

STATE

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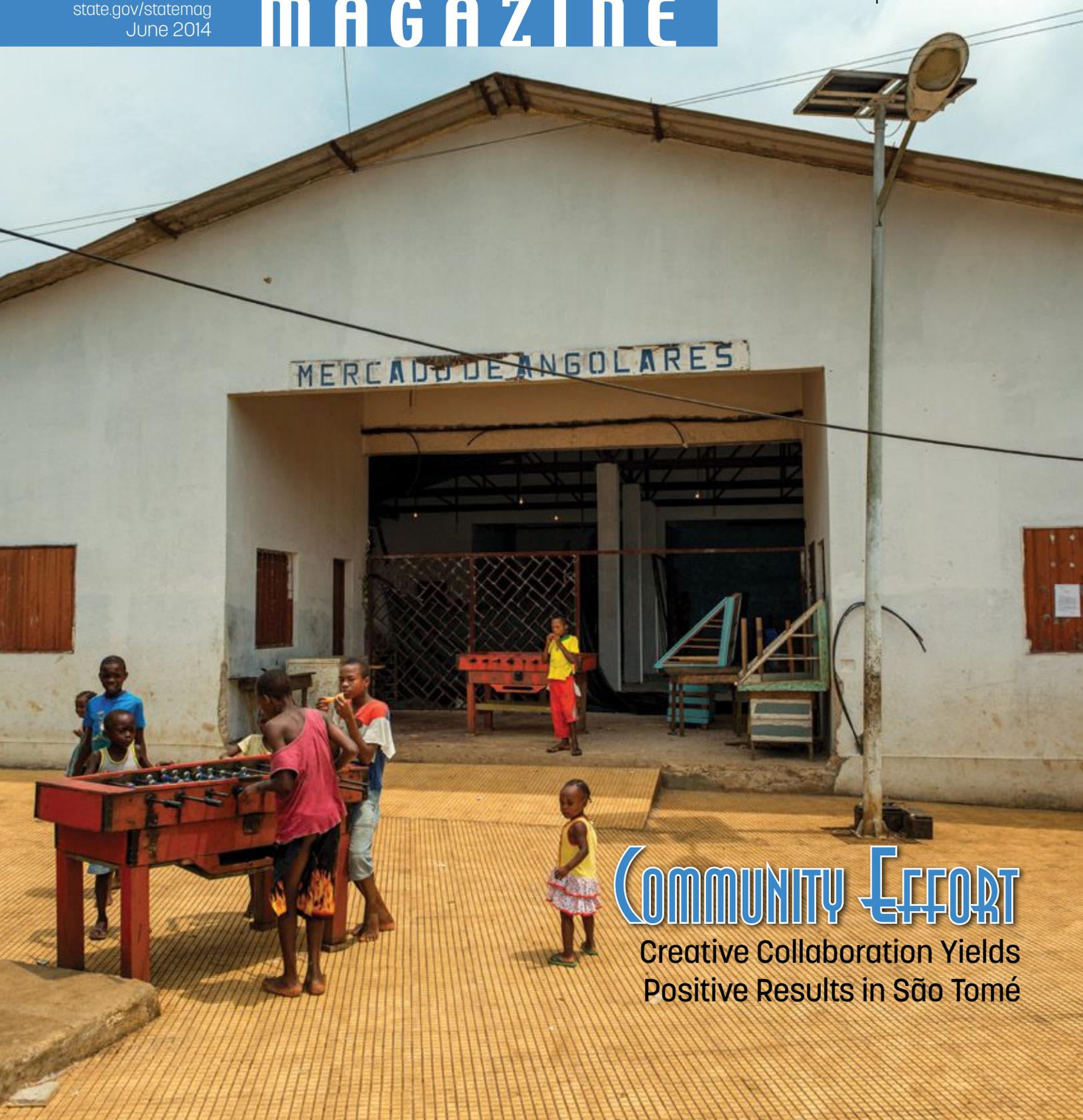
MAGAZINE

Songs of Inspiration

Gospel Choir Brings
Hope to Uruguayans

Mexico City

Post of the Month,
Vibrant Metropolis



COMMUNITY EFFORT

Creative Collaboration Yields
Positive Results in São Tomé

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On The Cover

A foosball table is a popular hangout spot for a group of children in São João Angolares, a fishing village in São Tomé, where U.S. Embassy Libreville is coordinating with locals to revitalize the central market.

Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco





MSAU Marines pose with Vice President Biden during his visit to Panama.
Photo by David Leinemann



Marines at the Ready

New unit can boost security coverage

By Maj. David C. Emmel, commanding officer, MSG Security Augmentation Unit

The Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) and U.S. Marine Corps Embassy Security Group (MCESG) partner on providing security for U.S. diplomats overseas. Besides assigning new Marine Security Guard (MSG) detachments to diplomatic posts previously without them and increasing the number of Marines in established detachments, MCESG has worked with DS to create the new MSG Security Augmentation Unit (MSAU), which will train, organize and deploy MSGs to provide responsive, scalable increases to security at diplomatic posts in response to threat conditions.

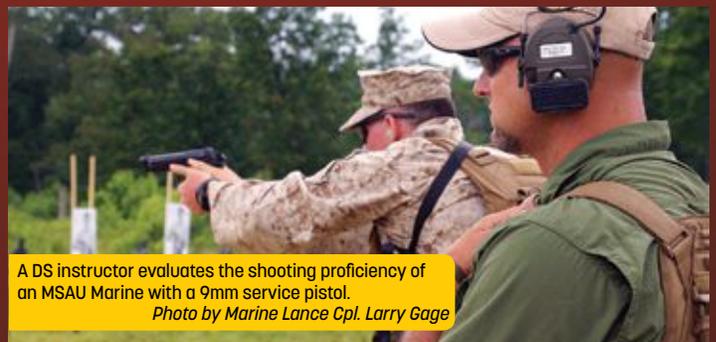
Marines selected for the MSAU are typically on their second or third MSG posting and complete a minimum of three weeks of specialized training. Instructors from the MSAU and the DS Training Directorate provide the training as well as continuous proficiency training to maintain standards in basic and advanced MSG augmentation operations. This training includes a review of the MSAU mission and structure and specific security augmentation procedures.

DS trainers provide instruction in first aid, communications, advanced weapons use and room-entry tactics, and review the use of physical security equipment commonly encountered at overseas posts. Additionally, MSAU Marines learn firefighting, how to survive in a collapsed structure, observation techniques and skills dealing with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear hazards.

“Our training is better,” said Sgt. John A. Alvarez, a team leader and one of the original Marines assigned to the MSAU. “We take what [the

MCESG] has put out there as a baseline and we exceed it.” He added that DS instructors “gave me the ability to understand what I’m doing wrong. So now I can see that in other Marines ... [and] correct them so they can develop their skills.”

After the initial MSAU training, the Marines are based in Quantico, Va., where they must be continuously ready for deployment in support of Department needs. They are assigned to one of nine regionally aligned, but not regionally exclusive, squads of 12 MSGs, each under a detachment commander who is a noncommissioned officer. The Marines’ training focuses on the diplomatic posts within their assigned region, but each squad is also ready to support posts in other areas.



A DS instructor evaluates the shooting proficiency of an MSAU Marine with a 9mm service pistol.
Photo by Marine Lance Cpl. Larry Gage

The decision to deploy MSAU elements typically results from a request from the chief of mission through the regional security officer (RSO) in response to security-related events at a post. The request can be based on present or anticipated conditions, but focuses on pre- or post-crisis periods.

Posts tell the DS MSG branch what the proposed mission is and how long the deployment is expected to last. The MSAU works closely with the branch and post officials to meet requests in a timely manner, deploying as quickly as possible.

Requests can also come from the Department, as was the case for the first MSAU deployments, in September 2013. In anticipation of an increased threat during the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attack in Benghazi, Libya, the Department identified specific posts for security augmentation. The MSAU, with assistance from the DS MSG branch and posts' RSOs, simultaneously deployed augmentation teams to eight embassies in Africa and the Middle East for 30 days.

Each of these embassies presented different security challenges. The teams worked closely with the RSOs, defining security requirements and how to meet them through implementing random anti-terrorism measures. Following the deployment of a team to Bamako, Mali, the post's RSO, Corynn Stratton, said MSAUs have "incredible potential for enhancing security measures at our high-risk posts."

Near the end of this first deployment period, the DS MSG branch received another request for support, from the RSO in Nairobi, Kenya, following the Al-Qaida attack on the Westgate Mall. Within 24 hours, one of the initial 9/11 augmentation teams was sent to the embassy in Nairobi for two weeks.

Nicholas Comas, a program analyst with the DS MSG branch, said the deployment was "a great example of why MSAU was created. The RSO had a problem following the Kenyan mall shooting, Westerners were targeted, and we were able to expeditiously send Marines to the post after a request."

Another MSAU squad recently completed a mission in Adana, Turkey, acting as an interim MSG detachment until the consulate completed preparations for a permanently assigned detachment.



MSAU Marines engage in a security response drill in Adana, Turkey.
Photo by Marine Gunnery Sgt. Chamous Duhachek

The MSAU also deploys in support of its secondary mission: providing security during overseas visits of the president, vice president and Secretary of State. In November, an MSAU team supported Vice President Biden's trip to Panama City, Panama. The post's RSO, Christopher Stitt, said the Marines "contributed to the success of the overall mission and visit," adding that the MSAU "can become the gold standard for VIP-visit deployments." As of April 18, the MSAU had supported eight other VIP trips overseas.

The MSAU has met every operational requirement, though each mission posed myriad coordination challenges for DS and the MSAU. From training to deployment, the team approach has proven essential to the MSAU's success. The experience and flexibility of MSGs and Department officials allow the augmentation teams to effectively integrate into security plans at diplomatic posts, whether by augmenting resident MSG detachments, providing security where there is no detachment or supporting VIP visits.

With continued support from DS, the MSAU will remain a viable option to meet diplomatic security concerns and sustain the strong Marine Corps-State Department partnership. ■

Left: MSAU Marines conduct medical training with a casualty mannequin; Below: The initial three squads of Marines assigned to MSAU after their first week of indoctrination training. Photos by Marine Lance Cpl. Larry Gage

