



June 2009

General Petraeus Appreciates Czech Help In Military Missions



General Petraeus shakes hand with Czech Chief of General Staff Vlastimil Picek (Photo: Jeff Holachek)

U.S. CENTCOM Commander, General David Petraeus, was in Prague on May 21 to thank Ministry of Defense and Czech military officials for the support the Czech Republic has provided in international missions in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. General Petraeus also said: "The U.S. armed forces have great respect for those who serve abroad and I would like to thank all Czech citizens for supporting their women and men in foreign missions." Calling the Czechs participation in Afghanistan "needed, noticed and appreciated," General Petraeus discussed future troop deployments there with Minister of Defense Martin Bartak; Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Vlastimil Picek; and Defense Ministry officials." Petraeus was appointed U.S. CENTCOM Commander in 2008. Prior to that, he served as Commanding General of Multinational Force in Iraq.

Radio Free Makes a Major Move

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) officially opened its new state-of-the-art headquarters at Hagibor in Prague on May 12. RFE/RL's 500 employees began their gradual move to the facility six months ago when Radio Free Iraq first broadcast from its new studio in February. "This is not just a new RFE/RL headquarters, this is also a monument to freedom that will be recognized around the world," said RFE/RL President Jeffrey Gedmin. RFE/RL broadcasts in 28 languages for 30 million listeners in 21 countries in which the U.S. supports the development of democracy, such as Russia, Belarus, Iraq, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

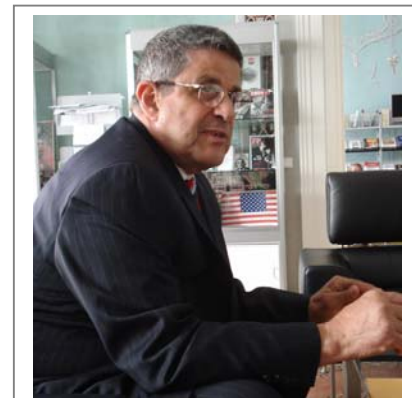


RFE President hails democracy's potential (Photo: Jakub Hornek)

Originally situated in Munich, RFE/RL moved in 1995 to the former seat of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly in Prague. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, RFE/RL sought to relocate to a secure facility in a less conspicuous part of Prague. The U.S. government established the Board of Broadcasting Governors, which oversees RFE, in 1949.

CSIS Expert Skeptical about Pipeline Plans

More gas pipelines may be essential to Europe's energy independence from Russia but they will be built only if they would be profitable, said William Siefken, an expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on May 27. "Energy security is formed by diversifying sources and clients. New pipelines would help both sides, but I don't believe they will become a reality anytime soon. With a spreading recession, there's simply not a sufficient market for projects like Nabucco-- or even Nord Stream and South Stream," Siefken told reporters in Prague. He noted that energy security for U.S. allies is in the U.S. interest but added that the U.S. must also do better in ridding itself of energy dependence on non-democratic regimes in West Africa and the Middle East. Siefken, a former U.S. diplomat and Lockheed Martin expert, was in Prague to speak on energy security at the Europeum conference on trans-Atlantic issues.



CSIS expert says profit must be pipelines' main driving force (Photo: Jakub Hornek)

American Helps Czechs Expand Bike Trails

At the end of May, Director of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) Mike Van Abel helped the Czech Mountain Bike Association's (CeMBA) preparations to establish the first Czech 'single-track' project, a network of sustainable mountain bike trails, in the Jizerske Mountains. Woodland trails specifically designed for mountain bikes have much less impact on nature than paved roads and are safer since their layout limits bikers' speeds, enabling both families with children and professional riders to use them. Van Abel, who has experience building single-track trails in his home state of



Mountain biking is increasingly popular in the Czech Republic. Van Abel says the real boom is at hand.

Colorado, said at a May 26 press conference at the American Center in Prague, "The conditions in Czech mountains are ideal for single track and the cooperation between bikers and local authorities (in the Jizerske Mountains) is very good."

Wild West without Visas

Before the busy summer tourist season, the U.S. Embassy's American Center in Prague featured on May 21st "The Wild West without Visas". The program, designed especially for the younger adventure set, provided advice about using the Visa Waiver program to travel to the U.S., along with some traveler's recommendations about what to see while in America's



Country band Paberky playing at Wild West program (Photo: Michal Stichauer)

vast West. Consular officials Stuart Hatcher of the U.S. Embassy and Martin Klucar of the Czech Embassy in Washington, via video, answered participants' inquiries. "Work and Travel" program promoter, Ondrej Zak, several student participants, and Association of Czech Travel Bureaus and Agencies Spokesperson Tomio Okumara also took questions and shared experience with traveling around North America. The American Center also launched the second amateur photographic competition, "America through Your Eyes." More

information how to travel to the United States on visa waiver can be found at the embassy page: <http://prague.usembassy.gov/esta.html>.

U.S. Companies See Franchising Opportunities in CR

Czech Franchise Institute (CFI) Managing Partner Jaroslav Tamchyna returned from Washington, D.C.'s Franchise Expo Fair with good news: American companies are very interested in expanding to the Czech Republic. Tamchyna noted, "Franchising is not only a fast food phenomenon but has spread to a lot of fields, especially service industries such as real estate, cleaning, automotive, postal and health care. Franchising originated in the United States approximately 150 years ago... In the Czech Republic franchising is still developing." On October 20, the U.S. Embassy and the Czech Franchise Institute will co-host 'American Franchise Day' in Prague. For more information contact Jana Ruckerová from U.S. Embassy at Jana.Ruckerova@mail.doc.gov.

U.S. Embassy Paid Tribute to Roma Holocaust Victims at Lety

On May 13, Political Councilor Charles Blaha attended the annual commemorative ceremony at the burial site of the former concentration camp for Roma in Lety. This year's event attracted a much larger number of citizens than ever before. There were some 250 people, including numerous Roma representatives, 160 high school students and numerous diplomatic representatives. Officials from the Czech government and parliament included Human Rights Minister Michael Kocab and former Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg.



More people than ever came to honor Roma victims during WWII (Photo: Helena Markusova)

Upcoming Events

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| June 10 | "Politics, Identity, Culture," Prague Writers' Festival, American Center (A.C.), Trziste 13, Praha 1, 5 pm. |
| June 11 | "American Underground Comics", Prague Writers' Festival, A.C., 5 pm. |
| June 18 | Lecture: Prague Festival of Glass Artists, American Center, 6 pm. |
| June 22 | Discover Chicago, A.C., 5:30 |