

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

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

# Report of Inspection

Embassy San José,  
Costa Rica

Report Number ISP-I-06-32A, May 2006

## ~~IMPORTANT NOTICE~~

~~This report is intended solely for the official use of the Department of State or the Broadcasting Board of Governors, or any agency or organization receiving a copy directly from the Office of Inspector General. No secondary distribution may be made, in whole or in part, outside the Department of State or the Broadcasting Board of Governors, by them or by other agencies or organizations, without prior authorization by the Inspector General. Public availability of the document will be determined by the Inspector General under the U.S. Code, 5 U.S.C. 552. Improper disclosure of this report may result in criminal, civil, or administrative penalties.~~

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY JUDGMENTS ..... 1

CONTEXT ..... 3

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION ..... 5

    Security ..... 7

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION ..... 9

    Political Section ..... 9

    Economic Section ..... 11

    Law Enforcement Coordination ..... 12

    Environmental Hub ..... 13

    Consular Operations ..... 14

    Public Affairs Section ..... 18

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ..... 23

    Overview ..... 24

    Equal Employment Opportunity ..... 34

    Information Management and Information Security ..... 34

QUALITY OF LIFE ..... 39

    Schools ..... 39

    Community Liaison Office ..... 39

    American Employee Association ..... 40

    Health Unit ..... 41

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS ..... 43

    School Grants ..... 43

    Local Guard Contract and Public Diplomacy Grants ..... 43

    Customs and Shipping ..... 44

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 45

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 47

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS ..... 53

ABBREVIATIONS ..... 55

## KEY JUDGMENTS

- The relatively new Ambassador and deputy chief of mission (DCM) are working to hone mission objectives through an improved Mission Performance Plan (MPP). Promoting Costa Rica's adoption of the Central American Free Trade Agreement remains the main mission priority.
- Costa Rica is in many ways a pleasant place to live and work, but it is not free of problems. The gap between expectations and the reality of living and working in Costa Rica is a primary factor in relatively low mission morale.
- The front office team has made a solid start on its agenda for change. However, more needs to be done to create a sense of team building within the mission and to foster cross-cultural understanding between the American and Costa Rican employees.
- Budget restraints have driven the embassy to hire Foreign Service nationals (FSNs) instead of suitably qualified eligible family members (EFMs) for some positions, which has further impacted negatively mission morale.
- The growing number of resident and visiting Americans to Costa Rica has taxed the consular section's ability to adequately address American citizens services (ACS) across the board. With the expected increased staffing, and the completion of a current project to expand the cramped consular offices, the consular section should be well positioned to give quality service to all clients.
- The Ambassador and his deputy provide the regional security office (RSO) with solid support. The embassy's local guard and personal security programs are managed effectively, efficiently, and in alignment with Department of State (Department) policies. Residential security and increased awareness training are helping to address the reality of rising crime rates in San José.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between December 18, 2005, and January 20, 2006, and in San José, Costa Rica, between February 23 and March 9, 2006.

## CONTEXT

Costa Rica is a middle-income developing country with an emerging middle class. It is approximately the size of New Hampshire and Vermont combined and is situated between Nicaragua and Panama. It has a primarily Spanish-speaking population of 4.4 million people, with approximately 1.4 million residing in the capital city of San José.



The relatively high standard of living (in comparison to other countries in Latin America) and low unemployment rate (about 6.5 percent) mask the serious problems besetting Costa Rica's economy, such as the large and inefficient public sector, an unsustainable

fiscal deficit, a growing debt burden, the second highest inflation rate in the hemisphere at 14.1 percent in 2005, and high domestic interest rates. Seventy-six percent of the government's tax revenue is committed to salaries, pensions, other entitlements, and debt service. This leaves little for investment in essential government services and infrastructure, which has declined significantly in recent years.

Costa Rica is the United States' largest trading partner in Central America. It concluded negotiations on the Central America-Dominican Republic-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) in January 2004, but has not yet ratified the agreement due to internal political opposition. CAFTA-DR faces strong opposition by those opposed to opening state monopolies in telecommunications and other state-dominated sectors to private competition. Costa Rica has until February 2008 to join CAFTA-DR under the terms of the agreement.

For more than half a century Costa Rica has been more democratic and stable than any of its neighbors. The country has just held its 15th successive open and free presidential election. President-elect Oscar Arias, an experienced leader of international renown, offers a new opportunity for a reinvigorated U.S. engagement with this important regional state. This is particularly significant in light of the U. S. government's reduced leverage in Costa Rica due to the drawdown in U.S. assistance (the country graduated from its U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program in the late 1990's). Costa Rica has a larger middle class and a lower level of poverty than is the norm for Latin America. At the same time the fact that Costa Rica does not maintain national defense forces, has not signed an Article 98 agreement, and makes a practice of avoiding involvement in regional military-related exercises and activities has made most U.S. security assistance unavailable to Costa Rica.

Costa Rica hosts more than 700,000 American tourists each year and is now home to over 30,000 Americans, mostly retirees. More U.S. passports are stolen and/or lost in Costa Rica than in any other foreign country (1,500 lost/stolen passports in 2005) raising problems in the provision of consular services and presenting a threat to the security of U.S. borders. Most major crime categories rose approximately 20 percent during 2005.

The U.S. Embassy in San José houses eight federal agencies and employs 234 individuals (59 direct-hire Americans, 17 local hire Americans and/or EFMs, and 158 FSNs in a modern embassy compound.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Embassy San José is a mission in transition in a country in transition. The embassy operated without an ambassador for more than a year before the November 2005 arrival of the new noncareer ambassador. The first-time DCM is also new, having arrived in August 2005. In February 2006, Costa Rican national elections resulted in a shift in power to the party of former President Arias, presenting the embassy with a window of opportunity to move ahead on a number of bilateral goals and objectives that had languished during the term of the outgoing President. The Ambassador and DCM were quick to formulate a proposal to influence the way the incoming Costa Rican government developed its agenda. They successfully sought funding from the U.S. government for a bilateral dialogue to be chaired by the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, part of the National Defense University. As part of the run-up to this project the Ambassador and DCM met frequently with a newly formed core group of embassy officers, including the heads of the political, economic, public affairs, and security sections as well as with the heads of the Office of the Defense Representative (ODR) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to ensure that the internal U.S. government approach to this dialogue was well coordinated and productive. Heads of all agencies represented at the mission report that the new front office team is accessible to them when needed, and that their concerns about either substantive or management issues are given a fair hearing.

The new management team at Embassy San José has spent their first months learning how Costa Rica operates and where they can and should make changes in the mission. They are to be commended for their thoughtful approach to the management of this mission. They are now moving ahead with the needed changes they have identified. This process started prior to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) inspection when the Ambassador reorganized and streamlined the lengthy list of set-piece meetings. This will free up country team members to spend more time on their substantive duties and should help devolve more responsibility to section chiefs, in line with the Ambassador's goals.

The Ambassador demonstrated during the OIG inspection that he is a skilled communicator who can inspire his staff. When the Department eliminated this embassy's five percent hardship differential he chose to get out in front of the issue. He called a Town Hall meeting for the American staff where he framed the

issues driving the hardship differential cut and called upon his staff to show a spirit of sacrifice for the needs of the Service. The employees of Embassy San José, both American and Costa Rican, would benefit greatly from more such interactions so that all staff members can hear first hand the Ambassador's vision for his embassy. The DCM can also play an important role in communicating to the entire staff a clear sense of where the embassy fits into the Department's key goals and objectives, especially those whose work would not normally bring them into direct contact with the front office.

One subject that should be aired at a Town Hall meeting is the inevitable conflict between the need to protect the embassy staff and the imperative to conduct important outreach and contact-building activities. This mission has tightened its security posture in line with Department guidelines. Some of these changes in procedures have had the inadvertent result of offending Costa Rican contacts and mission employees who feel the enhanced security measures have been counterproductive and occasionally implemented in a less than diplomatic manner. The Ambassador and DCM tasked the RSO and the management office to develop new procedures to help minimize protocol mishaps in future representational events. OIG informally recommended that the DCM conduct a Town Hall meeting to brief staff on these new procedures, to listen to their concerns, and to generate mission-wide understanding and buy-in for the mission security posture.

Both the Ambassador and the DCM provide the mission security program with sufficient supervision and oversight to ensure that the embassy has adequate measures in place both for physical security and the protection of information. The RSO and the assistant RSO report satisfaction with the level of support they have received from embassy management. The rising crime rate in San José has taken a toll on mission morale as staff members and their family members find themselves victims of crime to include armed robberies. Embassy management has supported the RSO's efforts to upgrade residential security measures.

The process to determine this mission's key goals and objectives as codified in the MPP received a welcome infusion of energy this past year. The Ambassador insisted that each section justify their submissions to the draft MPP, and those submissions that were not clear or were no longer relevant were reformulated. The end result was a tighter submission and one that reflected the interests of all agencies at the mission. Public diplomacy objectives are fully embedded within each of the mission's performance goal papers.

As noted above, the Ambassador and DCM have exhibited foresight and leadership in seeking to capitalize on the opportunities presented by a new Costa Rican government. At the same time they have inherited a mission with sagging morale among both American and Costa Rican staff members. The reasons behind the morale issues are complex and predate the arrival of either of these two officers (this will be discussed in more depth in the management section of this report), but it is their challenge to change this dynamic and to create the kind of teamwork a smoothly functioning embassy requires. Right now, that level of teamwork does not exist at this mission.

The general perception OIG received during the Washington survey phase was that service at Embassy San José was relatively easy - it is considered a reward mission for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA). Most officers at the embassy reported that they found living in San José much more difficult than they had expected. It is their belief, correct or otherwise, that the Department continues to underestimate the difficulty of life in Costa Rica and, as a result, continues to cut benefits and staffing at the mission. This clash of expectations seems to play a major role in morale issues at the mission.

No formal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaints were raised with OIG during the inspection. Staff members are aware of the EEO program, and counselors are trained appropriately. Embassy San José has a good entry-level officer (ELO) program, but the activity level has ebbed over the past six months as resources have shifted to the orientation of the new Ambassador, the Costa Rican national elections, and OIG's inspection. OIG discussed with the DCM the need to re-energize this important program and suggested informally that he meet one on one with each ELO to afford them an opportunity to seek his advice and counsel when needed. He agreed to increase the tempo of ELO program activities to include one-on-one sessions with individual ELOs. ELOs interviewed reported general satisfaction with the mentoring they have received at the mission.

## SECURITY

Although the Ambassador and DCM are new to the embassy they provide firm oversight and guidance to the RSO, resulting in a focused and proactive security program. Security practices and training are consistent with identified threats, and the embassy considers its host country security support and cooperation to be good in light of the limitations on government of Costa Rica resources.

The Ambassador recognizes his responsibility for the security of the embassy, and monitors threats against his mission closely. This assessment was based on a wide range of discussions about the Ambassador's and DCM's stewardship of the mission's security program, their interaction with the Department of Defense and the law enforcement agency at the mission, the dissemination of time-sensitive information, and their support of the RSO.

The RSO has unlimited access to the Ambassador and the DCM to discuss security issues that are outside the scope of the normal country team meetings. Although the Ambassador leaves the day-to-day operations of the security program to the DCM and RSO, he meets every other week with the RSO individually. The RSO and DCM have a regularly scheduled weekly meeting. The RSO confirmed that his relationship with the front office is strong and professional.

The residential security program, under the direct supervision of the assistant RSO, is comprehensive, effective, and in compliance with applicable standards. The embassy has four mobile patrols that circulate throughout the housing areas on a 24-hour basis and can respond rapidly to residential emergencies. These patrols are controlled by the local guard contractor's security dispatch office in the parking lot across the street from the chancery compound. This office is also responsible for monitoring the residential security alarm system.

A more comprehensive review of the embassy security program is contained in the classified annex to this report.

## POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

### POLITICAL SECTION

Costa Rica is rightly famous for its democratic credentials as, with only two exceptions, it has enjoyed peaceful transitions of executive leadership via free elections for more than a 100 years - but democracy is never a finished business, in Costa Rica or anywhere else. While the nation has escaped the kinds of vicious civil conflicts and forced changes in leadership that have marred the histories of many of its regional neighbors, at the time of the inspection two of the country's recent presidents were being investigated on corruption charges. Some observers, both in and out of the country, believe Costa Rica has been coasting on its democratic laurels for a number of years.

At present the section has adequate reporting staff: the section head, who covers internal politics, a second mid-level officer with major operational responsibilities for both the mission's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) grants and programs, an ELO on a one year rotational assignment who focuses on human rights and labor issues, an office management specialist, and four FSNs, two of whom are devoted full time to INL issues. However, during the period June 2004 to November 2005, when the mission had no ambassador, the section head was acting DCM, and for all practical purposes turned the political section over to the second mid-level officer. With major responsibility for reporting during the run-up to the February 2006 national elections, keeping the INL portfolio on track, and working to train and direct the ELO, the second officer had more than a full plate to manage. Although he did so well, there was inevitably some lowering of the quantity, if not quality, of reporting and inevitably less attention devoted to the INL program.

Unlike at least some other programs in regional missions whose resources have remained relatively steady, the INL program in San José has suffered from remarkable swings in funding, from \$2.6 million (FY 2001) to \$95,000 (FY 2004), back up to \$365,000 (FY 2005) and down once again to an estimated \$100,000 in FY 2006. It is unclear why these swings occurred, but the uncertainty in funding has meant that the operation of the entire program has been problematic. It is difficult to set up efforts, whether in counternarcotics or law enforcement, without some certainty that the contacts made, the training regimes instituted, and the cooperative programs begun, can be sustained. Thanks in part to INL program efforts, in terms of narcotics interdiction efforts alone, Costa Rica was able to seize almost the same amount of drugs in 2005 as its southern neighbor, Panama, where the INL program is many times its size in staffing and funding.

The second political officer also covers the issue of trafficking in persons, a serious source of concern for both Costa Rica and the United States. A sizeable grant from the Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons has enabled the section to initiate a major training program for Costa Rican law and judicial personnel involved with the investigation and prosecution of traffickers in women and minors. According to the mission's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons submission, completed during the inspection, the government of Costa Rica is devoting increasing attention and resources to prosecuting traffickers and those who commit offenses with minors. The problem is nevertheless growing, authorities lack the resources for the medical and other support services needed for the women and young people affected, and it is believed that at least some of the major traffickers and offenders are U.S. citizens.

President-elect (and former president) Oscar Arias, who will take office in May 2006, is a firm ally of the United States on some issues, including free trade, but is not expected to necessarily agree on others, notably issues involving military rights and prerogatives. Costa Rica, which has not had a standing army since 1948, is justifiably proud of its historical record on turning its swords into the plowshares of universal free education and basic medical care. It is the continuing challenge of the political section to report on Costa Rica as a democracy in progress and to point out the areas where reality and rhetoric do not match. Democracy and stability can be no more taken for granted in Costa Rica than in any other nation in the area or, indeed, the world.

## ECONOMIC SECTION

In 2004, the United States provided 45 percent of goods imported into Costa Rica and absorbed 59 percent of exports from Costa Rica, and the bilateral economic links are clear and arguably among the strongest in Central America. At the time of the inspection, San José had one direct-hire mid-level officer, supported by an EFM who works on special projects, an office management specialist, and one FSN. Another ELO officer left the embassy in January 2006, and his successor due to arrive in April 2006 will encumber a one-year rotational position. After completion of another rotational officer's tour, the position is due to expire in spring 2008.

The head of the economic section is a seasoned economist, by training and previous Department experience, with primary responsibility for all section output. He juggles these section priorities with additional duties as the backup for the mission's regional environmental hub officer for the roughly one week per month that officer travels outside Costa Rica and for the mission-based heads of the U.S. Commercial Service and the Foreign Agricultural Service when they are away from the mission. The section head is able to focus only on the most pressing issues and has little time for other important duties, including general reporting on the long-term economic issues that are important for Washington readers.

As noted, the mission's top priority in its MPP is the promotion of CAFTA-DR, an issue that falls squarely in the economic portfolio. If and when the new Costa Rican government elected in February 2006 ratifies the agreement, the section's responsibility will shift to the equally important task of assisting the office of the U.S. Trade Representative in ensuring the government of Costa Rica implements the agreement. Working closely with the public affairs section (PAS), it has arranged for a number of speakers who address the merits of free trade, made sure that CAFTA-DR information was widely available, and also supported a number of congressional and other U.S. executive branch delegations centering on CAFTA-DR issues.

CAFTA-DR is not, however, the only bilateral economic issue. To some degree Costa Rica's reputation as a progressive, stable, internal conflict-free democracy has hidden very real problems in some areas of government. Costa Rica remains on the Special 301 Watch List because of inadequate enforcement of intellectual property laws. Its lack of transparency, complex tax structure, and sectoral barriers to doing business discourage investment; thanks to problems with its legal and judicial system, commercial disputes can take years to resolve. Understanding the complexities of Costa Rica's government and private sectors is necessary if the section, and the mission, is to provide the mandatory reporting, answers to action requests,

visit support, and advocacy for U.S. business interests expected of the section. The economic section head is doing what he can to meet these various needs, and his work is commendable.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATION

There are two law enforcement (LE) entities with direct-hire personnel based at Embassy San José: the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's regional security office and the Drug Enforcement Administration's attaché office.

The RSO is the lead at the mission for all LE matters not related to drug trafficking. Driven in part by the fact that Costa Rica is home to more than 30,000 U.S. citizens and is visited by 700,000 American tourists annually, this office devotes approximately 20 percent of its work effort to the support of U.S. and regionally-based LE agency requests for investigative and coordination assistance. These assistance requests span the U.S. LE agency spectrum and include the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Marshals Service, the U.S. Postal Investigation Service, the U.S. Secret Service, the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service, and the Internal Revenue Service, as well as several U.S. state and local LE entities.

DEA takes the lead on any LE requests/activities pertaining to narcotics trafficking investigations. DEA staff members at the mission coordinate closely with both the RSO and the officer in the political section who has been assigned responsibility for INL programmatic activities.

Members of the LE community all confirm that they have immediate access to the Ambassador and DCM whenever needed. In addition, the Ambassador includes the head of DEA in the weekly country team meeting. The LE agency head and the RSO noted that the front office promptly addresses issues presented to them.

The embassy's LE community benefits from a weekly law enforcement working group chaired by the Ambassador or DCM. The group has been expanded to include non-LE entities whose activities impact or support LE initiatives at the mission. This arrangement enhances interagency coordination and fosters an informal collaborative spirit, as OIG observed on several occasions.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HUB

A mid-level officer and a small staff comprise the environment, science and technology hub in San José, one of two such centers in the Americas, and balance environment, science and technology activities inside Costa Rica with those in 22 other nations in Central and northern South America and the Caribbean. The officer and the two program FSNs in the unit are well qualified for their responsibilities, both by academic background and varied experience in government, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the private sector. Working in partnership with U.S. agencies including the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Agriculture, they support a wide variety of environment, science and technology cooperative initiatives both within Costa Rica and in the region. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has a particularly robust program of engagement: the hub provides administrative support for deployments of up to 100 NASA scientists at a time who, several times a year, use Costa Rica as a base from which to measure climate and environmental change in the region.

The environment is a major concern - and major tourist draw - in Costa Rica. Thanks in part to then President Oscar Arias' pledge in the late 1980s to protect what remained of the country's forest canopy and its extraordinary range of wild-life, eco-tourism has become the nation's largest business, surpassing receipts from the production of its traditional coffee, banana, and pineapple exports. With its record on environmental issues, Costa Rica hosts regional offices for several major international environmental NGOs with whom the hub works. Hub personnel also work closely with the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, and have used its initiative grants to train regional officials on environmental issues ranging from the protection of mahogany to sound fishing practices. It also supported a National War College conference on regional environmental security. Through travel within Costa Rica and the region, the hub links its many partners in the U.S. government with local and regional individuals and organizations. The unit also may have major new responsibilities when CAFTA and its Environmental Cooperation Agreement come into effect in the region.

Hub personnel work closely with many embassy elements, particularly the management, public affairs, and economic sections, to provide administrative, information, and policy support for initiatives and cooperative programs. In late 2005 NASA signed an International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

(ICASS) agreement with the embassy whereby it agreed to compensate the mission for the sometimes extensive resources devoted to supporting NASA activities (for instance, securing customs clearance for NASA equipment needed in its climatic investigations). More such agreements may be necessary in the future as cooperative ventures multiply.

## CONSULAR OPERATIONS

Operating out of an inadequate facility, and with insufficient staff, the consular section is doing a commendable job handling a challenging ACS workload and an increasing number of visa applications. Fortunately, the embassy has started a renovation project; the Department is adding a new officer position; and the section will soon get three new locally employed staff (LES). The front office has supported the effort to address the section's needs. In general, both the Ambassador and the DCM provide tangible assistance to the section whenever needed. The Ambassador has made tackling the problem of crime against Americans a priority and included assistance to American citizens in the FY 2008 MPP as an embassy goal. The DCM is reviewing the consular chief's visa refusals as required. The visa referral policy is working well with front office oversight. There is no undue interference by other sections in the visa process. OIG found that there is good cooperation between the consular section and other offices in the embassy, like the RSO, with whom they share areas of mutual concern. The consular section works particularly effectively with the RSO in the many extradition cases handled by Embassy San José.

### Staff

The section currently has nine officer positions, including a federal benefits officer funded by the Social Security Administration. The Department recently upgraded one ELO position to FS-03 and is adding another ELO slot. The section is in the process of bringing on board three new LES. OIG concluded that the new officer and LES positions are necessary and that once they are all filled, barring an unanticipated upsurge in workload, the section will be adequately staffed. There were two entry-level officer rotational positions, but after the next entry-level rotational officer's tour is completed, the positions will not be renewed. The Department has been very responsive in providing temporary duty help as needed. In the immediate future the section faces a potential of three staffing gaps and will probably need more temporary duty help.

## Facilities

Currently the section is cramped and has too few interview windows to handle its workload. This has been a major impediment to the section's efforts to eliminate the long waiting time for nonimmigrant visa (NIV) appointments. A construction project that may ultimately cost over \$1 million has begun. In April 2006, the consular staff will move into a temporary facility until construction is finished. When the work is finished later in 2006, the section will have an additional six service windows, improved line of sight, and a more spacious work area.

## Consular Management

The section chief and deputy understand the importance of professional development for ELOs. They have a structured system to rotate them through the various consular units. They also assign the ELOs projects to broaden their skills, and when end of year funds are available and the staffing situation permits, send them on temporary duty to other embassies in the region for short periods. They have tried to schedule the public service hours to allow for training and project time but have not been able to do so consistently. Because of staff and workload issues, officer staff meetings have been sporadic. OIG discussed with section management the value of regular meetings for officers and LES. In addition OIG found that the ELOs would benefit from more responsibility and a more active role in establishing the career development goals for their tours. OIG informally recommended that the section chief assign ELOs supervisory responsibilities as unit chiefs and use the work requirements form as an individual development plan for each ELO during the consular tour. By establishing ELO unit chief positions, the section will also remedy some LES confusion about the lines of authority.

Both the FSNs and officers, especially newly arrived employees, would benefit from more locally prepared standard operating procedures. There is an orientation plan for new ELOs, but little locally prepared material. OIG informally recommended that when the construction project is completed and the section is fully staffed, they draft standard operating procedures for all consular procedures.

The section has taken full advantage of the embassy's public diplomacy resources. The officers, including ELOs, have done many press interviews and have written numerous articles for local newspapers. The PAS is assisting the consular section in updating the web page. Among other things, on the front page there will be instructions to students and businessmen on procedures for expediting visas.

The section is taking a multifaceted approach to improving its public inquiry procedures. Currently the phone tree is ineffective, and too many calls come into the section at inopportune times. The section is planning to institute a user-pays information system through a regional call center but will at the same time promote use of the web site and e-mails. A receptionist will handle calls within the section.

LES training is a priority with consular management. All LES are cross-trained on functions within their unit. New hires are required to take the correspondence courses relevant to their work. The deputy section chief keeps a data file showing training completed by each LES and identifying future training needs.

## Visas

The section uses an off-site call center for visa appointments and data entry and a local bank for machine-readable visa fee collection. It is in the process of implementing a commercial pass-back system so visa applicants will not need to pick up their visaed passports at the embassy. Once the construction project is completed, the section plans to introduce other efficiencies, including entry of biometric data by EFMs. The wait time for NIV appointments has gone from a high of 107 days to a low of 58 days at the beginning of February 2006. The section will probably not be able to reduce this much more until the new windows are available. At that time there will be a concerted effort to bring down the wait time to as little as a week and keep it there. This will eliminate a large amount of time currently spent on dealing with requests for expedited services. The section's refusal rate for NIV applications has fluctuated by about 10 percent up and down over the last three years. OIG informally recommended that, later in 2006 when staff levels permit, they conduct a validation study of all applicants for tourist/business visas. This will not only measure the appropriateness of the refusal rate, but also serve as a useful tool in educating new officers about local conditions.

The section has a good relationship with the panel physicians. The program is reviewed and contracts are renewed annually.

## American Citizens Services and Federal Benefits

OIG found that one of the section's strengths is the attention paid to the problems of American citizens. Given the large number of American citizens resident in Costa Rica (about 30,000) and the approximately 700,000 American tourists who visit annually, it is appropriate that ACS work is the priority in the

consular section. The caseload has risen considerably in the past few years. For example, the number of passport cases has gone from less than 1,000 in 2002 to almost 5,000 in 2005, and arrests of American citizens and extradition cases have doubled over the same period. The number of lost or stolen U.S. passports is now the highest in the world at over 1,500 in FY 2005. In addition, reflecting a trend throughout the country, crimes against Americans have become more violent, necessitating more time spent on victim assistance. Both the section chief and the deputy spend a good portion of their time on these issues. The unit has experienced LES, including a former judge, and consular management plans to make the new FS-03 position an ACS unit chief job. This will provide greater continuity to the management of the unit.

The section has worked well with Costa Rican authorities to tackle problems connected with crimes against Americans. The U.S. Embassy is the only foreign government representative with a seat on the Costa Rica Tourism Safety Committee. Consular officers have engaged the local American Chamber of Commerce to help in the effort to improve tourism security. They induced the Costa Rican government to change its regulations to allow foreigners to leave their passports in hotel safes and instead to carry photocopies of their passports when traveling within the country. Most importantly, they have initiated an aggressive outreach campaign using the media, immigration officials at airports, and rental car companies to advise Americans about the problem of passport theft. Because the Costa Rican LE authorities lack the resources to do so, the consular section has created a spreadsheet with data on all crime cases that they share with Costa Rican authorities. This helps them identify crime trends and to pinpoint locations of most concern.

The warden system is an organization-based system that relies on 32 organizations to disseminate warden messages. OIG discussed with the consular section the value of using radio broadcasts to transmit messages to the American community, especially to those dual nationals who may have little contact with the expatriate community served by the warden system. For disaster planning the section drafted an emergency services directory with details about what resources are available in each part of the country. OIG discussed with them the next steps needed to fill out the local disaster assistance plan.

The federal benefits unit, which is staffed and funded by the Social Security Administration, is a hub for all of Latin America except Mexico. The unit works well with the rest of the consular section. Because the unit officer travels frequently, other consular officers help the unit in his absence.

## Fraud Prevention and Border Security

Staff shortages have limited the amount of officer time spent on fraud prevention. The LES fraud investigator hired in FY 2005 works closely with local officials and spends much of her time at the airport reviewing documents and providing training. Together with the RSO, she is compiling a comprehensive list of alien smugglers and document forgers. A new law making those activities a crime in Costa Rica will take effect in August 2006. The embassy hopes that at that time the government of Costa Rica will begin to prosecute those criminals. The section sent an informative cable explaining this new law (06 San José 280) and produced a comprehensive fraud summary telegram (06 San José 228) in January 2006. The new FS-03 position will include fraud prevention responsibilities, so the consular section will be able to devote more time to fraud prevention and border security issues.

As the Department reminded embassies in 05 State 231039, all members of the mission are responsible for keeping consular officers informed of terrorist trends or travel patterns affecting the host country. At Embassy San José a consular officer attends the meetings of the embassy's LE working group and the Visas Viper committee at which counterterrorism information is shared and then briefs the other consular officers. However, OIG found that some adjudicating visa officers still do not feel that they have the current terrorism trend information they need to determine which visa applicants warrant more scrutiny. OIG informally recommended that each newly arrived consular officer receive a general terrorism trend briefing from the RSO and that the section should organize periodic update briefings from other sections for all consular officers.

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

The PAS covers all its major bases of activity - information, advocacy, educational and cultural exchanges, and support for the embassy's other sections and agencies - with a well trained, committed, and enthusiastic staff. An experienced public affairs officer and a mid-level information officer lead the section that includes an ELO cultural affairs officer, and a combined staff of 12 FSNs. The PAO also supervises the work of the regional English language officer (RELO) and his FSN assistant who are based in Embassy San José. Public affairs concerns are woven into all activities, most notably via the three weekly mission strategy sessions the Ambassador chairs, where the PAO is in on the planning and tracking of major mission goals and programs.

## Press and Information

Costa Rica enjoys a literate, well-educated population who has access to a full media environment, thanks in part to the nation's traditional emphasis on education. There are five national daily newspapers that represent a range of editorial viewpoints and several important weeklies, including the widely available, English-language *Tico Times*. Most have access to several local television stations, and approximately 90 radio stations reach the farthest corners of the country. Thanks to solid media ties, the information officer and her staff are able to easily place news stories, press releases, and op ed pieces - all of which are tied to mission priorities, aimed at targeted reading audiences, and placed with thought given to the strategic pacing of the information provided in the various daily and weekly papers. Representatives of the print and broadcast media, including the stringers for major U.S. and international news organizations, cover embassy and U.S. government agency programs. Costa Rica has graduated from some forms of U.S. government assistance, but the information officer is working to assure that the much larger amounts of U.S. private and NGO assistance are noted and publicized.

While many Costa Ricans speak English with some degree of fluency, it is particularly important that journalists have access to and understand English-language materials, on- and off-line. The information unit, through a grant to the Binational Center, arranged for several classes of 15 young journalists to hone their intermediate-level English skills in approximately 60 classroom sessions. Evaluations indicate that participants were anxious to learn and showed marked progress. The mission also has a small information resource center located in a portion of the chancery that allows controlled public access. The center's director has crafted a solid information program for information seekers both in and out of the mission. After a November 2005 visit, the Mexico City-based regional information resource officer noted in his trip report that the information resource center "with its strong commitment to high-quality service...demonstrated that its sterling reputation is indeed well-deserved." OIG shares this judgment.

## Educational and Cultural Exchanges

The cultural affairs officer and her FSN staff maintain a full program of regular educational exchanges and also, through grants and cooperative efforts, an active schedule of cultural exchanges in spite of fewer resources devoted to this kind of programming in recent years. The International Visitor Leadership Program sponsors 10-12 Costa Rican prospective leaders yearly for regional and multiregional programs (e.g., accountability and transparency in government, environmental

protection, and civic action) closely matching mission MPP goals. The unit has also arranged shorter voluntary visitor programs for legislative assembly staff members and government officials and journalists, among others. Although most of the nominees have traditionally come from San José, which hosts the country's major educational, media, and government institutions, the mission is committed to finding quality nominees from outside the capital.

A steady stream of Costa Rican and U.S. scholars take part in various Fulbright grant exchanges. In FY 2005, for example, Fulbright fellowships covered expenses for 10 Costa Rican scholars in fields as varied as marine biology, translation/interpretation, and flute and piano training; in the same period eight U.S. scholars spent time researching and lecturing on phenomena as varied as earthquake hazards in Costa Rica's central valley, the exportation of financial regulations, and the high birth rate among Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica. There is no Fulbright Commission in Costa Rica, and the cultural affairs unit is thus directly involved in directing the program and briefing its participants. The Fulbright Association has not been very active in recent years, although it has recently shown some signs of life.

However, notable evidence of the lasting impact of exchanges - and the Fulbright experience in particular - does exist. In early 2004 a former Fulbright participant working in the Office of the Comptroller General contacted the PAS for help in addressing the problem of corruption in government. This request led to what has become a full program illustrating how PAS funds, technologies, and the section's ability to access appropriate expert assistance can be used effectively for an important end. The effort began with several digital videoconferences on the general themes of anti-corruption and the need for transparency in government, and then settled on the subset of procurement fraud, the immediate issue facing Costa Rican authorities. In early 2005 the PAS organized a presentation by a Mexican-born U.S. citizen who had worked in procurement while serving in the U.S. Army and who was able to not only address the participants in Spanish but able to understand the wider cultural issues involved. The audience was so enthusiastic about the event that he returned in November 2005 for a workshop involving not only government representatives but also those of the private sector. This ad hoc anti-corruption working group thereafter drafted an agreed action plan; it will present its findings and a list of principles to the new Costa Rican government and urge that the principles be converted into an action plan. The entire effort is particularly notable as it was demand-driven and illustrates how with careful tending and imagination PAS can help translate a general need into a valuable program that meshes perfectly with wider mission goals.

The PAS has long been a partner of the Binational Center in San José, which has active arts and English language instruction programs, a major lending library of U.S.-oriented materials, and appropriate venues for cultural programs. During the inspection, OIG attended a performance by students from the State University of New York/Buffalo, part of a year long schedule of monthly performances in a “Rising Artists of the Twenty-First Century” program showcasing young performers from major U.S. arts institutions, including the Juilliard School and the University of Indiana. The program got a rousing welcome from several hundred Costa Ricans, many of them young and/or involved in the arts themselves, and was made possible in part by a PAS grant. As noted above, the Binational Center is also a valuable partner in English language teaching.

## Regional English Language Officer

The RELO, a trained and experienced teacher of English as a second language (ESL), is officially the English language liaison for five countries in Central America and three in northern South America. In addition he has worked with the public affairs sections in Colombia. Both in Costa Rica and in the other countries for which he is responsible, the RELO works to complement ongoing mission initiatives - including the donations/sales of teaching materials, the distribution of *Forum* magazine to teachers, and English classes that are supported by PAS grants - by giving workshops for practicing teachers and helping to organize country and regional conferences. The RELO spends about half his time on activities within Costa Rica and the remainder on the road where he gives workshops, encourages the local production of teaching materials, and helps train the trainers. The desire for English language instruction is strong, but even in relatively affluent nations like Costa Rica many teachers lack the fluency, knowledge of language instructional techniques, and sufficient teaching materials to match the demand for quality teaching.

Even though it is out of his official roster of countries, the RELO’s most remarkable recent activity has been the organization of a series of five webcam interactions with English language teachers in Cuba. The PAS in Havana first broached the idea of such a series with the RELO, who agreed to give what are essentially ESL methodology classes to Cuban teachers via computer - with participants at each end able to see each other on their computer screens. This was accomplished with help from the PAS audiovisual staff both in the San José and in the U.S. Interests Section in Havana. The first session drew eight teachers, the fifth 15, and a sixth session is slated for May. The RELO sends handout materials in

advance and interactively answers questions for up to an hour after his own hour-long presentation. He has also provided ESL enrichment texts for the Cuban teachers, who have received them gratefully.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2005
State – D&CP	23	6	31	60	1,711,100
State – ICASS	4	9	84	97	2,620,800 (a)
State – Public Diplomacy	4	-	13	17	571,700
State – Diplomatic Security	4	1	6	11	1,002,200
State – Marine Security	7			7	130,000
State – Representation					33,100
State – OBO					2,898,800
Foreign Commercial Service	1		6	7	52,000
USAID – OFDA *					607,000 (b)
Office of Defense Representative	5		3	8	600,000
Foreign Agricultural Service	1		4	5	342,500
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service	1		3	4	406,501 (c)
Drug Enforcement Administration	6		3	9	199,453
Peace Corps **	2	1	21	24	1,346,114
Social Security Administration	1		3	4	100,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>\$12,621,268</b>

\* Washington complement 5; contractors 16 (employed by 2 Washington companies)

\*\* Does not include 81 Peace Corps volunteers

(a) Traditional bureau funding. LGP and OBO portions of the ICASS allotment funding are reflected under the State-Diplomatic Security and State-OBO totals.

(b) Includes the operational expense budget of 27 countries that OFDA services.

(c) APHIS' regional budget.

## OVERVIEW

Overall, the management section effectively provides administrative services to Embassy San José. The American officers have good team rapport and work in a collaborative manner to accomplish their goals. OIG's workplace and quality of life questionnaire completed by Department Americans and other agency heads showed that they perceived the management section to be functioning satisfactorily. The FY 2008 MPP includes a Performance Goal Paper on management and organizational excellence that stresses developing customer oriented service. The major weakness at the mission is morale. This is true both with Americans and local employees but is lowest and most significant among the local staff. Due to time and staffing constraints, OIG focused upon issues that surfaced both during the survey phase in Washington and after OIG's arrival at the mission.

A financial management officer, a supervisory general services officer (GSO), an EFM assistant GSO, an information management officer with three direct-hire American subordinates, a facilities maintenance manager, and a community liaison office (CLO) coordinator support the management counselor. The American staff is complemented by 95 locally employed positions including seven EFMs and two other resident Americans. The following paragraphs describe management areas of special interest, those of concern, and those needing improvement.

### American Morale

Morale among the American staff and their family members is fair due to a variety of factors that include the difficulties of being accepted by Costa Rican society, dangerous road conditions, inefficient service by the Costa Rican government, and limited opportunities for EFM employment. There is a sense among some Americans that they are not welcomed socially by Costa Ricans because Costa Rica is a closed society. Some complain the city shuts down in the evenings with few activities available. The host government bureaucracy works slowly and takes lengthy periods to get anything done. The fact that the mission has not had a functioning mission language program for some months has also had an impact on adjustment and morale. Problems related to EFM employment are discussed later in this report. One American said, "Costa Rica is perceived as being this vacation paradise, when in fact, it is difficult to live here, not to mention expensive." On a more positive note, professional relationships are generally collegial.

## Locally Employed Staff

Costa Rican society values traditional ways, making it difficult for individuals to adjust to change or innovation both in the workplace and in society. Interviews with many local employees revealed a widespread belief that they displayed loyalty to the mission by remaining in its employ for years and deserved to be rewarded for this service. They openly question U.S. competitiveness and emphasis on reinvention. American officers generally find the local employees knowledgeable and experienced, but complacent, set in their ways, and not accepting of change. The LES, interestingly, is cohesive in its approach to common interests in a way not ordinarily encountered at missions. The challenge for Embassy San José is to provide leadership to harness this cohesiveness and pride in working for the mission to get the local employees to adapt to U.S. methods for achieving mission objectives.

## Rightsizing and Regionalization

Embassy San José provides regional support services to other Central American missions for the Department's environmental hub programs, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the Foreign Agricultural Service, the Social Security Administration, and the U.S. Commercial Service. A regional office of USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) covers all of Latin America except Mexico. The mission receives human resource support from the Fort Lauderdale Regional Center instead of having a resident human resources officer. The arrangement is working satisfactorily with a regional officer visiting for a week about every two months. The services of a financial management officer, however, are essential to the proper functioning of this mission. The management

counselor is stretched thin with his current responsibilities and could not also cover the financial management functions. Replacing the financial management officer with regional support would adversely affect management control oversight.

The mission compound has modern and, except for the consular section, adequate facilities. A Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) consular renovation project is underway to expand and improve the consular facilities. Except for OFDA, APHIS and the Peace Corps, all U.S. government agencies are collocated on the compound.

In the past year and a half, the mission has had one NSDD-38 request, which was for a Peace Corps position. The FY 2008 MPP includes requests for five new American direct-hires: two Department program positions, one Department ICASS position, one Department security position, and one position for the Foreign Agricultural Service. In addition, the MPP requests one LES facilities engineer. The appropriateness of these requests is discussed in the relevant sections.

## Consolidation of Services

Duplication of services is not an issue at Embassy San José. The five other agencies at the mission, for the most part each represented by one officer, have all chosen the Department as their service provider.

## International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

The ICASS council is active with regular quarterly meetings and has implemented service standards that all accepted. All serviced agencies have signed current ICASS agreements with little change in services received. The council approves issues dealing with local employee salary increases and decides on anything related to new positions. An ICASS working group successfully achieved cost savings in several areas including reducing FY 2005 overtime by 60 percent from FY 2004 and distributing mission circulars and instructions by electronic means rather than paper.

## Avian Influenza Preparedness

Mission management is supportive of avian influenza preparedness efforts. The nurse has actively spearheaded embassy activities working closely with the emergency action committee (EAC) to establish tripwires and embassy responses to them. OIG reviewed the plan, which has tripwires covering possible scenarios with

detailed actions to take in response to each including a meeting of the EAC. In November 2005, the nurse arranged a panel presentation on readiness featuring the regional medical officer, an APHIS representative, a doctor from the Ministry of Health, and a private physician specializing in infectious diseases. The presentation was open to the entire mission and was also recorded so those unable to attend could view it.

The government of Costa Rica is not prepared for a pandemic. The nurse stated that a limited number of animal-to-human cases could be well managed, but the local medical system would be overwhelmed by a pandemic. The country is not stockpiling medications or isolation supplies. Security is also a concern as Costa Rica has limited police officers and no military to deal with potential civil unrest, looting, and violence that could erupt should a pandemic occur.

The consular section disseminated information about avian flu to resident American citizens as requested by the Bureau of Consular Affairs last November in 05 STATE 202102. They sent e-mails to wardens and Americans who provided their e-mails when they registered with the embassy. No Americans have contacted the consular section with concerns about avian flu.

## Premium Travel

Premium travel for FY 2005 and the first five months of FY 2006 was for appropriate purposes and was properly approved. The management section processed 519 travel vouchers during FY 2005 with 260 of them for Department travelers. Of the 519, six employees traveled using premium class tickets and none were Department employees. Five of the premium tickets were for trips exceeding 14 hours, and the sixth was because of an emergency during Hurricane Emily when the only available ticket was premium. Between October 1, 2005, and the end of February 2006, 171 vouchers were processed with 96 for Department travelers. Four employees used premium class because their trips were over 14 hours, and all were from the Department.

## Financial Management

An experienced financial management officer heads the unit and focuses on customer service to the mission. The officer has prepared a useful written briefing for newcomers containing practical information on financial management services and how to use them. The Department appointed a local employee, who successfully completed the appropriate training, as a certifying officer. This person acts as

an alternate to the financial management officer so there is always someone available to certify funds availability. The individual has proven reliable and handles the responsibilities of the position well.

## Human Resources

Embassy San José is a successful example of the implementation of regional support based in the United States for a position normally held by a resident Foreign Service officer. The management counselor acts as the mission's human resource officer with regular support from the virtual regional human resource officer based at the Fort Lauderdale Regional Center. A senior local employee satisfactorily manages day-to-day operations. OIG noted no significant problems with the running of the office.

## Eligible Family Member Hiring

Limited opportunities for EFM employment is a major area of concern contributing to poor morale among various American direct-hire staff and their families. The Department has implemented a policy of EFM and U.S. veterans hiring preferences. Family members are told by the Department in Washington about the EFM preference and led to believe that their chances for a job at Embassy San José are high.

Budget constraints have made this impossible, however, resulting in frustration and anger that feed poor morale. In a particular instance that occurred during FY 2005, an EFM was selected for a local position, but the embassy could not afford to pay the salary, which would have been two and a half times that of a local national. Prior to denying the position to the EFM, embassy management consulted the ICASS council, WHA's Executive Office, and the Bureau of Human Resources, Office of Overseas Employment (HR/OE) in an attempt to obtain additional funds. Subsequently, a host country national was chosen for the job. Management said they supported and wanted to implement the EFM and U.S. veteran preferences but at that time did not have sufficient funds to pay the higher salaries. Creating expectations that cannot be filled has a negative effect on family morale and indirectly an adverse effect on officer retention rates.

The Department has not yet clarified the existing situation and provided accurate information on EFM opportunities. HR/OE has issued guidance on its web site stating that EFMs and veterans have a statutory preference for all local hire positions at overseas missions. Specifically, the guidance says, "...EFMs on the

best-qualified list of applicants must, repeat must be selected for a position over non-EFMs.” At the end of February 2006, HR/OE notified the mission that it had revised the local employee staff recruitment policy. The revision states, “All hiring actions are subject to the availability of funds.”

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Human Resources should provide full information regarding constraints as well as opportunities for eligible family member employment at Embassy San José to ensure that officers do not bid on positions with false expectations. (Action: DGHR)

## Mission Language Program

There has been a gap of five months in the Spanish language program for American officers due to a misunderstanding regarding available funding. The management officer is aware of the problem and has taken action both to correct it and to ensure such gaps do not occur in the future. The mission has designated a second tour consular officer as the mission language officer. Because of past problems, the program needs an experienced officer to restart and reenergize it. The Department’s 13 FAM 261.1 lists desirable qualifications for the mission language officer to include administrative experience, previous intensive language training, and an S-3/R-3 proficiency in the host country language. OIG informally recommended that the mission emphasize its commitment to providing quality language training and reevaluate its choice of a language officer.

## General Services Office

The GSO effectively supports the embassy. The section has a supervisory GSO, an EFM assistant GSO, a facility maintenance manager and 52 LES. An electronic work order system is used to take requests for motor pool, housing, expeditor services, procurement, and expendable supply services.

Overall, the section performs well in most areas and provides good customer service. A commercial contractor provides adequate travel services. The motor pool unit provides good services with minor lapses identified in informal recommendations. The property functions are managed in accordance with the Department’s regulations. However, OIG noted that the housing and facilities maintenance programs need further strengthening. Although housing is good in San José, 44 percent of the houses are over the space standards for the current occupants. The interagency housing board needs to follow the Department’s housing

standards and regulations. The customs and shipping unit lacks commercial contracts with shipping companies. The embassy does not have a formal preventive maintenance program. Other operational weaknesses were identified and informal recommendations were left to address those issues.

## Real Property

The U.S. government-owned chancery is a three-story Inman building, constructed in 1986 and occupied in 1988. In addition to the chancery, the U.S. government owns the Ambassador's residence, the DCM's residence, and an empty lot located in front of the chancery used for vehicle parking by embassy personnel.

At the time of the inspection, a consular improvement project to renovate and reconfigure the consular section was underway. Contracting assistance is provided by the Fort Lauderdale Regional Center. The consular space is discussed in the consular section of this report. An embassy perimeter security upgrade project is expected to begin later in 2006. Further details on the perimeter project are discussed in the classified annex of this report.

## Housing

OIG found that the 55 short-term leased apartments and houses that the embassy manages are in good condition despite the views of some embassy personnel as expressed in both OIG's workplace and quality of life and personal questionnaires.

OIG found that 44 percent of the missions housing units exceed the Department's maximum space standards as stated in 15 FAM 237. OIG reviewed housing board minutes from the past two years and found that housing board assigned houses knowing that they were over the Department's space standards. In addition, there was no attention to security standards in residential housing. It was the mission's policy to place staff only in houses and not in apartments. The reasons for not leasing apartments were not documented. However, the current GSO and RSO are ensuring that Department housing standards are followed. The embassy has focused on adding more apartments to its housing pool. The RSO has recertified some of the houses and made appropriate recommendations to the housing board. Although Embassy San José is working hard at rightsizing housing as staff transfers, it has not prepared a formal plan to bring its housing pool in line with Department regulations. In addition, the mission has not updated its housing profile. Having houses over the maximum space standards has created an equity problem among embassy personnel.

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy San José should submit an updated housing profile and a formal plan to reduce oversized housing to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations. (Action: Embassy San José)

Employees of the Office of the Defense Representative are on living quarters allowance. OIG found the housing units for those employees have not been in compliance with Department regulations. 15 FAM 236 states “Privately leased housing acquired by civilian employees under the living quarters allowance (LQA) program and military personnel under the overseas housing allowance (OHA) program is governed by the same space standards as U.S. government-held housing and must meet the residential security standards outlined in 12 FAM 330.” The mission interagency housing board (IAHB) must approve in advance the units proposed for private leases. Agencies under LQA have not provided the space measurements to the housing board. In addition, the facilities maintenance office has not performed safety inspections in ODR’s houses prior to occupancy. However, residential security checks are performed by the RSO. The embassy’s management counselor is the single real property manager at the mission, and ODR’s houses are not approved by the interagency housing board prior to signing leases. The embassy is not enforcing Department regulations and is not ensuring that all agencies under LQA go through the interagency housing board for approval of space and safety standards and provide the housing office with measurement updates yearly.

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy San José should require agencies under living quarters allowance to seek housing board approval for their residences before signing leases and to comply consistently with the policies and procedures outlined in the Embassy San José housing handbook and Department regulations. (Action: Embassy San José)

The housing board meets monthly and on an as-needed basis. Although the mission interagency housing board is active, OIG noted some weaknesses in its operations and procedures. According to 15 FAM 212.2-2(B)(a), “larger agencies, (such as the Department) may have one permanent representative on the board.” There are two Department representatives on the housing board. There should be only one Department representative. OIG found that the housing board has accepted appeals based on circumstances contrary to the embassy housing handbook. Some reassignments have been made without proper justifications. Consequently, the housing board appeal process needs to be strengthened. The role of

the housing board members needs to be in accordance with 15 FAM 212.2-2(C). In one instance, OIG found that the housing board did not approve an appropriate apartment on the basis that the bedroom was too small. The apartment was appropriate for the officer who was assigned to it. OIG made informal recommendations on these issues.

## Procurement and Contracting

The unit handles a large number of contracting activities and executed more than 950 procurement actions in FY 2005 totaling about \$4 million. Sampled procurements were properly competed and kept in order. The unit would benefit by using a uniform automated system, such as the Department's Web Post Administrative Software Suite for standard processes. At the time of the inspection, the procurement and the budget and fiscal units were awaiting training on the use of the software. The purchase cards are not being used efficiently. The budget and fiscal section only bulk fund the purchase cards up to \$500 limit. OIG made an informal recommendation on this issue.

## Facilities Maintenance

Sufficient emphasis is not being placed on establishing a safety program. A visit from the Department's safety, health and environmental management (SHEM) office took place in February 2006, and a report with safety recommendations will be issued in April 2006. Prior to the arrival of the inspection team, the facilities maintenance manager sent an electronic administrative notice about the mission's SHEM program to all embassy personnel. However, a fully functioning SHEM program does not yet exist at the embassy. According to 6 FAM 614.3-2, the SHEM committee should meet at least semiannually, and written minutes of each SHEM meeting should be maintained by the mission occupational safety and health officer. The committee has yet to meet. SHEM issues have not received the attention needed. For example, the embassy has had two mishaps in the past six months, and they have not been discussed in the SHEM committee. In view of deficiencies in this area, OIG believes that sustained engagement from the embassy is necessary to protect employee health and safety.

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy San José should implement a comprehensive safety, health and environmental management program, and the safety, health and environmental management committee should meet semiannually or more frequently, as needed. (Action: Embassy San José)

## Preventive Maintenance

The embassy does not have a robust preventive maintenance program in place to maintain government-owned properties properly. This issue was raised in the 2001 OIG inspection report. The embassy's physical plant includes chillers, generators, boilers, and security equipment that require regular maintenance. Missions are required to develop preventive maintenance programs under the Department 15 FAH-1 H-118 guidance. The embassy has started to inventory and identify the equipment and create permanent files and records of maintenance work. Although the embassy has started to implement corrective actions, it needs to establish a formal preventive maintenance program. OIG left an informal recommendation on this issue.

## Property Management

Embassy San José is preparing to submit its annual property management report to the Department. The Department's Property Management Branch reviewed the embassy's property management operations in December 2005. The report concluded that the property management operations at the embassy are adequate and left several recommendations addressing inventory problems. At the time of the inspection, the embassy was implementing corrective actions to address those recommendations. During the inspection, OIG found two minor irregularities and made informal recommendations.

## Motor Pool

The maintenance of vehicles and the responsiveness of the motor pool received the highest scores in the workplace and quality of life questionnaires. OIG found that the vehicle fleet is adequate for the size of this mission. However, more careful record keeping is needed. Some of the Daily Vehicle Use Record (OF 108) forms' reverse sides were not completed, and signatures of passengers were missing, contrary to the instructions in 14 FAM 418.6-1. Official vehicles do not have reminders on the use of seatbelts. OIG made informal recommendations addressing these minor operational deficiencies.

## Customs and Shipping

Delays of up to six weeks in the clearance of household effects (HHE) and privately owned vehicles (POV) have been a morale issue, and delays in official shipments have been a significant operational problem. OIG found that the problem lies with the Costa Rican government. With forceful support from mission management, the mission has been able to secure concessions from the Costa Rican government to shorten the wait times considerably. The mission is planning to make formal arrangements with the newly elected Costa Rican government.

OIG reviewed the cables that the mission sends to incoming officers and found that they do not include any information about potential delays in HHE or POV shipments. OIG made an informal recommendation to include in its cables and on its web site information about potential delays of HHE and POVs.

## EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Embassy San José has two qualified, fully trained EEO counselors and a Federal Women's Program coordinator. Their names and contact information are displayed prominently in various places in the embassy. The mission has the Department's sexual harassment policy both in English and in Spanish on its bulletin boards. The embassy has no pending EEO cases.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SECURITY

Embassy San José's information management (IM) program meets the needs of its approximately 200 users in multiple locations (chancery, GSO warehouse, Ambassador's residence, and Marine house). The IM office operates and maintains the unclassified and classified networks, telephone and radio programs, and the mail and pouch systems. Staffing consists of four U.S. direct-hires and 15 LES. All IM employees are committed to ensuring that all operations work with minimum disruption. However, OIG identified some areas for improvement: including its equipment in the Department's Worldwide Property Accountability Systems (WPAS), position descriptions, and Section 508 requirements. OIG identified an

issue with information security that is discussed in the classified annex. Additionally, OIG does not concur with the request in the embassy's FY 2008 MPP for another U.S. direct-hire IM position, as it believes the section already has sufficient personnel to manage its program.

The IM officer has managed his resources well and has created an environment of mutual respect and camaraderie. The IM staff is knowledgeable and proactive, as evidenced by the IM specialist and the LES computer staff who reconfigured 198 unclassified workstations in one month. The IM office is piloting an automated application that uses the digital signature from the Department's global identification badge to create, send, and process leave requests.

## Inventory System

The IM office's nonexpendable property is not inventoried in WPAS. According to 06 State 8942, all posts are required to complete an annual inventory of nonexpendable property in WPAS. Although the Department plans to replace WPAS with two integrated applications, the cable states that this cannot be accomplished until missions reconcile their WPAS inventory. The IM office's lack of an inventory in the WPAS system is contributing to a global discrepancy in the Department's property management program.

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy San José should inventory its information management nonexpendable property in the Worldwide Property Accountability Systems Application. (Action: Embassy San José)

## Work Requirement Statements

Work requirement statements of some IM staff lack security responsibilities. OIG reviewed all the IM staff's work requirement statements. With the exception of the computer operations staff and the U.S. direct-hires, no one had statements regarding security responsibilities. In this post-September 11, 2001, environment it is essential that the switchboard operators, radio technicians, and mailroom staff are aware of the security responsibilities related to their occupations. When per-

sonnel are not aware of how critical security is in their occupations, the embassy is left vulnerable in several ways including improperly screened mail and damage to people or the compound due to lack of training. OIG left an informal recommendation on this issue.

## Section 508

The embassy's webmasters and their supervisors have no training in or awareness of the requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. This act requires all federal agencies to ensure that information technology is accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public, unless an undue burden would be imposed on the department or agency. All personnel responsible for developing and maintaining web sites on the Department's Internet and Intranet need to be aware of federal requirements regarding Section 508, as do their supervisors. Failure to ensure the federal web sites are tested and accessible to the disabled limits the web sites' usability for the disabled and makes them noncompliant with the Rehabilitation Act. OIG left an informal recommendation on this issue.

**Best Practice:** Electronic Leave System

**Issue:** The front office desired a quick way to determine if key officers were on leave and/or travel. The existing process was slow and generated a lot of paper.

**Response:** The front office, management counselor, financial management office, and information management office collaborated to determine user requirements for an automated system to track leave. The mission decided to use the Department-approved public key infrastructure system to obtain a digital signature on leave requests, thus eliminating the need for paper.

**Result:** The system is in the initiation phase and is available on the desktop for the front office, management counselor, and information management office. It has resulted in an easier automated process and has reduced the need for paper files. The system should be available to all mission personnel beginning March 13, 2006.

## Information Security

With the one exception discussed in the classified annex, the embassy's computers are properly configured according to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's guidelines. All information systems security documentation is completed and current. Additionally, the embassy is currently working with the Department to install the newest version of patch installation software, although recent patches cannot be updated until the installation process is complete.



## QUALITY OF LIFE

Costa Rica is often viewed as a paradise. With no armed forces, prosperity (relative to its neighbors), political stability, and a peaceful and well-educated citizenry, Costa Rica is seen as a country easy to live in. These factors make many Foreign Service officers bid on this mission. However, that is not the reality. In Costa Rica, the roads are perceived to be the worst in Central America, crime is on the rise, and simple services such as ordering cable or telephone services can take weeks. The reality of life in Costa Rica is tougher than the perception generally held in Washington.

(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)  
(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)  
(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)  
(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)  
(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)  
(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)  
(b)(2)(b)(6)  
(b)(2)(b)(6)

## COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

Embassy San José has an active CLO coordinator and a Strategic Networking Assistance Program coordinator. Embassy personnel are relatively pleased with the CLO-sponsored recreation activities. The sponsorship program received high marks on OIG questionnaires. The CLO developed a sponsorship policy that describes the duties of a sponsor and suggests activities to do with the incoming officer. In addition, the CLO has a child sponsorship program in which a child from the mission corresponds with an incoming child. OIG applauds this effort.

The CLO is active in the mission EAC and attends country team meetings. Although CLO activities are well attended, there is a perception among some mission employees that those activities are primarily targeted at families. OIG found that the CLO has events that are oriented for those officers who are single or childless, including bowling nights and trips. OIG noted that the CLO office and the Marines do not cosponsor activities. OIG informally recommended that the CLO and the Marines cosponsor events at both the Marine House and the embassy compound to bring the embassy community closer together.

## AMERICAN EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATION

Formally known as the United States Cooperative Exchange, the association provides limited services consisting of a small commissary, gasoline sales, video rentals, and film developing. For the period January through September 2005, it earned a \$2,000 profit. The association has an annual audit conducted by a certified public accountant. The last available one covering calendar year 2004, issued in April 2005, includes specific recommendations to improve management controls. The association has made progress on implementing them but still has more to do. The prior OIG inspection also noted management control weaknesses.

The key weakness is a lack of separation of duties as the association has but one employee. OIG also noted the sole employee is paid extra not to take vacation time. While there is no reason to question the integrity of this employee, prudent management requires both separation of duties and vacation time to prevent possible misappropriation of funds. Hiring a second employee on a part-time basis is the apparent solution, but this requires increased income. The board of directors has attempted to address the situation by requesting volunteers to work alone in the commissary so the employee can take leave. OIG discussed the problems of using volunteers to handle cash with the board president. An employee is bonded in case of theft, whereas a variety of volunteers who come and go while working a few hours here and there would not be. To bond every volunteer is not financially feasible. In addition, the mission has a potential liability in the event a volunteer suffers an accident. The board president agreed to seek other means of separating duties. One possible solution the board is actively working on would reduce costs by finding less expensive means for shipping merchandise to the embassy. OIG informally recommended that the association continue to pursue reducing costs, try to increase income, and find the means to hire a second, part-time employee.

## HEALTH UNIT

The health unit provides quality service to mission personnel and is well regarded by the employees. An ordinarily resident American nurse staffs the unit with support from the regional medical officer in San Salvador. In addition, in accordance with the practice of the host country social medical system, the mission has a contract with host country doctors to come to the unit about five hours per week to treat host national employees. As described above, the nurse is an essential participant in the mission's avian influenza preparedness.



## MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Overall, based on a limited review, Embassy San José's internal controls are satisfactory. The Chief of Mission signed the annual management controls certification on June 5, 2005, verifying that the embassy management control systems provided adequate assurance that management control objectives were achieved. The certification did note three reportable conditions regarding inadequate closeout procedures for INL accounts, lack of a comprehensive maintenance plan, and inadequate contract closeout procedures. The mission is taking corrective actions to address these deficiencies.

The embassy completed a risk assessment questionnaire for embassies in November 2005, and the scores by function were all above 85 percent, with four scoring 100 percent. The Ambassador designated the management officer as the mission's management controls officer, and the officer focuses time and attention on this responsibility. The consular section pays close attention to internal management controls and maintains well-organized logs and inventories. OIG found no areas of vulnerability in the consular section.

## SCHOOL GRANTS

At the time of the inspection, the (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) and the (b) (6) received grants in the amount of \$40,000 and \$11,000, respectively, from the Department. OIG reviewed the schools' grants files and found they are in accordance with the Department's regulations.

## LOCAL GUARD CONTRACT AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY GRANTS

Embassy San José's local guard contract expired on February 28, 2005. The embassy was chosen as a pilot embassy to have its local guard contract managed by the Department's Office of Acquisition Management. The Department contract representative signed a bridge contract costing \$650,000 from March 1, 2005, until January 31, 2006. On January 31, 2006, the Department was not prepared to enter

into a new contract and had to extend the bridge contract until July 31, 2006, for an additional amount of \$400,000. The management of the contract from the Department was poor and inefficient. The mission will manage the new local guard contract. At the time of the inspection, the mission was in the solicitation process and is on track to have a contract in place by the expiration date of the extended contract.

OIG's review of billing invoices submitted in 2005 found that the embassy uses the guards' electronic monitoring systems reports to verify actual hours worked by local guards. The mission deducts from contract payments when services are not delivered. OIG reviewed the public affairs section's grants for the FY 2005 and found that they are in accordance with Department and federal regulations.

## CUSTOMS AND SHIPPING

The embassy fired a customs and shipping employee in August 2005 because he was receiving kickbacks from the contract shipping company, and the embassy subsequently terminated its contract with that company. As a management control, the embassy started using purchase orders to solicit shipping services and paying for such services with purchase cards. This practice is contrary to Federal Acquisition Regulations Part 12 (Acquisition of Commercial Items). In reviewing the purchase requests, OIG found that there was no competition in acquiring the services. The costs of the services provided by the shipment companies are above the micro purchase threshold. No reasonable service standards for the proper protection of effects to ensure high quality service in packing, crating, and shipping household effects were established with the shipping companies. Having a formal contract with shipping companies and using the proper form of payment would promote transparency in pricing, further competition in the local marketplace, and significantly cut the paperwork burden for the procurement section.

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy San José should prepare and award formal contracts to local shipping companies, use the proper form of payment, and establish service standards for the proper protection of shipping effects. (Action: Embassy San José)

## FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Human Resources should provide full information regarding constraints as well as opportunities for eligible family member employment at Embassy San José to ensure that officers do not bid on positions with false expectations. (Action: DGHR)

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy San José should submit an updated housing profile and a formal plan to reduce oversize housing to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations. (Action: Embassy San José)

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy San José should require agencies under living quarters allowance to seek housing board approval for their residences before signing leases and to comply consistently with the policies and procedures outlined in the Embassy San José housing handbook and Department regulations. (Action: Embassy San José)

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy San José should implement a comprehensive safety, health and environmental management program, and the safety, health and environmental management committee should meet semiannually or more frequently, as needed. (Action: Embassy San José)

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy San José should inventory its information management nonexpendable property in the Worldwide Property Accountability Systems Application. (Action: Embassy San José)

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy San José should prepare and award formal contracts to local shipping companies, use the proper form of payment, and establish service standards for the proper protection of shipping effects. (Action: Embassy San José)



## 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.

### *Executive Direction*

Changes in embassy security procedures have had the unintended result of offending some local officials. Some employees believe the security program is carried out in a less than diplomatic manner.

**Informal Recommendation 1:** Embassy San Jose should hold a Town Hall meeting to brief staff on new security procedures, to listen to their concerns, and to generate mission-wide understanding and buy-in for the mission security posture.

The activity level of the entry-level officer program has ebbed over the past six months.

**Informal Recommendation 2:** Embassy San Jose should reenergize the entry-level officer program to include a series of one-on-one meetings between the deputy chief of mission and the entry-level officers.

On occasion the offices of the environmental hub and the English language officer have not had timely administrative support for their regional activities.

**Informal Recommendation 3:** Embassy San José should review and disseminate Department guidance, such as 05 State 155567, on mission support for regional offices and ensure that all mission elements comply with it.

### *Political and Economic Sections*

The recently elected new Costa Rican government is likely to include new members for whom the mission has little or no biographic information.

**Informal Recommendation 4:** Embassy San José should ensure that all its biographic files are up-to-date and that particular attention is given to creating biographies for important members of the new government, new legislators, and other potential leaders.

The economic section head, in addition to his regular duties, backs up the environmental hub officer and the heads of two other U.S. government agencies when they are on leave or traveling in support of their regional responsibilities.

**Informal Recommendation 5:** Embassy San José should review the backup duties assigned to the economic section head and determine whether they remain with that officer or could be assigned more equitably and appropriately elsewhere.

### *Consular Operations*

ELOs in the consular section would benefit from more responsibility and a more active role in establishing the career development goals for their tours.

**Informal Recommendation 6:** Embassy San José should have the consular section chief assign entry-level officers supervisory responsibilities as unit chiefs and use the work requirements form as an individual development plan for each entry-level officer during their consular tour.

There is an orientation plan for new ELOs but little locally prepared material, including written standard operating procedures.

**Informal Recommendation 7:** Embassy San José should ensure that when the consular renovation project is completed and the section is fully staffed the section draft standard operating procedures for all consular procedures.

The section's refusal rate for NIV applications has fluctuated by about 10 percent up and down in the last three years.

**Informal Recommendation 8:** Embassy San José should conduct a validation study of all applicants for tourist/business visas.

Some adjudicating visa officers do not feel that they have the current terrorism trend information they need to determine which visa applicants warrant more scrutiny.

**Informal Recommendation 9:** Embassy San José should see that each newly arrived consular officer receives a general terrorism trend briefing from the regional

security officer and that all consular officers get periodic terrorism update briefings from sections having responsibility for counterterrorism issues.

### ***Information Management***

Work requirement statements for some of the IM staff lack security requirements.

**Informal Recommendation 10:** Embassy San José should revise the locally employed staff's work requirement statements to include specific security responsibilities.

Neither the IM employees responsible for web site development, nor their supervisors, have awareness of or training in Section 508 requirements.

**Informal Recommendation 11:** The information management webmasters and their supervisors should take the necessary Section 508 training.

### ***Mission Language Program***

The mission has designated a second-tour consular officer as the mission language officer and is not adhering to the language officer requirements of 13 FAM 261.1. There have been problems in the program including a five-month gap in the Spanish program for American officers.

**Informal Recommendation 12:** Embassy San José should review its selection of mission language officer in accordance with Department regulations and emphasize to the mission its commitment to the language program.

### **General Services Office**

#### ***Housing***

The interagency housing board has two representatives from the Department. According to 15 FAM 221.2-2 (B), "Larger agencies, (such as State), may have one permanent representative on the board."

**Informal Recommendation 13:** Embassy San José's interagency housing board should have one Department of State representative.

The interagency housing board reassigns houses based on circumstances that are contrary to the embassy's housing handbook.

**Informal Recommendation 14:** Embassy San Jose's interagency housing board should follow the conditions stated in the embassy's housing handbook regarding housing reassignments.

The interagency housing board is not following its role as outlined in 15 FAM 212.2-2(C).

**Informal Recommendation 15:** Embassy San Jose's interagency housing board should follow the guidance established by Department regulations.

### ***Procurement and Contracting***

The budget and fiscal section only bulk fund purchase cards up to \$500. Any purchase above \$500 must be approved and funded separately.

**Informal Recommendation 16:** Embassy San Jose should bulk fund purchase cards above the \$500 limit up to \$2,500.

The LES who works solely in contracting issues does not report to the LES procurement supervisor but rather to the general service officer.

**Informal Recommendation 17:** Embassy San Jose should reassign the locally employed staff that works solely in contracting issues to the supervision of the locally employed staff procurement supervisor.

Embassy San Jose does not have standard operating procedures between the procurement unit and budget and fiscal section.

**Informal Recommendation 18:** Embassy San Jose should develop standard operating procedures between the procurement unit and budget and fiscal section.

### ***Facilities Maintenance***

Embassy San Jose does not have a formal preventive maintenance program.

**Informal Recommendation 19:** Embassy San Jose should establish a formal preventive maintenance program.

***Property Management***

Embassy San Jose does not have inventory overage documentation.

**Informal Recommendation 20:** Embassy San Jose should prepare an inventory overage document and keep it with the annual property management report.

Although spot checks of inventories have started, there were no records that such spot checks have been performed or how often those spot checks were done.

**Informal Recommendation 21:** Embassy San Jose should conduct periodic spot checks of inventories, document those spot checks inventories, and make corrections if needed.

***Motor Pool***

The *Daily Vehicle Use Record* forms (OF-108) are not always signed.

**Informal Recommendation 22:** Embassy San Jose should require all passengers to sign the *Daily Vehicle Use Record* form (OF-108).

Embassy San Jose does not have reminders on the use of seatbelts in its official vehicles.

**Informal Recommendation 23:** Embassy San Jose should place reminders on the use of seatbelts inside official vehicles.

***Customs and Shipping***

Notice of potential delays of household effects and privately owned vehicles are not included in the cables sent by the mission or on its web site.

**Informal Recommendation 24:** Embassy San Jose should include information about potential delays of household effects and privately owned vehicles in its cable to newly assigned officers and on its web site.

***Community Liaison Office***

The Marines and the community liaison office do not cosponsor events at the Marine House or in the embassy compound.

**Informal Recommendation 25:** Embassy San Jose's Marine guard detachment and the community liaison office should cosponsor events at the Marine House and in the embassy compound.

*American Employee Association*

The American Employee Association has only one employee and lacks separation of duties. The sole employee is paid extra not to take vacation time.

**Informal Recommendation 26:** Embassy San Jose's American Employee Association should pursue ways to reduce costs and increase income and should find the means to hire a second, part-time employee.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Mark Langdale	11/05
Deputy Chief of Mission	Russell Frisbie	08/05
<b>Chiefs of Sections:</b>		
Management	Scott McAdoo	08/04
Consular	David Dreher	09/05
Political	Frederick Kaplan	12/02
Economic	Whitney Witteman	06/04
Public Affairs	Laurie Weitzenkorn	08/04
Regional Security	Michael Wilkins	09/04
<b>Other Agencies:</b>		
Department of Agriculture		
Foreign Agricultural Service	Katie Nishiura	09/04
Animal/Plant Health Inspection Service	John Stewart	11/04
Department of Commerce		
U.S. Commercial Service	James McCarthy	07/04
Department of Defense		
Office of Defense Representative	Cmdr. Aylwyn Young	07/05

Department of Health and Human Services		
Social Security Administration	Roberto Santis	08/02
Department of Justice		
Drug Enforcement Administration	Paul Knierim	07/05
Peace Corps	Terry Grumley	08/04
U.S. Agency for International Development		
Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (Regional)	Tim Callaghan	01/02

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	American citizens services
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
CAFTA-DR	Central America-Dominican Republic- United States Free Trade Agreement
CLO	Community liaison office
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
Department	U.S. Department of State
EAC	Emergency action committee
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFM	Eligible family member
ELO	Entry-level officer
ESL	English as a second language
FSN	Foreign Service national
GSO	General services office(r)
G/TIP	Office To Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
HHE	Household effects
IAHB	Interagency housing board
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IM	Information management
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

LE	Law enforcement
LES	Locally employed staff
LQA	Living quarters allowance
MPP	Mission Performance Plan
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NIV	Nonimmigrant visa
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
ODR	Office of the Defense Representative
OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PAS	Public affairs section
POV	Privately owned vehicle
RELO	Regional English language officer
RSO	Regional security office(r)
SHEM	Safety, health and environmental management
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
WPAS	Worldwide property accountability systems

**FRAUD, WASTE, ABUSE, OR MISMANAGEMENT**  
of Federal programs  
and resources hurts everyone.

Call the Office of Inspector General  
**HOTLINE**  
**202-647-3320**  
**or 1-800-409-9926**  
**or e-mail [oighotline@state.gov](mailto:oighotline@state.gov)**  
to report illegal or wasteful activities.

You may also write to  
Office of Inspector General  
U.S. Department of State  
Post Office Box 9778  
Arlington, VA 22219  
Please visit our Web site at:  
<http://oig.state.gov>

Cables to the Inspector General  
should be slugged "OIG Channel"  
to ensure confidentiality.