



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
III MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
CAMP COURTNEY
OKINAWA, JAPAN

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G5/FAO
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MEMORANDUM

From: LtCol McDonald, S.D., XXX XX 8099/1802
To: HQMC, Strategy and Plans Division (PLU)
Via: Assistant Chief of Staff, G5, III MEF

Subj: TAIPEI, TAIWAN LANGUAGE SUSTAINMENT TRIP REPORT

1. **Purpose.** To report on official travel to the Taiwan, 30 Jun to 14 Jul 2012, by LtCol Scott D. McDonald, USMC, 8243 China FAO.

2. **Summary.** This trip was designed primarily to increase language proficiency through a combination of intensive one-on-one language instruction and immersion. Classroom time was designed specifically to improve reading comprehension through the use of newspaper articles and texts on Chinese thought, culture, and economics. This was supplemented by spending almost every evening out in various Taipei neighborhoods talking with native Chinese speakers.

3. **Discussion.** I chose to visit Taipei because it is close to Okinawa and based on a prior tour there, I was already familiar with a quality language institute with a reasonable price. I also wanted to use the opportunity to make maintain relationships with Taiwan military officers I knew from my tour in Taiwan.

a. I arranged for four hours of language training a day at Chinese Associates, a private language institute in downtown Taipei. I had used this school for refresher training several years ago and they offered me a discount based on my prior association with the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT).

b. I attended four hours of one-on-one language instruction, Monday through Friday, for two weeks. I was already aware that my reading proficiency had dropped off in recent years, so all four classes were based on reading and interpreting texts. I decided on two hours a day on a text addressing Chinese thought and culture in order to push my reading to a more advanced level and to enhance my ability to

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interpret more culturally laden passages. This is because as one moves beyond the basics, it is difficult to properly understand and use many Chinese idioms without an understanding of Chinese culture and philosophy. The additional two hours were focused on economics. These classes largely leveraged daily news articles in order to check reading comprehension and improve my ability to interpret the events that are relevant to the local, and ultimately regional geopolitical, situation.

c. Each afternoon, I made an effort to get "out and about" in Taipei. Whether I was just in a restaurant to eat, or an entertainment district to walk around, by putting myself in the environment I invariably had spontaneous speaking opportunities on a wide variety of topics. These not only allowed me to exercise my language skills, but to stay up to date on the ideas, concerns, and opinions of those who call Taiwan home. I was also fortunate to run into several Mainland Chinese and poll them on their opinions on Taiwan and the difference between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

d. Projected Cost of the trip was \$7400.52; claimed cost on voucher was \$5204.12.

4. **Recommendation.** This form of training is an excellent way to ensure that FAOs serving in the fleet can maintain and improve their language, as well as stay abreast of the social, political, and economic developments—not just as the textbooks represent, but as real people live and see them—in the target region.

S. D. MCDONALD