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United States Department of State  
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors  
Office of Inspector General

# Report of Inspection

## Limited-Scope Inspection of Embassy Port Louis, Mauritius

Report Number ISP-I-08-49A, September 2008

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## PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections, as issued by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of State (Department) and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).

### PURPOSE

- The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the BBG, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and the BBG. Inspections cover three broad areas, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980:
- Policy Implementation: whether policy goals and objectives are being effectively achieved; whether U.S. interests are being accurately and effectively represented; and whether all elements of an office or mission are being adequately coordinated.
- Resource Management: whether resources are being used and managed with maximum efficiency, effectiveness, and economy and whether financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- Management Controls: whether the administration of activities and operations meets the requirements of applicable laws and regulations; whether internal management controls have been instituted to ensure quality of performance and reduce the likelihood of mismanagement; whether instances of fraud, waste, or abuse exist; and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

### METHODOLOGY

In conducting this inspection, the inspectors: reviewed pertinent records; as appropriate, circulated, reviewed, and compiled the results of survey instruments; conducted on-site interviews; and reviewed the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, organizations, and activities affected by this review.



**United States Department of State  
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors**

*Office of Inspector General*

PREFACE

This report was prepared by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, the Arms Control and Disarmament Amendments Act of 1987, and the Department of State and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 1996. It is one of a series of audit, inspection, investigative, and special reports prepared by OIG periodically as part of its oversight responsibility with respect to the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors to identify and prevent fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement.

This report is the result of an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the office, post, or function under review. It is based on interviews with employees and officials of relevant agencies and institutions, direct observation, and a review of applicable documents.

The recommendations therein have been developed on the basis of the best knowledge available to the OIG, and have been discussed in draft with those responsible for implementation. It is my hope that these recommendations will result in more effective, efficient, and/or economical operations.

I express my appreciation to all of those who contributed to the preparation of this report.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "H. W. Geisel".

Harold W. Geisel  
Acting Inspector General

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

- Embassy Port Louis has an exceptionally well-trained, loyal, and able cadre of local employees. The flipside is their tendency to function out of habit and to resist change.
- Measures should be taken to reduce the workload expected of the small political/economic section.
- Processing of visa applicants should be modified to address crowd control, security, and personal comfort issues.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between April 7 and 28, 2008, and in Port Louis, Mauritius, between June 20 and 27, 2008. Ambassador David E. Zweifel (team leader), Andrea M. Leopold (deputy team leader), and Barry Langevin conducted the inspection. This limited-scope inspection did not include an information technology review.



## CONTEXT

Embassy Port Louis is accredited to both Mauritius and the Seychelles. Both host countries are prosperous by African standards. The per capita incomes are about \$7,000 in Mauritius and almost \$8,000 in the Seychelles. Bilateral relations between the United States and these two island nations in the Indian Ocean are excellent. U.S. commercial and economic interests in Mauritius and the Seychelles are modest.



Mauritius has a multiethnic population of about 1.2 million. When asked whether islanders consider themselves to be African or South Asian, a common answer is, "Neither. We are Mauritian." They are proud of their heritage, proud of their independence, gained peaceably from the United Kingdom in 1968, and proud of a well-established, stable, and democratic government. The parliamentary system is modeled along British lines.

Mauritius asserts sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory, which consists of the six main islands that make up the Chagos Island archipelago. The American naval base on Diego Garcia in that island group is of important strategic interest to the U.S. government. Washington recognizes British sovereignty. This stance is an irritant in bilateral relations, raised in sometimes unrelated contexts by the Mauritian government, for example, recognition of Kosovo's independence. The prospective near-term return of Mauritian nationals, earlier relocated to the home island by the British, to the Chagos may further roil the political sensitivity of these issues.

The Seychelles is an even smaller national entity. The widely scattered archipelago, about 1,000 miles northwest of Port Louis, has a population of about 80,000. The resident U.S. embassy in the capital, Victoria, closed in 1996, coincident with closure of a U.S. Air Force tracking station on Mahe, the principal island. Without an embassy in country, the Peace Corps also terminated programs at about that time. Since then, the Ambassador to Mauritius has been accredited to the Seychelles.



## THE SEYCHELLES

There is a U.S. consular agent in Victoria. A dual U.S.-Seychellois citizen, he has good access to official and private sector persons in the Seychelles. However, he is neither expected – nor authorized – to carry out policy dialogue on behalf of the U.S. government. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) team commended the embassy for maximizing benefit when officers do get to Victoria. For example, on one recent trip, the management officer pressed the Seychelles government on a status-of-forces agreement. The embassy also achieves synergy from more frequent travel by members of the Combined Joint Task Force/Horn of Africa (CJTF/HOA) team based in Port Louis. Conduct of bilateral relations and reporting are highly dependent on e-mail, faxes, and telephone exchanges between the two capitals.

U.S. naval vessels call frequently at Victoria. Otherwise, U.S. interests revolve broadly around the issues of the host government's vulnerability to corruption – for example, issuance of bogus travel documents, money laundering, etcetera – and the presence of and attention from elements inimical to U.S. interests.

Travel between Mauritius and Victoria is relatively expensive.<sup>2</sup> The embassy's travel budget was reduced by 18 percent in FY 2008. Thus far in the fiscal year, 10 embassy employees have gone to the Seychelles, including two visits by the Ambassador.

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<sup>2</sup> The economy air fare is about \$350; maximum per diem is \$447. The management officer recently negotiated a rate of 250 Euros for lodging at the Hilton Hotel in Victoria; normal rates are in the 700 Euro range.

(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2) The embassy community enjoys camaraderie and social events at the chancery and other venues. Americans and LE staff note that the Ambassador is especially kind and generous.

## EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS

There is an Equal Employment Opportunity counselor at Embassy Port Louis. The counselor has advised one employee regarding an interest in filing a grievance. The employee decided not to move forward on the issue at this time but remains uncertain whether to pursue it later.



## POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

### POLITICAL/ECONOMIC

The political/economic section is comprised of one officer, supported by four local employees. The section chief is a first-tour, political cone officer. This officer is also the back-up consular officer. In return, the consular officer takes responsibility for environment, science, and technology issues.

The DCM has been assiduous in mentoring the political/economic officer, who is talented and an eager learner. In addition to personnel assigned to the political/economic section, the DCM does a considerable amount of reporting on her own, especially on meetings she has with Mauritian officials or those on which she accompanies the Ambassador.

Three of the four LE staff in the combined section are long-time employees (ranging from 19 to 30 years with the embassy; one is on the verge of retirement). They obviously know their jobs. The fourth local employee is a more recent hire, but is also well qualified and well motivated. Each of these employees has a clearly defined portfolio. The two economic specialists backstop each other as do the two who focus on political and political-military affairs. Each local employee taps into a personally developed network of key contacts in Port Louis, thereby considerably facilitating the work of the lone American officer. OIG inspectors were pleased to note that the section's LE staff do a considerable amount of drafting on their own; they are properly credited for their input into the overall effort.

The section's work is supplemented by that of very cooperative CJTF/HOA personnel who share offices adjacent to those of the section chief. The leader of that two-person unit acts as an informal military adviser to the Ambassador. CJTF/HOA also works with the bilateral assistance person, who is one of the two political LE staff, in oversight of projects funded under the Department of Defense's International Military Education and Training program.

Until July 2007, two American officers worked in Embassy Port Louis' political/economic section. The economic officer's position, part of the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative, expired. In its Mission Strategic Plan, the embassy includes an appeal

for restoration of that position. The OIG team acknowledges the workload justification. However, in the absence of a basis on which to judge relative personnel requirements at other posts, the inspectors cannot endorse the embassy's request.

The quality of political/economic reporting is good, and the volume impressive in light of the paucity of personnel resources devoted to the effort. Nonetheless, too much of this small section's time and efforts is consumed in preparation of mandatory reports. The burden is doubled by the need to do parallel reports for Mauritius and the Seychelles. This means submission of two each of at least six annual reports.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the section must submit six additional annual reports for Mauritius (but not the Seychelles).<sup>4</sup> The section chief estimates that preparation of these reports takes up one full-year's work for one person. Some subjects for these mandatory reports – for example, international religious freedoms – are not matters of concern in the two host countries. The OIG team believes biennial submission of that and perhaps other reports would meet U.S. government needs.

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of African Affairs, in coordination with affected functional bureaus and the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, should determine which mandated reports could be submitted by Embassy Port Louis on a biennial rather than annual basis. (Action: AF, in coordination with H, DRL, INL, and EEB)

Much of the section chief's personal time is taken up delivering demarches or obtaining and reporting other information requested by the Department in Washington. Some, such as the failed elections in Zimbabwe, are of paramount importance. The OIG team believes that some others are of less urgency. The DCM feels strongly that most demarches merit personal delivery and meetings. Identification of suitable interlocutors is not always easy, arranging meetings can be cumbersome, and responses are often slow. Meanwhile, there is little time available for developing discretionary reporting or embassy-generated analysis. The OIG team informally recommended prioritization of these requests.

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<sup>3</sup>AGOA Eligibility Review; Input for the President's Report on AGOA; International Narcotics Control Strategy Report; Human Rights Report; International Religious Freedom Report; Trafficking in Persons Report

<sup>4</sup>Investment Climate Statement; Worst Forms of Child Labor; Forced Labor and Child Labor in the Production of Goods; Business Facilitation Incentive Fund Report; Investment Disputes and Expropriation Claims; Information on Textiles and Apparel Production.







There are about 150 American citizens living in Mauritius, about 80 in the Seychelles, and perhaps 70 in Reunion. The needs for American citizens services are minimal. One American citizen is incarcerated and is awaiting trial for possession of narcotics. Consular employees have visited him regularly. The DCM also visited the incarcerated American twice while filling in as back-up consular officer.

As an indication of the customer-service orientation of the embassy, for the second year in a row, all Mauritian recipients of F-1 student visas, and their parents, will be invited to the Ambassador's residence for a four-hour predeparture orientation – to include lunch.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A small staff makes up the management section. At the time of the inspection, the local inventory/administrative staff person was in Iraq, and the new human resource specialist was just back from training. The direct-hire information management specialist had rotated permanently. The information management officer is excellent, the section works very well, bandwidth is adequate, and there were no complaints. Similar to other posts with two direct-hire information management staff, information security oversight duties are performed, time permitting.

The management officer is the post occupational safety and health official, the acting post security officer, the human resources, financial management, general services, and facilities management officer, and also supervises health unit and information management staff. A related lack of LE staff has led to deficiencies in internal controls discussed in the management controls section of this report.

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire	U.S. Local-Hire	Eligible Family Member	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2007
Diplomatic and consular programs	6 (consular rotated)	6		12	665,100
ICASS	1 (IMS rotated)	37	1	39	703,900
Public Diplomacy	1	5		6	229,800
Diplomatic Security	rotated	4		4	187,900
Representation					15,400
CCE/JCTF-HOA	2			2	Not available
<b>Total</b>	10	52	1	63	Not additive

## The Chancery

The chancery is housed on the fourth floor of an office building in the center of the business section of Port Louis. (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2). The embassy is scheduled for a new embassy compound to be started in FY 2014. To date, land has not been purchased. The embassy hopes, with no assurances, that the government of Mauritius will donate about four acres of land for a new embassy compound. The British and other diplomatic missions are also interested in development of a diplomatic enclave on donated land.

Embassy offices are reasonably spacious and modern, but there is a necessity to move the community liaison office, which now shares the office with the health unit. Both functions need privacy.

The embassy leases space in a warehouse complex. The warehouse is clean, orderly, and stocked with the minimum of items necessary to meet expected needs. There is no receiving cage at the warehouse, there is no receiving clerk, and no staff members work at the warehouse. The management officer does not believe a receiving cage is needed. The management controls section of this report discusses the need for a receiving clerk.

## Housing and Maintenance

Two maintenance employees take good care of the three U.S. government-owned residences. The cost for short-term leased properties falls below the \$25,000 waiver threshold. However, three houses on a recently leased compound exceed that limit. American employees are housed in scattered locations throughout the island. The leased housing is adequate and comfortable, with no one complaining about space or maintenance. Landlords often do not do the necessary maintenance work, so the two maintenance staff fill in.

## Regional support

With the limited staff, regional support is vital to the management section. Embassy Pretoria provides support for financial management, medical care, and information management; Embassy Nairobi provides human resource and facilities management support; and Embassy Antananarivo's Foreign Service nurse practitioner visits occasionally. A key to the new human resource specialist's success will be regular support from Embassy Nairobi's human resources officer.

## Financial Management

Embassy Pretoria's regional financial management support serves Embassy Port Louis very well. The sole budget and financial specialist and the management officer are very pleased with the frequency and length of visits. The financial management officer, an LE staff member of Embassy Pretoria's financial section, is responsible for Embassy Port Louis and Embassies Mbabane and Maseru. His reviews are thorough and helpful. Because his responsibilities are limited to three missions, his availability and knowledge of the local situation is excellent. The OIG team finds this arrangement commendable. It is certainly useful for a management officer without other support.

A relevant memorandum of understanding signed June 26, 2008, and covering the period through the end of this year, stipulates that the financial management officer's assistance will include periodic reviews of financial information, procedures, advice, and problem solving to help Embassy Port Louis be self-sufficient in managing funds and financial activities. Visits may be more frequent than the agreed quarterly visits, if necessary. The Bureau of African Affairs funds the travel for this assistance. An appendix to the memorandum defines the financial functions that Embassy Pretoria's staff will review: funds control, budget and financial plans, International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) submissions, obligating documents, certified vouchers, cashiering procedures, representation vouchers, allowances, and many other financial items.

The CJTF/HOA unit at Embassy Port Louis is the single ICASS customer. According to the two members of that element, they are very satisfied with the services. Embassy Pretoria's visiting financial management officer explained these services and the associated billing during the visit that coincided with the inspection.

## Human Resources

Support from the regional human resources officer has been less satisfactory. That officer has visited Port Louis less frequently than the planned quarterly visits. Some of the LE staff's most serious complaints revolve around the section. These include lack of, or incorrect, information; concerns about promotions; advertising for positions; computer aided job evaluations; and the gamut of human resources functions. The new human resources LE staff member has had training but has no related experience. The management officer also has no experience and has not had human resources training. Consequently, it is very important that regular regional support occur to ensure the new staff is performing well and has the needed tools to accomplish the role.



## QUALITY OF LIFE

The direct-hire American staff is reasonably happy and well adjusted to life on Mauritius. There is ample opportunity for outdoor activities, and many houses are near the ocean or have swimming pools. There are frequent, well-attended after-work activities. The health unit provides local contact names in lieu of actual medical care, there are five schools that provide acceptable curricula, and the community liaison office coordinator has expanded part-time hours, still with no time to create a newsletter, which may be unnecessary in this small post.

### HEALTH UNIT

Until now, the health unit staffing included two LE nurses who shared a part-time position. Each worked in the embassy four hours every other week. Each also received salary for an additional four hours for on-call needs during the week of work at the embassy. Essentially, the nurses provided local medical contact information and, rarely, made house calls. One of the nurses just resigned. The second nurse will continue working four hours at the embassy and four on-call hours each week.

American employees were not likely to consult the nurses when they were in the unit except to get the contact information. Family members did not come to the embassy to seek medical attention. Embassy Pretoria provides regional medical care about semiannually.

The health unit shares the office space with the community liaison office coordinator. While the plan was for the part-time work for each function to avoid overlap and compromising privacy, the outcome has not been successful. Consequently, the embassy plans to move the community liaison office elsewhere.

## COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

The community liaison office coordinator is the management officer's spouse. Consequently, she reports to the DCM, based on nepotism requirements. The coordinator works 24 hours each week. She has school information that she provides for expected new arrivals and has visited the five schools. Her information is that children of American employees attend these schools related to where they live on the island. The parents are all pleased with the schools and the level of education. One or two accommodate children with learning disabilities. In lieu of a newsletter, she provides e-mail notice when she learns of events and other useful information.

## MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The Chief of Mission statement of assurance of management controls, dated July 7, 2007, states that the embassy's actions, taken as a whole, provide reasonable assurance that control objectives are in place. The document, however, cites the need for an additional direct-hire American to provide separation of duties for the management officer who is the contracting, certifying, and human resources officer.

A second direct-hire American, which would entail a very high cost, is not justified in this small embassy. However, there is a need to overcome internal control deficiencies, and LE staff could fulfill some of those. While the management officer would continue with certifying, the embassy believes the local employee who conducts general services functions should receive a contracting officer warrant. The Bureau of African Affairs, Executive Office, did not agree with this request. The OIG team left an informal recommendation that, based on internal control deficiencies and the cost savings associated with providing a warrant for local staff in lieu of a direct-hire American officer, Embassy Port Louis should again ask the Bureau of African Affairs to provide a warrant for the local general service specialist.

During the inspection, the OIG team discussed the need for a voucher examiner. According to the management officer, the embassy expects to hire a voucher examiner shortly. According to the budget specialist, the embassy has been planning to hire a voucher examiner since 2004. The OIG team agrees that a voucher examiner is needed as soon as possible.

A further deficiency lies in the separation of duties between procurement and receiving. The OIG team reviewed a number of vouchers and determined that the procurement clerk has also been the receiving officer. This is an unacceptable practice.

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Port Louis should employ a receiving clerk to ensure adequate separation of duties between procurement and the receiving function. (Action: Embassy Port Louis)







## INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Informal recommendations cover matters not requiring action by organizations outside of the inspected unit and/or the parent regional bureau and are not subject to the OIG compliance process. However, any subsequent OIG inspection or on-site compliance review will assess the mission's progress in implementing the informal recommendations.

Not all demarches and requests for information require immediate attention by Embassy Port Louis. Some specify a direct interchange with host government authorities. For most others, the embassy has discretion on how to carry out the required demarche and the time frame in which this is to be accomplished.

**Informal Recommendation 1:** Embassy Port Louis should exercise more care in prioritizing requests for information and demarches.

To overcome internal control weaknesses, the embassy requested a second, very costly, direct-hire American. The embassy believes the general services specialist should receive a contracting officer warrant. The Bureau of African Affairs, Executive Office, has not agreed.

**Informal Recommendation 2:** Embassy Port Louis should reissue its request to the Bureau of African Affairs to provide a contracting warrant to the local general services specialist.



## PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Arrival Date</b>
Ambassador	Cesar Cabrera	10/06
Deputy Chief of Mission	Virginia Blazer	07/07

### **Chiefs of Sections:**

Management	Timothy Bashor	07/07
Political/Economic	Quentin Barber	07/07
Public Affairs	Victoria De Long	07/05

### **Other agencies:**

Defense	Matthew Felt, Commander U.S. Navy, Country Coordination Element CJTF/HOA	01/08
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## ABBREVIATIONS

CJTF/HOA	Combined Joint Task Force/Horn of Africa
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
LE	Locally employed
NIV	Nonimmigrant visa
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PAO	Public affairs officer
PAS	Public affairs section
RSO	Regional security officer

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