



June 2008

Commerce Secretary Gutierrez Visits Prague

The U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez visited Prague June 3 for discussions with Czech officials and the NGO sector focusing on the economic importance of upholding **intellectual property rights (IPR)**. He also discussed **developments in Cuba**. With regard to IPR, Secretary Gutierrez and Czech Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Milan Hovorka spoke of strengthening copyright protection efforts, particularly focusing on the markets in the border regions with Germany and Austria. On Cuba, Gutierrez stressed that the changes announced since Raul Castro assumed leadership from his brother are only “tactical steps aimed more to impress the international community than to have any effect on the Cuban people.” Gutierrez met with Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg, and representatives of NGOs that are active in the democratization process in Cuba. Gutierrez was appointed Secretary of Commerce in February 2005. Born in Havana in 1953, he came to the United States with his family in 1960.



Secretary Gutierrez in Prague June 3

Ambassador Opens New Brdy Bike Trail, Visits Afghan Children

Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanová opened **new bike trails in the Brdy military training area** on May 31, where the U.S. hopes to locate a missile defense radar. Ambassador Richard Graber participated in the opening and expressed his belief that the new trail will remain accessible to the public throughout the lifespan of the radar, and that the trails would perhaps even expand. He also believes that people will acknowledge radar’s importance for future safety and thinks that local residents will come to know Americans as good neighbors who respect the people and natural beauty of the Brdy area and contribute to the local economy. On June 2, Ambassador Graber, Afghan Ambassador Mohammad Kacem Fazelly, Czech Interior Minister Ivan Langer, and representatives of Prague university hospital visited The Oliva Children’s Medical

Institution in Ricany and met the six Afghan children recuperating from life-saving heart surgery. The young patients arrived in the Czech Republic in April under the auspices of the Czech humanitarian program MEDEVAC. On June 10, the Ambassador traveled to Brno for the opening of IBM’s Integrated Delivery Center. The Center employs 2,400 global IT professionals. Ambassador and Mrs. Graber also visited Lipenec northwest of Prague to speak with elementary students on the occasion of the school’s 70th anniversary. American diplomats look forward speaking at schools throughout the Czech Republic again in the fall as part of the U.S. Embassy Speakers Program.



U.S. Ambassador and Afghan heart patient in Ricany

U.S. Welcomes Czech Students to the Work and Travel Program

The U.S. Embassy has issued 2,600 J-1 visas so far in 2008. The majority of these visas are for university students participating in the **Summer Work & Travel program**. This popular program gives them the opportunity to work in a selected area in the U.S. and then travel throughout the country for up to 30 days. Many Czech students participate in the program more than once, improving their English, making new friends and earning money. The Embassy cooperates with student agencies throughout the Czech Republic to promote the opportunity and reserves several days each month for Summer Work and Travel J-1 visa applicants.



ESTA Coming Soon to Visa Waiver Countries

On June 3, the Department of Homeland Security announced a change in the Visa Waiver Program that should enable the expansion of visa free travel. It has completed the prototype of the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), a **new online system** required by the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 **for VWP travelers**. By January 2009, all citizens of VWP countries intending to travel visa-free to the United States for 90 days or less must identify themselves through the simple, non-intrusive and secure ESTA process. We remain hopeful that Czech citizens will be able to travel under VWP later in the year.



American Center Hosts Honorary Czech Consuls, Screens Ford's PSAs

Ten Honorary Consuls, men and women who voluntarily represent Czech Republic throughout the United States, visited the American Center in Prague on June 3. Under the authority of the Czech Foreign Ministry, they provide consular assistance to Czech visitors in the United States and serve as goodwill ambassadors to local American communities. Ambassador Richard Graber spoke to group, thanking them and stressing the importance of work to strengthening Czech-American ties. Later in June, the American Center joined the other embassies in screening Harrison Ford's three 30-second public service announcements (PSAs) for television on **combating wildlife trafficking** specially prepared in cooperation with the State Department for World Environment Day. U.S. diplomats, guest speaker from the Czech Ministry of the Environment Czech Jan Kucera, Czech CITES, and Prague ZOO representatives spoke of the importance of global cooperation protecting rare and endangered wildlife.



Honorary Consuls with Deputy PM Vondra in the American Center

Radio Farda Journalist Wins Prestigious Prize

Radio Farda journalist Ahmad Rafat, who has reported on human rights abuses around the world for more than 30

years, was presented the prestigious Ilaria Alpi prize by the Italian chapter of *Reporters Sans Frontieres* during a ceremony in Riccione, Italy. The award, named after an Italian journalist who was killed along with her cameraman in Somalia in 1994, recognizes courageous, investigative and fact-based reporting. "Winning this award reinforces for me the responsibility I feel to **continue reporting on human rights abuses and in defense of press freedom**," said Rafat. [Radio Farda](http://www.radiofarda.com) is the Persian-language broadcasting service of RFE/RL, based in Prague. Radio Farda broadcasts news and information to Iran 24 hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week. More info at www.radiofarda.com.

Czech-American Astronaut Cernan Revisits Prague

Apollo 17 commander, U.S. astronaut Eugene Cernan visited Prague on June 18-19, to celebrate the Czech **National Museum exhibition "Human Traces."** The exhibition features the Czechoslovak flag Cernan carried during his Moon landing in early 1970s and then donated to the Astronomic Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Cernan, who has made several visits to the region, said he feels both American and Czechoslovak, because his grandparents were of Czechoslovak origin. Cernan also met with Ambassador Graber and Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek.



Ambassador salutes U.S. Astronaut Cernan in the National Museum in Prague (Courtesy: National Museum)

Upcoming Events

- June 28 Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra (under U.S. Embassy auspices), Obecní dum, 7 pm
- July 1 Lecture on U.S. Leadership in the 21st century, Kim Holmes, Heritage Foundation, American Center, 1 – 2 pm
- July 7 U.S. Elections lecture with Igor Lukes, Harvard University Professor, Institute of International Relations, Prague, 4 pm.
- July 24 Lecture of architect Charles Durrett, American Center, 6:30 pm.

<http://prague.usembassy.gov>