



January 2009

Ambassador Graber Visits Czech Troops in Afghanistan

U.S. Ambassador Richard Graber visited Czech troops in Kabul, Afghanistan on December 18-19. He noted visiting Czech soldiers in Afghanistan “was one of the best 36 hours in my life. You can read about it or see it on television, but it is only



A U.S. soldier accompanies Ambassador Graber at Kabul airport (Photo: Jeff Holachek)

when you go there that you fully appreciate what your people do in Afghanistan...” Graber added: “I was really impressed by the job Czech soldiers and civilians do in a difficult part of Afghanistan. Their performance is exceptionally important for the security of Europe and the U.S.” After returning to Prague, the Ambassador commented that he hoped Czech leaders would “sit down and listen to what your people do in a dangerous environment to preserve our lives as they are now. ... I had heard that the Czech PRT [Provincial Reconstruction Team] in Loghar province is unique and provides a model that other PRTs should consider following. Now I understand why: the Czech soldiers and civilian experts there share the energy and belief of their NATO allies, while bringing a scope to their mission that few other PRTs can approach. I hope Czech politicians have an opportunity to sit down for awhile and listen to their soldiers and that local politics

do not affect the longstanding and well-known Czech commitment to helping advance human rights and improving living conditions around the world.”

People in Need’s Blazevic Wins Alice Masaryk Award

On the 60th anniversary of International Human Rights Day, U.S. Ambassador Richard Graber presented on December 10 the annual Alice Garrigue Masaryk Award to Igor Blazevic, the Human Rights and Democracy



Igor Blazevic awarded in Ambassador Graber’s residence in Prague (Photo: Helena Stehlikova)

Department director at the NGO People in Need. Blazevic, who also directs the One World Film Festival, was awarded for his long-standing commitment to human rights in the Czech Republic and abroad. Ambassador Graber said: „I dare to say that

there are few in the Czech Republic who have done more for the human rights cause than Igor. He is the driving force behind the One World Film Festival, which just celebrated its 10th anniversary this year and has grown into one of the world’s most important human rights film

festivals.” The U.S. Embassy in Prague began presenting the annual Alice Garrigue Masaryk Award (named after the preeminent Czech-American founder of the Czechoslovak Red Cross) in 2004 to recognize persons in the Czech Republic who have courageously promoted social justice and the defense of democracy.

Christmas in American Center

The American Center (A.C.) celebrated this year’s holiday season with a large party on December 18. There were



Christmas tree with ornaments showing 50 U.S. states in A.C. (Photo: Jakub Hornek)

many highlights to the evening: former Czech Television correspondent to the U.S. Roman Bradac interviewed famous Czech author Arnost Lustig and children from various Prague schools sang carols and played instruments. Center Director Mirek Konvalina said, “This year’s season was successful, we had a record number of visitors. We would like to thank all the supporters of our programs.”

U.S. EU Ambassador Silverberg in Prague

U.S. Ambassador to the European Union Kristen Silverberg was in Prague on December 17 to discuss energy and international issues with representatives of the Foreign and Environmental Ministries. She reaffirmed in an interview that a strong EU, which is trying to reform itself through the Lisbon Treaty, is in the U.S. interest. She noted that the EU must assume a bigger role in international affairs. "We don't always agree, but Europe remains our strongest ally," she said. Silverberg also talked about the Iranian threat, energy, climate issues and regional conflicts.



Silverberg talks to journalists in American Center (Photo: Jakub Hornek)

Ambassador Tours South Moravia

Ambassador Richard Graber traveled to southern Moravia in mid-December for a two-day program primarily aimed at supporting the newly established South Moravian Community Foundation (SMCF), which issued its first call for grant proposals on December 11. The NGO Echo Moravia's initiative resulted in the establishment of SMCF in 2008. Its aim is to support regionally beneficial cultural, educational, environmental and youth projects in the Břeclav and Hodonín area. Since the region is a traditionally strong producer of wine, the SMCF was founded using a portion of the revenues from charitable wine auctions co-organized by the VIA Foundation.



Ambassador in wine cellar in Hodonin (Photo: Vaclav Salek)

Representative Ellen Tauscher Leads Delegation to Prague

On December 17 and 18 a bipartisan U.S. Congressional delegation headed by Representative Ellen Tauscher visited the Czech Republic. Tauscher, a Democrat from California, was joined by Representatives Rick Larsen (D) and Doug Lamborn (R). The group discussed missile defense, the U.S.-Czech strategic security relationship and the NATO mission in Afghanistan with Deputy Prime Minister Alexandr Vondra and Foreign Minister Karel

Schwarzenberg. Tauscher said during the visit that the U.S. believed in the need for a missile-defense system and that the radar proposed for deployment in the Czech Republic would be an important element of it.

American Flag Photo Contest

Miroslav Nowak's haunting black-and-white composition won the inaugural "American Flag Through Your Eyes" photography contest. Andrea Korcekova was the runner-up and Jana Zmekova's entry took third place. About 80 Czech and Slovak photographers attended the awards ceremony at the American Center on December 10. The best pictures are on display at the American Center until January 16, when they will travel to other cities in the Czech Republic. Lead judge Jiri Turek presented the winners with framed pictures of U.S. flags he took in New York. More winning pictures can be seen online at http://prague.usembassy.gov/american_center.html.



The winning photography by Miroslav Novak

The Czech-American Award for Talented Students 2009

Masaryk University's International Institute of Political Science in Brno, the U.S. Embassy and the J.W. Fulbright Commission are pleased to announce the competition for the fourth annual Czech-American Award for Talented Students. The competition is intended for university students of all study levels and recent graduates who wrote or are currently writing texts related to the U.S. Topics for this year's competition are political science and international relations. The winner will be awarded 10,000CZK and his/her text will be published in one of the editions of the Journal of the International Institute of Political Science. The winner will be announced in May 2009 in Brno. The deadline for submissions is April 15.

Upcoming Events

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Jan. 15 | U.S. Presidential Inaugurations, American Center, 4:30 p.m. |
| Jan. 21 | Obama Administration's Foreign Policy (in cooperation with CESES), 4 p.m., A.C. |
| Jan. 22 | Presidential Movie Serie Part 1, 6:00, A.C. |
| Jan. 29 | Andy Warhol, exhibition opening, with Klaus Biesenbach, MoMA, Rudolfinum Gallery, Prague |