

Providence Journal-Bulletin

September 28, 2002

In Tanzania, a year later

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DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania

IT IS ONE YEAR since we arrived here to take up our new assignment. Instead of remembering, a first day of exploring dusty markets, seeing panhandling children with polio, and hearing hawkers lustily bellying their wares, we will remember watching the images of the World Trade Center.

The crowd outside the electronics store on a side street in Old Town thought it was *Die Hard*, or some such film, being shown on the TV. Some chuckled that "those special effects are really good!"

Yet as the African sun quickly set, and the air turned chill, all of us realized that this was no film. It was CNN, and it was live.

As a representative of the University of Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Center working on a U.S. government project in Tanzania, I felt many thoughts race through my mind. None of them were very positive.

After all, this was Tanzania. This is where the bomb blasts had injured and killed Tanzanians and Americans when the U.S. Embassy was attacked in 1998. My predecessor was one of the first rescuers on that scene; hearing the explosion, he raced from his office to the embassy. Our office was one of the rallying points for the survivors, and over the next weeks the staff helped the embassy with access to

phones, faxes, the Internet and so on.

The population of Dar es Salaam is mostly Muslim, as are the fishermen and coastal communities with whom we work. The al-Qaida network supposedly has various cells throughout the country. None of this was reassuring to think about on my first day on the job.

Having lived in Muslim parts of the Philippines and Indonesia (where the Coastal Resources Center also has projects), I was used to seeing mobs attacking American "imperialism and aggression," so I expected to see the same thing here. Yet within a couple of hours, many of the *dalla-dallas* (public-transportation minivans loaded to the gills) showed American flags on their rear windows. And people came up to us on the street to say things like *Pole sana* ("very sorry") for the attack on America, and *Osama matatizo* ("Osama is a bad guy").

One of the sites where we help the local government plan for sustainable use of the coast is Bagamoyo. The last resting place of Dr. Stanley Livingston, it is also a national center of Islamic culture and doctrine. This is where boys are sent to learn the Koran from respected mullahs. Maybe not the best spot for a U.S.-funded project?

Bagamoyo has just held a national conference seeking to have it elevated to the status of a

UNESCO World Heritage Site. Many of the participants spoke of their pride in the history and culture of Bagamoyo. Nonetheless, they spoke equally well of the efforts that we Americans have undertaken to enhance their lives.

The people say they appreciate that people come from Rhode Island to help them eat better, make more money, live better lives. If this were not the case, what would be the use of applying to become a World Heritage Site? Who would want to come see hungry children and poor fishermen living in dilapidated shacks along stretches of dirty beach?

Thanks to the specialists from the Coastal Resources Center and the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the residents of Bagamoyo and other places in Tanzania have a chance to live better lives.

A year after 9/11, when villagers smile and greet us, I think that we really are making a difference. And as long as we continue to help people like these members of a coastal Muslim community, we can help stamp out the causes of 9/11.

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