

International Airmen & Guardians Newsletter

Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs

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Pictured: Sen. Tammy Duckworth (center) with (L-R) SDO/DATT to Thailand, COL Kurt Leffler; USAF Maj Jessica Padoemthontaweekij; Amb. Robert Godec; RTAF ACSC Commandant, AVM Pruitt Tuguesin; MAJ Pablo Valentin (JUSMAGTHAI); and five RTAF female officers and an RTAF ACSC instructor

Sen. Duckworth Visits Thailand—and ODE FAO Selectee

By: Liam Arne, SAF/IAPA, in conversation with Maj Jessica Padoemthontaweekij

Q (Arne): What brought you to Thailand?

A (Padoemthontaweekij): I was offered the opportunity to go to Overseas Developmental Education (ODE) to attend the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) Air Command and Staff College (ACSC). It was awesome to see that the USAF promoted women's leadership and integration for our Allies and partners as well. We increase our lethality by adding diversity and thus diverse problem solving. I moved from Thailand to the U.S. at [the age of] eight, so it was great to re-engage with the culture as an adult too.

Q: That's great! I saw Sen. Tammy Duckworth visited—how did that come about?

A: The USecAF recommended Sen. Duckworth visit while in Thailand on 11 Aug. We introduced the first female members of RTAF ACSC Class 67 and shared a video about their historic selection. She is a Thai-American veteran and spoke Thai fluently throughout the event, during which she shared great insight and advice from her long career.

Q: What do you think the impact of this meeting will be?

A: Sen. Duckworth is very popular in Thailand due to her facilitation of 1.5 million COVID-19 vaccines in the country along with her shared Thai heritage. She offered her contact information to the women present, who found her inspirational. The women selected for Class 67 are top-notch, and she illustrated how her efforts—like theirs—proved that women can be leaders in an operational Air Force. The RTAF appreciated such a high-level engagement and I feel it helped cement the promotion of women officers in the following years.

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A Message from the IAPA Division Chief, Col “Drew” Carey Johnson

Summer and fall have been busy for IAPA with frequent travel for events located from Hawai'i to Germany. Despite the jetlag, we are striving forward to serve the International Airmen & Guardians community's needs more than ever. As a result, I have a few exciting updates to share with you.

Following the retirement of Col Hamann and Col Allen this summer, my team and I reviewed multiple records and conducted interviews to produce a list of highly talented senior regional FAO (SRF) candidates. From this list, Maj Gen Cheater selected Col Charles Barton and Col Cole Bray as the AFRICOM and CENTCOM SRFs, respectively. We are excited for Cols Barton and Bray to share their expertise and experience to mentor FAOs across these AORs.

After many months of effort, we are honored to share that FAO badges are finally stocking shelves in BXs around the globe. The cloth badge is available already in the Pentagon and the Presidio of Monterey; stay tuned as the badges are stocked in even more locations. The metal badge will be available very soon in those same sites, as well. I hope that you will wear these badges with pride to show your hard work and service to our Nation as a FAO.



IAPA is offering two new virtual language platforms for those looking to refresh or expand their language skills. SCOLA and CL-150 are asynchronous programs tailorable to your needs. SCOLA is based around real-world scenarios adjusted to your required level of training while CL-150 offers valuable self-testing options to practice for the DLPT or OPI. These contracts will be valuable additions to our wide repertoire of language and cultural expertise resources available to our International Airmen & Guardians.

It has been a joy to participate in the MPEP forums at Hickam AFB, Frankfurt, Germany, and Andrews AFB over the last few months. Maj Gen Cheater and I greatly appreciated the opportunity to get to know our exchange personnel personally and to better understand an exceptional mission serving alongside our Allies and partners. We will continue to meet as many of our International Airmen & Guardians as often as we can to hear your feedback on how we can better serve our programs.

Finally, congratulations to our recent FAO and MPEP IDE and SDE selectees! We look forward to seeing how your continuing education will shape not only your career but the wellbeing of our Nation.

FY24 Important Dates:

6 Dec: Post-FAO Fall DT Webinar

8 & 9 Jan: FAOSS Webinars

22 Jan-16 Feb: FAOSS application open

22-26 Jan: Joint FAO Course I, DLI- Monterey, CA

11-15 Mar: Spring FAO Development Team Meeting, JBSA Randolph, TX

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MPEP Forums Recap

Hundreds of exchange personnel and MPEP staff congregated this summer in three forums across the world. MPEP Indo-Pacific met at Hickam AFB in Hawaii 21-22 Jun; MPEP Europe, Middle East, and Africa in Frankfurt, Germany 15-17 Aug; and MPEP Americas at Andrews AFB in Maryland 20-22 Sep.

The Military Personnel Exchange Program (MPEP) is a foreign partner assignment in an Airman/Guardian's core AFSC to increase interoperability and build upon U.S. strategic partnerships and Alliances. The program has grown to 568 exchanges worldwide, to include new partners and missions in Air and Space.

During the forums, exchange personnel had face-to-face time with leadership and each other, gathered for a commander's call, and were refreshed on the Combatant Commands' operational objectives in their AORs. Each exchange personnel took time to provide information about their exchange mission, location, and the challenges and successes they have experienced while embedded within a partner air force.

A FiT Family in Focus: The Béténés

By: Liam Arne, SAF/IAPA

Maj Claude Béténé is an AFRICOM FAO-in-Training (FiT) studying at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, CA. He grew up in Cameroon before studying in Senegal where he met his future wife, Kate. He hopes to use his background and experience to bridge gaps with Allies & partners. Béténé bypassed the Defense Language Institute (DLI) as a native French speaker, but he is "amazed by my fellow FiTs' hard work to master their language skills."

While one may assume he is already an Africa expert, Béténé entered NPS with the mindset to learn from everyone around him in the joint environment and to meld his lived experience with academia to craft a well-rounded perspective. However, the academic rigor means reading hundreds of pages a night which the Béténés note requires strong boundaries to balance spending time with family and your studies.

The Béténés have loved the diverse community and the natural beauty of the area. They feel particularly lucky to connect with so many international students at NPS—they recommend volunteering to help an international family settle into Monterey to build connections and learn more about their partner nations. Additionally, Béténé's parents live with them and even offer French tutoring to those studying at DLI!

Kate says she "feels taken care of as a family" amongst the joint FAO community and that "we are treated like people, not numbers" by IAPA staff. She has maintained connections with other FAOs and spouses she met at the Joint FAO Course, which she encourages spouses to attend in person, as available. Additionally, Kate recommends that spouses in Monterey seek out Mrs. Tully's monthly meetings and to lean on your peers across services to learn more about the life of a FAO family.

The Béténés look forward to putting their international experience to use at their first FAO assignment as a Security Cooperation Officer (SCO) in Morocco in May.

If you would like to hear more from Kate and other FAO spouses, you can access a recording of our latest FAO spouse webinar [here](#) (password: FAO2030).



Pictured: Maj Claude Béténé and his wife, Kate Béténé

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AFCLC, Air University Move to Cloud-Based System to Optimize Access

By: Mikala McCurry, AFCLC Outreach Team

The Air Force Culture and Language Center and Air University answered the call to address infrastructure modernization and resource access for Airmen and Department of Defense users with the recent migration of its Language Enabled Development Resource, or LEaDeR, to a cloud-based system.

LEaDeR is a language-enabled training management system designed to facilitate career-spanning development for total force Airmen. Language Enabled Airmen Program Scholars, Foreign Area Officers, Air Force Office of Special Investigation agents, Mobility Support Advisory Squadron members, and other individuals who participate in AFCLC's online learning modules can manage their student profiles, network, access resources, and connect with AFCLC staff through the LEaDeR platform.

AFCLC Director Howard Ward said, "This migration to a cloud-based system will completely transform how we interact with our partner organizations and sister services in the future while enhancing access to training, education, and resources for language-enabled and cross-culturally competent service members globally."

DOD and inter-governmental agencies are also able to request critical language and culture support through LEaDeR to integrate LEAP Scholars and FAOs in exercises, mobile training teams, international conferences, and translation projects by submitting Training Partnership Requests. These processes are now faster and more secure, accessible, and efficient through the Cloud One platform. Individuals with a Common Access Card can access LEaDeR as a program participant, LEAP applicant, requestor of LEAP support, or visitor at <https://leader.cce.af.mil>.

AFCLC Released 100th Video on Culture Guide App

By: Mikala McCurry, AFCLC Outreach Team

The Air Force Culture and Language Center has reinforced its commitment to being the "Air Force's Global Classroom" and modernizing the learning environment for Airmen by releasing its 100th educational video on the AFCLC Culture Guide mobile app.

The Culture Guide app is one of many tools AFCLC offers to modernize learning strategies to maintain a competitive edge, enhance knowledge of Allies and partners to build the strongest possible coalitions, and increase adversary understanding for integrated deterrence.

"The Culture Guide mobile app 2.0 is less than 2 years old, so we've averaged a new video or more a week," AFCLC Director Howard Ward said. "We're working hard to put on-demand content out to a busy force with a global mission that needs cross-cultural competence quickly."

Airmen receive a Certificate of Completion to upload to their learning record for credit upon completion of each course. These courses are also components of the United States Air Force Ready Airman Training program required for all Airmen. Between the courses and educational videos, military members and civilians have access to more than 40 hours of educational content for cultural competence directly from their mobile devices.

More than 36,000 individuals have accessed the resources and educational content available on the Culture Guide mobile app. This free mobile app is available to all DOD and non-DOD users in Apple App Store and Google Play and cleared for Department of Defense devices.

How do you say "air force" in your target language?

French:
armée de l'air

Spanish:
ejército del Aire

Chinese:
空军 (*kōngjūn*)

Arabic:
الْجَوِّيَّةُ الْفَوَات (al-quwwat al-jawiyah)

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Meet Your SOUTHCOM Senior Regional FAO (SRF): Mr. Dave Delmonaco

By: Liam Arne, SAF/IAPA



Pictured: Dave Delmonaco (left) and Liam Arne

The International Airmen & Guardians Newsletter will be featuring a SRF from each AOR. Look out for a new profile in every upcoming edition!

At first glance, Dave Delmonaco might seem like an unusual choice for an SRF as a civilian. However, don't let his status as a GS-15 fool you—before retiring in 2019, Delmonaco served in eight FAO assignments over his Air Force career. Today, he is embedded in USAF's mission in SOUTHCOM as the Executive Director of A589 at AFSOUTH.

Delmonaco's first brush with the FAO lifestyle came early in his career when he took a gap year halfway through his studies at USAFA to explore the world. Delmonaco recalled, "I wanted to learn Chinese, so I bought a one-way ticket to Taiwan. I could say 'hello,' 'goodbye,' 'thank you,' and 'My name is Dave' in Chinese. I ended up staying in Taiwan for seven months including a lot of adventures and some close

calls before I went back to the Air Force Academy." As a result, Delmonaco became a Chinese FAO, but he never got the opportunity to use his language skills as a rated officer. He couldn't shake his international mindset though, and he soon applied to international Air Command Staff Colleges where he landed a position in Argentina—with no Spanish skills. That fateful decision is how his career pivoted to SOUTHCOM, where he has remained until today.

Delmonaco finds that "regardless of your level as a FAO, you can influence policy at the highest level of the U.S. government. You forge such strong relationships with U.S. and foreign entities to the point that you could pick up the phone and call a country's Air Chief, the Chief of Defense, or maybe even their President." He says the pinnacle for him as a FAO was serving as the Secretary General of the System of Cooperation Among the American Air Forces (SICOFAA) where he could "sit at the principal table with all the air chiefs in the Western Hemisphere and know that I could talk to them about issues important to our nations." As fast-paced as the job can be, Delmonaco said that FAOs should always step back and ensure their family is supported amidst each transition. His children attended 13 schools over 17 assignments—frequently overseas—and he learned that you must carve out time to help your family adjust to their new environment.

Delmonaco noted that "before IAPA devised the SRF position, there was a vacuum for mentorship within each command. Being an SRF is an additional duty for me, but one I love and take on gladly." With approximately 90 FAOs in SOUTHCOM, he stays busy supporting FAOs to define and reach their career goals. Delmonaco's top tip for FAOs is to never stop reading, affirming that "it is important to make connections and be well-read on policy from the national level down to the ambassador's desires at an embassy. You have to thread that together with what you're doing today and what the ambassador, the geographic command, and the President wants." Another essential task is to stay current on your language skills—he says he hasn't read a book in English in eight years to practice his Spanish!

Delmonaco expressed he will always make time to speak with FAOs about the career field, their goals, or the 78 vehicles he has owned. He asserts that "I love my job and I'm not going anywhere soon, so please feel encouraged to develop a relationship with me. But don't google me!" Editor's note: I recommend googling him and Hugo Chavez.

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Congratulations to our 2023 Command Selectees!

Lt Col Banks, Lyndsey—Inter-European Air Forces Academy (IEAFA)

Lt Col Deal, David—637th International Support Sq

Lt Col Echols, Bradley—337th Air Support Sq

Lt Col Hanson, Alexandra—837th Training Sq

Lt Col Lukshis, Celeste—Military Personnel Exchange Program (MPEP) Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA)

Lt Col Thomas, Aaron—Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) Bangkok

Lt Col Thuli, Zachariah—318th Training Sq

Congratulations to our MPEP Promotees!

Col (S) Garner, Jason
(Australia)

Lt Col (S) Hamilton, Johnathan
(UK)

Lt Col (S) Stewart, Blaine
(UK)

Lt Col (S) Farkas, Jenifer
(Canada)

Congratulations to our MPEP IDE Selectees & Alternates!

Maj Dunn, Christopher (Australia) Australian Command and Staff College

IDE Alternates: Maj Trevor Gardner
(Canada), Maj Pablo Kruger (UK),
Maj Trevor Leeming (Canada)

Maj Gramlich, Jennifer (Australia) Air University Fellows

Maj Pike, Stephen (Australia) Air Command and Staff College

Congratulations to our 2023 IDE & SDE FAO Selectees!

Maj Alejo, Jose

12R Brazilian ACSC

Lt Col Benton, Julian Inter-American Defense College

Maj Brush, David

13B Japanese ACSC

Lt Col Derentz, Adam Belgium Superior Staff Course

Maj Fischbach, Jason

62E Spanish Joint ACSC

Lt Col Griffith, Paul Bangladesh National Defense School

Maj Gonzalez Arteaga, Maribel

63A Colombia CEM ACSC

Lt Col Horii, Brandon Japanese National Institute for
Defense Studies

Maj Hampson, Christopher

19Z Singapore ACSC

Lt Col Smith, Robert Royal Jordanian National Defense
College

Maj Hieronymus, Aaron

12F Norwegian ACSC

Lt Col Thomas, Kevin AWC

Maj Hofschneider, Kimberly

13M Rep. of Korea ACSC

Lt Col Weinert, Trevor AWC

Maj O'Kelley, Michael

11B Royal Thai ACSC

Maj O'Neill, Tess

14N Indonesia ACSC

Maj Ruiz, Ana

38F WHINSEC

Maj Stephens, Taylor

11M German ACSC

Maj Weston, Joshua

14N French War School

Maj Williams, Joshua

11F WHINSEC

FAO Highlight: DPAA Europe DO

Lt Col Zach Thuli is a EUCOM FAO serving as Director of Operations in DPAA's Detachment in Europe. From their small office near Ramstein AB, Germany, the Detachment is tasked with overseeing teams conducting field operations in search of the more than 22,000 Service members missing from WWII.



Pictured: DPAA personnel conduct an excavation to find a U.S. aircraft crew lost over Germany. Credit: USMC Sgt Jack Rigby