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Port of Palm Beach Welcomes Foreign Diplomats with Experience Florida

Riviera Beach, Florida – May 18, 2017 – The Port of Palm Beach was honored to welcome representatives from 21 foreign missions yesterday morning, as part of Experience Florida, a week-long program for participants to strengthen economic, commercial, scientific and cultural relations between the countries they represent and Palm Beach County. The foreign diplomats were treated to continental breakfast followed by a presentation and tour of the Port. The Port’s Vice-Chair of the Board Dr. Jean L. Enright, Executive Director Manuel Almira, and executive staff were on hand to host the meeting.

With the support and guidance of the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Foreign Missions and Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the Experience Florida program is in its second year, after a successful event in May 2016 held in Indian River County, Florida. During their stay this week in Palm Beach County, participating foreign diplomats will foster connections with representatives from the county and as a result, provide better support to their citizens living in or visiting Palm Beach County. Participants will also learn about law enforcement capabilities through the program, which provides for a mutual exchange and dialogue on policing, training, and technology in today’s rapidly changing environment.

The consulates of the Bahamas, Canada, Ecuador, France, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Spain, Uruguay, Dominican Republic, Belgium, Nigeria, Germany, Monaco, Sweden, Angola and Pakistan attended the event. In addition to the Port of Palm Beach, the participants also visited the Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office, Palm Beach Regional Fusion Center, Solid Waste Authority, Lion Country Safari, Florida Power and Light, West Palm Beach City Hall, Research Park at Florida Atlantic University and Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation.

“We were delighted to be selected for inclusion in the Experience Florida event,” noted Blair J. Ciklin, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners for the Port of Palm Beach. “We thoroughly enjoyed sharing insights into our cargo and cruise business with all the consulates during their familiarization trip in Palm Beach County.”

About Port of Palm Beach

Port of Palm Beach is a full-service, diversified port, offering cruise and cargo services to more than 30 onsite tenants and users. At 162 acres, the port’s efficiency is unparalleled, processing more than \$7 billion in commodities, 2.5 million tons of cargo, and 500,000 cruise passengers annually. As one of the largest employers in Palm Beach County, the Port of Palm Beach and its tenants employ more than 2,850 people. Through the contribution of more than \$185 million in business revenue and \$17.5 million in tenant-contributed state and local annual tax revenue, the Port of Palm Beach is one of the largest economic engines in South Florida. For more information, visit www.portofpalmbeach.com.

About the Experience Florida

Experience Florida provides an opportunity to strengthen relationships and allow participants to see and experience a different region of Florida. The event also affords the host region to promote its communities among the participants. This is the second consecutive year that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the Office of Foreign Missions and a participating Florida county have collaborated to provide a VIP tour for senior leadership of the Consular Corps and trade communities. The 2016 event took place in Indian River County and was considered a “complete success,” with 15 consulates and 30 participants in attendance.

About the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS)

As the Department of State's security and law enforcement arm, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security does not formulate foreign policy. The Bureau is responsible for providing a safe and secure environment for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Every diplomatic mission in the world operates under a security program designed and maintained by Diplomatic Security. Not only is Diplomatic Security a unique organization in the foreign affairs community – it is the only law enforcement agency with representation in nearly every country in the world. In the United States, Diplomatic Security personnel protect the Secretary of State and high-ranking foreign dignitaries and officials visiting the United States, investigate passport and visa fraud, and conduct personnel security investigations. Operating from a global platform in 30 U.S. cities and more than 160 foreign countries, DS ensures that America can conduct diplomacy safely and securely. DS plays a vital role in protecting 275 U.S. diplomatic missions and their personnel overseas, securing critical information systems, investigating passport and visa fraud, and fighting the war on terror.

About the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM)

Congress mandated the creation of OFM to serve the interests of the American public, the American diplomatic community abroad, and the foreign diplomatic community residing in the United States, ensuring that all diplomatic benefits, privileges, and immunities would be properly exercised in accordance with federal laws and international agreements. As an advocate for reciprocity, OFM pursues fair treatment of U.S. personnel abroad while ensuring that foreign diplomats based in the United States receive reciprocal treatment. Additionally, OFM assists foreign missions in their interactions with local government offices in the United States. OFM also provides a range of services to the foreign diplomatic community, including issuance of vehicle titles; vehicle registrations; driver's licenses and license plates; processing of tax exemption and duty-free customs requests; and facilitation of property acquisitions through local zoning law procedures. Finally, OFM establishes and maintains relationships with U.S. law enforcement and security communities at the national, state, and local levels to educate them about diplomatic privilege and immunity issues.

For more information on Experience Florida, contact Aaron M. Testa at TestaAM@state.gov or call 571-345-2504.

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