

## Secretary Marshall's Travelogue of June 2014 Moldova Trip

### June 14-20 highlights:

**Saturday, June 14.** By lunchtime, NC Guard Adjutant General Lusk, two of his aides and I left RDU, flew to DC, then took a big plane over the Atlantic Ocean overnight, landing in Munich, Germany for a few hours and on to Chisinau, Moldova by about lunch time on Sunday, June 15.

**Sunday, June 15.** I got settled and had an early dinner with other North Carolinians who were either attached to the US Embassy there full time or who had been in country for a few weeks during training and maneuvers. Early to bed, trying to get on Moldova time (7 hours ahead of N.C.).

**Monday, June 16.** My day began with an official meeting with the Harvard educated Minister of Education about an educational poster project to place up-to-date educational materials in classrooms replacing those from the 1950's or 1960's (think of a periodic table of elements with just 84 elements) with current science and other instructional aids. Also English grammar, writing, and other language posters are going to be available. The VIF Global International Education website is being offered at no cost to Moldovan teachers.

Next a meeting with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss the partnership and the current political climate (Ukraine is a neighbor and Russian pressures are evident in Moldova).

Then a political and partnership briefing by the American Embassy, Deputy Chief of Mission. The US Ambassador was traveling out of country while I was there. (By the way, Ambassador Moser is a native of Hickory, NC.)

In the afternoon I visited a day program called Guiding Star for developmentally delayed children. This is a project of Moldova World Children's Fund (MWCF) led by Captain Ray West, USNR-Retired of Flat Rock, NC.

In the below photo, I am talking with 18-year-old Daniela who was reciting a complicated poem in near perfect English. Daniela can't walk. In many other countries she would have had surgery or treatments allowing her to be mainstreamed and able to reach higher levels of achievement. The center's volunteer English instructor taught her and many of the students with limitations to speak and understand some English. Their day care center was in substantial disrepair, rehabbed by MWCF, but is still without sanitary facilities. MWCF has the funds to put in a bathroom, but the existing building is too unsound for a project of that magnitude.



We concluded Monday by delivering approximately \$250,000 U.S. value mine detection equipment and medical supplies for treatment of traumatic wound victims caused by tripping on land mines (usually farmers or children). This effort is part of a long-term project, launched in November 2013, when members of the North Carolina National Guard professionals visited Moldova to train the Moldovan Military on modern detection, disarming and medical procedures.



Below, General Lusk, the Moldovan Minister of Defense, and others watch a wound care demonstration. What a day!



I finished Monday night with a 9 p.m. radio interview with Florin Pindic Blaj over his Christian Radio Network. An hour can fly by while on the radio.

### **Tuesday, June 17**

In the morning, I met with several female members of Parliament or their representatives as a follow-up to the Women's Leadership meetings I had there two years ago.



Later Tuesday morning, we traveled to Molesti, where I received the traditional Moldovan welcome of bread and salt presented by young people in traditional garments.



The Molesti Middle School has been identified by the US Embassy as having quality English instructors for classroom to classroom partnerships. Aside from building relationships and delivering instructional posters, I introduced the respective teachers to the VIF Global International Education website. Based in Chapel Hill, this nonprofit has online education assistance at a variety of academic levels for teachers in over 60 countries. VIF supports curriculum and professional development for K-12 teachers.

This teaching tool will now be available to Moldovan teachers, at no cost. We continue to match Moldovan classes with North Carolina classes. Any NC teacher interested in a class-to-class pairing with a counterpart in Moldova can contact me at [emarshal@sosnc.com](mailto:emarshal@sosnc.com).

The remainder of Tuesday was all about children. MWCF has assisted a TB residential kindergarten for children who may be TB carriers needing assistance to avoid even more serious medical problems. The 75 year-old head nurse was most grateful for the air tight windows MWCF provided along with other weatherproofing. The three and four-year-olds performed traditional dances. It was a delight to see them so happy.

The below photo was taken in a classroom in Ion Creanga Lyceum that is matched with a fourth grade class at Charlotte Latin School.



**Wednesday, June 18.** While traveling to visit schools I also visited the Başkan (top leader/Governor) of Gagauzia. This is an autonomous region that does participate in the Moldovan Parliament. Shown below, I did an interview (in Russian) at the television station and later visited Comrat High School, Congaz Middle and High Schools, and Cazaclia High School. All of the schools were previously selected for EUCOM HA (humanitarian assistance – indoor restrooms), have capable English instructors, and also have Peace Corps members in the community. They were thrilled with the educational posters donated and the opportunity to access the VIF Global International website. EUCOM is the United States’ Military European Command center for all of Europe. This was a long day with hours traveling outside of Chisinau over sometimes difficult roads.



I finished Wednesday with a visit to North Carolina’s long-term friend, Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry, Vasile Bumacov. North Carolina State University together with Bob Wells and George Wilson are currently hosting six Cochran fellows from Moldova this summer. Multiple agriculture projects in the partnership’s history include post harvest product care and marketing, computer applications,

research and more. Minister Bumacov has been a supporter of the North Carolina-Moldova Partnership, and I thanked him for his contribution to this ongoing effort.



**Thursday, June 19.** It was a marvelous way to begin a day, meeting with about 50 local mayors to discuss municipal laws and government in the US. The mayors were the most interested in the US model of towns and cities having the ability to adopt local laws, even if the law being adopted has not been adopted at the national level, and may never be adopted at that level. In Moldova, law-making, taxation and the ability to take out loans are strongly tied to the central government.



The mayors were obviously interested in how authority is vested in local, county and state governments. Many of them would like to partner with US towns and would like for their Mayors Association to partner with the NC League of Municipal or County Commissioners Association.



On this afternoon, I traveled north to Balti to meet with a Women’s Business Group, Domestic Violence Advocates and Peace Corps representatives. We discussed the importance of women’s empowerment and I shared my own experiences. A most inspiring afternoon. The USAID Moldova Women Career Development Program identifies, trains, and finds employment opportunities for vulnerable and disadvantaged women in the northern part of Moldova.



Thursday was concluded by a visit to a Christian Orthodox Church in Orhei where I had visited several years before. What a warm welcome and surprise. Following five minutes of tolling bells and a chanted religious greeting by Bishop Nicodim on the sidewalk (he could perform in the finest opera), I was led into a beautiful sanctuary and inducted into the Order of St. Ann for my service and North Carolina's contributions to the people of Moldova.



In this picture you can see the church's interior with Bishop Nicodim. Also receiving an award was Florin Pindic Blaj of Hickory, NC, who is the Honorary Moldovan Counsel for NC. He has led Christian orphanages, maintains a Christian radio network, and many other assistance projects for Moldova.

**Friday, June 20.** My final day was the most interesting of all. There is an area called Transnistria (only 40 miles from Chisinau and adjoining Ukraine) that claims to be totally separate from Moldova and is presently occupied by Russian troops. Transnistria does not participate in Parliament, has its own currency, and is not officially recognized by any government, including Russia. How interesting is that? They do have close ties to Russia, however.

I am the first and only American official they have permitted to visit recently. Here is why they allowed me in there: a Lions Club sponsored baseball team from Tiraspol, the capital city, visited Winston-Salem last year. They played games here, had home stays, and more. One day I hosted them in Raleigh, provided a pizza lunch and arranged for them to visit various government buildings and museums.



That Lions Club was grateful to the Winston-Salem Lions Club and to me for helping these young men to have an experience in the States. On my visit, I was hosted by the leadership of the Tiraspol Lions Club including the senior management of the major area employer, a prominent wine and cognac producer—Kvint. On this day, we had a marvelous 2-hour lunch following a tour of the cognac plant. The above photo is our “reunion meeting” in Tiraspol of team members and Lions Club sponsors. One of the young men in the photo pitches at 95 mph and will be a university scholarship baseball player here next year when he passes his English proficiency test.



I also visited a practice field in Tiraspol where a group of 9 and 10 year olds were preparing for their Little League Tournament. They were excited with the bats, balls, gloves, and head gear with the Carolina Mudcats logo we were able to donate for their use. Thanks go out to our NC Guard members for acquiring this donation.

Friday also included a visit to the Tiraspol State University, specifically the American Center in Tiraspol. At the American Center you can find American classic literature, as well as reference books and works of non-fiction. You can watch American movies and documentaries in their original English. The center is one of five the Embassy manages. Others are located in Chisinau, Balti, Ungheni and Ceadir-Lunga. They are intended to help increase understanding of American culture and values, and to teach the

English language. I am pictured here, left to right, with Ryan Aiken, US Information Officer, and the Center's Director. The two people to the right are Vice-Rector Kushaka and his assistant.



All during the week I did various press interviews. The lady in the middle (below) is a wonderful Romanian translator, Wanda. This is the second trip I have had the pleasure of having her assistance.





Saturday, I packed and prepared to leave. My bags were heavily laden on arrival with educational materials. They were equally heavy for the return trip with Moldovan school information, mementos from various schools or areas, some homemade relish, and lots of Moldovan sweets and wine.

**Why the trip and why mid-June?** Moldova's Parliament approved the signing of an EU association agreement in the spring on the same timetable as Ukraine and Georgia. Moldova has a pro-Western coalition government. Moldovans have been very aware of happenings in Ukraine and have felt Russia's escalating economic pressures and threats. The EU agreement was officially signed a few days after I departed.

Since the sad happenings in Ukraine, Secretary of State Kerry and at least eight US Senators have visited Moldova this year. The rank and file Moldovans are actively being reminded they have friends and contacts in the US. North Carolina is at the top of the friend list.

National elections are this fall. The United States and EU believe Moldova's more clear and secure path to economic development and national integrity is through democracy. I agree.

In no way does this chronology adequately describe the emotions I experienced and observed on the part of grateful citizens seeking economic opportunities and a pathway to democracy.

Note: No State of North Carolina funds were expended for my trip.