



**THE AIR UNIVERSITY
INTERNATIONAL OFFICER SCHOOL**



**ALABAMA GOODWILL AMBASSADORS
HANDBOOK**

4 June 2014

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PREFACE

Importance of an Alabama Goodwill Ambassador

Well, this is it! You have just gotten off an airplane with your family in the state capital in a foreign country. The trip took the equivalent of two days and so far everything seems fine except that you, your wife and children are exhausted. As you leave the ramp and enter the terminal, you begin to realize just how little you really know about this country and its people. Your wife and children become silent and anxious as they look at the strange uniforms, clothes and faces of individuals speaking a language that they do not understand. Even your understanding of the language is limited, especially since there is such uniqueness to the way southerners speak. At this point you wonder how your family will survive during your stay. Especially since one week after you arrive, school starts! But before that, you will need to find housing for your family, a car to drive, and your children need to be enrolled in school.

Surprise! Not even three steps into the terminal, a uniformed military member personally greets you and your family. Standing beside the USAF representative is a man and his wife in American clothing, also extending their hands to greet you all. They tell you they are Alabama Goodwill Ambassadors (AGA) and want to be your friends throughout your stay and to assist in your adjustment to American culture. The basket with fruit and snacks they present to you and your family is a wonderful, welcome gift, making all of you feel more at ease. Alabama might not be so bad after all. You are invited to dinner the next night and then you realize someone is here to help and most of all to just be a “friend”.

The above scenario is how the majority of international students and their families feel upon arriving in Montgomery. The presence of an USAF representative is mandatory; however, the presence of the Alabama Goodwill Ambassador is voluntary. This guide will assist you in understanding the international officer, the reason he is at Maxwell AFB and what the Alabama Goodwill Ambassador program is all about.

AGA CHECKLIST

Student's Name: _____ Country: _____

Spouses Name: _____

Children's Name(s): 1. _____ 4. _____
2. _____ 5. _____
3. _____ 6. _____

Arrival Date: _____ Time: _____ Airline: _____ Flight #: _____

Inprocessing Appointment: _____ (at IOS)

Mobile Phone: _____ Email: _____

LODGING:

Temp Location: _____ Phone: _____

Perm Location: _____ Phone: _____

BOQ Room #: _____ Phone: 953-2055 then enter room number

CHECKLIST ITEMS:

IF POSSIBLE:

- Make contact prior to arrival: _____
- Meet at airport, transport to lodging: _____
- Transport to inprocessing appointment: _____
- Locate nearest emergency room: _____
- Locate local shopping locations: _____

IF NEEDED:

- Help find housing: _____
- Help purchase a car: _____
 - Assist to obtain registration: _____
 - Assist to obtain insurance: _____
- Help enroll children in school: _____

PART I
THE ALABAMA GOODWILL AMBASSADOR PROGRAM



The Alabama Goodwill Ambassador (AGA) Program began some 40 years ago as a cooperative effort between Air University and the Lions Club. The AGA program has been instrumental in the successful graduation of over 11,000 international military students (IMS) with more than 400 becoming Chiefs of their Nation's Air Force or higher within their military or government. Through the gracious support of the AGAs, this program provides a very personal means of exposing our IMS and their families to U.S. ideals and culture. AGAs have sponsored IMS from over 140 countries and are hosts to 200+ IMS and 300+ dependents every year.

Today, the AGA Program operates under the umbrella of the Department of Defense Field Studies Program (FSP). The FSP identifies community sponsorship programs as "important in assisting IMS in getting to know American people and how they live. Sponsorship programs, both military and civilian, are labor intensive, but their values cannot be overstated." AGAs fill this critical role by building partnerships, establishing friendships, helping IMS and their families feel welcome, and creating a lasting, positive impression of our nation and people. AGAs truly embody the spirit of southern hospitality for which Alabama, especially the River Region, is famous for. The relationships made through this program "often continue the education and cultural awareness process long after the individual returns home."

The AGA program is made possible by the volunteerism of individuals in the greater Montgomery area. As a friend to the international officer and his/her family there is no financial obligation. AGAs make the international student/family feel more comfortable in adjusting to living in the USA. AGA volunteers are especially helpful in the initial hours, days, and weeks as their officer/family deal with "settling in." These may include renting an apartment, buying a car, getting utilities turned on, etc.

Objectives of the Program

AGAs serve an important role by:

- Creating a lasting, positive impression of our nation and its people
- Acquainting our international guests with our ways and customs
- Correcting erroneous impressions created by movies, television, and other media
- Promoting an understanding of our national character
- Informing ourselves about our international neighbors

Your role as an AGA does not mean you have to be an expert in international relations. The sincere hospitality you will show your student will long be appreciated and remembered. Many AGAs later visit their students and families, enjoying hospitality not available to the average tourist.

The following guidelines will help in your ambassadorial role:

- You are a host, not a promoting agency for the United States. Overselling our country has the hollow ring of propaganda.
- Realize that although we cherish our democratic form of government, it might not be the form most suitable for your visitor's homeland.
- Appreciate the culture and society of people from nations with less technology and material wealth than we have. They often have much more to give us on an interpersonal level, and can greatly enrich our lives.
- Relax if a quiet lull follows an active discussion. Most Americans feel uncomfortable with quiet periods during a conversation, but friendly "silent language" can convey a respect and understanding that words cannot.

Preparation

As soon as you know the country of your officer, begin to learn particulars about that country and culture. Check the Internet for some basic information, such as:

- Greetings in their language
- Form of government
- Location and size of capital and main cities
- Ethnic makeup
- Religious preference
- Holidays
- Political situation



Arrival

Once the International Officer School (IOS) provides you with information about your officer's arrival, plan to greet the officer/family at the airport. IOS will also be there to meet and brief the arriving international officers and provide transportation to their pre-arranged temporary living quarters.

Initially your officer may seem aloof or shy. Often their journey here has been exhausting. You must take the initiative, as many of the officers are reluctant to make the first move, since they are in an unfamiliar cultural environment and have to speak in a foreign language (English).

The officer already may have your contact information; however, a note from you outlining your name, address, telephone, and email information will be appreciated. If you would like you may wish to take a small basket or bag with some fruit or snacks for them to enjoy their first night in town before they have the opportunity to shop for food. If at all possible an invitation to your home for dinner, within 48-72 hours of arrival, will help you better understand your officer's initial needs. Ask about any food allergies or food restrictions. Ensure your student has transportation. Your home offers a non-intimidating environment for getting acquainted.

At that time, plan your next meeting to initiate steps to handle the basics for settling into the community. You will find that your willingness to assist them in acquiring and understanding a lease, helping to arrange utilities, showing them Montgomery and the surrounding area, as well as giving them suggestions for transportation, will be very rewarding and greatly appreciated.

Schooling for their children is another issue that may require your assistance. You may need to mention the importance of knowing what schools the children will have to attend if they lease a property in a certain area. Some sponsors offer assistance regarding the school registration process. In addition, forms that will be sent home from a school in the first few days may need the sponsor's help in clarifying. Your efforts usually result in a lasting friendship.

Language Barrier

Although many officers understand English very well, there are others who know the language only moderately well. Eliminate any frustration by:

- Speaking slowly and clearly without distorting speech. For greater comprehension, an email vs. verbal request or invitation is preferable.
- Eliminating other distracting sounds while speaking or listening, if at all possible.
- Speak in a normal tone of voice. If your student does not understand, speaking loudly will not help; rather, it may imply that you are angry.
- Limit the use of slang or localisms, or be prepared to explain them.
- Be patient and don't feel uncomfortable if you don't understand them from time-to-time; don't feel embarrassed to ask them to explain or repeat what they said.
- Do not be offended if your international officer uses his/her native language while speaking to family members. This is usual if family members speak little or no English.



Social Interaction

An invitation to your home is considered a gesture of utmost sincerity and shows the guest true Southern hospitality. Keep in mind certain “do’s and don’ts”:

- Have them enter through your front door, as using a side or kitchen door or entrance may be degrading in certain cultures.
- If you invite other guests, try to keep the party small, so as not to lose personal interaction.
- Allow your children to be present when entertaining the international family so they have an opportunity to learn about another culture.
- Do not entertain more lavishly than you do for other friends.
- Informal gatherings please most officers more than formal ones.
- Your student usually will be well informed about our national problems. Feel free to discuss current issues, but don't feel you have to justify all that happens.

- Encourage your international officer to talk about himself and you will learn a great deal about his culture. The personal enrichment gained by ongoing contact with internationals is a two-way street. Accept that some of your opinions will not be the same as theirs. Don't judge them based on opinions. Respect, tolerance, and understanding are critical.

Suggested Topics for Discussion

- History
- Current events
- Family life
- Favorite sports/teams
- National holidays
- National dishes
- National dress
- Music
- Educational systems
- Traveling
- Hobbies

Food and Drink

You need to be aware that many international visitors have certain restrictions concerning food and drink due to cultural or religious beliefs. Many international visitors feel that our foods are strange. Become acquainted with what foods are customary, as well as what is not allowed. Following are some hints dealing with other cultures:

- Pork is not eaten by Muslims or Jews.
- Most love beef, but Hindus and some Buddhists, many of whom are vegetarians, do not consume beef. A strict vegetarian eats no meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or their derivatives. Vegetables, fruits, and nuts are always safe to serve.
- Smoked meats are not popular with some cultures.
- People of the Eastern hemisphere generally enjoy lamb, fish, and chicken.
- American salads may be unfamiliar to some Asians.
- Light desserts such as fruit, cheese, or ice cream are preferred by most nationalities.
- Followers of some religions, particularly those of Muslim faith, do not consume alcoholic beverages. Always have soft drinks and fruit juices available.
- Second helping should be offered more than once. In many countries it is polite to decline a second helping the first or even the second time it is offered.
- Conversation while eating is not as important in some cultures as it is in the United States. A quiet guest is not necessarily an unhappy guest.
- Table manners may be different from your own or what you are accustomed to.
- Some cultures do not use forks, knives, and spoons the way our culture does.
- Prepare your international officer for some of the different foods available in our country.

Assisting and preparing your international officer will help alleviate some of the frustrations he might encounter.

Invitations

International officers like to be invited to various places. As their AGA, you need to be aware of some of the difficulties you might encounter when extending an invitation. It is suggested that you write the detailed information on a piece of paper and give it to the student in order to prevent misunderstandings. Some things to remember when extending any invitation:

- Don't forget about the language barrier. Be clear to whom the invitation is extended, and whether or not the children are included in the invitation. (Occasionally, an international will invite other internationals without informing you, especially if they are here unaccompanied by family)
- Time, date, and place of the occasion
- Attire
- Make it clear whether or not a meal will be served
- Ensure your student has transportation and very clear directions; pick your student up at his quarters if he has no transportation
- Students have little time for travel, so it's best if you want to share a holiday with them to plan the event before they leave or after their return.
- At the end of the year in Alabama, the family may find transportation extremely difficult, particularly after selling their car(s) well in advance of their departure.
- At the end of the school year for children, there may be a need for the sponsor to assist the family in getting paperwork from the school to take back to their countries.
- At the end of the school year it is important to aid the family in getting to the airport, and helping to transport luggage.

Shared Activities

Roger Axtell, in his Do's and Taboos of Hosting International Visitors, provides suggestions on ways to entertain your internationals:

- State capitols
- Local factory tours
- College or university activities
- Sporting events
- Participation in an American holiday
- Local cultural attractions (such as local history, art museums, concert halls, theaters, and so on)
- Regional food harvests/festivals (fish fries, crawfish boils, barbecues, strawberry or peach festivals, Jubilee)

- Rodeos (or anything that has to do with cowboys and Indians)
- State and county fairs
- Boat tours on rivers or lakes
- Local grocery stores
- A local courtroom
- A local health or fitness spa
- Potluck dinners at local churches or clubs
- Auto shows
- Local amusement parks
- An American ranch or farm
- Zoo
- **Local church visits can be a touchy subject** (unless the visitor expresses interest)



Need-to-Know Tidbits

The basics of surviving in the United States are taught to many international spouses and children in late June through the International Family Orientation Program (IFOP). The spouses are shown information on such things as over-the-counter medications and medical care, use of 911, weather safety, driving safety, schools, transportation, and shopping. Field trips are also scheduled. Children are placed in appropriate age groups and go on special field trips. Volunteers are always needed to assist with IFOP.

- Once the K-12 school year starts, English language classes are offered for spouses, with the assistance of volunteers. Referred to as the International Dependents English Course (IDEC), classes lasting six weeks are held on base on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, ending with a graduation in October.
- The IOS international pre-course concludes with a graduation/reception for the incoming students and their AGAs. Expect an invitation and please plan to attend.



Alabama Goodwill Ambassador Appreciation Night

Each January the Air University President and Commander host the Alabama Goodwill Ambassadors Appreciation Night, to honor the hard work of the AGAs.

Remember, the International Officer School is here for the international officer and to assist you. It strives continually to make the program better and make your role satisfying and personally fulfilling. Do not hesitate to call IOS or the Chief of Sponsor and Dependent Programs when you need to speak about any issues regarding your sponsorship.

PART II

AIR UNIVERSITY SCHOOLS



International officers come to Maxwell Air Force Base to attend at least one of the many Professional Military Education (PME) courses offered (it is possible for a student to attend more than one course). The PME courses most frequently attended by international officers are:

- **Air War College (AWC).** This course lasts approximately 10 months and is a comprehensive study of leadership/warfare at the strategic level. It prepares senior military officers to develop, support, and employ aerospace power to deter conflict and achieve victory in the event of war. Most officers are Lieutenant Colonels or Colonels and at least 90% bring their families to live in Montgomery while they attend.
- **Air Command and Staff College (ACSC).** This course also lasts approximately 10 months and is a comprehensive study of leadership/warfare at the operational/national level. ACSC is designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and perspectives of mid-career officers for increased leadership responsibility at the command and staff levels. Air Command and Staff officers are Majors to Lieutenant Colonels and approximately 80% of students bring their families to live in Montgomery while attending.
- **Squadron Officer School (SOS).** Students attending SOS are here approximately 12 weeks. They generally **DO NOT** bring their families, and usually reside on base. This course develops the leadership abilities of company grade officers. Their rank ranges from Second Lieutenant to Major.
- **School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS).** A small number of students are selected from the recently graduated ACSC class to attend a 12 month graduate program in airpower and space power strategy. This course develops tomorrow's senior military strategists who are experts in the employment of air and space forces. These officers are usually Majors to Lieutenant Colonels and they will usually have their families with them.

IOS Academics

International students who attend AWC, ACSC, or SOS must complete a seven-week course specifically designed to prepare them for the school they will be attending. The international officers are divided into seminars of about 10-15 students. Countries, continents, and languages are mixed, providing officers with intercultural experiences. Included in the curriculum are:

Military Communications

- Students must comprehend and speak English as it relates to our military schools
- Students are placed in seminars so as to provide a variety of cultural perspectives
- Civilian linguists teach the communication skills portion of the course which is divided into:
 - Tailored military communication instruction (emphasis on speaking and writing in a military environment)
 - Computer driven, interactive communication lessons
 - Student-led classroom seminar discussions

Professional Military Education

- Students must become familiar with the academic material of their follow-on school
- Each student is given writing and speaking assignments covering:
 - Military history
 - Great leaders
 - Current events/issues
 - Theoretical leadership models
 - Field/sports activities to build teamwork

American Culture, Institutions, and Ideals

- International officers are given an insight into U.S. culture, institutions, and ideals through lectures, films, trips, and group discussions. This is known as the Field Studies Program (FSP). Topics covered by the FSP are:
 - Human Rights
 - Diversity and American Life
 - U.S. Government Institutions
 - Political Process
 - Judicial System
 - Free Market System
 - Education
 - Health and Human Services
 - Media
 - International Peace and Security
 - Law of War
- FSP trips and tours are conducted to:
 - Local Area venues
 - New York City
 - Washington, D.C.

After the international students graduate from the IOS, they are given some time off and then attend their respective follow-on school.

AWC, ACSC, and SOS Curriculum Areas

At their follow-on schools, the international officers are placed in seminars with up to 14 American officers, where they are valuable assets to classroom discussions. With their unique background, they are able to provide their U.S. classmates with interesting and illuminating insights, reactions, and opinions. As they work and study side-by-side with U.S. officers, the international officers are able to look at problems from our viewpoint and we from theirs. They receive the same professional education provided to their U.S. classmates; the subject matter is not adjusted for the language differences. A sampling of the subject areas that the international officers must become familiar with are:

Communication Skills

- Military briefings
- Effective writing
- Problem solving

Military Leadership

- Field leadership
- Team building

Military Resource Management

- Budgeting, planning, and programming
- Case studies

Warfare Studies

- Historical campaigns
- Wargaming

Force Employment

- Joint and Coalition Operations
- Air Force Doctrine
- Threat assessment
- Strategic force
- Weapons systems
- Military airlift
- Rules of engagement

COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS

When those of us in the Air Force carry on a conversation, we speak using terms unfamiliar to most. Below is a list of acronyms that are common to International Officer School:

ACSC	Air Command and Staff College
AETC	Air Education and Training Command (AU falls under AETC)
AF	Air Force
AFSAT	Air Force Security Assistance Training (The Air Force's primary agency for managing Security Assistance Training Program)
AGA	Alabama Goodwill Ambassador
AU	Air University (not Auburn University)
AWC	Air War College
BX	Base Exchange
CPD	Center for Professional Development
DLI	Defense Language Institute (English course taught in San Antonio, TX)
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FSP	Field Studies Program
HQ	Headquarters
IDEC	International Dependents English Course
IFOP	International Family Orientation Program
IMET	International Military Education and Training
IMS	International Military Students
IO	International Officers
IOS	International Officer School
JAG	Judge Advocate General (military lawyers)
JASOC	Judge Advocate Staff Officer Course
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PPF	Partnership for Peace
SAF/IA	Secretary of the Air Force for International Affairs
SAP	Security Assistance Program
SAASS	School of Advanced Air and Space Studies
SNCOA	Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Academy
SOS	Squadron Officer School
SF	Security Forces
TRICARE	Health care program for off-base medical care with military hospital approval

Contact Information

HQ AU/IOS
Sponsor and Dependent Programs
120 South Mitchell Street
Maxwell AFB AL 36112-6323

Chief, Sponsor and Dependent Programs
(334) 953-7613 or (334) 953-6338
amanda.mcgowin.1@us.af.mil
au.imso@us.af.mil