society with the Americans they meet. Since 1947, AFS has provided intercultural learning experiences that bring global cultures together by helping people connect, transforming the lives of thousands of students, families, and individuals every year. With exchange programs in more than 50 countries and a large network of volunteers, educators, and staff, AFS is committed to helping participants understand their immersion experiences in a foreign culture.



ABOVE: Public Affairs Counselor Ken Foster congratulates one of the lucky teachers headed to the U.S. on an AFS sponsored three-week exchange program.

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August 26, 2011

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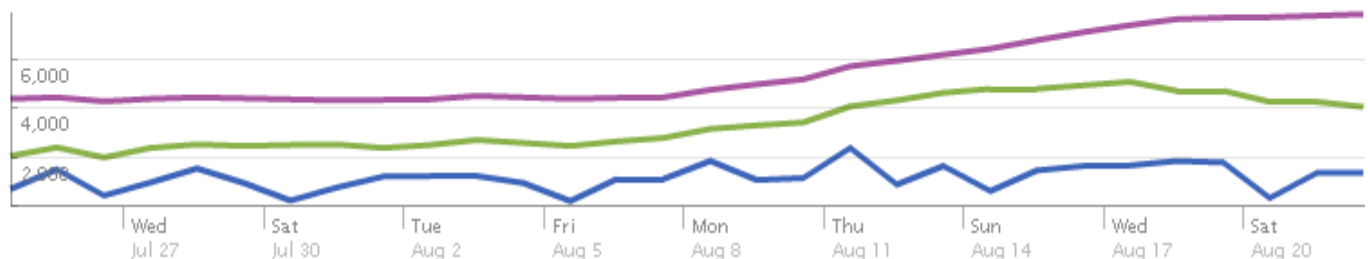
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