

The Briefing

A Newsletter of The Alabama World Affairs Council / Winter 2004

Don Oberdorfer at Maxwell; Saudis at Capital City Club; Ambassador Levitte, War College at Museum

Writer, academic, and long-time former newspaper correspondent Don Oberdorfer, a nationally and internationally known expert on the Pacific rim, especially Korea, will be in town on February 3rd. He will

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speak to an Air War College group in the



morning, interview with Alabama Public Television in the afternoon, and speak to the World Affairs Council in the evening. While the times will be the same (5:30 reception, 6:15 presentation), the venue will be changed. Instead of at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Oberdorfer will make his presentation at Maxwell AFB. The Enlisted Club on base offers a fine setting, with plenty of secure parking outside and lots of room inside, with excellent amenities.

Don Oberdorfer retired in 1993 as *Washington Post* diplomatic correspondent and joined Johns Hopkins University's Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SIAS) as a resident scholar of the Foreign Policy Institute. His SIAS-sponsored book, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, on the North-South struggle in Korea, was published in 1997 and 1998 in London, Seoul (in Korean) and Tokyo (in Japanese). The Japanese edition was awarded the 10th annual Asia-Pacific Book Prize in Tokyo.

Oberdorfer was a journalist for 38 years, a *Washington Post* staff member for 25 years and the paper's diplomatic correspondent for 17 years. He covered the Vietnam war as a correspondent in Saigon and Washington in 1966-75 for Knight Newspapers and the *Washington Post*.

Oberdorfer is a native of Atlanta, Ga. He graduated from Princeton University in 1952 and served as a U.S. Army lieutenant in Korea immediately following the signing of the armistice in 1953.

He is the author of five books, including his latest, *Senator Mansfield*, which will be available after his presentation. He has also written thousands of newspaper articles and dozens of magazine articles on current affairs.

He has won many awards for journalistic excellence, e.g., he twice won the National Press Club's award for diplomatic correspondence. In 1966 Princeton bestowed on him its annual Woodrow Wilson Award given to a graduate who has performed exemplary service to the nation. He is a member of the Asia Society and the Council on Foreign Relations.

Saudis Representing Business and Political Interests

The World Affairs Council is pleased to announce that on March 2 we will sponsor a visit by three or four prominent members of the Saudi business community representing the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Possibly **MAR 2** three men and one woman, they are all highly successful, American-educated professionals prepared to give presentations on U.S.-Saudi relations and handle the tough questions. The event will be held over lunch at the Capital City Club in a panel discussion format.

Since this is an unbudgeted activity, there probably will be a nominal charge for attendance. AWAC

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members will be contacted by mail to determine attendance plans. Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce members will also be invited. This is an exciting opportunity to learn more about Saudi Arabia and Saudi beliefs and attitudes.

The French Ambassador

The French Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Jean-David Levitte, has expressed a willingness to come to Montgomery in the spring, but due to his heavy schedule has not yet committed to a specific date. We have recommended March 23 to him and are keeping that date open.

Ambassador Levitte took up his current duties in Washington in

December 2002. He was previously permanent representative of France to the United Nations from March 2000 to November 2002. A career diplomat since 1970, Ambassador Levitte served as a diplomatic advisor and “sherpa” to French President Chirac from 1995 to March 2000.

He holds a law degree, and is a graduate of the Institute of Political Science and the National School of Oriental Languages, where he studied Chinese and Indonesian.

Air War College

On May 18, a panel of senior Air War College instructors from Maxwell AFB will report to the Council on

their individual spring trips to different regions of the world. This Annual Regional Studies report has become one of AWAC’s most popular programs.



Dr. Tom Vocino (Auburn University Montgomery), Dr. Lewis (Huntingdon College), Board members all, ch Bruce Laingen.

Weather, Airplane Trouble Deprives Council of Sir Eldon Griffiths, Gives Us Grant Hammond

The Council suffered a first on November 18, when bad weather and serial aircraft troubles prevented Sir Eldon Griffiths, president of the World Affairs Councils of America, from arriving on time to give his program. Rather than send everybody home unenlightened, Board member and Air War College faculty member Dr. Grant Hammond graciously volunteered to throw himself into the breach. On short notice and without notes, Dr. Hammond treated the membership to an overview of a book

he is working on entitled *The Revolution in Security Affairs: The Transformation of Politics and War in the 21st Century*. From crowd reaction after his presentation, it was deemed a highly successful, if a substitute, program.

Dr. Hammond reviewed briefly the impact of several emerging simultaneous phenomena that are changing the nature of security—personal, national and international — now and over the next quarter century. These include technological advances

in information, communication and computing capability; scientific revolutions in such fields as bio-engineering and directed energy; the increasing pace and interdependence, for good and ill, of globalization; and the rise of non-state actors, e.g., Al Qaeda and the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines.

The next day Sir Eldon spoke to two audiences at Air University and to AWAC members at the Capital City Club. All in all, an eventful trip for our national president.



Buck Grinter (Air War College), and Dr. Jeremy Lewis at AWAC presentation given by Ambassador

Great Decisions Programs for Montgomery High Schools – and Lake Martin Seniors

Board members Dr. Grant Hammond of the Air War College and Dr. Jeremy Lewis of Huntingdon College have arranged and begun the 2004 Great Decisions program for local high school students. The program started on January 12 in the “high tech” classroom at Huntingdon (Room 102 in Flowers Hall) and will run for a total of eight sessions, the last coming on March 15. Great Decisions is a national program offered by the Foreign Policy Association, a non-partisan, non-profit organization based in Washington.

Twenty-three interested students signed up from seven local high schools: Montgomery Academy, Trinity, Catholic, Brewbaker Tech, LAMP, Jefferson Davis, and Booker T. Washington. All classes are held Monday afternoons from 4:00 to 5:30, with a 30-40 minute presentation followed by group discussion. In addition to Dr. Lewis, all the other instructors are from the resources at Air University, mainly the Air War College.

The curriculum, accompanied by text books supplied by the Foreign Policy Association, includes such topics as reform in the Middle East, the U.S. and Europe, public diplomacy, and the Philippines.

The Horizons Unlimited program began in Alexander City ten years ago to satisfy the needs of a growing population of retirees around Lake Martin who were interested in continuing their education, particularly in world affairs.

Dick Bronson (Colonel US Army Retired), a resident of Jacksons Gap and a former member of the Air War College faculty, approached the AWC about presenting a mini version of world affairs to Horizons Unlimited. Dr. Bill Martel, then a board member of the World Affairs Council, the initial coordinator, instituted the Great Decisions format.

Ted Hailes (Colonel US Air Force Retired) is the current AWC coordinator. Each summer Hailes and Bronson review topics in the Great Decisions handbook and Hailes schedules the topics with AWC faculty members.

Approximately 40-50 residents from the Lake Martin community sign up every year for the six-week program. Two-hour meetings are held in the Aliant Bank building in Alexander City each Monday afternoon from late September to early November. As a result of this program, over a dozen members have joined the World Affairs Council.

For more information on Horizons Unlimited, call Dick Bronson at (256) 825-9353.

Financial Status Looking Okay

While AWAC's financial status can hardly be described as robust, it does appear that we will be able to get through the program year while paying all our bills. The adjustment in the dues structure, a most welcome grant from the Alabama Humanities Foundation, and a modest starting balance left from last year should all add up to adequate funding.

Check out our web
site! **awac.us**

Want to join AWAC?

After Christmas special for
non-members only! Big
Discount—Send in enclosed
pledge card or call 244-3337.

Executive Director's Corner: Dr. James Nathan

Editor's Note: The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the board of directors of the Alabama World Affairs Council

Recently, I was one of an American delegation that was invited to **Taiwan** for a visit with senior Taiwanese leaders. The trip lasted from December 15 to Christmas eve.

Taipei is amazingly prosperous, so different than China. The tallest building in the world just went up in Taipei. Its 101 floors tower oddly over a basically flat city—too many earthquakes and typhoons. A guide said it would withstand a hundred-year quake. I asked, “Starting when?” The upper floors have not been rented yet.

There is an **election** coming up in Taiwan, and we met most of the candidates. Real elections are something the mainland fears. The problem is that Taiwanese are voting, in effect, if not explicitly, for independence. People in Taiwan no longer say they are Chinese even though they speak Mandarin and are ethnic Chinese. They now say they are Taiwanese.

Communist China still threatens war continually. There was another threat in the days before Christmas. The trouble is the Chinese seem to mean it. China calls Taiwan a “rengade province,” and, if war came, Taiwan could do little about it except hope the US could save them. It is a very flammable situation, perhaps not now, but sometime in the next decade, or so most in our little delegation believed.

The senior leadership of Taiwan seemed oddly complacent. The US supports the status quo, but clearly,

the status quo is changing and the party that is likely to win the election, and even the opposition, are stressing their uniqueness. It doesn't help that the formula the Chinese use to entice Taiwan “back to the motherland” — “two systems, one country” — has worked so poorly in Hong Kong, where a half a million folks crowded the streets in protests a few months ago.

Elsewhere, the news in **American foreign policy** is mixed. The verdict is still out on Iraq, but whether by coincidence, or as a function of assertive American power, or both, there has been good progress on many of America's long standing interests. In **Libya**, Colonel Qaddafi has opened up the country to inspection of his WMD program. **Iran** announced that it would suspend its once-secret programs and allow international inspectors in. Diplomacy is looking up some after the prompt US emergency relief that was sent to help with Iran's most recent quake. The **North Koreans** have opened up their nuclear facilities to unofficial American inspectors. Both the Bush administration and the North Koreans are jockeying for position in up-coming talks. But at least it is talk. In sum, all points of the President's “**axis of evil**” are starting to morph. It is unclear how much the most recent Gulf war helped. Some, to be sure. But money matters too. The Europeans

offered Iran billions if Iran ends its nuclear programs. Similarly, Libya and the North Koreans are anxious to break out from the US-led economic isolation. Libya can't pump oil without American drill bit technology. North Korea is an economic disaster. Those of us who said that economic sanctions don't work, clearly have to re-think.

Even in **India and Pakistan**, things are looking up. Two years ago both seemed poised on the brink of nuclear war. But Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf has steadily moved against the Moslem terrorists Pakistan has long supported. The prospect of a better economy and US pressure helps, as did the sheer cost of fifty years of fighting. Most important, it seems, are the choices all countries, including Pakistan, have been forced to make after September 11th.

Next month, **Don Oberdorfer** will be here speaking to us at Maxwell. Oberdorfer is an articulate Asian expert, with extraordinary first hand experience. His most recent book on Mike Mansfeld, the revered U.S. Ambassador to Japan, has been nominated for a bushel of awards.

On January 28, I am off to the **annual national meeting** of the World Affairs Councils of America. The annual meeting is now booked by September! Some of you will be there, and I look forward to seeing you in Washington.