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FAO/jsz
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CLAT-FAO

MEMORANDUM FOR:

HQMC, Strategy and Plans Division (PLU), Plans, Policies, and Operations, Washington,
D.C. 20380-1775

Subj: French Language Sustainment Training Trip Report

1. **Purpose.** To report on official travel to the Republic of France, from 9-24 SEP, by Major Joshua S. Zager, USMC, Sub-Saharan Africa FAO.
2. **Summary.** This trip was designed to be a capstone immersion experience. I received 3 months of French Language classroom study prior to assignment as Marine Attaché to Ghana/Togo/Benin. During my tenure I used the language in sporadic dealings with host country officials. However, I have never been totally immersed. I designed this trip to be a complete immersion. I was billeted with a French woman named Mrs. Metivier while attending 6 hours of formal language instruction daily at the French in Normandy School. Upon conclusion of my formal language study in Rouen, I travelled to Normandy and toured the beaches, battlefields, and cemeteries of the D-Day invasion.
3. **Discussion.** I chose to study in Rouen because of the French in Normandy School's outstanding reputation. The French government ensures excellent schools are clearly identified through a strict certification process and this school maintains the rating of a "Qualité FLE" school. This particular school has been nominated for excellence 7 times by the International Association of Language Courses (IALC). Rouen is close to Paris allowing for easy transfers but is much less expensive. The individual attention, customized curriculum, and outstanding instruction combined with in-home billeting allowed for an unmatched immersion. Rouen's location in upper Normandy enabled my visiting the Normandy Landing beaches.
 - a. I attended 19 (2 each morning after arriving mid-morning on 10 SEP due to flight delay) level-appropriate sessions focused on improving listening comprehension, grammar, and syntax. The instruction I received was outstanding. The group never exceeded six students, and the teacher focused on more practical, functional aspects of the language rather than the rigid conventions usually associated with classroom instruction.
 - b. Each afternoon, I attended a two-hour discussion workshop. This was also a small group setting of five or six students and one tutor. The tutor took excellent

care to develop the discussion along the common and diverse experience of the group comprised of students from across the world.

- c. The immersion was complete. Billeting with Mrs. Metivier (who does not speak any English) forced me to communicate in French 24 hours a day. Moreover, during my 2 weeks in Rouen I did not encounter a single person who answered me in English when I initiated an interaction in French. This is different than Paris and the more known tourist areas in France. Every daily conversation both in the home and in restaurants, shops, buses, etc. became exercises in French.
- d. After the two weeks of formal study in Rouen, I travelled to the Normandy coast to execute a self-planned staff ride of the Operation OVERLORD battlefields. The staff ride allowed me to fully learn the details of the largest amphibious assault in history. I visited the beaches, explored the commanding German positions, and walked the ground of the Airborne's exploits that played a large factor in the success of D-Day. I visited the Omaha Beach American cemetery and the outstanding museums at St. Mere Eglise, Arranches, and Caen. I rented a vehicle and billeted in a small hotel in the town of Carentan facilitating and requiring full employment of the French Language. Itinerary as follows:

10 SEP 2012 (MON)

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|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0700 | Arrive Charles de Gaulle Airport and transfer to Rouen |
| 1030 | Take placement exam and begin Language Training at the French in Normandy School |

21 SEP 2012 (FRI)

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|------|-------------------------------------|
| 1600 | Complete Language Training |
| 1630 | Rent vehicle and travel to Carentan |

22 SEP 2012 (SAT)

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| 0800 | St. Marie du-Mont |
| 0830 | Brecourt Manor Battlefield |
| 0930 | Utah Beach |
| 1030 | St. Mere Eglise and Airborne Museum |
| 1200 | Iron Mike Paratrooper Memorial at la Fiere battle |
| 1300 | Pointe du Hoc Ranger Memorial (German Shore Defense) |

1500 American Cemetery and Utah Beach
1730 Longues sur-Mer (German Shore Defense)
1745 Arromanches Artificial Harbor and Amphibious Landing
Museum
2100 Overnight Carentan

23 SEP 2012 (SUN)

0800 Carentan battle sites
0830 La Vire Bridge
0930 Caen Memorial and Museum
1600 Return rental vehicle in Rouen

24 SEP 2012 (MON)

0430 Transfer to Charles de Gaulle Airport
0930 Retrograde on United Airlines to DCA

4. **Recommendation.** This form of training is extremely effective allowing regionally experienced FAOs to focus on and increase their root language proficiency. Immersion is irreplaceable. Projected cost \$4710 of trip, claimed cost on voucher \$4845.


J. S. Zager

MAS/USMC