

# Mastering Global Logistics Abroad



by Ms. Karen Pennington, DCMA Johnson Space Center, Texas; Mr. Edward Bridges, DCMA Chicago; and Mr. Daniel Wilson, Picatinny Arsenal, N.J.

In August 2006, Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) employees Mr. Edward Bridges, director, tactical wheeled vehicles, DCMA Chicago; Mr. Daniel Wilson, customer liaison representative, Picatinny Arsenal, N.J.; and Ms. Karen Pennington, administrative contracting officer, NASA Product Operations, DCMA Johnson Space Center, Texas, embarked on the opportunity of a lifetime as they joined their master's of business administration (MBA) cohort in Bangkok, Thailand, to begin a two-week international study tour of Asia. The trip was part of the logistics and technology (LOGTECH) MBA curriculum, scheduled to take place after the completion of one year of online studies.

The LOGTECH MBA program is an approved DCMA centralized development program with the U.S. Army Materiel Command as executive agent. It is an innovative program primarily focused on military and corporate logistics. The Institute for Defense and Business (IDB) at the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler School of Business manages the program with the

online portion provided by Indiana University's Kelley School of Business. The LOGTECH MBA integrates the experience of military officers, civilians and private industry in an academic environment.

One of the program's highlights is an international trip. After experiencing it firsthand, this trio of DCMA employees understands the program's benefits better than ever — as much as one can gain from book knowledge, there is no substitute for hands-on education.

In light of the program's goal of providing students with the opportunity to master global business, this tour included visits to various government, military, academic and international business sites. Fifteen MBA students, along with Mr. Van Noah, LOGTECH MBA director, Mr. William T. Powell Jr., president of IDB, and Dr. Clay Whybark, University of North Carolina professor, set out with a hunger for knowledge and Asian cuisine

In August 2006, three DCMA employees embarked on the opportunity of a lifetime as they joined their MBA cohort in Bangkok, Thailand, to begin a two-week international study tour of Asia.

(Above) A mural at Suvarnabhumi Airport, Bangkok, Thailand, designed to infuse Thai culture into the otherwise modern, Westernized airport terminal.

*Mr. Bridges, Mr. Wilson and Ms. Pennington found that as much as one can gain from book knowledge, there is no substitute for hands-on education.*

to observe logistical operations thousands of miles from home.

On the first stop of the tour, the group visited with Thai senators, the vice president of the Senate, deputy prime minister and vice chief of staff of the Royal Thai Army. This visit was of such significance that it appeared on the Bangkok evening news. The group heard about political challenges facing the country, where coups are a common occurrence. One issue that continually arose was the potential construction of a canal across Thailand's portion of the Kra Isthmus, a narrow landbridge connecting the Malay Peninsula with Asia's mainland. Such a canal would offer many benefits as well as challenges. A feasibility study on constructing the canal is underway with IDB's assistance.

The group also visited the largest airport terminal in the world presently under construction 19 miles outside of Bangkok.

Suvarnabhumi International Airport opened for international travel Sept. 28, replacing Don Muang Airport. The president of the Thailand airport authority led the students on a tour of the facility. The new terminal will ultimately serve 100 million passengers a year. Completing the terminal was no easy feat. The airport was in the planning stages for 40 years and under construction for over four, with multiple delays due to cost overruns, construction problems and political unrest. The airport project cost \$4.1 billion (U.S.) — an 80 percent increase from the original estimate. Suvarnabhumi was indeed a project manager's worst nightmare.

Students also heard from members of the Kenan Institute Asia regarding their endeavors to improve the quality of life and education in Thailand and from the Thai International Freight Forwarder Association (TIFFA) — one of the first companies to introduce radio frequency identification (RFID) technology



**(Above)** Navy Cmdr. Kevin Redman viewing operations at the Red Dragonfly shoe manufacturing facility in Shanghai, China, with a few other LOGTECH MBA students following close behind.

*“This trip was worth every dollar, baht, yuan or won spent.”*

*– Ms. Karen Pennington*

into Thailand. Using electronic data interchange, various shipping and customs documents are electronically stored and tracked using RFID. TIFFA coordinated with officials from the airport, customs and ports authority and implemented infrastructure at each point to enable real-time identification of the status of shipments. While implementing many technological advances, the students found it interesting that RFID readers are not in use at Suvarnabhumi Airport. The Thai government plans to install these readers at the airport later.

From Bangkok, the group headed to Shanghai, China, where they had the opportunity to ride the state-of-the-art Maglev (magnetic levitation) train. The Maglev reached a speed of 301 kilometers per hour, (187 mph) — twice as fast as Amtrak’s fastest commuter train. At another stop, Boeing Shanghai Aviation Services, a joint venture created less than one year ago between Thailand and China to establish an aviation maintenance facility, briefed the students. The MBA students also learned of the many challenges associated with foreign operations. The group then finished the China portion of the tour at the Shanghai Urban Planning Center, where they viewed models of the planned landscape of the future city.

In South Korea, the group visited Pohang Steel Company, a global steelmaker with \$26 billion in sales in 2005 turning iron ore, coal and limestone into various steel products using mechanized processes. The trip ended with a visit to the South Korean military attaché and two of the many universities in Seoul. The president of Kwangwoon University, Dr. Sang-Chul Lee, discussed the business structure used to achieve his goal of becoming the preeminent

information technology university in the world.

The cohort of students recognized, more than ever, that this international study tour was an added bonus to the already incredible opportunity of walking away with a LOGTECH MBA. Ms. Pennington said, “This trip was worth every dollar, baht, yuan or won spent.”

More information on the LOGTECH program is available at <http://www.logtech.org/logtech/default.aspx>.



**(Above)** From left: DCMA employees Mr. Ed Bridges, Ms. Karen Pennington and Mr. Daniel Wilson in the Shanghai Business Urban Planning Center in Shanghai, China.