



(U) 'Fourth of July Abroad' Tales (part 2)

FROM: SIGINT Communications
Unknown
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More tales from our worldly work force... Enjoy the holiday! (U)

From: [REDACTED]

Bucking the Trend in Spain (U)

(U) Back in the summer of 1999 I was living in Alicante, Spain. The conflict in Kosovo was the major news item at the time. (I wasn't too up on TV or newspapers, but we heard a lot about it on the streets from Spaniards.) The State Department had issued a warning to Americans abroad regarding anti-American sentiment, especially among Muslims. (Which I definitely had heard about.) Spain is a country full of contradictions. They declare themselves a democracy, but the socialist and communist parties are STRONG throughout the country and many of their social and economic policies go down those lines.

(U) On the 4th of July that year, inspired by recent world events, the Communist Party of Valencia (the province where Alicante is located) decided to organize a street rally. My American roommate and I were walking back to our apartment, and noticed traffic was stopped on the streets and that there was some large disturbance up ahead. As we got closer, we saw a good sized "populacho" or crowd/mob (almost). There was a man on the back of what looked like a small euro-style van with a bullhorn. I used to remember the things they were chanting, but years have blurred the memory. They were cute little rhymes though. I remember they were along the lines of "Die capitalist pigs" and "American imperialism [this and that]".

(U) Prudence would have suggested taking some alternate path. But being 20, headstrong, a patriotic little Eagle Scout, and a pair of smart alecks, my friend and I walked up to the group. The man on top of the van immediately recognized us as American. (Tall, blonde etc.) He started pointing and yelling communist rhetoric. Something about "nuestros compadres", "Yankees" (I'm a Mariners fan!) and "la leche de la madre!" (No clue why they threw in the reference to the milk thing, but he kept saying it!) By this time the crowd was pretty worked up. This couple in front of us had a banner that they had strung between two sticks but it was sagging because they were screaming and pointing at us and we couldn't see what it said. Being diplomatic, we asked them to stretch it out for us, which, surprisingly they did. We both snapped pictures of the banner that said "Die, Yankee murderers." (I still have mine.) We walked away whistling the Star Spangled Banner. They just kept yelling.

(U) It's one of my favorite experiences from my time in Spain.

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From: [REDACTED]

A Grand British Fourth (U)

(U) One of the most memorable 4th of July (let's not forget that is Independence Day) celebrations that I experienced took place at Menwith Hill Station, Harrogate, Yorkshire, England, U.K. around 1978 through 1981. It was a Grand Brit 4th. Our British counterparts and friends, clearance or not, were invited to the base, and many of us swear that there were more Brits than Yanks on hand for the festivities.

(U) The band played the Star Spangled Banner followed by God Save the Queen -- remember the Yanks were the guests in the U.K. There was a parade including Station staff dressed in rebel garb from the War of Independence. This was followed by traditional food and drink. The Brits gobbled up all the American hot dogs and hamburgers, and quaffed Kentucky Bourbon with a foamy Bud chaser. The Yanks managed to down a few hot dogs and hamburgers, and quaffed single malt scotch chased with dark ale or bitters.

(U) There were toasts to George Washington and George III, along with slightly less enthusiastic toasts to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. The Red Arrows, the magnificent RAF acrobatic demonstration team, performed. If you have never seen RAF jet fighters flying low over the Yorkshire moors with a very blue and only slightly cloudy sky as a background, well, it takes your breath away.

(U) The emcee announced that several of these pilots were veterans of the Falklands War, and they were the best of the best. The planes put out the obligatory red, white, and blue smoke, and they thrilled all of us, along with scaring the pants off a few Yorkshire farmers and their sheep. All this was at the height of the Cold War and in the midst of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and during a very significant expansion programme at MHS.

(U) Both the Brits and the Yanks were feeling "very" patriotic, and a good time was had by all the lads and the lasses. What a nice way to spend the 4th.

From: [REDACTED]

The Weather Is Moderate, But the Celebrating Isn't (U)

(U) American Fourth of July celebrations in the Australian outback are much less reserved than in the UK. The Aussies will use almost any excuse to have a party, and two tours over 5 years in the outback reinforce that perception. The Australians have a unique quality to make fun out of anything.

(C) The Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap (JDFPG) invites on the average 6 locals for each of the almost 500 Americans stationed at the base, and believe me, there is fun to be had by all. July in Australia is in the middle of winter, which means the daytime temperatures are quite moderate, sometimes confining themselves to the 80's instead of the blistering 120 degree summertime temps.

(U) Just outside the front gate to the base is a large picnic area where the annual independence celebration starts at about 10:00 a.m. and can go for 10 hours. The area is decked out in red, white and blue bunting with American and Australian flags and many

speeches elaborating on the special kinship the Americans and Aussies share as outcasts from the Georgian British Empire.

(U) I especially remember the picnic basket auctions filled with locally unobtainable American products where some baskets would go for more than A\$100 raising a record amount of money for charity. It seemed that 1200 hamburgers would not be enough, and we almost doubled that one year. Picture a New York block party, only in the desert, and that would be a pretty good approximation of what transpires. Everyone has fun and remembers why and how we can.



(U//FOUO) Pine Gap Facility

From: [REDACTED]

Patriotic in Poland (U)

(U//FOUO) There are many memorable and enjoyable experiences that come with being associated with or attached to a U.S. Embassy community. One of the most special of these is the privilege of participating in the Embassy's annual 4th of July reception. Usually hosted by the U.S. Ambassador at his or her official residence, this event is the culmination of a year of work by foreign service officers from the most junior to the most experienced to secure donations from U.S. and multinational corporations to guarantee good food and entertainment on the day. These efforts, which sometimes begin the week after the current year's party is over, guarantee that the event is high-class and that invitations are highly prized by host country partners and expat community contacts. If you ever receive an invitation to the U.S. Embassy's official July 4th reception, don't turn it down!

(S) Our last 4th of July official Embassy reception was in 2002, just days before we were scheduled to leave Warsaw after having spent five years in the Defense Attaché's Office. The sun shone in a cloudless sky, the U.S. flag fluttered high overhead, and the crowd, dressed in civilian best and military Class A's representing a vast range of nationalities, munched and mingled to the big band tunes of a Polish military jazz band. Already overwhelmed with terrific memories of our time in Poland that was about to come to an end, the particular memory of that day will stay with me for a long time as we celebrated our country's independence and friendships that extend around the world. And a solemn recollection of the tremendous outpouring of sympathy and support demonstrated by our host country the previous September (2001) influenced the patriotic mood of the day.

From: [REDACTED] NCR Iraq Exec (from the Presidential Palace, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad)

Around the World on the Fourth, Ending in Baghdad (U)

(U) Over the years I have celebrated the 4th of July holiday in a number of places, and in a number of ways. Unlike most Americans, over 20 of these holidays were spent outside of the US. Several of these celebrations stand out vividly in my memory. Once, as a young child, I stood in a campground clearing overlooking Rome and joined together with other American

campers to sing a variety of patriotic songs and wave sparklers. Throughout the evening, we shared an impromptu picnic and songfest as campers from many countries joined us. Our American celebration became an international party.

(U) In 1976, I was back in the States, and joined thousands of my fellow Americans for an unforgettable 4th of July experience on The Mall in Washington, D.C. Though I admit, my most vivid memory of that day is of the difficulties we encountered in returning home -- insufficient public transportation -- I hitch-hiked for the first (and last) time in my life.

(U) Stationed at Stuttgart, Germany, in the mid-1980s, I sat on bleachers, huddled in blankets for warmth in the late evening chill, listening to a concert by the local U.S. military band. The highpoint was the artillery blasting away during the "1812 Overture". It was amazing (and incredibly noisy) to be that close to the "cannons".

(U) Several years later, I stood shivering in 40 degree weather watching our local "4th of July Parade" at Menwith Hill Station, in northern England. The fireworks that evening (late that evening -- it doesn't get dark until well after 10pm) were attended by both American and British families associated with the Station as well as many local dignitaries wearing their chains and badges of office. Ordered through a British company, the fireworks had a unique twist -- pictures! I'd never seen firework pictures before (or since). There was one of the Queen (at least I think it was supposed to be her) and one of a tall-ship (your choice, "Boston Tea Party" or "Trafalgar") as well as a large American flag.

(U) Fast-forward a number of years to living at Yokota Air Base Japan. The annual fireworks display is held on the flight line. July in Japan is hot and bright. Even hours after the sun has gone down the flight line tarmac holds residual heat. Folks "quick walk" across the tarmac - and head for the grassy areas. Latecomers hope that several layers of blankets to sit on will keep them comfortable. Once again our 4th of July has an international flavor as many Japanese join us for the celebration. Celebrating by a flight line has a down side - and I mean down as in leaning down. On the 5th of July volunteers are invited to join in a "police the flight line" drill. All the debris from partying and fireworks has to be cleared from the runway before it can be reopened for business. The means lining up at one end and walking to the other, filling trash bags along the way.

(U//FOUO) As for many Americans, 4th of July for me usually means a relaxing day -- a picnic with family and friends, relaxing with a cool drink, fireworks in the evening - you know the drill, sunblock and insect repellent. This year, I'll be celebrating the 4th in Baghdad, far from family -- but with new friends. I plan on wearing my red t-shirt with the "Stars and Stripes" on the front. The Embassy staff does have some festivities planned -- horseshoe contest, pool volleyball, tug of war -- but fireworks aren't listed. I know the chefs will serve a picnic, complete with red, white and blue decorations, beautifully decorated cakes, and Baskin Robbins ice cream.

(U//FOUO) This 4th of July will be different. We are deployed to a war zone. The fireworks we hear and see are the kind that end lives, not celebrate life. For me, the 4th of July will be a time more of reflection than of celebration. I am proud to be an American; I am proud to be serving my Agency and my country. It's ironic that as I write this, a controlled detonation has just been announced

over the handheld radio. While hearing explosions off in the distance has become part of everyday life, they still profoundly affect me. We as Americans are so fortunate in our freedoms and in our commitment to freedom.

(U) When we celebrate the 4th of July, we are celebrating the ideas and ideals that Congress approved in our Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "...for ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollection of these rights, and undiminished devotion to them."



(U) Editor's note: Many thanks to all who sent in their stories.

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