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## **The USO and Pimsleur® Launch *OPERATION SPEAK EASY* Lowering Language Barriers for U.S. Troops in Afghanistan**

{September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010} The USO and Pimsleur® Language Programs, in partnership with The Boston Foundation and Playaway®, are proud to announce the launch of **OPERATION SPEAK EASY** – an initiative to eliminate language barriers for U.S. troops serving in and being deployed to Afghanistan. Through a donor-advised fund at The Boston Foundation, **OPERATION SPEAK EASY** was created to assist troops with learning the local languages spoken throughout the region and further day-to-day communications with the Afghani population.

“Simon & Schuster’s Pimsleur is proud to partner with The USO, Playaway, and The Boston Foundation on this project. By providing these programs to troops, we hope to remove any language barriers that may stand in the way of the vital mission in Afghanistan and show our support for those who serve.”

**Robert Riger, Director of Pimsleur Language Programs**

Omar Khudari, a Boston-area philanthropist, had a dream of giving U.S. Troops the ability to communicate directly and easily with the civilian population in Afghanistan. As an avid user of Pimsleur language programs, Khudari’s vision led him to fund the project, now known as Operation Speak Easy. His generous donation to The Boston Foundation allowed Pimsleur® to develop audio-based language training courses in Pashto and Dari and make his dream a reality.

Pimsleur’s portable audio programs are easily downloadable for use in the field or on a base. The USO is distributing these courses free of charge to U.S. Troops via digital downloads from the USO website and portable audio players from Playaway.

“The USO is dedicated to offering programs and services that support troops located in the most remote locations. Operation Speak Easy helps service members learn the languages of the countries where they are stationed, allowing them to communicate with natives more easily.”

**Steve Missimer, Vice President, Programs with the USO**

The choice of multiple formats – downloads and Playaway – allow for a variety of listening options for troops. Where power is an issue, Playaway audio players are preloaded and completely portable with their own power source.

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A test case for the project launched in June 2010 with free downloads of the Pimsleur Dari course. This allowed for the distribution of over 4,000 Playaway audio players to U.S. Troops, both those about to be deployed and those already on the ground in Afghanistan.

“There is no better gesture of respect and good will you can make in a foreign land than speaking the local language. I have been hearing for some time about the military's desire to improve its language training in order to "win hearts and minds" in Afghanistan. It occurred to me that Pimsleur courses in Pashto and Dari would be an obvious solution. I am very excited to be able to help get these courses to our troops sooner rather than later.” - **Omar Khudari, Project Philanthropist, Entrepreneur**

Available in over 60 languages, Pimsleur® courses have been at the forefront of audio foreign language instruction for over 45 years. The name OPERATION SPEAK EASY is derived from Pimsleur's focus on learning a language through speech.

To learn more about this partnership visit <http://pages.simonandschuster.com/operationspeakeasywithpimsleur/>

**\*Pashto and Dari are the key languages spoken in Afghanistan.**

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## **ABOUT THE PUBLISHER**

**Pimsleur** is the ultimate authority in spoken language learning. Pimsleur's Comprehensive Programs are the most effective and complete language-learning programs ever developed. The groundbreaking programs utilize proven methods of learning based on extensive research of how people master languages. The Pimsleur Method is a unique patented method developed by Dr. Paul Pimsleur that reinvents natural language acquisition by allowing program users to learn a language the way native speakers do, with exposure to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation all at once, in everyday conversations. Pimsleur's audio-only programs are the ultimate in portable learning. They can be listened to anytime, anywhere. Pimsleur is an imprint of Simon & Schuster Audio, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc. PIMSLEUR® is a registered trademark of Beverly Pimsleur, used by Simon & Schuster under exclusive license.

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## **ABOUT THE USO**

The USO (United Service Organizations) lifts the spirits of America's troops and their families millions of times each year at thousands of places worldwide. We provide a touch of home through centers at airports and military bases, top quality entertainment and innovative programs and services. We also provide critical support to those who need us most, including forward-deployed troops and their families, wounded warriors and their families, and the families of the fallen.

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**ABOUT PLAYAWAY**

Playaway is the simplest way to listen to digital content on the go. It comes with the audio content already pre-loaded on it and a battery to make it play. Simply plug in earbuds and enjoy. Each Playaway weighs only two ounces and has a universal jack. Learn more about Playaway at [www.playaway.com](http://www.playaway.com). Playaway is made possible by Findaway World Findaway World, a privately held company based in Cleveland, OH, is dedicated to delivering simple and immediate access to content listeners want or need. Their flagship product, Playaway, is the first audio player of its kind, coming pre-loaded with premier content from leading publishers or custom content for specific audio training and education needs. Learn more about the company and product at [www.playaway.com](http://www.playaway.com).

**ABOUT THE BOSTON FOUNDATION**

The Boston Foundation, Greater Boston's community foundation, is one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the nation, with assets of \$682 million. In Fiscal Year 2009, the Foundation and its donors made more than \$95 million in grants to nonprofit organizations and received gifts of \$81 million. The Foundation is made up of some 900 separate charitable funds established by donors either for the general benefit of the community or for special purposes. The Boston Foundation also serves as a major civic leader, provider of information, convener, and sponsor of special initiatives designed to address the community's and region's most pressing challenges. For more information about the Boston Foundation, visit [www.tbf.org](http://www.tbf.org)

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