



(U) Spanning The Globe...Misawa to Menwith Hill: Part 2

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Run Date: 10/23/2003

(U) Note from SIGINT Communications: This is the conclusion of a two-part article.

(U) Language Struggles

(U) Some folks are intimidated by the language differences when moving to Japan, but I found that I could communicate effectively using "international charades". Plastic food on display and menus with pictures were also helpful. Most road signs display English and Japanese and larger train stations have a tourist information kiosk with English maps and brochures. The key to success is to not be intimidated. We spoke only enough Japanese to be polite (please, thank you, excuse me) and to say "I don't understand" and we travelled the country, used the train system, and stayed at Japanese hotels.

(U) Speaking "English" is quite a different beast. At least in Japan I knew I didn't speak the language, but I thought I spoke the same language as they do in England. I have discovered that I speak "American" and not "English" and definitely not "Scottish"!

(U) Daily Life

(U) On-base life in Misawa is similar to living in a small town in the US. There is a hospital, 3 schools, a movie theater, 2 gyms, a mall (of sorts), a large commissary, and tons of housing, just to hit the high points. Misawa AB is HUGE compared to RAF Menwith Hill. While the goods, services and infrastructure may exist, they are very limited at Menwith. The flip side is that in England, you can usually get comparable goods and services on the economy (and you can read the packaging). If you get desperate and need that Taco Bell or Cinnabon fix, RAF Lakenheath is less than a 4 hour drive south and it is a large base.

(U) Off-base, our favorite ramen shop (next to Viking's) has been replaced by our local pub (The Flying Dutchman in Summerbridge), tempura has been replaced by fish and chips, and Sapporo Beer by Theakstons Old Peculiar. Georgia coffees hot from the vending machine will never be replaced, but tea at Betty's is a pleasant substitute. 100 Yen stores have been replaced by the January Sale at Harrods, and Tokyo never had a chance against London. We do wish there was a way to package and export the relaxing and warming effects of the onsen (Japanese communal hot bath).

(U) When we agreed to PCS to Misawa, we both envisioned we would do our 3 years and move on to better assignments. We did not think that we would stay an extra year and we never thought we would miss anything from Japan. We were wrong. As I type this, I'm sipping on a Georgia coffee shipped by a friend from Japan. It's just one of the many things we miss (and an addiction I



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simply refuse to break). Fortunately, England has been able to provide many acceptable substitutes and several things that I know we will miss when we PCS (Cadbury!).

(U) We had a super experience in Misawa professionally and personally and we both look back fondly on those 4 years. The jury is still out on our Menwith Hill experience, but if the first 5 months are any indication, it will rival if not surpass our Misawa adventure.

(U//FOUO) If you are thinking of applying for a field position, see the [Extended Enterprise Vacancy Announcements](#). Also, see the NSA Daily [article on Field Recruiting Events](#).

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DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 08 JAN 2007 DECLASSIFY ON: 20320108