Delegation from Isigny-Omaha Intercom Visits and Tours Omaha Sights

In mid-May, Omaha Sister Cities (OSCA) hosted a delegation from Isigny-Omaha Intercom in Normandy, visiting Omaha to sign and celebrate the formal establishment of a sister city partnership, or "jumellage," between our cities.

The delegation from France was led by Patrick Thomines, the Président of Isigny-Omaha Intercom, a group of 59 French townships located along the Normandy coast that includes Omaha Beach of D-Day fame. Mr. Thomines is also the mayor of Colleville sur Mer, where the American Cemetery is located above Omaha Beach. He was accompanied by Mr. Noël Anquetil, Vice President for Tourism of Isigny Intercom; Mme. Catherine Viel, Vice President for Culture and Sport, and Mayor of Columbières; and Ms. Laura Conte, Events Service for the Intercom.

The delegation began its official visit to Omaha on May 18th, at a public ceremony where Mayor Jean Stothert and Président Thomines signed the documents establishing a Sister City Agreement between our communities.

Offutt Air Force Base has been a historic cornerstone of the Omaha area for decades, and so the first destination for the delegation after the signing ceremony was an afternoon visit to U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt AFB and its associated activities. The program at Offutt included a tour of the brand new USSTRATCOM headquarters building, hosted by the command Chief of Staff, Maj General Greg Brady. The group received a welcome and command briefing by Col. Mark D. Howard, the Vice Commander of the 55th Wing ["Videmus Omnia – We see everything"], describing the global reconnaissance and surveillance missions of the squadron.

The visit to Offutt concluded with a briefing and tour led by Dr. Carrie Brown, Forensic Anthropologist of the DPAA (Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency). Dr. Brown presented the activities of the DPAA Forensics Lab at Offutt, charged with identifying and returning the remains of the nearly 80,000 missing and unidentified service members who have died in the service of our country. The same week of the delegation visit, CBS Saturday Morning broadcast a national feature on the activities of the Forensic Lab, and its success in identifying and returning the remains of deceased service members:

https://www.cbs.com/shows/video/GxB3VVPGArsGVHNtuVWWX3NksnXOCJHi/

OSCA is grateful to the command, staff and service members of US Strategic Command and Offutt Air Force Base, for the gracious and informative welcome they provided our international visitors.

For the remainder of their four-day visit, the delegation attended a series of celebratory dinners, official meetings and sightseeing events organized by Omaha Sister Cities Association and Alliance Française of Omaha. These included visits to the Durham Museum; the Henry Doorly Zoo; Lauritzen Gardens; the campus and Hall of History at Boys Town; and walking tours in the historic Old Market.

A highlight was the Gala Dinner held on Friday evening at the Omaha Field Club. Mayor Jean Stothert and Président Patrick Thomines each delivered remarks celebrating the establishment of Omaha's newest sister city relationship. Representative Don Bacon shared his perspective as a military veteran and congressman about the historic significance of Omaha Beach and our long alliance with France. The dinner was also attended by Nebraska's Secretary of State Robert Evnen; Omaha City Council President Pete Festerson; and Councilmember Juanita Johnson.

The visitors' program concluded with discussions of future activities, exchanges and plans to further deepen the close ties between our communities.