



RELEASES – BUREAU OF DIPLOMATIC SECURITY




DSS Regional Security Office in Lomé advances security through IVLP

DSS ARTICLES

BY ERIC WEINER, DIPLOMATIC SECURITY SERVICE PUBLIC AFFAIRS

AUGUST 11, 2020

Share 



Col. Kondi Yao Kidighan (standing, far right) traveled from Togo, West Africa to Bozeman, Mont. to attend a professional exchange program on Combatting Wildlife Trafficking sponsored by the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program, Oct. 3-9, 2019. (Photo courtesy of Kondi Yao Kidighan)

Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) special agents assigned to the Regional Security Office (RSO) at the U.S. Embassy in Lomé have fostered relationships with host nation police and security officials by helping to arrange regional and international trainings and professional exchange opportunities. In 2018 and 2019, 226 host nation personnel, who support U.S. mission security operations, attended trainings and exchanges through a range of programs. Some of the most notable were sponsored by the **International Visitor Leadership Program** (IVLP), a professional exchange program managed by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

IVLP arranges short-term visits to the United States for current and emerging foreign leaders in a variety of fields. They meet American counterparts and attend professional meetings that reflect their interests and support U.S. foreign policy goals. The following examples highlight the impact of the IVLP and the relationships built between RSOs and host nation police and security officials.

Lt. Col. Yaovi Okpaoul, Director General of the Togo National Police



Okpaoul was identified by RSO Lomé as an exceptional candidate for participation in a regional program on countering violent extremism sponsored by the IVLP in July 2018. Okpaoul joined IVLP participants from 12 other African nations on a trip to the United States that included stops in Washington, D.C., Charleston, S.C., and Las Vegas, Nev. Through meetings with several U.S. officials, he learned about governmental, non-governmental, and faith-based organizations' approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism. He also studied media involvement in extremism and countering violent behavior, and the role that youth can play in civic, political, and community action.

Okpaoul returned home inspired by his IVLP experience and worked with his government to create an inter-ministerial committee to combat violent extremism. The committee remains operational today with several branches throughout the Togolese territory. The lessons learned from this effort are being used to encourage community policing in Togo.

"My first visit to the United States through the IVLP was an educational and unforgettable experience and I am grateful for the opportunity to apply what I learned in my home country to help combat violent extremism," said Okpaoul.

Major Simtaya Djohéna, Director of Residence Cards, Visas and Immigration at Togo's General Directorate of National Documentation



Djohéna is the chief of immigration services at Togo's General Directorate of National Documentation where he combats trafficking in persons in West Africa. RSO Lomé nominated Djohéna in July 2019 to participate in an IVLP exchange on combatting trafficking in persons. Djohéna and fellow IVLP participants from 22 other nations traveled to Washington, D.C. to learn how the United States combats human trafficking. Djohéna met with government officials from the Justice Department, the Department of Labor, Department of Homeland Security and the State Department. He met with officials from the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons as well as DSS supervisory special agents and subject matter experts on trafficking in persons.

Djohéna also traveled to Des Moines, Iowa and San Antonio, Texas where he learned about trafficking detection training at the state level and observed police applying the training in the field. He also developed

a greater understanding of the important role that non-state actors can play in the protection of trafficking victims.

“The IVLP experience provided insight into U.S. foreign policy practices that I have applied to cultivate collaboration and capacity building to fight cross-border crime and defense of human rights in Togo,” said Djohéna.



Major Simtaya Djohéna (left) participates in a ride-along with an officer of the San Antonio Police Department during the IVLP trip to San Antonio, Texas, July 18, 2019. (Photo courtesy of Major Simtaya Djohéna)

Col. Kondi Yao Kidighan, Director of Togo's Central Office of Suppression of Illicit Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering



Kidighan combats transnational organized crime associated with the trafficking of wildlife as the Director of Togo's Central Office for the Suppression of Illicit Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering. Kidighan was nominated by RSO Lomé to participate in an IVLP on combatting wildlife trafficking in September 2019. He joined IVLP participants from 11 nations on a trip to the United States that included stops in Washington, D.C., Burlington, Vt., Miami, Fla., Bozeman, Mont., and Seattle.

Kidighan gained important insight from his meetings with officials in Washington, D.C., including how non-governmental organizations like Defenders of Wildlife, World Wildlife Fund, and the International Fund for Animal Welfare can support Togo's fight against environmental crimes. Kidighan applied what he learned from his IVLP experience to enhance cooperation and information sharing amongst Togo's national police, national gendarmerie, water and forestry agents, the Togolese post office and express courier companies.

"The concept of using hunting as a means of conserving wildlife was one of the most striking things I learned on the IVLP trip," said Kidighan. "This principle seeks to strike a balance between wild and domestic animals as well as humans and wild species and applying this model in Togo has helped calm tensions in protected areas."



Left photo: Col. Kondi Yao Kidighan (back row, third from left) joins an IVLP trip to Bozeman, Mont., October 3-8 2019. Right photo: Kidighan (5th from left) joins an IVLP trip to Seattle, Oct. 8-12, 2019. (Photos courtesy of Kondi Yao Kidighan)

Follow DSS on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram @StateDeptDSS, follow U.S. Embassy Lomé at @USEmbassyLome and follow the IVLP on Twitter at @StateIVLP

Contributors: Diplomatic Security Service Special (DSS) Agent and Regional Security Officer Stephen Roberts and DSS Special Agent and Africa Desk Officer Christine Skelonc