



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
MARINE CORPS DETACHMENT, PRESIDIO OF MONTEREY
PRESIDIO OF MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA 93944-3128

From: Captain Travis R. Post 3440/3404
To: Commanding Officer, MARDET, Presidio of Monterey
Subj: AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR URDU IMMERSION, AMERICAN INSTITUTE
OF INDIAN STUDIES (AIIS) LUCKNOW, INDIA FROM 10 JUNE 2012
TO 17 AUG 2012

Ref: MCO 3504.1

Encl: (1) AIIS Application Package and Funding Request
(2) AIIS Pre-Travel Information/Visa Materials
(3) AIIS Welcome Aboard/Orientation Materials
(4) AIIS Curriculum for Summer Language Program 2012

1. BLUF: This Training Program is well worth the investment for Post-DLI (Defense Language Institute) Urdu learners. Given difficulties in access to the area and DLI Urdu Language program difficulties, this immersion program can address both concerns to some degree. This program cannot replace DLI, but it can supplement it very efficiently.

2. General. This immersion program, sponsored by AIIS and the University of Chicago, provided an outstanding opportunity for immersion and language study. Language study was of very high quality, and the surrounding area offered reinforcing language training as well as physical and cultural immersion that lends strength to the instruction. Opportunities to speak with common people were limited only by the participant's endurance. I whole-heartedly endorse this language program for any Marine Urdu Student. Additionally, given the current diplomatic environment and the difficulties encountered obtaining entry into Pakistan and India (from time to time) this program provides excellent to get some time on the ground for an Urdu FAO.

3. I will parse this document into two areas. The first of which is simply general items of discussion, and the second of which will follow the standard Topic/Discussion/Recommendation

Subj: AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR URDU IMMERSION, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INDIAN STUDIES (AIIS) LUCKNOW, INDIA FROM 10 JUNE 2012 TO 17 AUG 2012

AAR format. Due to the nature of travel in India, many solutions/recommendations will be based on the particular problem, individual, context, and the individual's goals and objectives. The discussion points therefore, are issues that I encountered and how I addressed them. These solutions, which I came up with, may or may not be applicable to future program participants.

4. Force Protection: Force Protection considerations are extremely important. A Force Protection mindset is a requirement and pervasive.

a. Many of the other (civilian) students were completely unaware of their current security situation and failed to take common sense, simple actions - such as locking car doors. I found it necessary to promote other students' personal security habits, as their habits (or lack thereof) often compromised my safety as well.

b. Looking at Lucknow through the lens of my last international experience (Iraq as a police advisor) was ill-advised, but unavoidable. Large crowds of Indian MAM's looking at me and talking in a language I could not understand made me extremely nervous for the first few weeks. After I acclimatized and saw and experienced the kindness that most Indians showed I realized I was mistaken.

c. From my experience in Lucknow, I realized that - outside of rare instances - exercise of common sense personal security measures was adequate for daily life. Many of these items are so ingrained to Marines that we conduct them without even thinking and to cover them here is unnecessary.

d. Embassy notifications of rare/unique security threats were usually pushed out via e-mail a day or two after the event or the cause of the security threat was covered in local news. However, if that news story had been missed (in the Urdu paper) then it was handy to have the Embassy notifications.

e. Smart phones are extremely valuable. A GPS navigation aid, satellite imagery, instant English to Urdu/Hindi dictionary, and a communications device all in one should be a requirement. My smartphone went with me everywhere. Google maps was an incredible convenience and the rest of the above mentioned capabilities could prove invaluable in an emergency.

Subj: AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR URDU IMMERSION, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INDIAN STUDIES (AIIS) LUCKNOW, INDIA FROM 10 JUNE 2012 TO 17 AUG 2012

f. Safe haven locations were widespread and frequent, due to the prevalence of Government offices in the city.

5. Discussion Points:

a. Logistical Support - Host Family: Host Families are very important and have the potential to be an asset or hindrance. There were 3 residences that were used by students in the 2012 SLP. The first residence was simply called Simijee's house. This residence appeared to offer the best experience. Students were provided with food by the host family and took the majority of their meals with them as well. The host family and students appeared to take some entertainment in quizzing each other in Urdu/Hindi at meal times. The second residence was a Catholic Convent, which appeared to offer little as far as support was concerned. There was no AC (which would prove to be a detriment to effective study), and students who resided there were expected to be at worship and mealtimes as directed. The Nuns there spoke little to no English and often Hindi was a second or even third language, so communication was challenging. The third residence was called Captain Khan's house (Khan is a semi-retired Merchant Marine, hence - Captain). That was the residence in which I stayed. The host family did not provide food, and after a few unwelcomed advances by Captain Khan on some of the female students in residence, virtually all interaction ceased amongst the host family and all the students ceased. Host family interaction is important. However, I decided that in order to minimize distraction, I would forgo attempting to find a new residence.

b. Logistical Support - Food: This became quite the headache for me during the program. As stated above, my host family provided no food. All of the residents of Simijee's house got ill after their regular cook took some break time. My experience was rather different. For the first few weeks, the AIIS cook was preparing breakfast and dinner for myself and my housemates. Although her food was repetitive and not particularly good, it was healthy and convenient. After some sanitation oversights (hair in the food) began to occur 2-3 times a day, this service was cancelled. I found it too time intensive to prepare my own food (without a cook in India, it typically took me between 1.5 and 2.5 hours a day to purchase, prepare, and eat dinner restaurants also tended to take too much time away from studies when done daily). I felt I had no realistic option but to resume the service from the AIIS cook. Just a few days later I discovered a cooked cockroach in my food. I addressed the food

Subj: AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR URDU IMMERSION, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INDIAN STUDIES (AIIS) LUCKNOW, INDIA FROM 10 JUNE 2012 TO 17 AUG 2012

sanitation issue with the program director and we agreed that the cook would prepare the food at AIIS (with supervision and a known sanitary environment, I inspected it and found it acceptable) for delivery to my residence. I was given assurances that any further sanitation oversights would result in her being fired. For regular college students, who neither need to maximize their time efficiency nor concern themselves with the health detriments of eating out every day for 10 weeks straight, the solution was to simply cook their own food or eat out every day; options I felt were unacceptable. It is true that going out to eat or purchasing items on the economy and preparing food offered the opportunity to interact with locals, the quality and quantity of the interaction was not worth the time away from studies to make it worth while.

c. Transportation: Often a challenge, Transportation was usually provided by cycle rickshaws or auto rickshaws. Some students purchased a bicycle, which I would recommend upon arrival. Indian Traffic is a challenge. I would not recommend attempting to navigate busy intersections on a bicycle for the first few weeks.

d. Cell phones/Internet: Cell service and Mobile (USB) Internet devices are readily available through a number of companies. As stated in the Force Protection paragraph, I believe that a smart phone with data plan should be a requirement. Initial SIM card purchase was 800 Rupees (~\$15) and recharging with 2 GB data good for 30 days was only 450 rupees (~\$8.50). However, in order to obtain service, a very cumbersome registration process is needed. A Passport photo and registration paperwork must be submitted to the police and then the police must OK the service for each individual otherwise you will have no service. AIIS takes care of the majority of this painful process.

e. Travel: AIIS sponsored 3 local field trips. One to a British Fort/Residence used for defense during an anti-Colonial uprising, another was a Sufi Shrine and mango grove, and the third was to the Imam Bargah, which was originally intended to be a Christian/Hindu/Muslim neutral meeting hall for the religious leaders. At each of these sights, Urdu/Hindi guides were made available to us, though difficult, it was good to do some "sightseeing" in Urdu.

f. Teaching Facilities: The School house consisted of 2 stories of a building only about 600 meters from my residence.

Subj: AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR URDU IMMERSION, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INDIAN STUDIES (AIIS) LUCKNOW, INDIA FROM 10 JUNE 2012 TO 17 AUG 2012

The offices and Classrooms were adequately air conditioned and comfortable. There was an internet connected computer in room as well as the lunch serving room that students could access. Usually there were only 3 students to a teacher, though occasionally there would be 4. Class materials were presented each Friday for the following week. These materials were adequately prepared and tailored to each particular group of 3-4 students. Glossaries were presented with each assignment which greatly reduced the frustration common with DLI assignments and homeworks.

g. Environment: The first 1/2 of the Urdu SLP in Lucknow, the heat was astounding. It felt worse than Iraq in the summer. After the Monsoons came it cooled off quite a bit, but then our street flooded daily and entering/leaving the house/School house was quite unpleasant (open sewers and huge trash piles flooding onto the street do not make for pleasant "water ways"/Wading pools). These two factors combined to often discourage interaction/immersion walkabouts. Sickness will occur. I believe that every student had a bout of food poisoning. Usually it was over in approx 12 hours and then another 12-15 hours of rest/recovery and you were back in the game. But occasionally some students missed 2-3 days in a row due to a persistent bug.

h. Medical Facilities: Even though I had a rather severe bout of food poisoning after a few weeks, and had travelers gut the first 10 days. I never had need to seek medical attention. The AIIS staff had doctors available 24/7 in each city that they operated out of and a phone call would have resulted in a house visit.

i. Teaching Staff: The teaching staff are professional and dedicated. I was very impressed with their ability to stay calm and professional even when confronted by very unprofessional students. They made themselves readily available for assistance and encouraged students to get with them after class hours. Completely impressed with them as a whole.

6. Recommendation: AIIS SLP Urdu Training Participation

a. Topic/Issue: The value of this immersion language training program to a Marine FAO is great. This, or similar programs, offer a concentrated, comprehensive language training option for language learners.

Subj: AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR URDU IMMERSION, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INDIAN STUDIES (AIIS) LUCKNOW, INDIA FROM 10 JUNE 2012 TO 17 AUG 2012

b. Discussion: As compared to the DLI Urdu program, this program presents a refreshing approach to Urdu. The environment is very conducive to learning. The curriculum is diverse and well planned. The staff have great and varied experience, all have either Master's Degrees or Doctorates (Usually in Urdu Literature) which bear large impact in the classroom. In my case, I replaced the second half of the last semester at DLI with this program. While at AIIS, I concentrated on what I believed to be my greatest shortcomings, and made great improvements. I can now speak and understand spoken Urdu with much higher proficiency.

- A note on DLPT/OPI Tests - Through this program, I did not - I now realize - prepare for my DLPT tests. I did not devote a great amount of time to Vocabulary. I had not had an opportunity to take the tests before the program to know what to prepare for. The AIIS program has enabled me to make large improvements in my language capability, to make me a more effective FAO, even if test results of Listening 1+, Reading 2, and Speaking 1+ do not support this statement.

c. Recommendation: This or a similar immersion program should be made available to Marines after the DLI Urdu curriculum. Due to the short (10 week) nature of this program, it can by no means replace DLI. It can, however, take the basics that DLI has crammed into a Marine's brain and enable that Marine to contextualize and become comfortable with the grammar and language structures after DLI.

7. Recommendation: Language Training Classes/Modalities

a. Topic/Issue: The standard language training package offered at the AIIS Summer Language Program (SLP) for Urdu is quite varied. It includes all modalities and covers films, poetry, literature, news/current events, and cultural items. The offered package is very broad, but lacks depth.

b. Discussion: As a less than proficient Urdu Linguist, I found it very confusing to study non-standard grammatical constructions as were often found in poetry and literature. The AIIS staff is very accommodating in this regard. They were happy to modify the curriculum for each student as much as was practicable. Other students needs/desires had to be taken into account. But, generally, the staff actively supports students and attempts to tailor the instruction to the student.

Subj: AFTER ACTION REPORT FOR URDU IMMERSION, AMERICAN INSTITUTE
OF INDIAN STUDIES (AIIS) LUCKNOW, INDIA FROM 10 JUNE 2012
TO 17 AUG 2012

c. Recommendation: Poetry was the only portion of language instruction that I had the staff modify for me. I completely eliminated the poetry and film study from my curriculum. Additionally as the course went on, and the literature selections became more and more abstract, I eliminated the homework in literature. For FAO language learners who do not have a natural affinity for languages, I recommend this course of action.

d. Implications: Each Student is different, with this caveat out front, I found that by eliminating the film and poetry, then by eliminating the literature homework, I had more time available to concentrate on weaknesses, namely; grammar, listening, and Poli/Sci-current events themes. I felt that poetry and some of the more abstract literature were distracting due to the improper grammar often employed. Films were distracting because I felt my brain was defaulting to my eyes instead of my ears. I was seeking understanding based upon what I saw the actors doing, not what they were saying.

8. Summary of Event. This training opportunity was of great value. Having spent a year studying this language, I feel that this program has helped me to "bring it all together." I have been able to gain clarification on many points that I knew were weak. I have also discovered and began addressing deficiencies that I did not even know I had. The "bang for the buck" of this program is astounding. The most expensive single item for this 10 week program has been the airfare at approximately \$3000. The quality of instruction, quality of curriculum, and the immersion experience are certainly helpful in learning Urdu and I feel like my book learning from NPS now has some context that was sorely missing.

9. Point of Contact for this AAR is Captain Post at (760) 470-5769, or travis.r.post@gmail.com.

/S/

T. R. POST