

State Department/Mongolian Affairs

January 15, 2016

Attendance State Department:

Jeffrey D. Graham, External Political Affairs Unit Chief
Office of Chinese and Mongolian Affairs

Alan Z. Brinker, Desk Officer
Office of Chinese and Mongolian Affairs

Delegation:

Beth Fluke and Holly Jobe

Alan met us, explained he had been on the Mongolian Desk for only two weeks, apologized and said he had asked his boss, Jeffery Graham, to sit in on our meeting.

We presented the two men with Delegation information including history, a brief overview of the women involved and our September itinerary. We explained we hoped they would facilitate a meeting with the Mongolian Ambassador in Ulaanabaatar and suggest a reception at the Embassy to meet women. They would be happy to make the contact. We explained we plan to send Ambassador Jennifer Galt resumes of each participant and their area of expertise, we hope the Embassy would facilitate connections. We explained we would like to make counterpart connections before we go.

Jeffery Graham proceeded to spend the next 35 minutes reviewing Mongolian history and the present relationship with the USA. Much of this you may have already read, here are my notes:

Mongolia, sandwiched between China and Russia, is the only Democracy in the area. It thinks of its "neighbors" as S. Korea, Japan and the US. As a result of past domination of China, then the USSR, and the fact the country is sparsely populated, there appears an anxiousness they will lose their way and be occupied. Jeffery smiled and explained they have been anxious to establish their credibility as an independent nation by joining all

possible international organizations. Mongolia has been active in supporting UN actions by being one of the first countries to send troops to conflict areas. They are active in 'communities of democracies' assisting countries adopt democratic practices.

Jeffery worked in Mongolia in 1997, seven years after the Soviets departed. He said Russian was the primary second language, schools were mostly focused on math and science. There is not the negative attitude towards Russia they have towards the Chinese.

He explained the population of Mongolia is about 3 million, about 1 million have moved to Ulaanabaatar and suburbs. Mongolia, having been primarily nomadic, industry has not developed and may have difficulty developing as the country is landlocked. As Jeffery said, they are sitting on a "gold mine" in their mineral resource. If mining is handled financially in an equitable manner, the Mongolian citizens can be classified as 'middle class'. If however the mining contracts are held by a few in political power, the residents of Mongolia may not experience the fruits of the mining explosion. The State Department is watching the 'jockeying for power'. They need to diversify the economy. Besides mining, tourism and cashmere are possible exports.

He said it is difficult to do business in Mongolia, they keep changing the rules.

There are over 80 million heads of livestock in the country: too many. Overgrazing a problem.

Alcoholism and domestic violence are also problems and the reports are getting much more positive regarding domestic violence. Despite this, Jeffery reported the women play a major role in the country and all girls are in school and are educated.

Mongolia will be hosting the Asia/Europe minister summit in the summer and they are building a new airport.

The peace corps has been in Mongolia for 25 years mostly teachers of English and the environment. USAID projects are winding down because

the income average, due to mineral wealth, is considered middle and Mongolia is no longer eligible for assistance.
In conclusion he said "it is a beautiful country, you will enjoy seeing it."