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## DLO DAILY MEDIA WATCH

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### **CURRENT NEWS 30 JULY 2010**

#### **Senator hopes to bridge feds foreign language gap**

For Senator Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii), foreign language proficiency by federal workers isn't just a luxury - it's mission critical. "Foreign language skills are necessary to provide vital services to people with limited English abilities. Because of the rich cultural and linguistic diversity in my home state of Hawaii, I understand well the need to communicate about disaster relief, social services and other government programs in a variety of languages," says Akaka Thursday during a hearing.

#### **The CIA as Executive Agent on Climate Change**

Gen. James Clapper (ret.) gets his Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing today, and it's very likely he'll sail through with a large number of votes from Republicans. Last week's public hearing didn't tell us too much about Clapper's insight into a variety of institutional issues, but [his answers to some written](#) questions provide us with a snapshot of how the man's mind works. He wants to use other agencies to serve as executive agents for specific functions delegated to the DNI, thereby keeping his headquarters staff small and nimble. He writes: "For example, the DIA could serve as the DNI's Executive Agent for IC Document and Media Exploitation; the NSA could serve as the DNI's Executive Agent for IC Foreign Language Machine Translation; the CIA could serve as the DNI's Executive Agent on Climate Change."

#### **Increased focus on K-12 language learning can augment government language capabilities**

Deficiencies in U.S. federal foreign language capabilities, especially within defense-related agencies, could be reversed and overcome with an increased and sustained national focus on K-12 language learning, concluded several panelists at a Senate hearing today on improving government language proficiencies. "Language learning in an overseas immersion environment has enormous potential for the government workforce of the 21st century," said Dan Davidson, president and co-founder of the American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS, in his testimony, "but it must be coupled with effective K-12 language learning." David Chu, Former Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, seconded Davidson's assessment, noting that his experience at DOD convinced him that increased K-12 language instruction would allow the U.S. "to build a better base for language success."

#### **Standardized English Tests to Resume in Iran Amid Sanctions**

The [Educational Testing Service](#), the company that offers the Test of English as a Foreign Language, announced Thursday that it would resume registering students for its tests inside [Iran](#) after striking a deal with a bank willing to process payments. The company said two weeks ago that it was [temporarily halting registrations](#) for the English test and its graduate-school admissions exam, after its bank refused to continue processing payments from Iran amid recent sanctions by the international community taking aim at the country's financial institutions.

#### **Top 25 Android apps: The best of the best**

**Google Goggles.** This is a fun app that is a little but ahead of its time. It does visual searches. You can take pictures of things and then the app tries to tell you what they are. It's limited in its scope but it is pretty cool, and it's definitely a peek into the future. One of the coolest features is the ability to take pictures of text in a foreign language and let that app translate for you. In a foreign country, this can help you read street signs and avoid going into the wrong bathroom.

#### **Language skills still are getting lost in translation**

During a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce and the District of Columbia hearing, David Maurer,

director of GAO's homeland security and justice team, told lawmakers similar challenges and failures at Defense, DHS and the [State Department](#) are contributing to an ongoing lack of necessary language proficiencies. Maurer said DHS, in particular, has failed to take a comprehensive approach to assessing the foreign language capabilities of its employees and addressing any shortfalls despite several critical GAO reports.

### **AFPAK FAQ's**

**What is AFPAK Hands?** The objective of the AFPAK Hands, or APH, program is to identify, select, train, and manage a team of Department of Defense experts to bring greater unity and cohesion to the fight in Afghanistan. AFPAK Hands will be placed in positions of strategic influence to ensure progress towards achieving U. S. Government objectives in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. The targeted end-state is a program that will support critical elements of the strategy while preserving the member's career progression.

### **Ansonia Library Gets Grant For More Foreign Language Books**

The Ansonia Public Library has received a \$5,000 grant from the Katharine Matthies Foundation to add to its foreign language offerings. The library already has a small collection of foreign language books for adults and children.

## **PREVIOUS NEWS**

### ***Closing the Language Gap: Improving the Federal Government's Foreign Language Capabilities***

On Thursday [7/29/10], U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI) will hold a hearing titled Closing the Language Gap: Improving the Federal Government's Foreign Language Capabilities to examine the federal government's needs for personnel proficient in foreign languages. Changing threats to U.S. national security, the increasing globalization of the U.S. economy, and immigration to the U.S. have greatly increased federal agencies' needs for personnel proficient in foreign languages.

### **NIST replaces translators with smart phones**

The persistent shortage of qualified translators is a serious problem facing American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. But the National Institute of Science and Technology is working on a [solution](#) that makes a surprising use of smart phone technology. [NIST](#) is currently testing a smart phone-based device that translates English to Afghani Pashto and back again. When an English speaker talks into the phone, speech recognition software records and translates the information. The device then reads the information back orally in the target language. NIST scientists have spent the last four years researching and evaluating speech translation systems for the [Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency](#) (DARPA). Previously, they used microphones and portable computers. But the new technology works on more wieldy devices and operates in real time.

### **Tribe hopes to fund Cherokee as foreign language class in public schools**

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians is urging the state to formally license Cherokee language teachers, enabling Cherokee courses taught in public schools off the reservation to count toward a student's foreign language requirement. Earlier this month, tribal and school officials met with representatives from the N.C. Department of Public Instruction to finalize the steps in the process.

### **TalkAbroad founder discusses Silicon Valley, Omaha Startup scene**

TalkAbroad is a company that uses online video conferencing to connect American college students learning a foreign language with native speakers abroad.

### **Virtual schools 'clicking' for many students this school year**

A record number of students are heading back to school this year – without ever stepping foot inside a classroom. A growing number of virtual schools (also known as cyber schools or e-schools), combined with booming parent (and student) demand for high-quality virtual education, have more students than

ever logging on, instead of boarding a school bus, this back-to-school season. Many parents are drawn to the quality curriculum a virtual school can offer their student – and programs they might not have access to at the local brick-and-mortar school. The current economic climate has forced many neighborhood schools to eliminate programs like foreign language instruction, Advanced Placement (AP) courses and more. At the same time some virtual schools are adding courses like Mandarin Chinese and AP Chemistry.

### **TEFL TEACHERS LOSE JOBS AS JAPANESE LANGUAGE-SCHOOL**

The TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) industry is often regarded as recession-proof but with another major language-school operator going bust in Japan, this does not appear to be the case. GEOS Japan filed for bankruptcy in April citing fewer students as a result of the recession as the reason for its debts of ¥7.5 billion (£51.5 million). G Communication is to take over 230 schools while 99 are set to close but the company has pledged to help GEOS employees who have lost jobs to find new employment.

### **CASL's Brecht To Discuss Improvements to Fed's Foreign Language Capabilities**

Richard Brecht, the executive director of the University of Maryland's Center for the Advanced Study of Language (CASL), will testify before the Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management during its hearing titled *Closing the Language Gap: Improving the Federal Government's Foreign Language Capabilities*.

### **OPINION**

#### **The CIA Solution For Afghanistan**

*(Wall Street Journal)*...Jack Devine

The U.S. military will not achieve anything resembling victory in Afghanistan, no matter how noble the objective and heroic the effort.

#### **Afghan army struggles with ethnic divisions**

Officers in the U.S. Army routinely praise their Afghan partners: They know the culture, can relate to the villagers and understand regional politics. But in southern Afghanistan, the focus of the U.S. war effort, nearly all the Afghan soldiers are foreigners too. Most don't even speak the local language. They have to communicate through interpreters hired for the Americans. Despite ethnic quotas and recruiting drives, the Afghan army is still dominated by northern minorities who were oppressed by the Taliban. Nearly all Taliban are ethnic Pashtuns.

#### **Protesters: 'Say no to Mandarin!'**

Sunday's protest was unique – Guangzhou citizens were walking in the street to protect their native language: Cantonese. It was sparked by an announcement earlier this month by the local China People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a political advisory body, encouraging the local government to promote Mandarin language content on Guangzhou's prime time TV news programs. Mandarin, China's official language, is based mainly on northern dialects, primarily, the Beijing dialect. It was not adopted as the country's national language until the 1950s, when the fledgling Communist government took power and began to enforce it as the standard language to be used in education, media and by the government. But in a country as large and geographically diverse as China, promoting one standard dialect has been no easy task. It's not uncommon for villagers living just 30 miles away from each other to speak different dialects – particularly in the south where the mountainous terrain helped lead to linguistic differences.

#### **New Haven schools get \$1.3M for language studies; Chinese, Arabic to be expanded**

The public schools have received a \$1.3 million federal Foreign Language Assistance Program grant for Chinese and Arabic culture and language programs, the district said in a statement. The five-year grant,

provided through the U.S. Department of Education, "is intended to strengthen, expand, and enrich the teaching of critical languages essential for our nation's international competitiveness," the statement said.

### **Google Docs Adds Integrated Translation**

Google is making the most of its translation technology by introducing it to more and more of its products. The latest to take advantage of it is Google Docs. Users can now translate documents from inside the editor. There are 53 languages to choose from, but other than the convenience, the feature doesn't add anything to the quality of the translations above the standard Google Translate.

### **Katie Grossweiner '12 wins US Department of State 2010 Critical Language Scholarship**

Grossweiner spends more than 20 hours a week studying at the Nanjing University, where she takes two Chinese courses to learn how to read "shumian," the written and formal version of Chinese, and colloquial Chinese. She also attends night lectures about Chinese culture and history as well as tai chi classes. "But the most exciting aspect of the program happens outside of the classroom," Grossweiner said. "I am living with a Chinese roommate, which means I am constantly immersed in the language."