



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MARINE AIR SUPPORT SQUADRON 2
MARINE AIR CONTROL GROUP 18
1ST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING
UNIT 37211
FPO AP 96603-7211

IN REPLY REFER TO
1520
ARK
22 Jan 12

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

Subj: KOREAN LANGUAGE SUSTAINMENT TRIP REPORT

1. **Purpose.** To report on official travel to the Republic of Korea, from 4 September - 21 September 2012, by Capt Aaron R. Krukow, USMC, 8248 Northeast Asia FAO.
2. **Summary.** As a study track FAO, this trip was designed to refocus on my language skills that had been put on the back burner due to the high operational tempo within 1st MAW. Furthermore, immersion in the culture helped me to reconnect with Korean social norms. I stayed in a hotel for the duration of my trip. When not attending one-on-one instruction through the Seoul Korean Language Academy, I conducted sightseeing and met with US Army FAOs serving in Korea - including the UNCMAC Secretary.
3. **Discussion.** I began the trip with a stop at Osan AB to receive intel briefs and then used Osan as a staging area for a follow on DMZ tour. I chose Osan for this portion of the trip due to the reduced costs associated with that area. After the DMZ trip, I moved to a hotel in the vicinity of Seoul Korean Language Academy (SKLA) for ease in getting to and from school. The majority of this trip was spent in the classroom, though I did make the time for a few tourist activities as well as office calls and a meeting at the Seoul National University International Relations department.

a. While at Osan Air Base, I received an intel update brief from the 607th Air Support Operations Group. This was a great way to start the trip. Though Korea is a focus for Okinawa-based Marines, it is always beneficial to hear various intel assessments. The USAF and USMC key in on different indicators, so this brief added to my understanding/appreciation for the political/military situation on the Peninsula. I also toured the Hardened Tactical Air Command Center (HTACC) - the 7th Air Force's equivalent of, and senior agency to - the 1st MAW Tactical Air Command Center. Though I have worked in the HTACC before, I learn something new each time I visit. I rounded out

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my time at Osan with a trip to the DMZ provided by United Nations Command Military Armistice Committee (UNCMAC). Again, though I have done this on multiple occasions, there is always something new to learn.

b. Seoul is the largest city in South Korea - nearly half of the nation's population resides in/around Seoul. Gangnam is one of the most affluent of all districts within Seoul proper - heavily concentrated wealth and high standard of living. Korea's educational fever is quite evident in Gangnam - thought of as the education capital - with academies specializing in any academic subject you can think of. There are numerous English and Chinese language academies rivaled in number by Korean language academies for foreigners. Due to the multiple options available, I chose Gangnam as the location for this year's language training.

c. I selected SKLA as my language school for three reasons - location, cost, and flexibility.

(1) The school is located no more than a five-minute walk from the closest subway station - and important factor to consider when in Korea. I was able to stay in a hotel that was only a ten-minute walk from the school.

(2) The school cost for one-on-one instruction was quite low and despite the fact that Gangnam is a very wealthy area, hotel costs were well below the authorized lodging rate - I think it our responsibility, when using these funds, to cut costs wherever possible. The convenient location also allowed me to forego the expenses associated with a rental vehicle for the majority of my stay.

(3) The third, and probably most important, factor in my choosing SKLA was the flexibility. Working with the school in advance of my travel, I was able to design my own course. Typically, this school teaches out of a textbook. Though I do appreciate the textbook when it comes to grammar, I don't find it as useful when that is the only teaching medium. I requested Korean history documentaries; current, local news broadcasts/papers - concentrating on politics, economics, and social issues; and television dramas to encompass the bulk of my study. The school was very responsive to my requests and was prepared on day one. As my instruction progressed, I was able to adjust where necessary to ensure that I was getting what I needed out of the training.

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d. While studying, I scheduled several half-days/days off in order to tour the city and make office calls.

(1) Though I had intended to meet with the Naval Attaché and receive political/economic briefs at the embassy, I was unable to make this happen. When planning my trip in 2013, I will ensure that I start locking on these office calls/meetings earlier. I think the embassy visit is one of the more important events and am disappointed that I was unable to make it happen.

(2) I was able to meet with the UNCMAC Secretary, COL Taylor, USA. We had a great conversation about the FAO's role in Korea in general and at UNCMAC specifically. We discussed UNCMAC's piece of the armistice pie and the difficulties associated with enforcing the armistice/investigating armistice violations.

(3) I was also able to meet with the International Relations department at Seoul National University (SNU). Knowing that I will be transferring to Korea next year, I thought there may be opportunities for continuing education upon my arrival. Though nothing is set in stone, I do plan on pursuing my PhD at SNU while in Korea.

4. **Recommendation.** I fully recommend other Korean FAOs to follow a similar plan. The school's willingness to let me design my own program vice using a "one-size-fits-all" textbook was very valuable. This training was cost effective and valuable. My DLPT score remains 3/3. Projected cost was \$8,635; final cost was \$6,587. I was able to refocus on the issues of the day in Korea - especially valuable considering it was an election year in both Korea and the United States. Reconnecting with Korean friends and professional contacts made while on my ICT helped pave the way for my impending move to Korea. For further details about Seoul Korean Language Academy, their website is: <http://seoul-kla.com/new/en/main.html>.


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