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30 May 13

From: Majon Jonathan F. Brown
To: Branch Head, International Affairs Branch (PLU)
Subj: FRENCH LANGUAGE SUSTAINMENT AFTER ACTION REPORT (AAR)
ICO MAJ JONATHAN BROWN IN PARIS, FRANCE, 4-15 MAY 2013

1. Purpose. To report on French language sustainment training at Accord Ecole de Langues in Paris, France from 04-15 May, 2013.

2. Background. As a multi-lingual FAO, the objective of this trip was to improve French language proficiency with emphasis on speaking fluency while re-establishing current social and cultural perspectives through immersion. This training was conducted 18 years since my last formal training in French. My last French DLPT score was 2+/3. I have a DLPT scheduled for next week, and after 11 days of immersion, I feel confident in achieving 3/3/3 with an OPI. Accord Language school provided family homestays as a lodging option for well below the maximum lodging rate. I chose to live with a French family for 11 days, so everything outside the classroom reinforced what I learned in the classroom. The school and my homestay experience were top notch.

3. Topic. Accord Ecole de Languae (Accord School of Languages)

a. Discussion: Accord is a private school in central Paris. The staff was professional, proactive and helpful from initial contact through completion of the course. The school offers a dozen courses based on time available, level of intensity desired and language ability. They provide a placement test on the first day to help assess class level. The school Director, Ms. Nathalie Harrap, and Registration Manager, Ms. Kathy Mastain, were very helpful, and walked me through every step. I signed up for Course G (32 hours/week) with transportation arranged to and from the airport (Charles de Gaule), and lodging arrangements. After placing in the B2 class, I attended school daily with a dozen students at the same level from eight countries, who ranged in age from 19 to 39. Class sizes varied by the day; some were as small as four students, others as big as 12. Max class size is 14 students in group sessions.

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Morning classes focused on grammar and explaining verb tenses. Afternoon classes are considered "workshops", and focused on several topics (culture, arts, food, grammar) from which we could choose. The teachers were all talented, credentialed, and engaging.

b. Recommendation: I highly recommend Accord Ecole de Langues, and will come back in future years. The following contact information is provided:

<http://www.french-paris.com/uk/adults/french-courses.php>.

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4. Topic. Family homestay.

a. Discussion: Accord Ecole de Langues provided options. Options included host family (235-355 EUR/week), furnished apartments (465-780 EUR/week), and hotels (95 EUR/night) throughout Paris, coordinated through the LODGIS agency. Details are outlined on the school website above. I chose to stay with a host family. My rationale was to reinforce my conversation skills and culture/social immersion outside the classroom as well as in. I couldn't be happier with my experience. I was effectively adopted by my host family and continue to keep in touch with them by email. My family provided meals, metro tickets, and served as a walking guide throughout the city.

b. Recommendation: Having a host family forced me to speak and think in French through the duration. Highly recommended.

5. Topic. Transportation and Security.

a. Discussion: Accord Ecole de Langues provided a taxi driver to pick me up from Charles de Gaulle airport, and drop me off at my host family's address at no personal cost. The school coordinated the return travel from home to the airport at no personal cost. The expense was included in the school tuition,

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and very convenient; especially with baggage, immediately following a trans-Atlantic flight. Paris is an extremely modern city with very efficient, clean and reliable metro bus, metro rail, and SNCF train system. Metro tickets are interchangeable between metro bus and rail. Getting around Paris is easy and inexpensive. My daily commute from home to school was 30 minutes by Metro bus or rail. The school is located one block from the Metro stop 'Grands Boulevards'. Security at train stations and significant tourist destinations was visible and at high alert, due to France's aggressive action against Al Quaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali. I felt as safe in Paris as I do walking the streets of Washington, DC.

b. Recommendation: Highly recommend coordinating airport taxi pick-up and drop-off through the school. This option reduces requirements to file separate miscellaneous travel expenses in DTS, or produce foreign currency for ground transportation immediately upon entry into country. Metro transportation facilitated easy, independent movement around the city during my 11 days. Paris takes security seriously, and is a safe city.

6. Topic. Cost.

a. Discussion: Accord Ecole de Langues provides the following class pricing per week:

Course A (26 lessons/week)	= 300 EUR (1-4 weeks)
Course B (30 lessons/week)	= 320 EUR (1-4 weeks)
Course C (34 lessons/week)	= 340 EUR (1-4 weeks)
Course D (38 lessons/week)	= 360 EUR (1-4 weeks)
Course G (42 lessons/week)	= 390 EUR (1-4 weeks)
Course E (52 lessons/week)	= 430 EUR (1-4 weeks)

With homestay, school, airport pick-up, and meals included in my tuition expense for 11 days, my total was \$1,730 USD.

b. Recommendation: Accord Ecole de Langues is a great value for the money.

7. Topic. U.S. Embassy visit.

a. Discussion: I coordinated a visit with DAO on my last day, due to scheduling. No two Embassies are the same, and few Marines have the experience or insights of visiting Embassies, so FAOs are well served by taking every opportunity to visit the DAO, ODC, and if possible schedule meetings with the RSO, Political and Economic officers. With a little planning, I

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could have spent a day with the French War College class. The timing of this visit was significant, as USMC prepared for mil-mil training with French Marines returning from combat action in Mali, and CMC participation in Memorial Day celebrations in Paris and Belleau Wood. Marine Attache and my office (PLU) coordinated FAO and FAS support for both of these events.

b. Recommendation: Make time to visit Embassies during language sustainment efforts.

8. Summary. French language sustainment in an immersion setting is very effective. I had constant feedback and opportunity to build confidence in speaking ability, vocabulary, accent, grammar, as well as maintaining a sense for important social and cultural cues. Accord is a great school for French speakers at any level; beginner through advanced. The school is flexible, affordable, and provides great service.

ACCORD

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9. Point of Contact. I can be contacted by e-mail or phone at jonathan.f.brown@usmc.mil or 703 692-4365.

/S/

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