



## Sesame Street in Afghanistan – Josef Korbel School alum Matt Case brings joy to Afghan TV

MA International Development, Josef Korbel School of International Studies 2007  
BA International Relations, Syracuse University 2001

Matthew was recently in Washington D.C. on a brief hiatus from Afghanistan where he's working for the U.S. Department of State. He agreed to speak with me over the phone as he drove home to visit his family.

Matt works as a Grant Manager for the U.S. Embassy in Kabul in the Public Affairs section (PAS), managing a portfolio of \$25 million out of a full PAS budget of \$150 million. "This is not your grandfather's Public Affairs Section, we do a lot more than just academic exchanges and cultural activities" he says. With guidance from the Director of Communications and Public Diplomacy, David Ensor, Embassy Kabul PAS is tasked with meeting the strategic objectives of the Integrated Communications Plan for Operation Enduring Freedom.

He works with a team of over 50 in Kabul where he engages with some of the best and brightest locals in the Afghan media market. Matt is involved in many projects which deal with communications and infrastructure in Afghanistan. One of the most exciting projects he is currently working on is a plan to bring Sesame Street to Afghanistan. While the details aren't finalized yet, the idea is to introduce Afghan children to Elmo, Grover and Big Bird by taking an already established Muslim version, adding live-action shots of Afghan children, dubbing it into the local language and then running it on TV. Some of Matt's other activities include building journalism schools at six universities throughout Afghanistan, developing additional TV content (he manages the Afghan version of the American hit series "24," which is currently running on Thursday evenings at 9PM), expanding the communication capacity of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and developing radio content as radio is the preferred means of disseminating information in Afghanistan. "I really love my job and the work we're doing," gushes Matt.

Life in Afghanistan is not luxurious and it was on this topic that Matthew was interviewed by CNN for a segment on civilian life in Afghanistan. It will be shown on CNN November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 but can also be viewed [here](#). Matt's home in Afghanistan is a compound the size of two football fields. He lives and works with his co-workers. His room has four sets of bunk beds, and it's what Matt calls "tough living" but "the work and what's going on make up for it."

Matt received his BA from Syracuse University and moved to D.C. after graduation to work for a development contractor. Ready for a change, he decided to look at graduate schools. While attending a graduate school fair, he happened upon the Josef Korbel School and thought "this is exactly what I need." The [MA program in International Development](#) appealed to Matt because, in his words, "I am a practitioner and I like getting my hands dirty and seeing the results of my work." While at the Josef Korbel School, Matt specifically mentioned Professor [Tom Laetz](#)'s classes in International Project Management and International Project Analysis, Professor [Peter Van Arsdale](#)'s class in applied

field methods as well as classes in economic development, fundraising and management of non-profits as all being particularly influential in his choice of careers.

Foreign Service seems to be in Matt's blood as he mentioned that he'll try to become an FSO (Foreign Service Officer) after he leaves his current job at the State Department. While he may never again find himself in as exciting and rough conditions as he currently resides in Afghanistan, there's no doubt Matt will always be doing something exciting and worthwhile as he looks forward to the future.

**-Shane Hensinger, MA candidate International Security  
Josef Korbel School of International Studies**