This last month saw a high-water mark in French-American relations, when on February 10 through 12 French President François Hollande paid a State visit to the United States at the invitation of U.S. President Barack Obama.

In a busy program that reflected the mutual commitment our countries share, Presidents Hollande and Obama visited Monticello, the historic home of Thomas Jefferson. The following day, the two leaders spoke before a crowd of thousands at the White House during a magnificent ceremony, met several hours in the west wing then gave a joint press conference. Those exercises reflected the high degree of convergence between our two capitals, specifically on national security matters such as Syria, Iran, Mali, and the Central African Republic.

In honor of French-American military cooperation—and remembering that 2014 marks the 70th anniversary of D-Day, the Allied landings at Normandy—President Hollande traveled to two of Washington’s important military sites. At Arlington National Cemetery, he laid a wreath and bestowed a medal at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He went on from there to nearby Fort Myer, where he gave a speech and decorated six U.S. veterans of the Normandy battle. The day ended in high style when, returning to the White House, President Hollande attended a State Dinner as the guest of honor among several hundred attendees. On February 12, the Presidential delegation traveled to San Francisco, where meetings and public events brought together French and U.S. leaders in government and technology. San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee gave him the key to the city alongside California Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom.

President Hollande later inaugurated the U.S.-French Tech Hub, an incubator for technology and business development. He also reaffirmed several of the pro-business measures passed recently by the French government, including tax cuts and labor law reforms. He also had the opportunity to meet with several of local business leaders.

As proof of France’s commitment to good relations with the United States, no fewer than seven French ministers accompanied the President, as well as members of French Parliament, Presidents of French Regions and several CEOs. A number of bilateral agreements with U.S. authorities were signed during the State visit in areas such as space research, the sciences, and higher education.

In sum, the success of the State visit has provided a strong new boost to the French-American partnership. On the basis of our shared values, we are now better prepared than ever to face the challenges ahead. We look forward to welcoming President Obama to the 70th anniversary of D-Day, on the beaches of Normandy next June.
French-American Think Tank Hosts Debate at American U.

On February 11, the French-American Global Forum (FAGF) co-sponsored a panel discussion with the American University School of International Service. The event was the third part of the Le Monde Diplomatique Debate series.

The event, entitled “NATO Today: Does Collective Security Work?” focused on security issues. The panelists participating in the discussion included: Frances Burwell, Vice President and Director of the Program on Transatlantic Relations, Atlantic Council; Anne-Cécile Robert of Le Monde Diplomatique; Kurt Volker, Executive Director of the McCain Institute and former U.S. Ambassador to NATO; and was moderated by James Goldgeier, Dean of the School of International Service.

NATO is a military alliance founded in 1949. It is a system of collective defense established in the early days of the Cold War following World War II. The central question of the FAGF debate was whether NATO remains relevant today.

Tour de France to Include One-Day Women’s Stage

On February 1, the Tour de France announced it will be hosting a one-day women’s leg of the race, starting with the summer 2014 season. The event adds another race to a growing list of international women’s cycling events, such as the Ladies Tour of Qatar and La Flèche Wallonne.

The women’s race will take place on July 27 on the Champs-Elysées, and will accompany the final stage of the Tour de France. The race, named La Course, marks a significant move for women’s cycling. It will be the first time since 1989 that female cyclists have appeared alongside their male counterparts at the sport’s most prestigious finish. The event is expected to be a huge step forward for competitive women’s cycling, and will attract unprecedented commitment from sponsors to the women’s sport.

The route and distance of La Course, named La Course, adds another race to a growing list of international women’s cycling events, such as the Ladies Tour of Qatar and La Flèche Wallonne.

“Conversations with Chevaliers” Begins in New York

On February 12, New Yorkers enjoyed an evening featuring artist Meredith Monk, hosted by writer Adam Gopnik. The event served as the debut of “Conversations with Chevaliers,” a series created to highlight the contributions of artists and intellectuals from around the world and to honor the historic relationship between France and the United States.

“Conversations with Chevaliers” is a joint effort between the Cultural Services of the French Embassy and the Recanati-Kaplan Foundation, a philanthropic organization that sponsors an artistic merit scholarship program. All of the individuals participating in the series have received the prestigious French Legion of Honor or the Order of Arts and Letters awards.

Mr. Gopnik is a well-known American writer, essayist, and commentator. With an avid interest in France, he was dispatched by The New Yorker to live in Paris for five years with his family. During this time, he wrote the “Paris Journaux,” an essay series that describes life in the French capital.

Ms. Monk is a composer, singer, and director/choreographer. She is also a creator of new opera, music-theater works, films and installations. Over the last five decades, Ms. Monk has been lauded as “a magician of the voice” and “one of America’s coolest composers,” and has performed at major venues in various countries throughout the world. Among her many accolades, she was named 2012 Composer of the Year by Musical America and one of NPR’s 50 Great Voices, and received New Music USA’s 2013 Founders Award, a 2011 Yoko Ono Lennon Courage Award for the Arts and a 2012 Doris Duke Artist Award.

The next event in the series will take place on April 10 and will feature French-born chef, Eric Ripert.
What does science have to do with diplomacy? Quite a bit, says Minh-Hà Pham, who leads France’s science and technology policy at the Embassy in Washington.

In a few words, what is your role at the Embassy of France?
I am appointed as the head of the Office of Science and Technology. I started in September 2013. My role is to support French-American scientific cooperation. I also promote the quality of French science to our American partners, and coordinate the network of French scientists in the U.S. or of the American scientists who wish to work with France and French scientists.

How do your partnerships in the sciences serve larger French diplomatic goals?
The main priorities of the ministry of foreign affairs is threefold: diplomacy of influence, economic diplomacy, and scientific diplomacy.

As I see it, scientific diplomacy helps other fields of diplomacy in promoting the quality of France. It connects economic interests, because science leads to technology transfer and to innovation. It also provides a positive image of France to the United States by showing France’s excellence in the sciences.

How can French and U.S. science contribute together to the global “knowledge economy”?
We have specific programs which help young companies, which run the gamut from research to innovation, come settle in the United States. Or reciprocally, to help young American companies set up in France. NETVA [New Technology Venture Accelerator] brings French companies to the U.S., and YBI [Young Entrepreneurs Initiative] brings U.S. companies to France. We are also working with Ubifrance, which is the French Trade Commission, and AFII [French Agency for International Investment]. Ubifrance helps French companies come to the United States, and AFII helps American companies go to France.

With which U.S. authorities do you work, in Washington and nationwide?
Our main American partners are funding agencies. The National Science Foundation is our largest counterpart here, as well as the National Institutes of Health, which fund biomedical research. We also have relationships with research universities. For example, we have four funds shared between France and top-level universities including MIT, Stanford, Berkeley, and the University of Chicago. With those specific institutions, we are working together to fund cooperation projects selected and funded jointly.

What are some of your goals for French-American cooperation in the sciences?
I think we should support the links among higher education, research, and innovation. In France there are currently some substantial reform efforts taking shape, which support more fluent networking among universities, research organizations, and companies in France. We try to do the same with the United States and forge better connections among students, research, and innovation.

I would like also to better integrate the French scientists working in the United States, in order that we can partner with American institutions, as well as to keep connections strong between institutions.

Has anything surprised you in your work at the Embassy in Washington?
An embassy is like an ecosystem. We have a lot of people coming from different backgrounds. For me it’s very interesting to connect science with economics, with diplomacy, and I think our office has a real task ahead of itself in connecting all of these aspects. France is not only the country of perfumes and good food, but also a place where you have top-notch research and quality of scientific talent.

I also think that France can be a gateway to American partners toward Europe, and toward what Europe can offer to American partners. For instance, take the European Commission’s new Horizon 2020 program. There are projects and funding which are offered to partners globally, including to Americans.

In addition to the French Voices Award, the Embassy will embark on three new projects related to literary translation. One is creating a list of notable but not-yet published French titles, another is establishing a committee of American translators who will translate original short French texts in American magazines and reviews.

New York Lifestyle Show Includes 17 French Firms
From February 2 to 6, Ubifrance, the French Trade Commission, brought 17 French companies to the United States’ largest gift show, NY NOW. Held at the Javits Center and Pier 94 in New York City, 35,000 traders from more than 80 countries attended this winter’s convention. The fair, which occurs biannually, showcased 2,800 exhibitors with their most up-to-date trends in the home, lifestyle, and gift industries. The show is open only to industry professionals, company representatives, and the press. The 17 French companies came from all over France to show a range of products that included fine cutlery, porcelain products, glassware, patterned linens, and colorful kitchenware.

The fair used a new set-up which utilized four market collections, labeled home, lifestyle, handmade, and new. The French pavilion was located in the home section.

Seven of the brands exhibited at this winter’s convention for the first time.

Award Recognizes Translated French Works
The French Voices Award recognized translator Melanie Mauthner and Archipelago Books for Notre-Dame du Nil by Scholastique Mukasonga on February 6. The goal of the program is to create a series of U.S.-published books that represent the best of French contemporary literature and support French-to-English book translations.

Literary agents, editors, translators, and publishers who have a translated copy of a French book published in France in the last six years were eligible to apply.

Applications for the French Voices Award are accepted twice a year, and candidates are chosen by a literary committee. This year’s award ceremony paid special tribute to French-born American author and publisher André Schiffrin, who died in 2013.

The prize includes $6,000 for the publisher of each selected project, $4,000 to cover the publishing costs, and a $2,000 bonus will be given to the translator. The next 2014 deadline is August 29.

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President Hollande Heads Successful State Visit to U.S.

History at Monticello
The State visit was in itself historic, being the first of its kind since 1996, when French President Jacques Chirac visited U.S. President Bill Clinton. Messrs. Hollande and Obama made their own history on February 10, when the two traveled together to Monticello, the historic home of Thomas Jefferson.

Located near Charlottesville, Va., the site provided a powerfully symbolic backdrop to the presence of the French and American leaders. Mr. Jefferson is remembered as perhaps the greatest individual friend to France in U.S. history: he served as Minister to France from 1785 to 1789, cultivated French wine grapes on his property, and once famously said, “Every man has two countries—his own and France.”

White House and Beyond
Tuesday, February 11 was a uniquely important day for U.S. ties. President Hollande appeared with President Obama at the White House, where a crowd of several thousand endured hours in freezing temperatures to watch official goings-on, including a 21-gun salute, performances of each country’s national anthem, and a troop review—culminating in remarks from the two leaders.

Speaking first, President Obama shared his openness to continue close relations with France. “To our French friends, I say let’s do even more together,” he said, and described the efforts in global security, prosperity, and human rights that both countries have been working on together.

President Hollande then remarked that “Our two countries hold universal values... Today still, France and the United States stand side by side to make these values prevail.”

Following their appearances, the two men returned to the White House, where they addressed a joint press conference with French, American, and international journalists. President Hollande later traveled to the U.S. Department of State for a luncheon, of which U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry acted as co-hosts.

The afternoon was devoted largely to commemorating military history, featuring ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery as well as Fort Myer, both in Arlington, Va. President Hollande laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and conferred the Legion of Honor in a general commemoration of World War II. The award is France’s highest honor.

Heading directly to Fort Myer, the President spoke again, this time before a crowd of French and American guests, then bestowed the Legion of Honor on six U.S. veterans of D-Day, the Allied landings on the coast of Normandy, France. The watershed moment would liberate France and set in motion the events that would ultimately bring World War II to an end.

The Allied landings at Normandy provide what may be the most vivid example of French-American cooperation in recent history, and because 2014 marks the 70th anniversary of the Normandy battle,
France is preparing a full slate of events in remembrance of U.S. and other forces coming to the country’s aid. President Obama has confirmed his attendance at the D-Day ceremonies set for this June.

“The flame of memory, which the French people maintain from generation to generation, will not go out,” President Hollande said, before decorating each of the veterans present.

To culminate the full day of official events, French and U.S. officials later returned again to the White House for the State dinner, which President Hollande attended as the guest of honor. The evening featured fine American cuisine, music, and toasts from each President. The evening served as a beautiful demonstration of French-American society, friendship, and good will.

San Francisco: Tech Time

On February 12, the French delegation flew to San Francisco, where President Hollande headed up another busy day, this time focused on developing business and investment activities between France and the United States.

The morning featured a ceremony at City Hall, where Mayor Ed Lee, California Governor Jerry Brown, and Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom welcomed President Hollande. Mayor Lee presented the key to the city, then the leaders began a series of speeches in French and English. President Hollande enjoyed a lunch with leaders of several major technology firms, including Google, Facebook, and Twitter.

President Hollande and Mayor Lee then traveled to the site of the U.S.-French Tech Hub, which the President inaugurated with remarks and a short question-and-answer session. The center, which serves to stimulate innovation and the development of technology ventures with French and U.S. ties, will spur economic growth and job creation on both sides of the Atlantic.

While the delegation took on the ribbon-cutting of the U.S.-French Tech Hub, organizers were busy preparing the President’s final appearance in San Francisco: a meet-and-greet with the city’s large French community. Held at Union Square, Mr. Hollande met with French nationals both residing and visiting the Bay City. He would reboard the Presidential airplane that night, flying directly from the American West Coast to Paris, where the next steps of his U.S. visit would be carried out.

Considered a success by French officials and U.S. media, President Hollande’s State visit accomplished its goals. In traveling to Monticello, it touched on the common history between France and the United States. His appearances with President Obama cemented an already robust dynamic between the two countries. And the San Francisco leg of his journey speaks to what the future might hold for French-American business, technology, and economics—a future with more cooperation and shared success.
Online French Film Festival Available Worldwide

An online film festival that aims to showcase French cinema and film directors ran through February 17. MyFrenchFilmFestival.com just finished its fourth year and allowed internet users to enjoy French works worldwide.

Ten French feature titles and 10 French short films were in competition. Viewers—who could watch the films with subtitles in 13 languages—were invited to rate films and leave comments online.

The feature films included “Augustine” by Alice Winocour and “Le Jour des Cornelilles” (“The Day of Crows”) by Jean-Christophe Dessaint. “Argile” (“Clay”), by Michaël Guerraz and “7ème Ciel” (“In Seventh Heaven”) by Guillaume Forêt were among the short films in competition.

Award-winning films will be shown on Air France flights for six months.

SpectiCast is a U.S. company that partners with art and entertainment organizations to distribute programming over its network. It also provides the technical services like encoding and duplication that are necessary to distribute content. This year marked its first season with uniFrance Films, the company that presented the online festival.

Mark Rupp, co-founder and COO of SpectiCast, said, “Our first season with myFFF should educate us on exhibitor demand, requirements and interest in this amazing program and hopefully build audiences in all of the territories for which we are able to bring these films.”

Collaboration Produces French Revolution Digital Archive

On January 28, Stanford University and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) released a vast database of documents and images called the French Revolution Digital Archive (FRDA). The FRDA is the result of a multi-year collaboration between the Stanford University Libraries and the BNF to produce a digital version of the key sources on the French Revolution and make them available to the global scholarly community.

The database is one of the most complete searchable digital files of the Revolution. It includes various types of resources, from prints depicting the events of 1789 to records of parliamentary deliberations and private letters. The archive is organized into two sections: the Archives Parlementaires and the Images de la Révolution Française.

The Archives Parlementaires is a chronologically-ordered, edited collection of sources on the French Revolution. The Archives was conceived in order to create a definitive record of parliamentary deliberations. It is also comprised of letters, reports, speeches, and other first-hand accounts from an extensive variety of published and archival materials.

The Images de la Révolution Française include high-resolution digital photographs of approximately 14,000 individual items, with prints, illustrations, and pamphlets. The materials were selected from the collections of the Département des Estampes et de la Photographie (Department of Prints and Photography), as well as from other BNF departments.

This online database was created to enhance user accessibility to a wealth of resources pertaining to the French Revolution. Now users can easily search for documents in the Archives Parlementaires by dates, speakers, places and terms, and can search for images in the Images de la Révolution Française by artist, subject, genre, and place.
Embassy Decorates 11 U.S. Veterans with Legion of Honor

On Monday, January 27, the Embassy of France honored 11 U.S. veterans who served during the Normandy landing that started on June 6, 1944, also known as D-Day, by giving them the Legion of Honor. The award is France’s highest and pays tribute to those who have provided exceptional service to France. Led by Allied forces, the liberation of the northern French region of Normandy would mark the decisive turn toward the end of World War II.

In opening remarks before several hundred attendees, family members, diplomatic personnel, and press professionals, Olivier Sérot-Alméras, Consul General of France in Washington, lauded the sacrifices made by the men.

“The grief from death and destruction... went hand-in-hand with the newfound freedom” of liberated French citizens, Mr. Sérot-Alméras said.

At the time of the war, those enlisted were in their early twenties and in some cases still teenagers. The President of the French Republic has decided that all U.S. veterans should be honored, whether they served at Normandy or as part of Operation Dragoon, on France’s Mediterranean coast. The Embassy and consulates have been mobilized to identify as many of these veterans as possible.

The event marks the first of numerous ceremonies planned to commemorate this year’s 70th anniversary of the Normandy landing. On and around June 6, D-Day’s anniversary, France will be hosting American dignitaries, organizing events, and promoting French-American relations through the remembrance of a significant moment in the two countries’ common history.

The Embassy event was attended by a delegation of French officials and citizens from the Basse-Normandie region, on whose coast the D-Day landing took place. Philippe Gosselin, a Deputy from La Manche; Laurent Beuvais, the President of the Region; Jean-Pierre Lhon-vneur, the Mayor of Carentan; and Marc LeFèvre, Mayor of Sainte-Mère-Eglise, all traveled to Washington for the occasion.

The 11 U.S. veterans decorated with the Legion of Honor were Carlton Bazzell, Austin Cox, Russell Decker, Charles Ecker, Frank Ehly, Sebastian Gionfriddo, Frederick Griswold, Raymond Gritton, Thomas Hasbrouck, Walter Heline, and Everett Sumner.

During U.S. Tour, Compagnie Kafig Fuses Old and New

The Compagnie Kafig, a modern dance troupe based in Lyon, performed a handful of performances across the U.S. Northeast, Midwest, and Southeast this February. Their style combines urban, hip-hop, as well as Brazilian dance forms.
American Receives Top Honor at Angoulême Comic Festival

For his classic series Calvin and Hobbes, U.S. cartoonist Bill Watterson was awarded top honors at the 2014 Angoulême Comic Festival. The annual event gathers illustrators and creatives to the southwestern French town of the same name.

At the end of the 41st Angoulême International Comics Festival on February 2, the jury honored Bill Watterson, American cartoonist and creator of the Calvin and Hobbes comic series, with the Angoulême Grand Prix. The award is the highest accolade given at the festival and honors an author for their work in the evolution of comics.

The author is the fourth American to have received the Angoulême Grand Prix, following Will Eisner in 1975, Robert Crumb in 1999, and Art Spiegelman in 2011. This honor marks the second tribute given to Mr. Watterson by the Angoulême International Comics Festival as he received the Best Foreign Book Award in 1992.

Started in 1985, Calvin and Hobbes chronicles the life of six-year-old Calvin and his talking plush tiger, Hobbes. Their conversations, profound yet whimsical, comment on various topics regarding the state of the world.

The author was not present to receive his honor, however. After his retirement, Mr. Watterson secluded himself from the public eye to enjoy his private life after his success. The award was received by Lee Salem, Mr. Watterson’s former editor. Upon accepting the award, Mr. Salem mentioned that he would try to get the author to come out for the next year’s festival, since the jury consists of previous recipients. The author has participated only twice for interviews in the 19 years since the retirement of Calvin and Hobbes.