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

Report of Inspection

Embassy Port of Spain,
Trinidad and Tobago

Report Number ISP-I-09-40A, July 2009

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**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, and Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended. It is one of a series of audit, inspection, investigative, and special reports prepared by OIG periodically as part of its responsibility to promote effective management, accountability and positive change in the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

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, as appropriate, 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 black ink, appearing to read "H. W. Geisel".

Harold W. Geisel
Acting Inspector General

PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections, as issued by the Council of the Inspectors General 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.

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The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between January 5 and 23, 2009, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on January 22 and 23, 2009 and in Port of Spain, Trinidad, between January 26 and February 11, 2009.

CONTEXT

“The Land of Calypso,” the twin-island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, is the Delaware-sized anchor of the former British West Indies and, as such, has arrogated to itself a strong role in regional Caribbean affairs. Geographically, the country is an



extension of the South American continent, with the island of Trinidad just 7 miles off the coast of Venezuela. Like Venezuela, it is rich in hydrocarbons —Trinidad and Tobago supplies the bulk of the liquefied natural gas imported by the United States — and serves as a major transit route for narcotics flowing north towards the United States and Europe. Unlike the rest of the Caribbean island nations, the country is primarily industrial based rather than tourism reliant. With oil and gas accounting for 40 percent of its gross domestic product, Trinidad and Tobago has one of the highest growth rates and per capita incomes in the Caribbean.

“Discovered” by Columbus in 1498 and a Spanish colony for three centuries thereafter, Trinidad and Tobago has an unusual history, one that accounts in large part for its distinctive multicultural style. Until independence and the establishment of a parliamentary democracy in 1962, it was a British colony whose heritage included a French-Spanish speaking population, a mix of British and Spanish laws, an economy dominated variously by sugar, cacao and hydrocarbons, and a populace equally split between former slaves from Africa and indentured servants from India. At present, Trinidad and Tobago still looks to London for some of its cultural identity, but is increasingly drawn into the United States orbit through emigration, tourism, business, and law enforcement engagement.

The racial composition of the population is mirrored to some extent in party politics: the ruling People’s National Movement receives the bulk of its support from Afro-Trinidadians, while Indo-Trinidadians generally back the opposition—

United National Congress. In recent years, the country has expanded its political and economic influence in the region, leveraging its relative prosperity among Caribbean countries. It is a strong supporter of hemispheric free trade and an ally of the United States, despite differences in its approach to Cuba and other foreign policy matters. In April of 2009, Trinidad and Tobago will host the Summit of the Americas, becoming the smallest country ever to do so.

Staffing at the U.S. mission in Port of Spain includes 44 direct-hire Americans, roughly 20 long-term, but temporary duty military special operations personnel, and 119 locally employed staff. Among agencies represented at post are the Department of Defense, the Department of Justice, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Homeland Security. Reflecting the flow of drugs and visitors to the United States, the mission has comparatively large consular and Drug Enforcement Administration operations. These and other mission elements operate out of four scattered and generally run-down facilities in downtown Port of Spain, a cumbersome arrangement, which frustrates efficient work within the Embassy. The current physical plant, including an Ambassador's residence, is a poor public representation of the United States.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Executive direction at Embassy Port of Spain faces a host of challenges. The management section, the traditional backbone of any embassy, is not of the highest effectiveness. Curtailments of its key officers are the norm rather than the exception. Since the 1980s, no supervisory management officer or general services officer has served a complete tour in Port of Spain. The physical plant sprawls over four buildings, two of which are in poor shape. Morale has been so-so for decades, thus discouraging qualified applicants. Foreign Service national (FSN)-American tensions are palpable despite the efforts of the deputy chief of mission (DCM) to improve them. The problems are systemic and endemic — almost beyond the ability of anyone, including the newly elevated chargé d'affaires, to remedy.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) inspection took place just days after the Ambassador departed. This noncareer envoy, who served from 2001 to 2009, had left a distinctive stamp on the Embassy, in part because of a management style that precluded deputies from acting in the traditional DCM role of chief operating officer for the Embassy's internal activities. Those who resisted, departed. The Ambassador went through five DCMs, the longest serving were two who had been elevated from the ranks and thus were mindful of the limited authority the Ambassador would afford them.

OIG's previous inspection in 2003 found that the DCM had a distinctly subsidiary, often mediating, role in Embassy Port of Spain's direction and coordination. This constrained DCMs, invariably career officers, from systematically addressing long-standing administrative problems. Further, in 2003 the OIG inspection team highlighted the Ambassador's hands-on role in personnel matters, including the hiring of local employees, and advised the Ambassador to move away from too great an involvement that undercut the Embassy's supervisory officers and created as many problems as it solved. The Ambassador did not take this action. The latest OIG team still found palpable tension between the American and local employees, amplified in part by the former Ambassador's ill-considered, semi-public criticism of his consuls, his management officer and even his DCM.

The newly elevated chargé d'affaires appears acutely aware of these issues, including the need to expand his role, achieve a firmer grip over paper flow, empower section chiefs, and otherwise tighten the mission before the next Ambassador arrives.

Change in Port of Spain will not happen overnight, however. The chargé d'affaires is atop a mission lacking cohesion, in part because of its sprawling physical facilities and the former Ambassador's distaste for traditional lines of authority — conditions also noted in the 2003 inspection. Ironically, a further constraint to action may be the chargé d'affaires own approachable, soft-spoken, likeable demeanor, which served him well under the previous Ambassador. The OIG team, for example, twice observed the multiple late arrivals of participants in senior staff meetings. Front office authority should be projected more forcefully.

A further challenge includes perking up the local staff morale while also dialing down the local employees' inflated sense of mission role, a circumstance deriving in part from Trinidad and Tobago's very strong labor tradition. The outgoing Ambassador had empowered local staff explicitly or implicitly to the point that the spouse of one local employee was viewed as more of a confidant of the Ambassador than his own DCM. The Ambassador also entertained complaints directly from local staff, bypassing their American supervisors.

Despite these inherited problems, executive direction at Embassy Port of Spain has many strengths. The chargé d'affaires has excellent relations with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) and other Washington agencies, and is realistic about where Trinidad and Tobago fits in the Washington policy context. Other than during the run-up to the Summit of the Americas, the country commands about 5 percent of the relevant regional deputy assistance secretary's time, which is chiefly devoted to Haiti.

The chargé d'affaires displays a firm grasp of the overall issues, listens with care and provides clear instructions. He has a sure touch for asking for the most important points and then cutting directly to the heart of the issue. The chargé d'affaires is highly mindful of budgetary issues. Staff credit him with only rarely micromanaging and then with a gentle, tailored hand. The OIG team also notes that the chargé d'affaires, while DCM, discreetly sought to rectify a variety of problems the former Ambassador left unaddressed.

The current regime of meetings is appropriate to ensure command and control without unduly burdening officers. Meetings themselves are generally well-focused and have a definite agenda. During the OIG team's visit, the chargé d'affaires reduced the frequency of the all-Americans meeting to once a month, recognizing that this large get-together somewhat duplicates in attendance and agenda the weekly senior staff meeting. The chargé d'affaires also believes that the monthly session could focus more on particular themes, thereby furthering a collective embassy vision as well as reinforcing the mission's strategic plan.

The country team process works well, with the exceptions of the management section chief whose section is ground zero for complaints, and the consular chief whose assertive leadership style does not mesh well with that of other section and agency heads. The OIG team found that interagency relationships were harmonious and productive, especially in the key programmatic area of law enforcement/security/counter-terrorism. Agency and most section chiefs credit the chargé d'affaires for setting the proper strategic direction and for evenhanded brokering of inter-agency differences. They also view him as skilled in stripping out the emotionalism in bureaucratic battles. This furthers cooperation among the many mission agencies and those sections involved with law enforcement. It also has encouraged agencies to work out tactical differences at Embassy Port of Spain rather than move them to parent agencies in Washington.

MISSION STRATEGIC PLAN

Embassy Port of Spain's 2010 mission strategic plan (MSP) is a concise, internally consistent presentation of U.S. policy and goals. Three entry-level officers (ELO) gathered input from individual sections and agencies and crafted initial goal papers. Thereafter, the front office and agency/section stakeholders refined the document, along the way discussing it three times at the weekly senior staff meeting. The process was time consuming, and yet yielded a product similar to strategic plans drafted at the mission in recent years. This lack of change reflects the relatively static nature of the Trinidad-U.S. relationship and the core issues at play: law enforcement and security issues writ large, consular concerns, and regional themes including the 15-nation Caribbean Community group known as CARICOM. In light of this, the Department may wish to make the current annual planning process more flexible. It could, for example, put embassies representing smaller countries, or those with more static relationships, on a biannual strategic planning schedule, setting up an adjacent procedure involving resources, if needed.

While the OIG team concurs that MSPs are useful in themselves in that they induce missions to think holistically, it believes this goal could be reinforced through enhanced embassy participation in the Washington review process. Embassy Port of Spain generally receives modest Washington feedback late in the process. A key staffing concern was ignored — the Embassy's request for Washington to reconsider its decision to eliminate the economic section chief position in a country which has no commercial section, but is the seventh largest trading partner of the United States in the Western Hemisphere. Conversely, some Washington readers believe that Port of Spain's strategic plan could provide a better sense of how to fix problems identified in the document.

ENTRY-LEVEL OFFICERS

Embassy Port of Spain has an outstanding program for its seven ELOs, who represent more than a quarter of the Foreign Service complement. The program goes well beyond the Department-mandated or suggested guidelines such as the DCM serving as reviewing officer for all non-specialist junior officers. The OIG commends the chargé d'affaires for installing a formal written program while he was DCM, for his counseling on possible career tracks for ELOs, and for otherwise taking the initiative in broadening front office-junior officer involvement. Moreover, he did this in the absence of a concerted push by subordinates, on occasion reminding his junior officers to attend senior staff meetings, if the designated officer failed to show up. When a ranking Department official came to Port of Spain, the front office allowed junior officers a share of the limelight, including their own separate meeting with this visitor.

Among many examples, the chargé d'affaires, while DCM, launched a program wherein an ELO attends the weekly senior staff meeting, and instituted an exchange program allowing vice consuls in Barbados and Port of Spain to swap duties and houses for several weeks to broaden their horizons. He has also encouraged officers to draft cables and other messages for the Department. One ELO crafted a baseline study of Trinidad's Muslim community, which underwent several drafts reviewed by the DCM. Another junior officer prepared a summary of the economy based on consular interviews. Yet another ELO did a stint as political advisor to a visiting United States Navy ship.

Ideally, the front office would allow junior officers additional opportunity to host representational events, thus honing their skills for future positions with serious representational responsibilities. The outgoing Ambassador, however, did not use representational money wisely, exhausting most of the budget on a few large events whose high per-attendee cost reflects the failures to use official residence staff or facilities prudently. The result is that junior officers had only a few representational opportunities. Even the political section has only \$150 for representation, which in oil-rich Trinidad buys a handful of meals.

MORALE

Attractive winter vacation destinations, Caribbean islands can be less than ideal places to live and work for several years. Port of Spain ranks low on charm and high on noise and crime, and other urban ills. The embassy facilities themselves do not further a sense of team or collective activity, either on or off the job. There is no cafeteria or other common area. For decades, the Department has found it difficult to attract quality officers to small islands where service can be mind-numbing and perceived as inconsequential to Washington, and thus unlikely to lead to promotions and/or enhanced responsibilities. Reflecting the tropical island image rather than the stifling reality, differentials for hardship tend to be stinting.

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SECURITY

The OIG team found that Embassy Port of Spain's front office attends assiduously to security, including maintaining a true open-door for the regional security officer (RSO) to raise security matters both during and after working hours. The chargé d'affaires, as DCM, worked with the RSO to ensure that substantial financial assistance provided by the United States under the Antiterrorism Assistance Program over the past two years, was well spent despite the previous Ambassador's reluctance to involve himself fully in leveraging these funds to address broader, related political goals.

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POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

POLITICAL

The political section, staffed by just two officers and two FSN employees, adequately conducts operational and coordinating responsibility for the MSP's two most important goals: to institutionalize systems to interdict narcotics and prosecute criminals, and to ensure that Trinidad remains a reliable security partner. The section also coordinates the Embassy's overall foreign assistance program. The section works closely with other agencies at the Embassy to advance these goals. A mid-level officer manages the section, and a rotational ELO (who normally rotates every year) assists him. One FSN provides budgetary oversight for the Department's foreign assistance in the narcotics and law enforcement areas. The other FSN employee assists in all other traditional functions of the section. The section coordinates most of the limited Department foreign assistance to Trinidad.

The OIG's 2003 inspection report for the Embassy recommended the creation of a full-time mid-level officer position to replace an American contract employee to manage counternarcotics programs and coordinate law enforcement activities. This was not done due to competing priorities elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere. The American contract position was replaced by a FSN employee. Currently, the section's talented ELO devotes about half of his time to coordinating counternarcotics and law enforcement activities. The incumbent did not rotate during his 2-year tour, ensuring continuity and experience in the administration of the program. Given the importance of counternarcotics and law enforcement work as a top embassy goal, the OIG team believes this position should be upgraded to a nonrotational, mid-level rank.

Recommendation 1: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and the Bureau of Human Resources, should upgrade the rotational junior political officer position (position number 10-906000) to a mid-level rank. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with WHA and DGHR)

U.S. Foreign Assistance to Trinidad and Tobago

Due to its relatively vibrant, energy-driven economy and high per capita income, Trinidad is not a major recipient of U.S. assistance, and receives no bilateral assistance funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development. There is also no Peace Corps presence. Trinidad plays a leading regional security role for the CARICOM group of nations. The Embassy's major strategic goals focus on helping Trinidad withstand the destabilizing forces of narcotics and weapons smuggling and other illicit activity such as money laundering, in order to assist itself and the region to achieve greater prosperity and heightened security.

The Embassy's major assistance program involves narcotics and law enforcement funds from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Spending for this program in FY 2008 equaled \$397,000; projected spending for FY 2009 is \$500,000. A relatively large 2-year program of antiterrorism assistance funds from the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, totaling \$893,000, recently concluded. The political section manages narcotics control and law enforcement assistance. The RSO oversees antiterrorism assistance. In addition, Trinidad benefits from international military education funds (\$90,000 in FY 2008 and a projected \$150,000 in FY 2009) as well as hospital/civic action ship visits and exercises administered through the Embassy's military liaison office.

Law Enforcement and Counternarcotics

The mission ranks counternarcotics and other security issues atop its list of priorities. Just 7 miles from the South American mainland, out of the hurricane zone and convenient to other Caribbean islands, Trinidad is an exceptionally attractive transshipment point for drugs. Inefficiency complements geography; the Trinidad Government exercises limited control of its borders. The primary mission of a six-person Drug Enforcement Administration team located at the Embassy is to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking networks.

Despite success in some areas, drug trafficking flows appear to be waxing rather than waning. Taking advantage of the Mexican Government's reinvigorated commitment to combating drugs, the Merida Initiative has focused U.S. resources to the west of the Caribbean. Counternarcotics authorities who work in the Caribbean believe that the Merida Initiative must be matched with a redoubled effort in their region. The more forcefully that U.S. and Mexican Governments disrupt the flow of drugs to the west, the more likely the traffickers are to shift their routes and resources eastward.

The Embassy's progress in achieving counternarcotics goals is, at best, incremental. Officers have developed positive and cordial working relationships with host-country government officials charged with combating drugs. At an institutional level, however, the Trinidad Government exhibits a limited capacity to take on drug trafficking and traffickers with the kind of drive and efficiency that would lead to meaningful progress.

Law Enforcement Working Group

The chargé d'affaires chairs a law-enforcement working group that coordinates counternarcotics efforts within the mission. It meets regularly and includes the Drug Enforcement Administration, the military liaison office, the Department of Homeland Security representative, and the legal attaché, as well as the regional affairs, security, economic, and political officers. During his 2001-2009 tenure, the departed Ambassador involved himself intensely with counternarcotics issues, not always to the advantage of other mission priorities.

The working group coordinates the training and assistance provided by the U.S. Government — the main U.S. aid to Trinidad comes under the heading of law enforcement. The group's primary policy issue is the improvement of the local government's legislative framework for dealing with narcotics issues. The mission strongly believes, and the OIG team concurs, that the Trinidad Government must make statutory changes to improve its ability to fight drug trafficking. If Trinidad's parliament enacted a wiretapping law and a law regularizing the status of an elite anticrime unit, among others, government officials charged with counternarcotics responsibilities would be better able to make real progress.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Port of Spain should consolidate and act on its plans to press the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for legislative changes needed to improve counternarcotics efforts. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Interagency cooperation at the Embassy is reasonably good, although friction among agencies periodically surfaces, particularly when it comes to sharing operational information. Because the host country government is small, mission personnel have to make a concerted effort to avoid overlap in dealing with a given official or office. Given that the offices of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the economics section, and customs and border patrol are not located in the chancery compound, the group faces a perennial coordination challenge, including information sharing problems.

Aware of the former Ambassador's strong opinions on law enforcement matters, group members tended to censor themselves. On occasion, they chose not to bring to the group issues or approaches to which the Ambassador was opposed. They did, however, voice disagreement with his decision to give the relevant Trinidadian ministry vetting power over nominees to U.S. training programs. After discussing the matter, the group reached a compromise with the Ambassador, whereby the mission proposed a number of potential nominees, from whom the ministry chose participants.

Working group members also disagreed with the former Ambassador's priorities on the use of demand reduction money from the INL. The OIG team's review finds that some of the activities funded at his behest have only a peripheral connection to demand reduction. For instance, the mission gave \$10,000 to support a public campaign called the "Song and Verse Competition," an initiative that the Ambassador energetically promoted. While the theme of the competition was preventing crime, group members and the OIG team believe that the activity itself was marginal to counternarcotics.

Narcotics Affairs Unit

The INL provides modest support to the Government of Trinidad. One FSN works full-time in the narcotics assistance unit of the political section which channels and coordinates that aid. She reports to an American officer who works about half-time on counternarcotics matters.

From 2004 through 2007, the bureau sent only program development and support funds to the Embassy. The decrease in funding over that period was due to the existence of money in the pipeline. That money was not spent because the host-country government programs it was intended to reinforce did not come to fruition. By the time of the inspection, the pipeline was clear.

In FY 2008, the bureau allocated \$397,000 to the post. After subtracting their support costs, the Embassy had \$277,000 to work with. It applied \$150,000 to narcotics law enforcement, \$50,000 to border control and port security, \$27,000 to interdictions, and \$50,000 to demand reduction. The section also coordinates counterterrorism activities at the Embassy, and such issues are covered at meetings of the Embassy's law enforcement working group.

The narcotics assistance unit also coordinates the provision and use of drug interdiction equipment to the Government of Trinidad. The FSN employee conducts end-use monitoring, occasionally with the assistance of the American officer

to whom she reports. Personnel from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the military liaison office have been helpful in confirming the end-use status of airplanes and boats.

Trinidadian officials involved with the counternarcotics programs respond late and languidly to embassy requests for reports on interdiction activities supported by the mission. As a result, financial reporting to the bureau is routinely tardy. The Embassy does, however, comply with a financial management system which provides real-time data to Washington.

Political Reporting and Analysis, Counter Terrorism

The reallocation of limited political resources as well as the political section chief's lengthy absence from work in 2008 stretched the section's resources, including for reporting. Despite limited assets, the section, bulwarked by reports prepared by the DCM, still managed to complete congressionally-mandated reports, prepare spot reports in the form of cables, contribute to WHA's daily activity report, and craft a steady stream of e-mails to interested agencies in Washington. Washington end-users appreciated these spot reports, including those on the local Islamic community, but would welcome more volume in all areas, including biographic reporting. As resources permit, the Embassy could usefully seek opportunities for more reporting, including on issues relating to the Summit of the Americas, which Trinidad will host. In this regard, 09 Port of Spain 0028 is a good reporting example. The Embassy could also work with the Department's country director for Caribbean affairs to consider a wider, more systematic distribution of daily activity reports and e-mails to Washington end-users.

Political-Military Activities

The political section coordinates political-military issues with the Embassy's military liaison office, which has the only permanent Department of Defense (DOD) positions at the Embassy. The political section takes the lead in negotiating a status of forces agreement to cover visiting U.S. military personnel. Political considerations in Trinidad have delayed such an agreement. As an interim measure, the political section will exchange diplomatic notes with the host government to cover U.S. military personnel visiting for the Summit of the Americas.

The military liaison office takes the lead in handling limited foreign military financing credits, international military education training, and military procurement opportunities. The military liaison office also coordinates some export control issues with the economic section (see below). The commander of the military liaison office

reports directly to the U.S. military Southern Command in Miami, Florida. In the absence of a Defense attaché at the Embassy, the military liaison office handles ad hoc requests for assistance from the Defense attaché at Embassy Caracas and from elements of the Department of Defense in Washington, for such matters as air and ship clearances and other traditional defense attaché work. The Embassy's military liaison office also acts as the coordinating hub for a series of long-term temporary duty personnel. Some arrive with the intent to stay for several years to conduct military and other training and regional programs under chief of mission authority, including anticrime professionalization training and civic and humanitarian programs. The number of DOD visitors in country at any given time can range from a few dozen to 200, with peaks when military ships visit for civic and humanitarian work.

At the time of the OIG team's inspection, a few permanent and several long-term temporary staff located at the Embassy were shoehorned into inadequate and tight facilities in the chancery. The deputy military liaison leader even had to remove the arms from his chair to fit into his allotted 35 square feet. At the time of the OIG inspection, the military liaison office intended to transfer up to eight of its permanent and temporary duty personnel to an annex. Under present plans, the Embassy will, under National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) 38 authority, consider whether any of the military liaison temporary duty positions can continue after September 30, 2010. Given the growing presence of military liaison office temporary duty personnel, by far the fastest growing element within the Embassy, and the mission's inadequate physical facilities, the Embassy must start this NSDD 38 process immediately to allow for resource planning.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and the Under Secretary for Management, should by June 30, 2009, complete a rightsizing review of permanent staffing of the Embassy's military liaison office. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with WHA and M/PRI)

ECONOMIC

The economic section promotes well bilateral economic and commercial relations, despite a small staff and the handicap of working in an annex without classified communication facilities. A mid-level officer heads the section, assisted by a rotational ELO who stays in the section for about 1 year. A FSN handles economic and commercial work. The section has primary responsibility for implementing the

MSP's third goal of promoting sustainable energy development, competitive gas markets and the Caribbean single market and economy.

Given the importance of Trinidad's gas energy infrastructure, the Departments of Energy and Homeland Security (DHS) in early 2008 completed a study on protecting Trinidad's energy infrastructure. In May 2008, the visiting U.S. Secretary of Energy presented this study to Trinidad's Prime Minister Manning. The United States and Trinidad will likely establish a joint working group on energy infrastructure protection, similar to the U.S. arrangement with Saudi Arabia.

Apart from a FSN working at a local university under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service, there are no representatives in the Embassy from other U.S. agencies focused on economic and commercial work. The economic section consults with DHS's embassy representative on customs and other trade issues, as well as with the Embassy's military liaison office on export control issues and military procurement possibilities. The Embassy does not have an economic and commercial cluster or working group. The OIG team finds this acceptable given the low-level, intermittent nature of trade and commercial issues in the Embassy apart from activity handled entirely by the economic section. Ad hoc efforts by the economic section to communicate between the few relevant sections or agencies appear adequate.

Trinidad provides the majority of liquefied natural gas, methanol, ammonia, and urea imports for the United States. The mission takes a structured approach to strengthening the framework for open markets. All sections of the Embassy follow the economic section's work plan to deal with the local business community. In this area, the mission does well in meeting its limited economic and commercial objectives, despite scarce human resources.

Economic Reporting and Analysis

The section chief provides significant economic and commercial reporting, which several Washington end-users praised for volume and quality. The reports were cited for providing good oversight of the important energy sector as well as other macroeconomic topics, including such cables as 08 Port of Spain 552. The section also contributes to WHA's daily activity reports, as well as to composite e-mails sent to select end-users in Washington. The economic section could join with the political section in a review of how to pass these non-cable messages more systematically to Washington end-users. The economic section is located in an annex with no classified facilities, about a 10-minute walk from the embassy chancery. The economic section shares cramped common user terminals in the chancery with other

agencies and has only miniscule classified storage space. This arrangement impedes the work of the economic section and results in fewer classified cables and e-mails to Washington end-users than would otherwise be the case, thus limiting the range and sensitivity of the comments that the section can provide.

Trade Promotion, Environment, Science, and Technology

Trade between Trinidad and the United States approximates \$10 billion a year, including about \$8.5 billion worth of exports to the United States. The U.S. direct foreign investment stock is about \$4 billion. Trinidadian exporters currently enjoy preferential access to the U.S. market under the Caribbean Basin Initiative, but Trinidad's high-income status will lead to a loss of some of these preferences in 2010. While the Government of Trinidad professes interest in expanding trade talks with the United States under the umbrella of the regional CARICOM group of nations, talks have not progressed significantly to date.

The Department of Commerce terminated its presence in the Embassy when it eliminated its final national employee position in September 2007. In response, the Embassy requested a new FSN position in the economic section under the mission strategic planning process and also sought an American professional associate position. The Department denied the FSN position request. The Embassy also has been unable to obtain the requested professional associate slot. The economic section works intermittently with the Department of Commerce regional office in Embassy Santo Domingo, the Department of Agriculture's Caribbean trade office in Miami, and Trade Development Agency officials in Washington. The section works closely with the local American Chamber of Commerce to benefit from its resources.

Embassy financial resources in the commercial area are limited to small business facilitation incentive funds from the Department that allow economic staff to travel for commercial training. The section responds mainly to local requests for trade facilitation and advocacy from U.S. firms. It lacks the information technology or other means to connect with the Department of Commerce's standardized business promotion programs. Coordination with the regional environment hub in Embassy San Jose has been limited in the trade area because of the hub's focus on the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement to which Trinidad does not belong. The Embassy coordinates with other U.S. Embassies in the CARICOM's single market and economy initiative, but in actual practice the degree of CARICOM integration is minimal.

The economic section coordinates environment, science, and technology issues as they relate to trade under the general guidance of the regional science officer in Embassy San Jose. The section responds to day-to-day requirements such as presenting demarches on global issues and requesting host government support in multinational bodies.

CONSOLIDATION OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SECTIONS

Despite objections from the Embassy, the Department decided to eliminate the mid-level economic section chief position when the incumbent departs in summer 2009, which presumably reflects higher U.S. priorities in other countries. The Embassy will combine the remaining economic section elements of one rotational junior officer and one FSN with the political section. This forced combination raises both physical location and policy issues. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the two remaining economic section positions should be physically located with the political section staff. Physical space limitations and needs are described elsewhere in this OIG report.

The elimination of the economic chief position will impede work and reduce the volume of economic reporting. The Embassy may choose to continue to seek candidates for the professional associate position in order to supplement economic and commercial work.

Some Washington end-users voiced concern about any reduction in embassy reporting on the energy sector. Thus, the Embassy will need to take care in reducing the volume of economic and commercial work under the mission strategic plan. If the combination of the two sections is done incorrectly, the Embassy may be unable to complete even reduced goals under its strategic plan.

All three officers in the combined political and economic section, including the chief, will need to be flexible enough to work both directly or indirectly on economic and political work. In particular, the duties related to narcotics and law enforcement handled at present by one political officer, which OIG recommended elsewhere in this report be upgraded to a mid-level position, will not take all of his/her time. The incoming combined section chief will have to weigh relative political and economic work in allocating portfolios. Economic work will entail at least half of the combined section's work, if not more. In addition, the selection process for future section chiefs could usefully factor in the need for both prior economic and political experience. The consolidated section may also need to consider reducing some required reporting.

The Burden of Required Reporting

Since the abolition of the worldwide special embassy reporting program, small missions devote disproportionate time to all-embassy assignments, which pose much less of a burden for major U.S. Embassies. Small embassies like Embassy Port of Spain stagger under the load of annual reports, including many mandated by Congress, on subjects ranging from human rights to religious freedom, trafficking-in-persons, and investment disputes, among others. Each is based on a separately defined statute with different and sometimes conflicting reporting schedules and standards. Many of the mandated reports carry the possibility of sanctions. Thus, dialogue with host governments can be prickly and beyond the skill or experience of the relatively junior officers at small embassies who typically craft these reports. The OIG team favors a simplification of the different deadlines, guidelines, and timelines for these many reports, especially for those not mandated by Congress.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

In a country in which the United States looms large in the public imagination, an active public affairs officer leads a section with six FSNs, including a new director of the information resource center who began working in the course of the inspection.

The section is situated close to the chancery, on the first floor of a building that also houses the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the German Embassy. The space includes the information resource center that serves as the Embassy's primary venue for public events. In addition to its core job of targeted outreach to mission contacts, the center also houses a vigorous student advising program. The lease on the building space expires in late 2010 and will not be renewed. Securing a suitable replacement location that will provide adequate space for public events is critical and should be taken into account in the Embassy's planning. The OIG team made a recommendation on all space needs in the management section of this report (see below).

The section's programs dovetail with mission priorities, but the impact of public diplomacy in Trinidad is constrained by a wafer-thin program budget and a small staff. Fortunately, the current public affairs officer excels at public speaking and knows how to put a program together with minimal resources. She also enjoys a comfortable working relationship with the chargé d'affaires, who understands the connection between public diplomacy and the image of the United States.

All relevant sections of the mission participate in activities such as the selection of international visitors. The processes, procedures, and paperwork necessary to keep the exchange programs running are in general orderly and timely.

The Media

The public affairs officer is the embassy spokesperson, and the chargé d'affaires has made it clear that the public affairs officer speaks for the mission. In dealing with the media, a capable senior FSN with good press contacts backs up the public affairs officer. In a one-officer section with multiple demands on her time, the current public affairs officer devotes more of her work day to program events and activities than to dealing with the media. This arrangement is defensible but has limitations. The public affairs officer's awareness of and coordination with U.S. military personnel is good but would be enhanced by more regular engagement. This includes the military information support team, which carries out activities that impact public opinion.

At the time of the inspection, two significant media issues were looming: the Summit of the Americas in April 2009, and the public perception of visa processing and adjudication by the Embassy's consular section. The OIG team made informal recommendations for dealing with both of these media issues.

Information Resource Center/Student Advising

The information resource center is adjacent to the public affairs section offices and offers the mission's only space for such public events as speakers and press conferences. The number of contacts with target audience members varies by month and is affected by the student advising schedule, fluctuating from 250 to 500 a month in 2008. Much of the outreach work is done electronically; an electronic newsletter, distributed bimonthly, reflects a generally balanced range of views on subjects likely to interest Trinidadian readers. However, the number of visits to this newsletter is very low.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Port of Spain should analyze the public diplomacy pages of its Web site for content, timeliness, and ease of use, making changes as required to stimulate usage. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

The information resource center is a fairly attractive space and well lit, although the interior walls need painting. As a public diplomacy platform it is probably under-used. The former Ambassador had security-related reservations about using the center. In the future it can be used to better advantage both for Washington-supported and locally generated programs.

The center's outreach work is reinforced on the neighboring island of Tobago with an "American Corner," temporarily located in a secondary school. The American Corner is supported by the public affairs section in Port of Spain as well as by book donations from Washington and by visits from the regional information resource officer. A computer providing a "virtual presence post" is also available on Tobago.

The information resource center houses a vigorous, notably successful student advising program. Given the substantial revenue that foreign students bring to the United States and the shaping influence that their stays exert on them, the OIG team views this as an important activity that merits continued support. An annual student advising fair, the highlight of the program, draws as many as 3,000 students and is held in high regard by representatives of the American schools that participate.

Voice of America Affiliates

Five radio stations and two television channels have become Voice of America affiliates, rebroadcasting material they receive from Voice of America in Washington. Because they receive all of their material by satellite, the Embassy incurs no transmission costs. Given the extensive amount of material that these stations put on the air — and notwithstanding the fact that some are small-circulation media — the OIG team believes that the modest amount of trouble-shooting done by a FSN is time well spent.

Administration of the Public Affairs Section

A senior information section employee with a background in administration is the liaison with the general services office and assists the public affairs officer in administering the section. In a small post, this arrangement is workable and realistic.

The position descriptions for the FSNs of the public affairs section are outdated and do not accurately reflect their duties and the percentage of time they spend on

each. The requirements of one position description read more like an evaluation of the incumbent than the prerequisites the job requires. The current versions also contain defunct terminology, leftover from the days of the United States Information Agency, such as “distribution record system.”

Recommendation 5: Embassy Port of Spain should revise all public affairs section employee position descriptions to reflect duties accurately and the time spent on each. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

The number of grants the section manages is small, and they are used to support projects that make sense in terms of the mission’s priorities. Individual grant files, however, are inadequately maintained and confusing to read. It was unclear whether two separate grants from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention went to support one or two events. Dollar denominations do not specify whether they are Trinidadian or U.S. dollars. There was also confusion at post as to whether the grants officer was permitted to sign grants for other agencies.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Port of Spain should ensure that grant files accurately reflect the projects supported and their purpose as well as confirming that the services were satisfactorily rendered in a timely manner. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 7: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration’s office of procurement executive should clarify whether the Embassy’s grants officer is permitted to sign grants funded by other agencies, and the extent and nature of oversight required. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with A/OPE)

In FY 2008, public diplomacy representational funds were commingled with the Embassy’s other representation funds, in contravention of the advice of allotment and Department policy.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Port of Spain should ensure that public diplomacy representation funds are used exclusively in support of programs and activities that have a public diplomacy focus. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

CONSULAR OPERATIONS

In many ways, Embassy Port of Spain serves as a model for effective consular management. Upon arrival in September 2008, the section chief initiated significant reforms that brought consular operations into compliance with Department regulations and norms for the first time in years. Most prominent among these reforms was consular management's curtailment of local staff access to the nonimmigrant visa data system. Hitherto, contrary to consular management handbook instructions, every local staff member in the section, regardless of rank or responsibilities, had enjoyed "senior nonimmigrant local employee" access. Thus, all local staff could read officers' interview notes on visa issuances and refusals.

The consular section consists of two office suites divided by an open-air public waiting area. Moving from one office section to the other requires a walk through the main embassy lobby and then along a roofed, open-air corridor. Both office suites are small and crowded, but there is no space to expand in the existing embassy compound. The public waiting area is raised, covered, and equipped with roof vents and fans, but is still dark, dusty, and hot. In the rainy season, water backs up into the vents and drips onto the customers and the furniture. A plan to enclose and air condition this space has been in progress for several years; it is currently expected to be completed in early 2010.

The waiting area holds nonimmigrant and immigrant visa applicants as well as those seeking American citizens services. It also holds a Trinidad and Tobago postal services desk, where successful nonimmigrant visa applicants arrange for return of their passports with visas by mail. A locally-employed receptionist greets customers and makes sure they are prepared for the services they are seeking. The public address system used to call applicants to the services windows works satisfactorily.

Consular staffing consists of an FS-02 section chief, an FS-03 nonimmigrant visa chief, five first- and second-tour officers (one of those positions is a economic-consular rotation), a consular associate position that is currently vacant, and 16 local employees. The OIG team agrees with embassy management that this staffing is adequate.

Consular management has brought all internal controls up to date. It now designates accountable officers in writing, and controlled items are handled, stored, accounted for, and disposed of pursuant to regulations. Consular management drafted

and cleared through the Bureau of Consular Affairs a visa referral policy notice, issued by the former Ambassador, which complies with the Foreign Affairs Manual. The consular section also instituted referral training for all American officers to assure that only referable cases were sent to the section.

The consular section is completing the process, begun in late 2008, of disposing of a decade's worth of nonimmigrant visa applications and refusals, obsolete immigrant visa files; ancient subject files; and miscellaneous consular documents. Once done, this will bring the section into compliance with the records management handbook requirements. The OIG team notes that even after the local destruction of many documents, the Embassy had to send a 20-foot shipping container of records to the Kentucky consular center for scanning and storage.

Other essential changes include the reduction or elimination of long-term backlogs in consular services. The OIG team commends the supervisory consul for looking ahead and systematically instituting, for example, measures to head off the inevitable summer rush of visa applicants and minimize disruptions related to building projects. The section's five ELOs now benefit from a structured orientation program and out-of-section assignments that are substantive and developmental.

Consular management not only includes local staff in regular meetings, but also makes time for local staff to take online consular training courses, and actively urges them to participate. Management assures that, per access regulations, local employees are only present in the consular section when officers are also there. New, accurate standard operating procedures exist for every unit. Upgrades to the decrepit waiting area, long postponed, are slated to be performed within a year. Unwilling to wait for a permanent solution, consular management launched a paint, polish, and cleaning regime that does more with less. Imagination has also been evident. An entry-level tour officer met a businessman who sold electronic signage systems identical to the waiting room's sign that had been nonfunctional for over a year. He diagnosed the problem instantly, and prescribed a successful repair.

The OIG team found the American citizens services officer engaged in an aggressive revival of a dying warden system. Visits to all the wardens as well as an annual wardens' conference and an annual trip to the virtual presence post Tobago are currently planned.

The OIG team also commends consular management for taking steps to end abuse of a business visa referral program managed by the local American Chamber of Commerce. Similarly, consular management halted the previous informal practice

of referrals wherein phone calls or e-mails came to consular officers when local staff members' friends and relatives were applying for visas. The OIG team confirmed that no consular local and American employees no longer usher applicants into the waiting room and through the application process. No visa applicants are seen behind the hard line. Local embassy staff members can no longer call the section to find out why a visa was refused, and argue for its issuance. None of these essential elements of effective consular management were in place a year ago; most date from the arrival of the incumbent section chief.

Reform, however, is necessarily a work in progress, especially when wholesale changes are essential and where a visa referral system by the book runs up against host-country mores. Trinidad is in many ways "a village or small town" where connections are paramount and where change comes slowly. Further, consular management did not do an ideal job of selling its new visa referral policy to local staff or the public at large. When the OIG team arrived, tension between the section and other mission elements was evident. In the OIG's view, this tension should abate as the consul and chargé d'affaires jointly address public relations. In addition, misunderstandings related to Embassy Port of Spain's visa referral crackdown could be alleviated through further actions that follow.

Bring visa refusal policies into line with existing laws and regulations

Consular section management currently teaches nonimmigrant visa officers to refuse visas to certain categories of applicants who should not be refused under visa law. Of special sensitivity are routine refusals for newly hired employees of known local and American companies going to the United States for training. These knee-jerk refusals have damaged relations with those companies, many of which do daily business with the Embassy. Consular management argues that applicants just out of school and/or starting first jobs are poor candidates for full-validity visas in that they might leave those jobs and use the visas to illegally migrate.

However, section 214(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act clearly states that, "[every alien... shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the consular officer, at the time of application for admission... that he is entitled to a nonimmigrant status....]" Further, 9 FAM 41.112 N2.2-1 states "...if you determine an applicant is qualified under the law for a visa that decision should apply to future trips as well" and, per 9 FAM 41.31 N2.3: "Suspicion that an alien, after admission, may be swayed to remain in the United States because of more

favorable living conditions is not a sufficient ground to refuse a visa as long as the alien's current intent is to return to a foreign residence.” These references, and others, argue for visa issuance based on applicants' intent at the time of application, not what they might opt to do in the indeterminable future.

The consular section also routinely refused youthful applicants who have — with their families — held U.S. visas, visited the United States, and complied with the terms of their visas all their lives, but upon reaching maturity are suddenly viewed as intending immigrants for no apparent reason. Many hail from prominent families unlikely to abandon a lifestyle of privilege hard to duplicate in the United States. Again, both the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act and the Foreign Affairs Manual argue against such pro forma refusals.

The OIG team also questions the Embassy's handling of applicants who gave birth or might give birth while in the United States. The Immigration and Nationality Act does not require ineligibility for tourist visas because an applicant has given birth to U.S. citizen children. The fact that such children might petition for immigrant status for the parent upon reaching age 21, if they should choose to do so, if they are domiciled in the United States, and if the parent wants to immigrate is so remote as to be, in nearly all cases, a non-starter. Congress, the Department, and the DHS all recognize that an applicant for a nonimmigrant visa can have dual intent, i.e., might intend to emigrate to the United States at some future date, but at the time of visa application intends only to visit temporarily. If the visa applicant can convince the interviewing officer that this is his or her intention, then, absent other ineligibilities, the visa should be issued.

The OIG team is also dubious about consular management's argument that women who have in the past or might in the future give birth in the United States and allow their hospital bills to be paid through public funds, should be refused a visa. While these applicants are not always refused overtly under section 212(a)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act as public charges, they are refused under 214(b) due to the belief that they might give birth at public expense, even though 214(b) has no such component. The functional definition of 'public charge,' per 9 FAM 40.41 N2, is, "...an alien, after admission into the United States, is likely to become primarily dependent on the U.S. Government for subsistence. This means either the receipt of public cash assistance for income maintenance; or institutionalization for long-term care at U.S. Government expense.” An applicant whose one-time medical bill was paid by public funds is not a public charge and should not be refused a visa on those grounds.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs should review its nonimmigrant visa refusal policy to ensure conformity with existing laws, regulations, and Department guidance. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with CA)

Make accurate and helpful visa information freely available to the public

While the consular section appropriately restricts local employee access to the nonimmigrant visa system, local staff still answer calls about processes and refusals during public telephone hours. Responding to such calls can be better managed. The OIG notes that Embassy Port of Spain had previously used a call center and, in 2007, was one of three posts worldwide given an opportunity to join the Bureau of Consular Affairs' user-pays call center umbrella contract. This opportunity remains available and should be considered. A well-managed call center contract ensures uniformity in the information provided to the public, lessens stress on staff, and permits passage of case-specific inquiries to the consular section by e-mail. Officers can thus research, prepare, and deliver considered answers rather than responding ad hoc, whenever a caller happens to get through.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should either join the bureau's existing user-pays call center umbrella contract or implement a contract with a separate company for user-pays information-only call center service. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with CA)

Recommendation 11: Embassy Port of Spain should hold meetings with targeted audiences, such as the media, the American Chamber of Commerce, and prospective students, to disseminate accurate information and field queries about visa matters. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

The consular section's essential visa referral reforms created stress inside and outside the Embassy as incorrect "post specific" practices were abruptly changed and not replaced with realistic alternatives. For example, American officers learn of valuable business and diplomatic contacts being refused visas but cannot advocate for these contacts. The officers' queries are simply rebuffed. The OIG team believes

that attendant frustration with consular management can be lessened if the section provides better information about the visa application processes and institutes a process for reasonable queries and appeals.

The OIG team believes that the Ambassador and the consular section chief should circulate a detailed visa policy statement and instruction memo. This document would include the visa referral policy; a summary of information that the call center, once implemented, will provide to the public; and the call center contact information. It also would provide instructions on how nonconsular employees might best handle calls from contacts about specific cases and how to route appropriate information to consular management. Further, the memo would instruct embassy telephone operators on how to direct callers to the newly established call center and advise the operators to forward only particular types of calls to the consular section. Finally, the memo would stipulate a process for employees and immediate family members seeking visas as well as explain how the section will expedite emergency visa applications.

This memo would also reflect the joint chief of mission/consular management commitment to ensure, within the letter and spirit of consular law, the best possible relations with the host country.

Recommendation 12: Embassy Port of Spain should issue a chief of mission policy statement detailing basic consular rules as well as the mission's commitment to providing quality nonimmigrant visa services. This document should detail how embassy employees can assist and advise their contacts about the visa process. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign Service National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2008 \$000
State – D&CP	22	2	24	48	1,511
State – ICASS	2	3	55	60	3,183
State – Public Diplomacy	1	0	6	7	349
State – Diplomatic Security	1	0	15	16	1,073
State – Marine Security	6	0	5	11	157
State – Representation	0	0	0	0	14
PD - Representation	0	0	0	0	7
State – OBO	0	0	1	1	1,473
State – MRV	0	1	3	4	159
Agric – APHIS	0	0	1	1	151
Department of Justice (DEA)	6	0	0	6	260
Department of Justice (LEGATT)	2	0	0	2	77
MILGRP-DSCA – T20	1	0	0	1	22
MILGRP – O&M	2		2	3	92
Department of Homeland Security	1	0	0	1	83
State INL (PD&S)	0	0	1	1	40
State INL (Projects)	0	0	0	0	277
Totals	44	6	113	162	8,928

MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

The 2003 OIG inspection report noted that the management section had a history of staffing problems due in part to the fact that “during the last 13 years, no management officer has completed a tour.” This unfortunate record has continued. No management officer has fully completed a tour in 19 years. The incumbent at the time of the inspection was scheduled to leave the Embassy on reassignment shortly after the completion of this inspection. A replacement officer has not been identified. Although some units in the management section are functioning satisfactorily, the next management officer will find significant problems in general services operations and a physical plant that should have been replaced or significantly upgraded years ago, a circumstance that the OIG team highlighted for a visiting senior WHA official. As discussed below, physical plant shortfalls will need to be addressed and corrected in the near term.

Real Property

Embassy Port of Spain is overcrowded and has offices scattered among multiple annexes. The Embassy has applied for new facilities, but the Department has not placed it on the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations’ (OBO) top 80 construction list because the threat level for Trinidad is not very high. It appears unlikely that this status will change in the near future. The OIG team believes, however, that the Department could significantly upgrade the facilities given that a new embassy may be decades away from construction. First, the abandoned annex located on the compound can be renovated and used for the DEA office and most of the public affairs section. Further, greatly increased attention to routine maintenance and repair will improve the quality of life for employees as well as their productivity in the office.

Chancery

The chancery dates from 1955 and is in poor condition. Offices are cramped and ill laid out. The only space large enough for 20 or more people to gather is the main lobby. The upstairs women’s bathroom doubles as a storeroom. Incomplete maintenance projects can be seen throughout the chancery. Some present safety hazards. The electrical system is visibly in need of repair or replacement. While the OIG team saw some signs of recent improvement, including the newly renovated storage room in the consular section, the chancery has a general air of neglect that provides a poor context for U.S. diplomacy.

The OIG team notes that there is an empty annex on the embassy chancery compound which could factor into a comprehensive plan to upgrade facilities. The Embassy had plans to renovate this annex but abandoned them when it opted instead to lease another building to serve as a new management annex.

The Embassy might usefully take a fresh look at the optimal use for this empty annex on chancery grounds. In so doing, it could consider refurbishing this facility to house the Drug DEA office and the public affairs section officers. Currently, these two offices lease space in the same building as the German Embassy. Their leases cost \$148,800 a year and will expire in 2010, when the German Embassy buys the entire building for its exclusive use.

Were the Embassy and the OBO to renovate the annex on the chancery grounds, the cost savings of moving offices onto the compound — rather than having to enter into new annual leases likely costing a total of more than \$250,000 — would readily cover the expense of renovation and allow DEA and public affairs offices to be within the chancery compound. The OIG team favors this course but also notes that embassy planning should take into account the need for adequate public space including that for a modest information resource center. OIG made a formal recommendation below in the real property part of this report regarding this renovation and other actions.

Management Annex

The Embassy's management annex is located two long blocks from the chancery in a leased office building. It houses the management and general services offices, the health unit, the community liaison office and the economic section. At the time of the inspection, elements of the military liaison office were scheduled to move into the building within a few weeks. The building is relatively modern and provides sufficient office space. There are, however, signs of maintenance problems. This is further discussed in the facilities maintenance section of the report.

Official Residences

The chief of mission residence is located on a sizable plot of land overlooking Port of Spain. It is ample for representational purposes. The residence itself, though, has a feeling of neglect and disrepair, in part because the previous Ambassador viewed repair activities as intrusive. The Embassy planned to reconstruct the residence's roof in July 2009. The OIG team reviewed the lengthy list of essential repairs and desirable rehabilitation that should be undertaken before the next Ambassador assumes charge. Some of the deficiencies seen by the OIG team included:

- broken glass in the guard house windows;
- broken wooden frames on a front window of the house that lean at an angle between the window and the grill;
- electrical wires left dangling off the second-story roof onto the first-story tin roof.

Some maintenance has been scheduled for the residence, but the timeline is stretched through at least July 2009 and likely to extend past the arrival of the next Ambassador. The current state of the residence is unsuitable for a new Ambassador to move in. Any delay in reconstruction of the roof and other repairs could mean finding a temporary residence for the Ambassador. This could prove costly given the time needed to complete necessary security measures and would affect the new Ambassador's ability to perform effectively.

The DCM's residence is an appropriate size but is relatively plain compared to most of the housing pool, and not a good residence for representation events. The outdoor patio is entirely enclosed.

Corrective Action for Embassy Structures

Recommendation 13: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should use its facilities master plan to identify all flaws in embassy structures, including the chancery and chancery annex, develop a corrective action plan prioritizing maintenance and improvement projects and obtain the necessary approvals to make modifications to embassy office structures and the chief of mission residence. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with OBO)

Housing Pool

The regional security officer, for security concerns, limits the selection of homes for the housing pool to four neighborhoods. This limitation makes the leasing process a challenge for the general services office. The housing pool does, however, contain a good selection of spacious residences that are generally well-maintained by the landlords. The housing board and general services office are working to concentrate

more houses in a single neighborhood that is near the international school embassy children attend and a short commute from embassy facilities, while decreasing the stock of residences that are further from the Embassy.

According to the Department swimming pool safety standard published in August 2000 by OBO, all pools shall be surrounded by a 4-foot barrier to prevent unauthorized entry, particularly by children, to the pool area. One Jacuzzi in the yard of a residence did not have the required barrier.

Recommendation 14: Embassy Port of Spain should inspect all residence pools and correct any deficiencies in barriers and other safety requirements. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Facilities Maintenance Program

Facilities maintenance operations for Embassy Port of Spain are mismanaged and disorganized. Simple observation reveals a lack of attention to the quality of work done. The work-order process is complicated and poorly maintained.

. There is a strong need for an organized plan of routine maintenance and repair for aging facilities that demand care and attention.

In order to improve service, the Embassy reorganized maintenance operations so that the management officer rather than the general services officer oversees the facilities maintenance unit. The facilities maintenance manager is a FSN. Reporting to him are a maintenance supervisor, housing assistant, work-order clerk, and 19 maintenance employees. Despite the official organization of the program, most work orders still require signature from the general services office, and there is frequent conflict between the maintenance and general services offices over procedures and responsibility, particularly housing maintenance and repairs.

Work orders are, in theory, submitted to facilities maintenance via the eServices system. However, many requests come via e-mail or phone to either the general services office or the management officer who will often respond to minor maintenance requests personally. There are frequent comments from staff members that this is the only way to make sure a work order is actually completed. The OIG team heard anecdotes about multiple follow-up requests for services. Facilities maintenance has a target of completing work orders within one month, but the work-order files are not maintained well enough to judge whether this benchmark is being met. When reviewing files, the OIG team found that the oldest outstanding work order was from September 2008, 4 months before the beginning of the inspection.

While work orders are tracked using the Web Post Administrative Software Suite (PASS) online system, the paper files are woefully incomplete. The OIG team found completed work orders that were merely marked “complete” without details of who did the work, what the costs were or how much time was spent. Some orders were never signed by the customer who requested the work. Outstanding work orders did not contain any notes about holdups or other explanations for the delay that may have occurred. Instead, the facilities maintenance manager would periodically print out a list of outstanding work orders from Web PASS and handwrite short notes for himself. These notes would not be included with the work order upon completion and archival. The OIG team also observed a multitude of sites in facilities where maintenance tasks were left unfinished or done in an unprofessional manner. Work-order files should contain all details about the work done and a final evaluation in order to track work orders through completion and provide management with information for performance evaluation.

Recommendation 15: Embassy Port of Spain should establish and implement policies and procedures to accurately track work orders, confirm completion of the work, and provide performance metrics for facilities maintenance. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Embassies are required to establish a comprehensive preventive, routine, and special maintenance program covering all facilities and major support systems so as to maintain real property in such condition that it can be effectively used for its intended purposes. Embassy Port of Spain’s routine maintenance plan amounted only to preventive care for air conditioning units, emergency generators, and pumps. Any other work must be requested through the work order system.

The condition of embassy facilities requires a comprehensive and diligently implemented maintenance program that does not rely on the submission of work orders. The OIG team’s inspection of the chancery, management annex, and official residences generated a long list of structural and material deficiencies that should be repaired under such a program, including:

- exposed and aging electrical systems;
- extensive water damage to walls and ceilings;
- damaged and moldy ceiling tiles;
- large hole in door to a ladies’ restroom;
- ratty, dirty, and torn carpeting;

- broken office furniture and window blinds;
- dirty and cracked walls requiring fresh paint; and
- broken windows and window frames.

Some repairs have been neglected so long that staff no longer expect to see them repaired and instead cope with humor. For example, an employee taped a sign reading “Do Not Use Until 2010,” over the past-due maintenance repair notification in the men’s upstairs bathroom of the chancery. Embassy Port of Spain needs a long-term, organized plan to repair and maintain all its existing facilities.

Recommendation 16: Embassy Port of Spain should establish and implement a comprehensive preventive, routine, and special maintenance program covering all facilities and major support systems based on periodic inspection of the facilities. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

The overall mismanagement and neglect of facilities maintenance procedures and controls indicates a lack of expertise in the management section. The management officer of an embassy is responsible for the oversight of many sections. The incumbent should not be expected to micromanage the facilities maintenance program. A facilities management specialist posted to Embassy Port of Spain for an extended temporary duty period would bring the necessary experience and expertise to develop an effective maintenance program that prioritizes the needs of the Embassy as well as better organizes the management of the facilities maintenance unit.

Recommendation 17: The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations should provide, in response to a request from Embassy Port of Spain, a temporary duty facilities management specialist to develop an effective preventive, routine, and special maintenance program. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Port of Spain)

Human Resources

Three FSNs staff the human resources unit and serve under the indirect supervision of a human resources officer based in the FRC. This officer visits Embassy Port of Spain periodically. A memorandum of agreement between the regional center and the Embassy calls for a minimum of six visits a year. The FSN human resources specialist’s overall performance is superb. Her knowledge of local labor law and ability to identify the Embassy’s adherence to the law was exemplary. The FSN employees handbook was current and complete but needed a correction to state that in accor-

dance with 3 FAH-2 H-212D the Embassy must adhere to local labor, employment and social security laws to the maximum extent practicable in matters that affect FSNs. The OIG team made an informal recommendation to correct the handbook. There is, however, a problem with the FSN employee evaluation process whose correction requires front office involvement.

The Performance Evaluation Process

While the performance evaluation process is working well for American employees, the OIG team review confirmed that evaluations for FSNs are not being completed on time.

There was some improvement on this issue compared to the situation rated in the 2003 inspection. Although the human resources unit periodically sends reminders to supervisors regarding local employee evaluation processing, such communications appear to have little if any effect. The Embassy needs to set in place procedures that will, if the first reminder is ignored, call for the DCM to remind supervisors and, as warranted, address any further delinquencies in supervisors' evaluation reports.

Recommendation 18: Embassy Port of Spain should establish procedures that will provide timely completion of performance evaluations for Foreign Service national employees. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Financial Management

Overall, financial operations comply with applicable laws and regulations. Relevant internal controls are effective. A FSN financial management specialist supervises the staff on a day-to-day basis and is authorized to certify vouchers up to \$25,000. The financial management officer, who is based at the FRC, visits Embassy Port of Spain about every 2 months. Cashier operations scored well on the OIG workplace and quality of life questionnaire. Reviews of unliquidated obligations need to be strengthened to ensure funds are still required for the purpose specified and that adequate supporting documentation exists. Funds obligated but no longer required for the transaction should be deobligated and made available for other use. In one instance, an open obligation totaling \$24,397 dated January 29, 2008, and modified February 14, 2008, was for a purchase order for a transformer that was cancelled June 23, 2008. In another instance, an obligation of \$44,000 for a possible lease payment was created without supporting documentation.

Recommendation 19: Embassy Port of Spain should implement procedures to review unliquidated obligations to include a determination of the continuing need for the obligation(s).
(Action: Port of Spain)

General Services

As the OIG team notes in the management controls section of this report, general services operations are fraught with problems.

Motor Vehicle Management

Embassy Port of Spain needs to strengthen its management of the motor pool. The OIG team confirmed irregularities in the motor pool inventory and reporting files, including vehicles not included on the inventory list, insurance information missing for five vehicles, the lack of monthly vehicle use reports, and inadequate documentation of “other authorized use” transportation. Several vehicles were in poor condition with broken glass, dirty interiors and missing seat belts. The condition of the motor-pool files and vehicles suggest a lack of effective oversight by an accountable officer.

The Under Secretary for Management issued a statement (STATE 00118457, dated Nov 08) in anticipation of changes to 14 FAM, directing embassies to identify an American officer as the motor vehicles accountable officer to be personally responsible for ensuring compliance with motor vehicle inventory and reporting requirements. This officer is to be responsible for the motor pool inventory and reporting through procurement, receipt, in-service, and disposal.

Recommendation 20: Embassy Port of Spain should appoint a motor vehicles accountable officer to be responsible for compliance with motor vehicle inventory and reporting requirements. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Documentation related to motor pool services also merits greater oversight and review. Only one file for a driver contained a copy of a current driver’s permit at the time of the OIG inspection. All other files either had photocopies of expired permits or lacked any copy at all. Drivers’ records also lacked any documentation on

current medical clearances. According to 14 FAM 432.4 c.(1),(4), operators of official vehicles must possess valid driver's documents and be medically cleared and trained to ensure safe motor vehicle operation.

Recommendation 21: Embassy Port of Spain should establish a procedure to verify that all motor pool drivers submit current copies of their local driver's permit. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 22: Embassy Port of Spain should require that all motor pool drivers submit, on a regulated schedule, a medical clearance report to certify fitness for duty. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Embassy Port of Spain's motor vehicle use policy needs to be updated to clarify "other authorized use" transportation. According to 14 FAM 433.4 b.(1), the charge for home-to-office transportation must be calculated based on cost recovery. The charge may be standardized by calculating an average cost. This calculation must be revisited annually, and the computation documented and filed for inspection. The policy for collecting these charges must also be fair, equitable, and clearly stated in the Embassy's policy governing the use of official vehicles.

The embassy policy issued January 15, 2009, simply states that the fee is not to exceed \$2.70 per one-way trip. The policy does not clearly stipulate the actual fee that will be charged to all employees, regardless of rank, who use the motor pool vehicles for other authorized use.

Recommendation 23: Embassy Port of Spain should revisit the calculation of home-to-office transportation costs and update the motor vehicle use policy to state the actual fee for other authorized use of motor pool vehicles. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

The OIG team's review showed a disparity in the home-to-transportation charges, ranging from \$1 for the deputy chief of mission (chargé d'affaires) to \$2.70 for other employees during the same period. The regulation 14 FAM 433.4 b.(4) requires that the collection of transportation charges must be fair and equitable. The fee should be a standard average cost of home-to-office transportation shuttles.

Recommendation 24: Embassy Port of Spain should review home-to-office transportation billing, and if the Embassy has undercharged any employees since the last annual computation, collect the difference owed. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

The motor pool drivers for Embassy Port of Spain do not check that their passengers are using seat belts in the vehicles, and some drivers do not use a seat belt. In some vehicles, it is clear the belts are not used frequently because they are inaccessible behind seat backs.

Recommendation 25: Embassy Port of Spain should immediately notify all employees that the Department requires the use of seat belts by all occupants, passengers and drivers in government-owned vehicles. Drivers should not start driving until they have confirmed seat belts are buckled. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Drivers are not clearly noting the difference between official business and other authorized use on the daily vehicle logs. Other authorized use bills are prepared based on personal knowledge or guesswork because of this lack of documentation.

Recommendation 26: Embassy Port of Spain should require that motor pool drivers clearly note the purpose of travel in the daily vehicle logs. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Procurement and Contracting

Embassy Port of Spain has two purchasing agents reporting to the general services officer. Both use petty cash and a commercial purchase card with bulk funding for transactions up to \$3,000 as well as a bid solicitation process for larger transactions. In most circumstances, the purchase agents consult with budget and finance to determine the availability of funds. Purchase orders are tracked in a Microsoft Access database; the Embassy has not yet begun to use the centralized database.

The general services officer was on an extended absence in the fall of 2008, and other officers at the Embassy with little or no relevant training were given temporary contract-warrant appointments by the Ambassador. (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) Some of the irregularities found by the

OIG team include: files not easily identified because much of the filing information was left incomplete; documentation without pre-solicitation and solicitation activity information; and vouchers in completed files missing the signature of a certifying officer. Procurement also had a significant number of outstanding purchase orders dating back 2 years. The outstanding files contained little to no documentation on any follow-up done to determine the status of the orders.

Department acquisition regulations (DOSAR 604.8) require that all relevant information from pre-solicitation to closeout be kept together to provide a complete record of all contracts, regardless of dollar value. Further, the contracting officer must review files and confirm that they contain sufficient detail to permit reconstruction of all significant events by any subsequent reviewers (DOSAR 604.7). While procedures for review of procurement and contract files are nominally in place, the condition of the files indicates a failure to implement them in an effective manner.

Recommendation 27: Embassy Port of Spain should implement procedures and controls for all procurement and contract files, including the requirement for complete documentation and review of the files by the contracting officer. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

The management section expressed concern about allegations of favoritism in the selection of vendors. The Competition in Contracting Act of 1984, 41 U.S.C. 251 et seq., requires the promotion of full and open competition in the solicitation of offers and the awarding of U.S. Government contracts. Port of Spain has a limited pool of available vendors, making wide competition among vendors difficult. The current selection process requires the Embassy to phone at least five vendors (if there are even five vendors available) and then select the one who can offer the procurement for the lowest rate. The OIG team did not find records kept with purchase orders indicating who was contacted or the bids offered. Without these records, it is nearly impossible to confirm or refute such allegations with confidence.

Recommendation 28: Embassy Port of Spain should implement correct procedures for recording the process of selecting vendors for procurements and contracts. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Information Management and Information Security

Embassy Port of Spain operates a comprehensive and effective information management and information systems security program. Embassy Port of Spain's information management unit scored well on the international cooperative administrative support services survey. OIG questionnaires reported excellent marks for information management services both from users at the Embassy and from Department affiliates' reports. In addition to being strong technically, the information management unit also sets the bar for the rest of the Embassy in terms of customer service. Overall, the OIG team found that information management operations have been well maintained, despite the fact that resources have been stretched because of limited staffing, unusual facility structures, insufficient office space, and increased workload due to growing tenant agencies at post. In fact, the number of workstations and servers supported has doubled since the OIG's 2003 inspection, while staffing has remained constant.

The information management unit is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and security of the Department's sensitive but unclassified local area network (Open Net), classified local area network, dedicated Internet networks, unclassified and classified pouch, telephone/radio operations, as well as mailroom operations. The Open Net network consists of 130 workstations and 18 servers; the classified local area network has 15 workstations and seven servers. The information management staffing complement consists of two American officers — the supervisory information management officer and an information management specialist. Local staff includes two systems-support employees, two mail/pouch employees, and one switchboard operator. The unit follows Department information management guidelines and standard industry practices.

Information Management Staffing

Notwithstanding its thin staffing, the information management unit effectively manages the Open Net network at the Embassy. The unit has two highly skilled local administrators who maintain the Embassy's site health to within optimum levels despite extensive network topography with information management operations dispersed over four sites. The current office structure has both system administrators located in the main chancery. Staff who troubleshoot issues typically must walk a fair distance or drive in heavy traffic to outlying embassy operations. Transit time between work locations is considerable, thereby leaving less time for ongoing priority projects. Accordingly, the information management officer sees a need for additional administrators and to have systems' staff located at the main chancery as well as the management annex. A previous informal request by the Embassy for two additional

positions in information systems — an additional full-time administrator and a part-time administrator/telephone technician — yielded no result. The management officer concurs with the need for additional positions but has not acted due to bureau and embassy funding restraints. The issue remains unresolved.

The Open Net network is the backbone of embassy operations. It is used by all embassy sections in support of work requirements, for general correspondence, and to convey American views to the public. Hence, it should be adequately staffed at all times. It would be prudent to add a FSN position that could provide systems support at the main chancery compound as well as back up for the current systems administrators. This would allow an administrator to be located at the management annex where about half of the Embassy's users are located.

Recommendation 29: Embassy Port of Spain should establish an additional locally employed assistant administrator position for the information systems center. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Help Desk Operations

Embassy Port of Spain lacks an automated system to track and manage computer help desk issues. The current procedure requires users to contact the information-systems' staff directly either via telephone or e-mails, which are handled on a first-come first-served basis. The systems staff stated that the current procedure does not work efficiently. Although the OIG inspection team found no direct evidence that help desk calls for assistance did not result in reasonably prompt action, an automated help desk application would reduce staff time. It would also help staff to prioritize calls, identify systemic issues, better allocate resources, and gauge more accurately the level of customer service received by users. Information managers could then draw on this data to document operations for international cooperative administrative support services reporting purposes. Given the multiple embassy sites supported by chancery-based staff, the implementation of a helpdesk application could be a significant aid to the effectiveness and efficiency of information management operations at the Embassy. The OIG inspection team made an informal recommendation that the Embassy acquire and implement an automated help desk tracking application.

Information Programs Center Facilities

Information programs center facilities meet neither the space nor safety needs of staff. Three employees share a small, noisy space, which itself wraps around the classified server and other equipment. A visiting representative from the regional information management center in Florida conveyed to the OIG team his concerns regarding the location of the information programs center's equipment. Currently, the Embassy has no plans to relocate equipment or staff workspace given the very limited secure space at post. However, plans do exist to expand tenant agency workspace in the controlled-access area. The OIG team believes that relocating the information programs center should take precedence over any other embassy expansion in the controlled-access area.

Recommendation 30: The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, in coordination with Embassy Port of Spain, should relocate the office space for information programs center personnel. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Port of Spain)

Unclassified Pouch Operations

OIG found evidence of inappropriate pouch usage by the locally employed staff. The information management officer, the designated pouch control officer for post, has aggressively pursued enforcement of penalties for violations due to occurrences from repeat offenders. Management believes that these incidents occurred due to the level of permissiveness and leniency existing at the Embassy regarding disciplinary action. Local employees may not use the pouch for personal mail.

In February 2008, the Embassy circulated a management notice to all personnel detailing the new diplomatic pouch policy. It stipulates personnel actions for persons that violate the pouch usage and appears to have put an end to the violations.

Dedicated Internet Networks

The OIG team confirmed that Embassy Port of Spain is operating dedicated Internet network computers in the public affairs annex and the general services warehouse. In May 2006, the Department's information technology change control board authorized the Embassy to operate the dedicated Internet network that is located

in the public affairs annex. The waiver is scheduled for renewal in May of 2009. At present, the Embassy has an additional dedicated Internet network that is currently servicing the newly leased general services warehouse. The Embassy has not requested a waiver for this network.

Recommendation 31: Embassy Port of Spain should request a waiver from the Department's information technology change control board for the dedicated Internet network located in the general services warehouse. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Radio Check Program

The Embassy's emergency very high frequency/ultra high frequency emergency and evacuation radio check program is done quarterly, rather than twice monthly. Monthly radio checks, as opposed to twice-monthly checks, invite reduced operational readiness of the equipment and user competency in an emergency. Radio checks should be done twice monthly or as mandated by the Ambassador, per 5 FAH-2 H-732.4. OIG left an informal recommendation addressing the issue.

QUALITY OF LIFE

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

The talented community liaison office coordinator is active and engaged with the embassy community, even though she is in a part-time position (20 hours per week) and has been without a co-coordinator since October 2008. The community liaison office program focuses primarily on welcoming newcomers and organizing community events. The community liaison office coordinator is still waiting for her security clearance, and thus far has not participated in any crisis management planning at the Embassy. While the lack of security clearance may limit her participation in security-related planning, there are aspects of crisis management that she should still be involved with. This exclusion from crisis management and security liaison has limited the community liaison office coordinator's ability to present the community's interests and community concerns to post leadership.

Recommendation 32: Embassy Port of Spain should include the community liaison office coordinator in crisis management and security matters to the greatest extent possible. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

HEALTH UNIT

The health unit consists of two part-time nurses to provide health services to the Embassy, including hospital and doctor referrals, physical exam screenings, limited medication services, and coordination with the Department's Office of Medical Services as well as the Bogota regional medical officer (RMO). Both nurses are new to the Embassy and the Foreign Service. The RMO requires that they receive 2 weeks' training from him in Bogota before he authorizes them to give immunizations or treat certain conditions such as upper respiratory infections. Embassy Port of Spain will not have the funds to send a nurse to Bogota for training until June 2009 at the earliest. Until the RMO authorizes at least one of the nurses to give immunizations or treat certain conditions such as upper respiratory infections, the health unit must

refer patients to local physicians for routine vaccinations and medical treatment. The RMO, however, has travel funds for visits to post and was scheduled to be at Port of Spain in March 2009.

Recommendation 33: The Department's Office of Medical Services should send a regional medical officer to Embassy Port of Spain to conduct on-site training of the Embassy's nurses. (Action: M/MED)

EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

The Employees' Association is well-managed. The small shop the association operates is open 2 days a week, and offers gift items, snacks, and duty-free alcoholic beverages. The shop manager is efficient and progressive, with plans to expand the store and its hours.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Only one Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counseling contact was made at the Embassy during the most recent reporting period. The names of the EEO counselors and liaisons, as well as the name of the federal women's program coordinator, are clearly displayed in the chancery and the management annex, along with an outline of the complaint process. The federal women's program is quite active and hosted at least five events in the past year. One of the EEO counselors coordinated with the regional human resources officer and this led a series of brownbag sessions in November 2008 to explain the general process to all embassy staff, both American and FSN employees. A similar training is planned for the same time period in 2009.

The OIG team found concern among employees that, despite the fall sessions, most of the embassy staff remain unfamiliar with the EEO process and unlikely to make use of the program. While management notices are circulated among staff as required, they are often overlooked in the midst of daily tasks. The EEO board is stagnant and infrequently used, which eliminates any incentive for employees to look at it. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the EEO counselors develop a more robust training program with sessions for employees scheduled more than once a year.

Both of the EEO counselors are overdue for their annual refresher training. This training would greatly benefit their development. If travel funds are not available to send the counselors to the formal classroom training, the Embassy could coordinate with the Foreign Service Institute and the Office of Civil Rights to develop an alternative option.

Recommendation 34: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Foreign Service Institute and the Secretary's Office of Civil Rights, should provide the Equal Employment Opportunity counselors with refresher training. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with FSI and S/OCR)

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The annual chief of mission management control statement of assurance for 2008 reported several weaknesses and said that plans to correct the deficiencies were attached. The attachments were not available for review. Apparently, they were never sent. While the weaknesses mentioned were relatively insignificant, the statement did not address the weaknesses in controls over nonexpendable property.

NONEXPENDABLE PROPERTY

Embassy Port of Spain holds nonexpendable property valued at approximately \$3.1 million. The inspection team's limited test of the accuracy of records for such nonexpendable property as washers, dryers, refrigerators, dehumidifiers and freezers showed physical shortages for all categories except freezers. Quantities physically on hand were less than the quantities shown on the records. Sloppy record keeping and a lack of effective paper flow accounted for the shortages. The OIG team confirmed, for example, that the Embassy had sold items that were "missing" at an earlier disposal sale. Recording receipts in a timely manner, addressed in an informal recommendation in the 2003 OIG inspection report, also remains a problem. The Embassy had yet to record receipt of several sets of household furniture valued in excess of \$100,000 weeks after delivery. In addition, receipts of electronic equipment which may have been designated for more sensitive areas of the Embassy were temporarily stored in a hallway in the unclassified annex. The Embassy has also failed to record these items in its official records.

Recommendation 35: Embassy Port of Spain should implement correct procedures to require recording of nonexpendable property upon receipt. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Representational furniture and furnishings located in the chief of mission residence and the warehouse need rehabilitation and/or replacement. Virtually all of the items stored in the warehouse are not in usable condition and should be disposed of. At the time of the inspection, a chief of mission had not been identified, thus

affording an optimal time to make needed replacements. Accordingly, the Embassy should ask the personnel of the interiors and furnishings division in the project execution office of the (OBO/PE/IF) to visit Port of Spain as soon as possible to determine which items need rehabilitation or replacement.

Recommendation 36: The Bureau of Overseas Building Operations, in coordination with Embassy Port of Spain, should rehabilitate or replace unusable representational furniture and furnishings. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Port of Spain)

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and the Bureau of Human Resources, should upgrade the rotational junior political officer position (position number 10-906000) to a mid-level rank. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with WHA and DGHR)

Recommendation 2: Embassy Port of Spain should consolidate and act on its plans to press the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for legislative changes needed to improve counternarcotics efforts. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 3: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and the Under Secretary for Management, should by June 30, 2009, complete a rightsizing review of permanent staffing of the Embassy's military liaison office. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with WHA and M/PRI)

Recommendation 4: Embassy Port of Spain should analyze the public diplomacy pages of its Web site for content, timeliness, and ease of use, making changes as required to stimulate usage. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Port of Spain should revise all public affairs section employee position descriptions to reflect duties accurately and the time spent on each. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 6: Embassy Port of Spain should ensure that grant files accurately reflect the projects supported and their purpose as well as confirming that the services were satisfactorily rendered in a timely manner. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 7: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration's office of procurement executive should clarify whether the Embassy's grants officer is permitted to sign grants funded by other agencies, and the extent and nature of oversight required. Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with A/OPE)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Port of Spain should ensure that public diplomacy representation funds are used exclusively in support of programs and activities that have a public diplomacy focus. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 9: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs should review its nonimmigrant visa refusal policy to ensure conformity with existing laws, regulations, and Department guidance. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with CA)

Recommendation 10: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should either join the bureau's existing user-pays call center umbrella contract or implement a contract with a separate company for user-pays information-only call center service. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with CA)

Recommendation 11: Embassy Port of Spain should hold meetings with targeted audiences, such as the media, the American Chamber of Commerce, and prospective students, to disseminate accurate information and field queries about visa matters. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 12: Embassy Port of Spain should issue a chief of mission policy statement detailing basic consular rules as well as the mission's commitment to providing quality nonimmigrant visa services. This document should detail how embassy employees can assist and advise their contacts about the visa process. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 13: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should use its facilities master plan to identify all flaws in embassy structures, including the chancery annex, develop a corrective action plan prioritizing maintenance and improvement projects and obtain the necessary approvals to make modifications to embassy office structures and the chief of mission residence. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with OBO)

Recommendation 14: Embassy Port of Spain should inspect all residence pools and correct any deficiencies in barriers and other safety requirements. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 15: Embassy Port of Spain should establish and implement policies and procedures to accurately track work orders, confirm completion of the work, and provide performance metrics for facilities maintenance. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 16: Embassy Port of Spain should establish and implement a comprehensive preventive, routine, and special maintenance program covering all facilities and major support systems based on periodic inspection of the facilities. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 17: The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations should provide, in response to a request from Embassy Port of Spain, a temporary duty facilities management specialist to develop an effective preventive, routine, and special maintenance program. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Port of Spain)

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Recommendation 21: Embassy Port of Spain should establish a procedure to verify that all motor pool drivers submit current copies of their local driver's permit. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

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Recommendation 25: Embassy Port of Spain should immediately notify all employees that the Department requires the use of seat belts by all occupants, passengers and drivers in government-owned vehicles. Drivers should not commence driving until they have confirmed seat belts are buckled. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

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Recommendation 28: Embassy Port of Spain should implement procedures for recording the process of selecting vendors for procurements and contracts. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

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Recommendation 31: Embassy Port of Spain should request a waiver from the Department's information technology change control board for the dedicated Internet network located in the general services warehouse. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 32: Embassy Port of Spain should include the community liaison office coordinator in crisis management and security matters to the greatest extent possible. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

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Recommendation 34: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with the Foreign Service Institute and the Secretary's Office of Civil Rights, should provide the Equal Employment Opportunity counselors with refresher training. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain, in coordination with FSI and S/OCR)

Recommendation 35: Embassy Port of Spain should implement procedures to require recording of nonexpendable property upon receipt. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Recommendation 36: The Bureau of Overseas Building Operations, in coordination with Embassy Port of Spain, should rehabilitate or replace unusable representational furniture and furnishings. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Port of Spain)

~~**SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED**~~

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INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Informal recommendations cover operational matters not requiring action by organizations outside the inspected unit and/or the parent regional bureau. Informal recommendations will not be 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.

Economic

The Department eliminated the mid-level economic section chief position when the incumbent departs in summer 2009. The Embassy will combine the remaining economic section elements of one rotational junior officer and one FSN with the political section. This forced combination raises both physical location and policy issues. The economic officer needs ready access to classified information and technology. Both economic employees need to be located with the new, combined political and economic section chief responsible for overall supervision and guidance.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Port of Spain should locate the two remaining economic section positions with the political section staff.

Public Diplomacy

In a small country like Trinidad with limited infrastructure and a laid-back official style, the press-support requirements for the Summit of the Americas in April present a daunting challenge. Given the logistical, space, and resource constraints with which the mission must work, at the time of the inspection embassy plans for the traveling media were not sufficiently advanced. This is particularly true because of the nature of the event, which brings leaders from many countries and their retinues to a small city. Competition for host-government time, attention, and finite resources will be fierce.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Port of Spain should develop a plan and commit the resources necessary to ensure that the traveling media have appropriate facilities and access during the Summit of the Americas.

Trinidadians frequently travel to and care about the United States. Visa procedures at the U.S. consulate are a public affairs concern that the media emphasize with some frequency, almost always with a negative slant that does the American image no good. At the time of the inspection, the Embassy lacked a forward-looking plan to deal with the press or to provide information to the public through the media.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Port of Spain should develop a plan systematically to inform the press and public of consular issues, regulations and other subjects as needed.

Human Resources

The FSN employees' handbook should be corrected to state that, in accordance with 3 FAH-2 H-212 D., the Embassy must adhere to local labor, employment and social security laws to the maximum extent practicable in matters that affect FSNs.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Port of Spain should correct the FSN employees' handbook to state that the post must adhere to local labor, employment and social security laws to the maximum extent practicable in matters that affect FSN.

Information Management

Embassy Port of Spain lacks an automated system to track and otherwise manage help desk issues.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Port of Spain should acquire and implement an automatic help desk tracking application to help manage and prioritize help desk operations at the mission.

The Embassy's emergency very-high-frequency/ultra-high-frequency radio check program is done quarterly, rather than twice monthly. Monthly radio checks, as opposed to twice-monthly checks, invite reduced operational readiness of the equipment and user competency in an emergency. Radio checks should be done twice monthly or as mandated by the Ambassador per 5 FAH-2 H-732.4.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Port of Spain should conduct radio checks twice monthly or as mandated by the Ambassador. (Action: Embassy Port of Spain)

Equal Employment Opportunity

Embassy employees expressed concern that most staff are still unfamiliar with the EEO process and unlikely to make use of the program. The program currently consists of one training a year and a stagnant bulletin board.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Port of Spain should develop a more robust Equal Employment Opportunity program with sessions for employees scheduled more than once a year.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Chargé d'affaires	Leonard Kusnitz	08/07

Chiefs of Sections:

Management	George Lawson	08/08
Consular	Cynthia Ebeid	09/08
Political	John Cushing	06/07
Economic	John Ries	08/06
Public Affairs	Michelle Jones	08/06
Regional Security	Mark Lewis	09/06
Regional Affairs	Enid Garcia	09/07

Other Agencies:

Department of Defense		
--Military Liaison Office	Clint Prindle	07/08
Department of Justice		
--Federal Bureau of Investigation	Connally Brown	11/08
--Drug Enforcement Administration	Dave Joseph	09/07
Department of Homeland Security	Karl Brown	01/06

ABBREVIATIONS

DCM	deputy chief of mission
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOD	Department of Defense
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
ELO	entry-level officer
FRC	Florida Regional Center
FSN	Foreign Service National
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
MSP	mission strategic plan
NSDD	National Security Decision Directive
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PASS	Post Administrative Software Suite
RMO	regional medical officer
RSO	regional security office(r)
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

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