



July 2015

DoD Passport and Visa Office Newsletter



Dr. Toye Latimore
Director

Message from the Director

Message from the Director:
On behalf of the LSW community, I would like to thank each and every one that has made my stay here at LSW a success. However, as with everything else, all things must come to an end. I have decided to retire after 35 years of federal service. Upon my departure, the Executive Director, AHS will name a new Director. This has been one of the most challenging assignments that I have undertaken in my entire career, however, it has also proven outstanding results. When I first arrived in LSW, there was at least 3 months' worth of Passports/Visas that were backlogged. Soldiers, family members and civilians missed their deployment dates, our customer service ratings were at an all-time low, no one responded to customer's telephone calls and the organization did not have the required resources to process the volume of passports/visas that

were being submitted by all Passport Agents. Our Passport Agent training program was not up to standard, not all Agents were in compliance with their training requirements and LSW had no succession plan for moving forward. One of my first priorities was to eradicate the backlog and get the customers deployed in a timely fashion. This took time and significant resources. With the help of senior leadership, our employees and the soldiers on Fort Belvoir, LSW was given the proper resources from a service member perspective and the soldiers and civilian employees eventually eradicated the backlog. I am so grateful for all of the help, dedication to mission and the "we will make it happen" attitude displayed by the soldiers and civilians. The soldiers worked tirelessly to ensure that the mail was processed in a timely manner, all mail was opened and accounted for and everyone worked with the units to provide status of their documents. So to the soldiers of LSW, without your loyalty and dedication to duty, I will always be indebted to all of you and grateful for your support. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You all know who you are.

In addition to the soldiers, the civilians stepped up and provided their expertise and support. Many have since retired and moved on to other positions, but the civilians were overwhelmed if not, over worked due to limited resources. OAA went on a mission to fill every position in the LSW directorate and now we have a full staff of employees. To the civilians who have worked and now work in LSW, thank you very much for your great attitude, your expertise and your work ethic for making LSW Passport/Visa office the benchmark for all other Passport Acceptance Facilities to emulate. Without your attention to detail, your drive and determination, we would still be opening boxes of mail. However, you all set the standard and ensured that the mission was accomplished by putting in countless hours to get the directorate back on track. To augment the soldiers and civilians, LSW had to hire contractors to assist with this mission. LSW processes well over 210,000 passports and visas a year and the volume was just overwhelming.

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Message from the Director (Continued)

To the contractor employees of IP Keys, Inc., you have been an inspiration and I thank each and every one of you for all of your service to the war fighters, their families and the civilians. You all will truly be missed. In addition to processing passports/visas, LSW's customer service ratings were not very impressive. Today, we have a Tier I, II, and III Help Desk that allows the telephones to be answered 24X7. This was a huge accomplishment and the war fighters can receive real time status on their documents, especially those service members that are in OCONUS environments. Today, we receive nothing but positive ICE comments from everyone, Senior Officers consistently have taken the time to come by and/or send notes of appreciation, and for that, we appreciate the recognition. It has lifted the spirits and confidence of all employees alike. There is nothing like a positive work environment!!!! The most positive change has been partnering with our stakeholders such as G-3/5/7, FORSCOM, CENTCOM, the Special Issuance Agency (SIA), and our Liaison partners with the State Department and DSCA. This change has afforded LSW to make changes to our customer service to ensure that the word is getting out about deployments, Passport Matters has been revamped, our training strategy has changed to ensure that all Agents are being trained, we are

tracking the Agents and how long it's been since they have had training, we provide IPR's to senior leadership, we participate in VTC's with our stakeholders and our Liaison Officers in the desert validate if units are due to deploy and how many service members will deploy. This along with other initiatives have proven to be very successful. We have great communication channels and our jobs are so much easier. We trust all of our information that is received from our stakeholders and have adopted the "one team/one fight" concept. Most importantly, we have just passed the bi-annual State Department inspection with no deficiencies. Our newsletter has proven to be successful and now is read by every Passport Agent and all of our stakeholders. From an outreach perspective, LSW has visited many of the facilities overseas in an effort to hear the issues and problems that the Agents have been faced with such as shortage of personnel to process documents. While many of these offices, take these positions out of hide, we have tried to streamline the PAAF's to ensure that we have enough PAAFs to support everyone and that no one turns down any service member for assistance regardless of the service (i.e. Army, Air Force, Marines, Navy,). In addition, LSW has passed many internal audits from our own lead-

ership and have prepared for many external audits. We consistently focus on preparation, transparency and communication to the military community, and it is my hope that the focus will never change. To the Embassies who have bailed us out so many times due to submission of late documents, I salute each and every one of you for everything you have done for the war fighter and for LSW. Your friendship means more to me than you will ever know. To the UAE Embassy, Monir and Tamara, well done my friends, well done. You both have continuously set the standard for customer service and I will never forget the relationships that we have built. To all the other embassy personnel that I have had the pleasure of building a relationship with; I bid you all farewell and thank you for your support to the DoD community.

Lastly, to all the senior leaders, employees and colleagues, thank you for the opportunity and support to showcase my leadership skills and for allowing us in LSW to rejuvenate this organization that required repair. The organization is sustainable, processes have been implemented and our customers are happy. This is a measure of success and all the success goes to the employees of LSW.

Best wishes to all!

Dr. Toye Latimore

Director, LSW



Nicole Jungermann and the Customer Service team at her farewell.



Passport and Visa

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) Embassy informed us that they will be closed the entire week of July 20-24 and that they will only accept 5 visa applications per day between 9-16 July due to a decrease in available embassy personnel. Logistics Service Washington will be limited to submitting a maximum of 140 visa applications between 1 July and 2 August. Along with the revised embassy hours due to Ramadan, we expect delays in the KSA visa process.

The Embassy of Uganda visa process has now changed. In lieu of sending a visa application with the passport, the

Consulate now requires that the applicant complete the online application at <http://washington.mofa.go.ug/data-smenu-88-Apply-online.html>, print off the completion receipt and enclose this in the packet. The only difference with this new process is that we will be turning in an application receipt which is printed off, instead of a full application.

An Aircraft and Personnel Automated Clearance System (APACS) approval is now mandatory for any visa application going to Peru for visits outside of the Embassy. The Peru Consulate will not accept any visa applications unless an APACS

request is approved by the DAO Office at the US Embassy in Lima, Peru.

The Republic of Georgia now requires copies of birth certificates and marriage certificates for personnel being assigned long term (PCSing).

Our quarterly Passport and Visa Agent VTC is presently scheduled for 28 and 30 July. An email will be sent to all agents informing them of the exact time and VTC re-

LSW Spotlight

During this newsletter, we want to feature Ms Betty Siadto. Ms Siadto was born and raised in Jacksboro, Tennessee. She grew up being both a fan and a participant of competitive ice skating. After graduating from high school in Tennessee, she moved to the National Capital Region in Washington DC. Her initial government employment began with the Department of the Navy in their Passport and Visa Office located in Arlington, VA. She was promoted

through the ranks and became a supervisor during her tenure there. After the Department of the Navy relocated their Passport and Visa Office to Tennessee, Ms Siadto remained in the Washington DC metro area and moved her employment to the Department of the Army (DA). She initially worked in the Pentagon supporting both the passport and visa programs for DA. She has moved three separate times with DA while remaining in the same program office.

She is an acknowledged Subject Matter Expert on all visa requirements and the team relies upon her to perform error free close outs, perform mailroom operations and generate short notice visa letters with both Department of State letterhead along with letters requiring the Department of Defense letterhead. Ms Siadto now devotes lots of her free time to attending antique sales.



Ms. Betty Siadto leading the team during mail room operations.

Customer Service Operations (CSO)



Mr Edmund Snead at the front counter

We are excited to have the FY16 training schedule approved and posted to Passport Matters. This year the schedule has three distinct training tracks: New Agent, Refresher, and Two Day Refresher. We have eleven courses scheduled with four of them off-site courses; California, Hawaii, Texas, and Germany. Tentatively we have facilities in San Diego, Pearl Harbor, Fort Sam Huston and Frankfort willing to host the training. We set the training up into the different tracks based upon the critiques from this year where we had both new agents and agents that have not been to training in the past two years. The feedback was that the more experienced agents had specific detailed questions that intimidated and confused the new agents and therefore the new agents did not ask questions they needed answered. If you haven't already signed up for training this FY, next year is our last opportunity to get all of our agents that have not been to a refresher course in over two years recertified. Working with SIA, the LSW training team is showing 214 agents that still need to be recertified. To support that effort we have set aside three of our eleven training opportunities just for this population; one in each of the first three quarters of the FY. If you fall into this category, defined by SIA as last attending training in July of 2013 or

earlier, these are your only training options. These courses are clearly noted on the schedule as Two Day Refresher (Only for agents over two years from last training). There is very little room for procrastination in signing up because we are limited to 75 seats per course. These are first come first serve with the October course already a third filled. Failing to be recertified by the end of the third quarter is grounds for SIA to immediately deactivate you as a DoD Passport Acceptance Agent. If you have any trouble signing up for a course please let us know by using our training group email (usarmy.belvoir.hqda-ooa-dol-w.mbx.executive@mail.mil) and if possible provide a screenshot of the error so we can help fix what is going on.

Another trouble area where the field is asking for help is in locations where customers are being turned away or referred to other facilities. Some of these calls are more a miscommunication than an actual problem (e.g., we can't help today because today is our by appointment day). In the few instances where we do see customers being referred to other facilities, I would like to remind everyone that as part of the responsibility of becoming a DoD Passport Acceptance Facility or Agent is the requirement to support the entire DoD community military, civilians and all dependents. We understand the local constraints and the increased workload. I ask that we keep in mind the customers perspective in what is most likely new territory for them and make sure the reason why we might not be able to help today is understood. We need to all work together to meet the mission requirements within the local geographic areas.

Our help desk and call center is collectively one of the best tools we have for supporting the agents and customers. Last month the help desk and call center, Tier I and Tier II, handled over 2300 calls and 1200 emails. Per the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between LSW and the Department of State (DoS) the LSW help desk is limited in what we can provide on the status of your actions. The status information customers receive will be either "Pending", "Issued", or "Not Issued". "Pending" means that the case is still undergoing adjudication, "Issued" means that the passport has been issued and "Not Issued" means that the passport request was denied, adjudication is completed with a conclusion of do not issue. The Department of State will continue to provide assistance regarding applications, placed on hold for additional information.

Our facilities inspection team is finding that we need to add some emphasis on keeping SIA up to date on personnel changes. We are required to send in changes within five business days to CA-PPT-SIA-CS@state.gov. Also, please add usarmy.belvoir.hqda-ooa-dol-w.mbx.paaf@mail.mil in the cc line when you send in your SIA compliance check list.

Regards,

Stephen Morgan
Customer Service Operations Chief

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Mr. Leonard Norman hard at work sorting outgoing mail