



# News From France



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## France Congratulates President Obama on New Term

▲ As the world watched the results of the 2012 U.S. Presidential elections roll in on November 6, France likewise followed the developments with great anticipation. The next leader of the United States, the country with whom France shares perhaps its strongest alliance, affects French-American relations in fundamental ways.

Both the French President, François Hollande—who also won election in May of this year—and Minister of Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius extended their congratulations after the re-election of U.S. President Barack Obama was confirmed.

In an official letter issued on November 7, President Hollande, beginning with a handwritten “*Cher Barack*,” expressed his optimism for continued good relations.

“France and the United States share common values,” he wrote. “I am convinced that during your new term we will further strengthen our partnership.” He cited the common causes on which France and the U.S. can act together, including greater economic growth, unemployment, and international hot spots such as the Middle East.

“I know that our cooperation will continue in the same spirit of dialogue and respect, and I want to assure you of France’s commitment to strengthening the bonds of friendship and trust between us,” Mr. Hollande said. In a similar tone, Mr. Fabius said the results made for “a positive day,” during an interview on November 7 with the France 2 media network. He cited the role of global governance as one area in which France and the U.S. would continue their cooperation during a second Obama term.

“There are problems that can be resolved only if there’s global governance; I’m thinking in particular about the climate issue,” Mr. Fabius said.

The French official also gave examples of pressing international issues on which France hoped to work with its American counterparts, including stopping the violence in Syria, the threat of nuclear weapons capacity in Iran, and a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

When asked what he wished to say to President Obama, Mr. Fabius offered one sincere wish: “Good luck, Mr. President.”



Presidents François Hollande and Barack Obama shook hands in Washington on May 18, 2012, shortly after Mr. Hollande’s Presidential election win.

## From the Ambassador’s Desk: A Message From François Delattre

▲ I’d like to echo President François Hollande’s congratulations to President Barack Obama for his re-election on November 6. The election was an important moment, for the United States and the world.

Outside the flurry of electoral activity, France has been working very actively with our American partners in business, culture, and science.

In business, France and the United States are innovating together in new and significant ways. The “Say Oui to France” campaign visited tech hubs in Boston and New York City late last month as part of a global program to promote business and investment cooperation.

Cultural partnerships were equally present this month. French Week Miami accomplished much more than its name suggests—six weeks of arts celebrations. And the Kids Euro Festival took place among Washington’s European Union embassies to provide young people a first look at European culture.

In science, French researcher Serge Haroche and American David Wineland were awarded last month the 2012 Nobel Prize in Physics. What better example of the highest quality of our cooperation! On November 12, I bestowed the Legion of Honor on Bruce Beutler, an American scientist who shared the Nobel Prize in medicine last year with French biologist, Jules Hoffmann.

Again, congratulations and good luck to President Obama and elected Members of Congress. In French-American political, business, cultural, and scientific partnerships, France will continue to work hard on our common endeavors.



“From the Ambassador’s Desk” appears each month. Your comments and questions are welcome (see p. 8).

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## Francophile Student Blogger Launches “France in D.C.”

When master’s student Natalie Plumb launched a blog this fall on France-related events in Washington, D.C., she likely didn’t realize how she might be contributing not just to the presence of France in the blogosphere, but in nourishing French-American dialogue as well.

A native of the District and soon-to-be graduate in broadcast journalism at the city’s American University, Ms. Plumb combines her talents in radio, writing, and computer savvy to “bring France to [her] home and to yours,” as her blog’s slogan states.

Originally begun as part of a school project, Ms. Plumb’s interest in France reaches much farther into her past. She has studied the language since age 12 and developed her skills during a 2010 summer language program in Besançon, near the French border with Switzerland. She describes her time abroad as a revelation. “I was born in Washington, D.C., but my heart was born in France,” she said.

For “France in D.C.,” her goals are at once modest and optimistic. She hopes that viewers “learn something about French culture in D.C.” Ms. Plumb’s long-term career goal is to become a foreign correspondent in the French-speaking world. Her blog is available at [www.franceindc.wordpress.com](http://www.franceindc.wordpress.com).

## Maison Française Offers Beaujolais Nouveau Tasting

The third Thursday of every November marks the release of Beaujolais wine, or “Beaujolais Nouveau,” and Francophiles and wine-lovers at La Maison Française were some of the first in the United States to taste it. Guests from the Washington area attended a private event at the French embassy on November 16.

In addition to Beaujolais Nouveau, wines and hors d’oeuvres from around Europe and the United States accompanied the prized red wine.

The production of Beaujolais—in fact, of all French wine—is regulated by the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Institute of Origin and Quality (INAO). To be considered a *vin de primeur*, an exclusive label reserved only for certain brands, the wine must be sold the same year that its grapes were harvested. Of the over 300 wines recognized by INAO, Beaujolais is one of the only *vins de primeur*.

Nearly 12 million gallons of Beaujolais are shipped around the world annually.

## Bouroullec Brothers, Design Legends, Showing in Chicago

French-American cooperation and the support of the Consulate of France in Chicago have brought famous French designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec to the Windy City for the first time. At the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Bouroullecs’ exhibition, “Bivouac,” features 15 years’ worth of unique creations.

Since they began collaborating in the late 1990s, the Breton-born brothers have established themselves as two of the most innovative designers working today. For the 2011 London Design Festival, the duo replaced a museum’s viewing benches with a 100-foot padded textile floor, or “field,” that slopes at the perfect angle for lounging while admiring art. Most of the Bouroullecs’ pieces, like the Textile Field, can most accurately be described as “microarchitecture”—items larger than furniture but smaller than full-scale buildings.

Driven by the concept of mobility, the Bouroullecs create furniture and household items that can adapt to many different environments. The Bouroullecs’ *Clouds* is another of their many ground-breaking pieces. A series of interlocking, wool-based units that can be infinitely reconfigured—think expensive, cool-looking Legos—the *Clouds* act as walls that can be deconstructed, rebuilt and moved around.

Though some question the accessibility of their work due to its avant-garde qualities, the brothers’ influence is widespread. The curator of “Bivouac,” Michael Darling, hopes that the Chicago exhibition will “consolidate their influence and presence as designers here in America.”

Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec have received many international awards, including the 2011 Designer of the Year from *Maison & Objet Paris*. The Bouroullecs owe their success to their creative process of teamwork and uninhibited experimentation.

In its American debut, “Bivouac,” originally organized by the Centre Pompidou-Metz, will make Chicago its home through January 20, 2013.



The Bouroullecs’ *Clouds* uses colored, interlocking wool pieces, which can be shaped as a stylish partition.

## Police Chief Elected INTERPOL’s First Female President

Mireille Ballestrazzi of France was elected the first woman President of INTERPOL at the close of the 81st General Assembly on November 8 in Rome. The long-time law enforcement leader said she looked forward to serving in “an unflinching spirit to promote mutual

assistance and solidarity.”

Headquartered in Lyon, France, the International Criminal Police Organization (more commonly known as INTERPOL) is an organization of 190 countries that focuses on law enforcement issues ranging from public safety and war crimes to terrorism and the mafia. The group is led by Secretary General Ronald K. Noble, the first American named to the position, who is currently serving his third term.

Mr. Noble extended a warm welcome to Mrs. Ballestrazzi, saying, “She brings invaluable experience in cross-border police collaboration to her role, as well as proven leadership abilities. I look forward to working closely with her to ensure that INTERPOL continues to provide innovative responses to meet the needs of our member countries.”

Mrs. Ballestrazzi became a police commissioner in France in 1975 and was Vice-President for Europe on INTERPOL’s executive committee before being named as President. She burnished her reputation while taking on organized crime in the 1990s.

French Interior Minister Manuel Valls called her “a great policewoman,” and said her experience will be crucial in fighting global battles against drug trafficking and mafias.

Mrs. Ballestrazzi will serve as INTERPOL’s President until 2016.



Mireille Ballestrazzi made her reputation fighting organized crime, a useful skill for her new international post.

## Bruno Caïtucoli, French Defense Attaché

▲ Since arriving at the French embassy in August 2011, **Brigadier General Bruno Caïtucoli** heads the work of France's military in Washington's diplomatic community. A French Air Force pilot and veteran of Afghanistan, the Balkans, and Chad (Africa), we caught up with the leader to ask his opinion on French-U.S. military history, the present, and a common future.

### What are the objectives of the Military Mission at the Embassy of France?

We basically have two missions. The first applies to all of the services in the embassy: to maintain a positive bilateral relationship with our American counterparts. It consists of making sure that what Paris is saying is clearly understood in Washington, and vice-versa. My second mission, as the military advisor to the Ambassador, is to brief him so that he can make the best decisions on the military dimensions of the topic at hand.

### What does a second Obama term mean for French-American military cooperation?

The relationship we have with America is tied to history, so it goes well beyond one president or mandate. France was very actively engaged when the United States was fighting for independence, some 230 years ago. In the same way, France will never forget the fact that the United States came to support us when we were struggling to defend our freedom and values in World War II. It's really premature to say whether there will be a big change in a second Obama term. I mainly see continuity in American policy and in the French-American relationship.

### European militaries are facing austerity. What is France doing to rein in costs and maximize capacity?

I think the fact that we are all facing budget challenges is well-known. What is more important for us is whether France maintains its 'spirit of defense.' By that I mean feeling responsible for one's own security. What currently makes France such a close ally to the U.S. is that we share this idea. The U.S. will never rely on anyone else to protect its territory, its population, and its values. The U.S. will defend the U.S., period.

The French have the same approach. You can go aboard a French submarine, or go to a French airbase operating nuclear weapons, and everything is 100-percent French. As far as nuclear deterrence is concerned, we are 100-percent independent. Similarly, our conventional inventory, meaning standard weapons, covers the whole spectrum of capabilities. I think this is important for the U.S. because they know that when the French say we are going to do something, we have the capacity to do it, culturally, politically and militarily.

This is also why, even if there is a budget challenge, I am absolutely confident that what is required to protect our territory, our population, and our values, will be done.

### France maintains a global military presence. Why?

In addition to the above, we are one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. And when you have such a position, you have duties. If the Council decides that action should be taken to restore stability or peace somewhere, it's expected that France has the capacity to implement the decision—to actually do what we say. Otherwise, we could vote for action, but then depend on someone else to follow through. We



have a responsibility to be able to act in very concrete ways, according to our duties at the UN Security Council.

### On Veterans Day, you officiated in a wreath-laying at Arlington National Cemetery. Is it important to remember our military past?

It's important to remember that freedom isn't a given. Events like those at Arlington, when we honor veterans, contribute to this understanding. We still have the veterans, some of whom are quite old. Younger generations see them recognized. It creates awareness.

### You sometimes decorate U.S. veterans. Why is this important for France?

This is one of the most moving activities that I do. These men and women are called "the Greatest Generation" because of their major commitment to peace during World War II. They had peaceful lives in their respective hometowns and, all of a sudden, they stand up, they cross the Atlantic Ocean, and they fight to restore freedom, thousands of kilometers from their homes. I think that, as a nation, we really need to acknowledge that. When I stand in front of veterans, I say "thank you" on behalf of France. It's hard to describe that feeling in words.

### How do you see the French-American military relationship continuing in the near future?

In today's hot spots, and the fact that the U.S. is looking carefully at Asia, we can reinforce the relationship we have with the Americans. Again, France is one of the very few nations with the capacity to look globally and act globally.

We are a Pacific nation as well. We have territories like New Caledonia and French Polynesia. We know the area very well. If there is one major lesson to be learned from recent decades, it is the necessity to cooperate. I spend my life at the Pentagon doing just that. And we have a permanent flow of top-level visitors coming from Paris, and a lot of American delegations going to Paris, looking at the future with their counterparts, whatever the future might be and wherever crises might arise. 🇫🇷

## Filmmaker Claire Denis Tours American Midwest

French film director Claire Denis made her way through the American Midwest in November, participating in discussions and film screenings that examined the full breadth of her 25-year career. Each of the events provided an opportunity to see the artistic progression of her work and realize common themes that stretch across her repertoire.

Ms. Denis's productions are visually stunning and thematically complex. Some critics have described her work as "fearless." A solidarity with the disenfranchised comes across in each of her films, which include "35 Shots of Rum," "Trouble Every Day," "The Intruder," and "Beau Travail."

Ms. Denis joined American writer-filmmaker Kent Jones at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, MN, on November 17 for an in-depth conversation about her creative process, influences, and her favorite films.

Other stops along the tour included Indiana University on November 10 and Notre Dame University on November 13, where audience members were able to meet and talk to the director.

## Colonial Records Shed Light on Louisiana Race History

Boxes of records holding details of Louisiana's colonial years are being digitized by historians in New Orleans, who say the papers are the first judicial accounts of African-American slaves and freedmen in North America. The documents, some 220,000 yellowed pages from the French Superior Council and Spanish Judiciary, provide a glimpse into colonial life in the southern gulf state between 1714 and 1803.

While most of the colony's administrative records were taken back to France after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, these fragile pages were left behind, surviving the U.S. Civil War and two centuries of a volatile coastal climate.

The Louisiana system of law was a key difference between the thirteen British colonies and the French territory, which changed possession from France to Spain in 1762 and back to France in 1802, just before the Louisiana Purchase. The English-based system followed a paradigm of common law, while both the Spanish and French practiced codes based on Roman law. The Roman codes recognized the personhood of slaves and allowed them to represent themselves in court.

# “Say Oui to France” Encourages Economic Diplomacy

On October 25 and 26, France launched “Say Oui to France, Say Oui to Innovation,” a growth initiative designed to boost France’s economic performance in partnership with the world’s leading economies. Stopping first in Boston and New York City, the French government officials organizing the plan made a very conscious decision to begin in the United States, a global economic driver and France’s single-largest trading partner.

Though it’s a new idea, “Say Oui to France” reflects a firmly-established set of French-American economic ties. It’s also part of France’s goal for greater “economic diplomacy,” a broad three-part plan announced in August 2012 to support French enterprises in external markets, to adopt better financial governance in Europe and abroad, and to encourage foreign investment in France.

Here’s a glimpse of France’s global partnership ideas for the 21st century.

## Fostering Entrepreneurship

An arsenal of pro-growth structures are in place, and more will be soon, to encourage entrepreneurial ventures. France’s National Investment Program, effective since 2010, has been seeking to invest a total sum of \$45 billion to grow business potential with those who make up the roots of tomorrow’s economy: young professionals.

Where can one find tomorrow’s professionals in France? One place is French universities. France boasts three of the ten best business schools in Europe, as ranked by the Financial Times. In university research, notably the long-standing partnership between the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) and the local authorities in Metz, France, funds and infrastructure are provided to scientists and engineers who are able to achieve together what they could not have accomplished separately.

Sometimes affiliated with French universities are technology innovation centers, called “clusters.” Clusters have yielded important advancements within the common culture of experimentation and outside-the-box thinking. France has 71 such centers, which in 2011 benefitted from a \$4.55 billion increase in public funding.

Additionally, the special status called the Innovative New Company (INC) assists start-ups as they get established. The same tax-based advantage is doubled for all research-and-development expenditures. If a company employs pre- or post-doctoral students, the same tax credit rate is shrunk to four times less what a new business would pay without those employees. As a result, more young French companies are encouraged to hire more young people, who put the energy and their expertise in the service of the entrepreneurial economy.

## Tech Economics

If any of France’s developing sectors are outpacing the others, it may be technology. It’s no accident that the “Say Oui to France” project was launched during an annual summit at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.), called emTech, short for



“emerging technologies.” In a speech by Fleur Pellerin, France’s Junior Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises, Innovation and the Digital Economy, emTech attendees learned about France’s unique advantages, both a place to set up tech businesses and as fertile ground for cultivating ties with pre-existing ones.

“Technology and innovation-focused companies have found France to be a strong partner that recognizes the need to compete in today’s global economy,” Mrs. Pellerin said.

She also emphasized the benefits that France offers to large and smaller businesses alike. “Our approach to innovation has worked for big-name multinationals,” she said. Global brands including Google and Microsoft have set up offices in France, which seek to leverage access to the European Union market as well as French ties to Africa and the Middle East.

“Now we’re making it easier for [small and mid-sized businesses] to get in on the action, too,” Ms. Pellerin said.

For tech investment specifically, France is putting considerable resources into the sector’s future success. The National Investment Program committed \$2.9 billion for specific use in digital applications and businesses. In a similar vein, the plan put aside \$2.6 billion for Internet infrastructure throughout France, with the stated goal of 100-percent broadband coverage for the country for 2025. Outside the country, tech-related activities include the annual New England Technology Venture Accelerator, known as NETVA, in which promising French start-up companies are selected for a study trip to the U.S., where they present and refine their ideas with American experts.

## Tomorrow’s Sector: Green Tech

France is equally aware of the innovation necessary to complement, or even replace, today’s growth markets. The area of green technology has seen France’s special engagement. Green tech is part of the discussion on rising interest on smart grids, sustainable development and energy efficiency, and the future of eco-friendly systems depends on the progress its stakeholders make today. Toward this end, the “Say Oui to France” package assures tax credits for green companies and financial aid for companies that chose to “green” their buildings through measures such as moderated use of lighting, electricity and climate control.

Likewise, the Consulate General of France in San Francisco co-sponsored, with the University of California at Berkeley, the California-France Forum on Energy Efficiency Technologies (CaFFEET) on November 5 and 6. The talks centered around the chosen “Smart City” theme, and participants discussed solutions to reducing the effects of fossil-fuel energy uses, such as air pollution, and improving energy efficiency use for today and tomorrow.

As for the future, France will remain engaged. The town of Versailles will host the 2014 Solar Decathlon Europe, a biannual competition

SAY OUI TO  
FRANCE  
SAY OUI TO  
INNOVATION

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Fleur Pellerin is France’s Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises, Innovation and the Digital Economy.

co-organized with the U.S. Department of Energy in which engineering students from Europe and beyond will compete to conceive and then build the most innovative home design, on one condition—that the house produces at least as much energy as it consumes. France is proud to host a competition for a cause it values, and proud of its re-

lated accomplishments: a French team won the same event in 2012. From the “Say Oui to France” program to greater entrepreneurship, technology development, and green energy solutions, French leaders hope that using economic diplomacy will stimulate a vibrant partnership economy that can last. In all of this, France seeks to work with the U.S.—and the world. 

## Case in Point-Com: A Look at France’s Innovation Clusters



The idea of “innovation clusters,” where forward-thinking professionals gather to brainstorm the world’s next big ideas, is well-established in both France and the U.S. Some clusters develop around regional industries, such as the perfume business in Grasse, or the finance industry in Paris. Others seek to create new markets entirely.

## Part of Global Trend, Cité du Cinéma Flourishes Near Paris

A recently opened film production complex near Paris hopes to provide quality facilities and infrastructure to attract a global clientele and bring a boost to local businesses. Called the Studios de Paris, the development joins a recent worldwide swell in film studio-building.

The Studios de Paris is part of a \$230 million complex called Cité du Cinéma, a project of Luc Besson, a film director and chairman of EuropaCorp, one of France's largest TV and film companies. The Cité has transformed a formerly gritty part of Saint Denis, a Paris suburb, into a bustling area. The site houses a film school, a movie studio with nine stages, and the headquarters of EuropaCorp.

Launched in 2004, the Cité was built not only for French films, but also in attempt to attract American and international producers who usually go to other European countries to produce their films. Subsidies are also offered by the French government. With these combined incentives, a recent action film was produced at the studio for less than half of its estimated cost in Hollywood.

Though still young, the Studios de Paris are making steady strides. The American film "Malavita" is currently being produced there, starring Robert De Niro, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Tommy Lee Jones.

## French Wedding Biz Now Offering U.S. Trends, Services

With the dresses growing fuller and the cakes getting taller, the French wedding industry is seeing a rising American influence. Perhaps inspired by the recent boom of wedding blogs and bridal television-reality shows like "Say Yes to the Dress," French brides are adopting American wedding trends and traditions.

Sophie Chastrusse-Peyronnet runs Paris's annual *Grand Salon du Mariage*, one of the city's largest bridal fairs. "In the past two years, we've increasingly seen girls adopt fads from American weddings," she said to Agence France-Presse.

As a case-in-point, a different lingo can be heard among today's French brides. Some no longer cut the *gâteau* but the "wedding cake." Trends such as "sweets tables" and custom-printed "escort cards" are growing, and are referred to with the fashionable American vocabulary.

French brides also want more ornate dresses, overflowing flower arrangements, and custom cakes stacked the American way. Though the average U.S. budget of \$27,000 still exceeds the French average (\$16,000), the bigger-is-better nature of U.S. weddings has been expanding French ones as well.

## French-Californian Forum Talks Urban Energy Efficiency

▲ The University of California at Berkeley played host to the second-annual California-France Forum on Energy Efficiency Technologies (CaFFEET) on November 5 and 6. Gathering French and American policymakers, innovators, and academics in the Bay Area—a hub of green technology research—CaFFEET sought to examine the way cities use technology so as to improve energy sustainability. The theme of this year's conference was "Smart City: What is the Added Value?," which focused on designing city energy plans for the future.

Giving one of the keynote addresses, Ambassador of France to the United States, François Delattre, emphasized the importance of sharing ideas and technology. "There is no doubt that the exchanges that you will have today and tomorrow on Smart Cities [...] will lead to concrete solutions and new opportunities," he said.

Deputy Mayor of Paris in charge of Innovation, Re-



A tech-savvy attendee took this Instagram photo at CaFFEET, which focused on sustainability energy for cities.

search, and Universities, Jean-Louis Missika, and Director of the Environment for the City of San Francisco, Melanie Nutter, also gave remarks on the opening day of the event.

In addition to the panel discussions, 13 companies were selected to pitch their ideas about energy technology in two showcases.

CaFFEET began in 2011 as a joint venture between the Consulate General of France in San Francisco and Électricité de France (EDF), one of Europe's largest energy companies. The company shares a research partnership with the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), a nonprofit organization that completes research on the energy industry in the United States.

In 2011, CaFFEET's conference theme focused on technology for industrial plants as a route to lowering their carbon emissions through improved efficiency, on-site renewable energy, and carbon offsets.

## French-American Science Festival Seeks Sustainability

▲ The Scientific Office of the General Consulate of France in Chicago, in partnership with Northwestern University, hosted the second annual French-American Science Festival on October 29 and 30. From sustainable bio-energies to the premiere of several youth-directed films on waste and water management, this year's French-American Science Festival provided information on its theme of "Sharing Experience, a New Insight on Sustainable Development."

The 2012 program included scientific conferences,

hands-on activities, films, workshops, and an informal *cafés des sciences* discussion series. The hands-on section featured interactive booths examining different fields in biology, chemistry, nanotechnology, and nuclear energy.

The programs were marked by a strong educational focus, through which science enthusiasts of all ages could learn. With the cooperation of some 40 French and American partners, more than 450 students from schools in Chicago and around the Midwest attended the event.

French and American educational institutions, from the Lycée Français de Chicago to the École Normale Supérieure-Paris, contributed to this year's booths. Festival attendees were able to explore the secrets of DNA, make gold nanoparticles, and handle meteorites.

Three panels of French and American experts, including a representative from the U.S. National Science Foundation, discussed some of today's pressing environmental questions. The French and American scientists hoped to advance toward solutions for today's ecological problems. Likewise, they stressed to the students how environmental education and outreach programs can produce lasting positive effects.



Kids of all ages engineered arts and crafts at Chicago's French-American Science Festival, a two-day series of educational events for those passionate about science.

## France-Atlanta Returns for Third Year of Partnerships

▲ In association with the Georgia Institute of Technology, the Consulate General of France in Atlanta hosted its third annual France-Atlanta conference from October 25 through November 10. The conference sought to foster and improve relations and cooperation between France and the United States in the American Southeast. In addition to hosting symposiums and workshops, France-Atlanta 2012 was filled with events and exhibitions concerning business, science, culture, and humanitarian efforts.

A two-day seminar on economic development and sustainability around airports made for a conference highlight. Hubstart Paris, an organization pioneering the future of airport sustainability, sponsored the event in which it detailed previous and current efforts at both of Paris's international flight centers. A tour around the Hartsfield International Airport area ended the two-day sustainability program.

Other symposiums included discussions on the future of nuclear energy in the United States, a forum on management of water resources across the world, and a

roundtable on how to effectively fight urban poverty.

Ambassador of France to the United States, François Delattre, as well as Atlanta mayor, Kasim Reed, and Georgia governor, Nathan Deal, attended the opening ceremonies of the event on October 25. The Ambassador's opening remarks reflected the importance of French-American economic cooperation. "France is one of the top five foreign investors in the United States, where 3,000 French companies provide more than 650,000 jobs. Conversely, the United States is the number-one foreign investor in France, and American investment in France has increased by more than 40 percent over the past two years," he said.

France-Atlanta began in 2010 to commemorate the opening of the Georgia Institute of Technology's campus in Metz, France. Since then, the program has gained popularity and participation, with some 4,700 attendees this year. The annual gathering provides a platform for future leaders in business, science, culture, and humanitarian efforts to connect and form relationships with their counterparts overseas.

## Texan, Postman, Hermès Designer: The Life of Kermit Oliver

▲ In Lyon, France, the silk factory of the luxury brand Hermès produces some of the most famous scarves in the fashion world. The masterpieces boast limited production runs, price tags upwards of \$400, and sold-out inventory at the pre-order phase. The artist behind these pieces of art? Kermit Oliver of Waco, Texas. He is a painter, Hermès's only American designer—and a United States postal worker.

Mr. Oliver's paintings are full of color and depth, even with the inexpensive watercolor paper and acrylic paints he typically uses. After graduating from Texas Southern University in Houston in 1967, his work caught the attention of a gallery in Houston, where Mr. Oliver became the first African American to have a solo show, breaking a color barrier in his field and community. His openings became significant events in the Houston cultural calendar—which is how he met Shelby Marcus, wife of Lawrence Marcus, who is the Executive Vice President of Neiman Marcus, the chain of luxury department stores.

When designers for Hermès approached Mr. Marcus about producing a scarf with a Southwestern American theme, he knew just who to call. The amount of detail Mr. Oliver poured into his works made him the perfect candidate for the job. The result was "Pani La Shar Pawnee," an intricate painting of a Pawnee chief that required 36 separate screens to print onto silk.



The "Pani La Shar Pawnee" painting would be the first of 16 to become scarves of the luxury fashion brand, Hermès. Artist Kermit Oliver, a postman by day, lives in Houston.

(By contrast, an average Hermès scarf uses about 25.) The scarf was so successful that Hermès has since commissioned 15 additional scarves from Mr. Oliver. He has never spent less than six months on an Hermès commission. The scarves have become collector's items and fetch even secondhand sums of \$900.

Despite his success, Mr. Oliver has never quit his day job—working the overnight shift at an east Waco post office. To him, painting is just something he does, a passion, not a way to support himself or his family. And that passion shines through in his work featured on Hermès scarves, which are worn around the world.

## French White House Correspondent Publishes Memoir

Tangi Quéméner, reporter for Agence France-Presse (AFP), has lived the dream of many journalists throughout the world: in 2009, he became the only non-native English speaker to follow the President of the United States on a daily basis, covering the White House for his organization.

Becoming a White House correspondent means a "hectic pace of work," says Mr. Quéméner, who also takes turns with other AFP colleagues in covering each of the President's trips. "When it is our turn to be in the 'pool'—the group of journalists embedded with the presidential delegation and who often travel with Air Force One—we become the eyes and the ears of all our colleagues," he explains.

One of Mr. Quéméner's daily challenges is to make French readers understand the particularities of the U.S. political system. Language can also be an issue sometimes: though very fluent in English, he admits that some phrases from the President or his spokesman—"gorilla dust," "fiscal cliff"—can be hard to translate.

Mr. Quéméner published *Dans Les Pas d'Obama* (In Obama's Footsteps) this fall, in which he chronicles the three years he has spent at the heart of America's political power.

## Marseille-Provence to Become EU Culture Capital

Situated along the Mediterranean coast, Marseille, the capital of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region of France, has been designated by the European Union as one of the 2013 European Capitals of Culture. The year-long celebration will include music, art, and food festivals, slated to begin on January 12, 2013.

In preparation, the city is conducting several urban renewal projects.

"Not since construction of the *Grands Boulevards* in Paris has a French city been subjected to a transformation like the one Marseille is experiencing right now," says Philippe Gloaguen, author and founder of the French travel guidebook, *Le Guide du Routard*.

Other nearby towns will also host events to complement Marseille-Provence 2013, such as the popular Aix-en-Provence. Already a bustling tourist destination, the region is expected to attract two million festival attendees.

Marseille is France's most important port city given its Mediterranean location. Culturally, the city is rich, with a fusion of European and North African customs, food, and art.

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## French Photographer Portrays Faces of American South

▲ French photographer Pierre Gonnord completed a residency through the American South this year, capturing what he saw through the lens of his camera. The result of his travels, an exhibition titled *Portraying the South*, was on display until November 16 at the on-campus gallery of the Savannah College of Art and Design. The exhibit was part of this year's "France-Atlanta: Together Towards Innovation" series.

Mr. Gonnord's work is the result of three months spent in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi to commemorate the 50th anniversary of writer and Mississippi native William Faulkner's death. The photographer ex-

plored homeless shelters, churches, poor and wealthy neighborhoods, and rural communities in the region. His exhibit showcases the unique landscapes, spaces, and faces of the American Southeast.

Mr. Gonnord is an internationally praised, self-taught photographer. Although born in France, he has been living and working in Madrid, Spain, since he was 25 years old. He has presented exhibitions at many prestigious institutions worldwide, and his photographs bear an equally global scope. He often depicts those living at the margins of society. His past work has examined gypsies in Europe and outcasts in Japan.



Subjects with Southern names and bearings, including "Hattie" and "Harper," above, sat for photographer Pierre Gonnord as part of "Portraying the South." A three-month residency took the French artist to Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi.

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