

Moore makes customer service a top priority, noting that all visitors, both Haitian and American, will remember their experience with the consular section. “Often the most direct contact a foreigner has with an American is for a visa interview,” Moore explains. “The impression we give will have a lasting effect on how we are viewed as a people.”

Most mornings, Moore walks through each section of the consular office, checking in with staff and addressing personnel issues. He inquires about any American citizen emergency cases. He meets with his section heads each day and often participates in policy discussions at the country-team level.

Moore joined the Foreign Service in 1992. He has served at six posts in consular positions, including Milan, Italy; Paris, France; Tirana, Albania; and Washington, D.C. Moore was born in Fort Pierce, Fla. He has a B.S. in broadcast production and a J.D. from the University of Florida, Gainesville. He also has a master’s degree in international private law from the University of Paris. Before joining the Foreign Service, he served in the Judge Advocate General Corps with the U.S. Navy and as an assistant state’s attorney in Florida. Don speaks French, Italian, and Albanian. He has one son from a former marriage. While in Haiti, Moore was promoted to the Senior Foreign Service and received the 2009 Barbara M. Watson Award for Consular Excellence. After Haiti, he moves on to a second assignment to Italy, this time as consul general in Naples.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

Christopher Teal ■ Consulate General Guadalajara, Mexico

This is a historic time in the relationship between Mexico and the United States, and public affairs officers for the U.S. mission in Mexico have a direct role in moving the relationship in a positive direction. Public Affairs Officer Christopher Teal serves as the spokesman for Consulate General Guadalajara, explaining U.S. policies to residents of the large seven-state area of western Mexico. Teal has the dual role of



Chris Teal looks on as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Mexican Foreign Minister Patricia Espinosa sign an agreement on emergency management cooperation in Puerto Vallarta, October 2008.



being the “eyes and ears” of the consulate, reporting on the local situation, but also the “face” of America to the public and the local government. He promotes educational and cultural initiatives that

bring American experts and artists to Mexico and send Mexicans to the United States on exchanges through Fulbright Scholarships and other programs.

The U.S. embassy in Mexico City is one of the largest, and the U.S. mission in Mexico includes nine consulates, making it the largest overall U.S. diplomatic presence in the world. Consulate General Guadalajara is larger than many embassies, with about 100 Locally Employed Staff and 50 Americans from the State Department and other federal agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Agency. Due to the complexities and extent of the ties between the United States and Mexico, coordination between the embassy and the consulates, as well as among the many government agencies working in Mexico, is paramount. The nonstop stream of VIP visitors to Mexico requires constant engagement; in his first year at post in 2008, Teal served as lead control officer for then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s visit and later as press lead for President Barack Obama’s visit.

The most significant bilateral issues that Teal must follow and explain on behalf of the United States are counternarcotics and security, immigration and visas, and economic development and trade. Immigration is always a major area of interest and concern throughout Mexico, so Teal spends a lot of his time explaining the visa process and immigration policy. The wave of violence associated with the Mexican government’s fight against drug cartels makes security a top concern: Teal fields many questions about bilateral assistance programs such as the Merida Initiative, which aims to combat the threats of drug trafficking, transnational crime, and money laundering. On top of that, the unfortunate position of Mexico as epicenter for the H1N1 virus meant that the public affairs and consular teams had to help keep the large American community across Mexico informed and facilitate U.S. assistance to local health authorities as they tried to cope with the crisis.

Much of Teal’s time is spent meeting with contacts in the government, the academic world, and the media. He often participates in public events, traveling frequently to engage Mexican audiences throughout the consular district directly. “Insatiable curiosity makes for a good FSO, but this is especially true in public affairs,” Teal says. “There is always more to learn, and by learning we can also share more about ourselves and our country.”

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Teal also plays a management role in the consulate, overseeing a staff of four Locally Employed Staff, a Mexican intern, and one entry-level FSO. He regularly advises the consul general on major issues of the day and how best to position the consulate in response. Consulate General Guadalajara has no political or economic section, so Teal often finds himself filling those roles as well, reporting on local issues.

Teal's work with local media is rewarding and difficult. The security dangers tied to the cartel violence in Mexico put press freedom at risk, as the cartels frequently threaten media outlets. Several international nongovernmental organizations have listed Mexico as the most dangerous place to practice journalism in the Western Hemisphere. Teal and his team work actively with local journalists to help increase their capacity to cover high-risk stories while staying safe. The right to information and freedom of expression is critical to democracy in Mexico, so helping Mexican journalists maintain their ability to keep their compatriots informed about what is happening in their country is a top priority.

The public affairs officer is one of the most visible U.S. government figures in Guadalajara. This offers unique challenges, as well as opportunities to meet and interact with individuals from across the spectrum of society, from business and government leaders to artists and intellectuals. "The variety of work and the challenges of leading a public affairs section make this one of the most interesting jobs in all of government," Teal explains. "The fact that we can have a real and immediate impact on people's lives is tremendously rewarding. There is nothing I would rather be doing."

Teal, 40, was born in Pontiac, Illinois, but grew up in Arkansas, Texas, and Washington, D.C. He studied political science, and has a B.A. from the University of Arkansas and an M.A. from George Washington University. Before joining the Foreign Service, Chris worked with journalist Juan Williams on his biography of Thurgood Marshall. He joined the U.S. Information Agency in 1999, just as it was being merged into the State Department. His first tour was as a consular officer and press officer in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He then went on to Lima, Peru, and spent two tours in Washington, D.C., most recently at the Foreign Press Center covering African affairs. Teal is married with one son. In his limited spare time, he enjoys writing; *Hero of Hispaniola*, his book about the first African-American diplomat, Ebenezer D. Bassett, was published in 2008 (Praeger).



Teal with a group of student folk dancers at an elementary school in Guadalajara.