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

Report of Inspection

U.S. Mission to the North
Atlantic Treaty Organization
Brussels, Belgium

Report Number ISP-I-10-12, December 2009

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PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

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

PURPOSE

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the BBG, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and the BBG. Inspections cover three broad areas, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980:

- **Policy Implementation:** whether policy goals and objectives are being effectively achieved; whether U.S. interests are being accurately and effectively represented; and whether all elements of an office or mission are being adequately coordinated.
- **Resource Management:** whether resources are being used and managed with maximum efficiency, effectiveness, and economy and whether financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- **Management Controls:** whether the administration of activities and operations meets the requirements of applicable laws and regulations; whether internal management controls have been instituted to ensure quality of performance and reduce the likelihood of mismanagement; whether instances of fraud, waste, or abuse exist; and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

METHODOLOGY

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



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

Office of Inspector General

PREFACE

This report was prepared by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, and Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended. It is one of a series of audit, inspection, investigative, and special reports prepared by OIG periodically as part of its responsibility to promote effective management, accountability and positive change in the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

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

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

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

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

Harold W. Geisel
Deputy Inspector General

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KEY JUDGMENTS

This inspection report on the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should be read in conjunction with, *Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels, Belgium*, ISP-I-10-15.

- The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (USNATO) plays a crucial role in addressing key U.S. national security challenges within and outside Europe, including Afghanistan.
- USNATO is unique among U.S. diplomatic establishments since its Ambassador reports to both the Secretaries of State and Defense.
- The mission maintained its effectiveness despite unprecedented turnovers in Ambassadors and other staff over a period of 16 months because of the efforts of its high quality State and Department of Defense staff and their professionalism. The recent arrival of a new ambassador and deputy chief of mission (DCM) should initiate a period of stability.
- The political section supported a high number of important visitors in recent months, including the President, the Vice President, and the Secretaries of Defense and State. Its officers function extremely well despite long hours and constant pressure.
- In recent years, USNATO has increasingly reported through email and should return to using front channel cables for important reports and most instructions.
- In its separate report *Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels, Belgium*, ISP-I-10-15, the OIG team addressed the need for improved communication and coordination among missions, and addressed a formal recommendation on this subject to all three Brussels missions, with specific suggestions as to how this could be accomplished.
- Given the importance of the joint administrative services (JAS) section to the functioning and morale of all three missions, USNATO leadership should join with the front offices of Embassy Brussels and the U.S. Mission to the European Union (USEU) to assume greater collective responsibility for overseeing and supporting JAS.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between April 13 and May 1, 2009; and in Brussels, Belgium, between June 1 and 10, 2009. (b) (6)(b) (6)
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CONTEXT

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been vital to U.S. national security for 60 years, because the United States benefits from a democratic, prosperous, and secure Europe. The organization is the ideal platform for addressing key U.S. goals: working with European allies on a global security agenda; supporting the work of building a whole and free Europe; dealing with a less democratic and more aggressive Russia; and rebuilding a strategic partnership with Turkey.

The vast change in the post Cold War global security environment is reflected in NATO: the organization's membership has grown from 16 to 28 countries over the last two decades, and several more states hope to join in the future. The organization has built partnerships across the globe—from the Middle East to Central Asia and Australia. It leads operations in Afghanistan and the Balkans, defends against terrorists, pirates, and weapons of mass destruction, and helps the African Union build security capacity. NATO is highly operational yet needs further modernization to cope with rebuilding the sense of U.S.-European community; succeeding in Afghanistan; developing a consensus on Russia and its neighbors; concluding the operation in the Balkans and integrating that region into Europe; and focusing on future challenges (energy and cyber security, missile defense, failed states, and violent extremism).

Achieving U.S. interests requires foreign leaders and their people to be convinced of the continued vitality of the Alliance. USNATO is working with NATO on a comprehensive public diplomacy approach. It is unique among U.S. diplomatic posts since its Ambassador reports jointly to the Departments of Defense and State. USNATO is also managing our interests in the construction of a new NATO headquarters building to be finished in 2015 and estimated to cost \$2 billion.

Since its founding in 1949, NATO has evolved from a military alliance aimed at defending Western Europe from Soviet aggression to a broader political/military organization that largely focuses on peacekeeping and cooperation. The continued expansion of its membership, the return of France to full participation, and the embrace of security roles in places outside Europe, such as Afghanistan, will all impact the future development of NATO.

USNATO's work is heavily dictated by a focus on operational issues, such as Afghanistan, and by an intense schedule of committee meetings and high-level events. Nevertheless, the mission appears to have made a conscious effort to examine and report on larger institutional changes taking place within the organization, and their implications for its future purposes, cohesiveness, and effectiveness.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

USNATO is unique among U.S. diplomatic establishments, with 101 U.S. direct-hires representing the Departments of State, Defense, and Homeland Security. The mission attracts high caliber people from all three Departments. Three drivers comprise the only locally employed (LE) staff. A military delegation, not under chief of mission authority, reports to the Department of Defense's Joint Chiefs of Staff. Uniquely, the Ambassador reports to both the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense.

In the 16 months prior to the inspection, USNATO twice suffered the simultaneous departure of its Ambassador and DCM. During August 2008, all seven officials in the mission's front office—the Ambassador, the DCM, two office management specialists (OMS), an executive officer, a management assistant, and a protocol assistant—departed, providing not even a semblance of continuity. The mission survived these extraordinary dislocations, due to the exceptional quality and professionalism of the mission's mid-level officers, who were called upon to fill the void; the strong support provided by the mission's senior military representatives; and the experience and leadership of the incoming Ambassador.

A highly regarded career officer who had served at USNATO, on the NATO international staff, and as principal deputy in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs with responsibility for both NATO and the European Union (EU), the new Ambassador moved quickly to reaffirm mission goals and objectives, create a sense of teamwork among mission elements, and establish relationships with NATO members and secretariat staff. His knowledge of NATO history and process, together with his unique access to senior policymakers across the interagency spectrum in Washington, gave him instant credibility with the mission's military advisor, who represents the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Office of the U.S. Military Representative to NATO (representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff).

No less impressive was the Ambassador's success in gaining the confidence of senior members of the incoming Administration, which specifically included his regular and valued participation in classified videoconferences with senior Department of State, Department of Defense, and National Security Council officials. In addition, the Ambassador expanded and deepened the role played by his two immediate predecessors as the principal U.S. spokesperson on the U.S. commitment to, and future aspirations for, the Alliance at a time when many were skeptical and

critical of both. When he stepped down in early May, soon after overseeing President Obama's highly successful participation in his first NATO summit, the Ambassador could point to a significant record of accomplishment, even though his tour spanned only 9 months.

The Ambassador was ably assisted by a former Foreign Service officer whom the Department agreed to bring back from retirement to fill the DCM position that otherwise would have remained vacant. During his 5 months on the job, the acting DCM, himself a NATO veteran, contributed importantly to the re-establishment of orderly front office process and procedure, in addition to taking on several festering management issues that were undermining staff and community morale.

As discussed in the separate inspection report on Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels, the JAS section responsible for providing administrative support to all three Brussels missions has been adversely affected over the past year by position cuts, staffing gaps, and budget constraints. Both USEU and USNATO tend to defer to the Embassy's leadership in exercising oversight over JAS operations. Given the importance of JAS to the functioning and morale of all three missions, the OIG team informally recommended in the inspection report on Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels, that the leadership of all three missions take collective ownership and responsibility for JAS, especially in sharing the burden of communicating on administrative support issues and lending their collective influence in addressing critical resource issues.

Fittingly and in keeping with a strong tradition, the new Administration's appointee as Ambassador to NATO comes with impeccable and unimpeachable credentials. His widely respected expertise on NATO derives from three decades of dedication to the subject as a scholar and writer, a congressional staff member and a National Security Council staff director in a previous Administration. Within hours of his arrival in mid-May, while the inspection was underway, he had already launched the initial phase of his mission, which was to explain clearly to NATO partners and his own staff, the new Administration's intended approach to strengthening the U.S.-NATO relationship. Importantly, he also signaled his intention to build upon his predecessor's collaborative approach to working with all elements of the U.S. representation to NATO.

This last objective will pose its own set of challenges. A first-time visitor to USNATO is often struck by the compartmentalization of the three principal elements of the U.S. representation. The physical structure and layout of the building itself compromises a flexible and collaborative working environment, but the principal constraints remain institutional and cultural. The space configuration seems especially anachronistic given intense discussion in Washington on how to promote

tighter interagency integration. That same philosophy seems to guide other important NATO missions; for example, the United Kingdom reorganized its offices in a way that brings the three elements of its NATO representation—which mirror U.S. representation—into a shared space. The construction of the USNATO office wing within the new NATO headquarters building will provide an opportunity to rethink how the three U.S. elements interact.

Recommendation 1: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in coordination with the Bureaus of European and Eurasian Affairs and Overseas Buildings Operations, should report its views on whether space in the new North Atlantic Treaty Organization headquarters building should be configured to integrate work space for diplomatic and military representatives. (Action: USNATO, in coordination with EUR and OBO)

Despite these limitations, and in contrast to the situation found during the 2004 OIG inspection, a culture of interagency collaboration seems to be developing. Mission staff attribute this to the philosophy and example of the outgoing and incoming mission chiefs, as well as to the experience and professionalism of the current senior Department of Defense officials. Organizationally, this collaboration is manifested in teams established with representatives from all three elements of USNATO (the Department, the Office of the Defense Advisor, and the Military Representative).

Mission Strategic Plan and Tri-Mission Coordination

USNATO's Mission Strategic Plan is a model of clarity and conciseness. The plan details how mission resources will be deployed in support of five overarching policy goals, and identifies additional resources required to achieve them. There is a growing convergence in the policy agendas and priorities of the three Brussels missions, which strongly argue for the development of methods to enhance communication and collaboration. The issue of coordination among the three missions is detailed further in the Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels inspection report.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

A large political section carries out most of the mission's work with NATO's international staff and the permanent representations of the 27 other member countries. It works closely with the Office of the Defense Advisor, which is manned by Department of Defense personnel. The mission now does much of its work through a system of 26 combined political-military teams that focus on key issues. All but a few contain at least one Department officer and representation from the Office of the Defense Advisor and the U.S. military delegation to NATO. The OIG team found this approach significantly improved coordination among all three groups.

An FS-01 political advisor leads the political section, which is divided into a five-officer operations and policy unit, and a five-officer partners unit. It is supported by three OMSs and a visitors assistant. A new position will be added in summer 2009, when two officers at USNATO and Embassy Kabul swap positions at 6-month intervals during a 2-year assignment to provide support to the growing International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, which has nearly 60,000 troops largely from NATO countries. This position will augment the work of the single political officer who is currently covering Afghanistan developments.

The section is temporarily undermanned due to prolonged gaps in the political advisor and a unit chief position. Both officers were reassigned in spring 2009, but their replacements will not arrive until the fall. An internal redistribution of work ensures all issues remain adequately covered. Current officer staffing levels are appropriate, but the section does not require three OMS positions. Even though the OMS workload spikes at certain times of the year, including during ministerial meetings, a review of workloads during FY 2009 showed that there was not enough work to keep three OMSs busy, especially after the section added an administrative assistant to help manage its heavy visitor load.

At the same time, as discussed elsewhere in this report, the public affairs (PA) office has identified the need for a full-time Foreign Service OMS position. Accordingly, the OIG team recommended the mission seek the necessary authorization to transfer one OMS position from the political to the PA office.

Recommendation 2: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should request authorization from the Bureau of Human Resources to reprogram one office management specialist position from the mission's political section to its public affairs section. (Action: USNATO, in coordination with EUR and HR)

The section largely focuses on regional issues and political-military affairs, with added emphasis on terrorism, counternarcotics, nonproliferation, human rights, and relations with other multilateral organizations. Its dedicated officers work long hours in a demanding environment. The section is nearly always busy. NATO regularly hosts five ministerial level meetings each year; there have been three summits in the past 4 years. Since the beginning of 2009, the section helped support several high-level meetings, including Presidential and Vice Presidential visits, ministerial meetings, and visits by senior political and military officials. Since the 2004 OIG inspection, the section has added a full-time administrative assistant devoted to supporting approximately 5,500 U.S. Government visitors to NATO each year.

Committee meetings drive the work. Section officers represent the United States on NATO working-level committees, which prepare the agenda for the weekly meeting of the North Atlantic Council that the Ambassador attends. The North Atlantic Council is NATO's top policy body and organizes semiannual ministerial meetings attended by the Secretaries of State and Defense, as well as the biannual summit of NATO heads of government. The preparation for and the results of these meetings comprise the bulk of political reporting, which in recent years has been largely transmitted by email rather than by front channel messages. However, the incoming post leadership recognizes the importance of cable traffic and is endeavoring to increase the number of cables to effectively distribute messages to readers in Washington and to embassies in NATO member states, as well as to facilitate easy message retrieval.

The mission has problems receiving documents for committee meetings in a timely manner. Written by NATO's international staff, the discussion papers are sometimes not received sufficiently in advance to allow the political section and Washington officials to analyze them properly. The mission acted on the 2004 inspection recommendation to develop more personal contacts on the international staff in order to get earlier, informal notification of developments and documents. This has alleviated the timing problem to some extent, but further improvements should be sought in the context of revamping NATO headquarters procedures.

Another difficulty arises from the fact that NATO documents and communication to the mission from other permanent delegations to NATO are sent via a communications system whose output has to be reloaded into the USNATO message system. While these message transfers by the mission information technology (IT) section occur several times daily, this may not be frequent enough. The OIG team left an informal recommendation on this issue. Political officers spend a great deal of time reviewing documents to determine whether action is necessary. They are training OMSs to help them in this time-consuming task.

Washington readers praised the timeliness of political reporting and its excellent analysis and recommendations. Washington guidance is generally timely and from high levels, given the nature of work at NATO and the importance of most of NATO's agenda to U.S. national interests. Increasingly, the mission is receiving its instructions by email instead of cable. While this helps reduce frustrations with delays attributable to the Washington clearance process, it does raise questions of coordination and authority. While the mission needs prompt instructions, it also requires assurances that they have been fully cleared, represent authoritative guidance, and can be saved and systemically retrieved (in the absence of a cable message record number) as a record of U.S. positions, votes, and actions. On some occasions, contradictory guidance has resulted in the mission supporting a measure in committee, while the U.S. military delegation to NATO opposes it.

Recommendation 3: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should develop and implement a plan for sending timely guidance to the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization by record traffic that reflects the clearance of all relevant agencies. (Action: EUR)

Recommendation 4: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should include in its requests for official guidance its own recommendations for such guidance with an indication that it will deliver them unless instructed otherwise. (Action: USNATO)

As discussed in the separate inspection report on Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels, coordination between USNATO and USEU needs improvement. The responsibilities of the two organizations are converging as the EU increasingly focuses on political and security matters. For example, both EU and NATO military forces

are involved in antipiracy operations off the coast of Somalia, which need coordination. The OIG team applauds the incoming post management's recognition that USNATO and USEU should develop a better understanding of the other's perspectives and problems. USEU and USNATO did explore the possibility of exchanging officers for short periods, as recommended in the 2004 OIG inspection report, but eventually decided that this was impractical since learning the complex technical procedures of each institution would be time consuming for the officers. While the invitation exists, officers at USEU and USNATO rarely attend each other's staff meetings, in part because it takes an hour to travel between the two posts.

Both missions' front offices want to foster greater cooperation through regular meetings with the Ambassadors and DCMs. While joint reporting is rare, the two missions can collaborate on cables that address mutual possibilities of cooperation and synergy between NATO and the EU and outline potential obstacles. In its separate inspection report on Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels, the OIG team addressed the need for improved communication and coordination, and addressed a formal recommendation on this subject to all three Brussels missions, with specific suggestions as to how this could be accomplished.

NATO Management Reform

With the addition of new members in the last decade, NATO has become a larger and potentially more unwieldy organization. Meetings take longer, and decisions and communication can become more cumbersome. A small but illustrative example is that, despite repeated complaints, the agendas for council and committee meetings are rarely circulated more than 24 hours in advance, making it almost impossible for missions to seek and obtain timely guidance. The incoming NATO secretary general is reportedly open to considering reforms on how the organization conducts business. USNATO is also planning a number of initiatives to pursue more streamlined operations.

At present, an official in the management section represents the mission at all meetings of NATO's civil budget committee, where matters concerning NATO's administrative issues and budget are discussed. These meetings are critical to U.S. interests in a well managed NATO budget that is supportive of important policy concerns. Discussions in these meetings have increasingly focused on a mix of management and political issues. The current U.S. representative on the committee has greatly increased his consultation with the political section to ensure that he has appropriate guidance on political and policy issues. To address the problem more systematically, the mission drafted plans to move the budget committee officer position to the political section, and redesignate it as "political/management."

The OIG team supported moving the position to the political section but expressed concern that designating it “political/management” instead of “management/political” could limit potential bidders for the position to political officers without sufficient knowledge of administrative and budget issues. While the reverse may also be an issue, what is needed for this key position is an officer who understands both the management and the political dimensions of key budgets issues.

Recommendation 5: The Bureau of Human Resources, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs and the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, should redesignate the management officer position number 51234001 as management/political in order to ensure that bidding tools make clear both the management and the political qualifications needed for the job. (Action: HR, in coordination with EUR and USNATO)

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The public diplomacy office (known as the public affairs office at USNATO) has nine employees, including four Foreign Service officers and a military information liaison officer. All LE staff are also eligible family members. The public affairs officer (PAO) is an FS-01 and the deputy PAO is an FS-02. The section also includes the Ambassador’s speechwriter, who was hired under the Professional Associates Program and is paid using USNATO’s Department of State and Department of Defense operations funds. The PA office is expecting a new assistant information officer, who will most likely be an entry-level officer. An OMS position is approved, but unfunded.

Most of the PA staff arrived at post at the same time. There was a gap of 6 months before the most recent officer’s arrival. There was no continuity with the former staff and everyone had to learn the job without any guidance. Climbing this steep learning curve went on for several months. There was no one to provide the institutional memory necessary to carry on an often complex program. The next turnover of staff should not be so destabilizing, since the tours of at least two of the present staff will overlap with those of the incoming staff, thus providing some continuity.

The PAO enjoyed a good working relationship with, and immediate access to, the former Ambassador and DCM, both of whom departed post during the inspection. The PAO is off to a good start with the incoming Ambassador and DCM. There is good teamwork between PA office and other sections of the mission and the military.

Although the section meets weekly, and the downward flow of information is improving, several members claim that information does not flow readily within the section or the mission. Sometimes this occurs because of the sheer volume of information circulating in NATO. Although officers have an open door policy, they might go the extra step in keeping staff informed and develop a more collegial atmosphere in the section by having informal chats with the LE staff. The OIG team attended one staff meeting of the section and found it was focused, open, beneficial, and comprehensive.

The staff takes pride in the quality and amount of work they do, but they are overworked. There is little time for strategic thinking. At least one staff member has had stress-related health problems. In the past 8 months, the former Ambassador gave 130 interviews, prepared 31 video messages and participated in 3 digital videoconferences for the media, thanks to good organization and the professionalism of the PA staff. The staff was heavily involved in preparations for the April 2009 NATO Summit, defense and ministerial meetings, and VIP visits. The OIG team informally recommended the PAO meet regularly with the DCM and the Ambassador to prioritize the work and to flag tasks that might be unrealistic in a given timeframe. The OIG team believes this heavy workload justifies reprogramming one OMS position from the political to the PA office.

The PA office shares media contacts with the other two missions. There is a core of 25 journalist contacts, 65-70 with whom the section interacts frequently, and 400-500 are on the contact list. These may be based in London, Paris, or Brussels. The PA staff often briefs on background. NATO and the European Regional Media Center (Brussels Hub) each have broadcast studios. Occasionally, a USNATO speaker will use the Hub studio instead of the one at NATO if it is more convenient. USNATO provides names of journalists to the Hub for these broadcasts. The Hub is more fully discussed in the separate inspection report on Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels.

The lack of PA-specific representational housing is a problem, but the office can use either the chief of mission or DCM residences for media breakfasts. The PA office's travel and representational budget is sufficient.

USNATO organizes about 30 NATO tours each year. It works with U.S. Embassies throughout the region to bring journalists, politicians, academics, and other leaders to Brussels for briefings at NATO headquarters. A PA representative, usually the military liaison officer, accompanies the groups to Afghanistan, Kosovo, or other areas in which NATO is engaged or has an interest. This is a logistically complicated program. USNATO relies on administrative support from JAS to provide the fiscal data for embassies to write grants to cover participant costs outside Brussels, including airline tickets purchases, as well as to complete administrative processes including securing visas, where applicable. Usually, USNATO sends requests for this fiscal data to JAS up to 3 weeks before a program begins, but the fiscal data in some cases is not provided to U.S. Embassies that nominated participants until a day or two before departure. At least one tour group lost favorable airfares because of the delay; in one or two cases, participants were unable to travel because posts were not able to complete the visa process in time due to JAS delays.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Brussels should establish and implement procedures to provide the necessary fiscal data to embassies nominating North Atlantic Treaty Organization Tour participants no later than 1 week before a tour is to begin. (Action: Embassy Brussels)

In addition, due to the significant personnel and management responsibilities of the NATO Tours program officer position, the PAO and DCM support upgrading the position from FS-03 to FS-02. The OIG team supports upgrading this position.

Recommendation 7: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in coordination with Embassy Brussels, the Bureau of Human Resources, and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should upgrade the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Tours program officer position number 60888049 from FS-03 to FS-02. (Action: USNATO, in coordination with Embassy Brussels, HR, and EUR)

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	US Direct-Hire Staff	FMA & EFM's	LE Staff	Total Staff	Funding FY08
State Program	27	11	12	50	3,883,100
Public Diplomacy	4	3	1	8	947,000
VIP Visit Bucharest	-	-	-	-	27,000
State Representation	-	-	-	-	41,000
Public Diplomacy Rep.	-	-	-	-	15,200
Subtotal State	31	14	13	58	4,913,300
DOD - Air Force	11	-	-	11	-
DOD - Army	50	-	-	50	-
DOD - Navy	3	-	-	3	-
DOD - Other	5	-	-	5	-
Subtotal DOD	69	-	-	69	12,115,000
DHS - FEMA	1	-	-	-	76,700
Total	101	14	13	127	17,105,000

In 2008, U.S. contributions to NATO totaled \$64.8 million. The United States contributed \$9 million to the new NATO headquarters building planned for 2014. The United States contributed \$45 million to NATO operations and \$10.8 million for other NATO projects.

MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

USNATO has a small, experienced, and knowledgeable management section. The section effectively provides support, mainly to Department of Defense employees, and coordinates with the JAS section. The USNATO management section handles Department of Defense, human resources, financial management, travel, and operational needs based on Department of Defense regulations.

The section is headed by a management counselor from the Department of Defense at the Executive Service rank and a deputy management counselor who is a Foreign Service officer. The Departments of Defense and State jointly fund the US-NATO operation on a 65 percent/35 percent basis; a memorandum of understanding outlines how these funds will be spent.

JAS provides most of the management support services for Department officers and some Department of Defense entities. Overall, JAS management services were highly rated, but customers complained about housing, procurement, human resources, and customs and shipping. The inspection report on Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels discusses JAS management services in detail.

USNATO is located about 30 minutes from downtown Brussels. Unlike Embassy Brussels and USEU, USNATO is not located near the JAS office. To counter a widespread belief that Embassy Brussels and USEU receive preferential treatment, some JAS officers hold office hours once a week at USNATO.

The mission and JAS complied with the two management recommendations found in the 2004 inspection report. The Department has authority to retain funds reimbursed for U.S. Government employees on loan to international organizations. The Department declined to give the mission the authority to extend to family members working for military commands the same benefits given to family members under chief of mission authority.

Tours of Duty

Previous OIG inspections have called attention to problems caused by some Department of Defense civilian employees at USNATO who remain in their jobs much longer than the 5-year maximum called for by Department of Defense and mission policy. The management counselor approves requests for exceptions to this policy on the recommendation of supervisors, but without the chief of mission's specific authorization.

Exceptions to the 5-year rule can provide the mission with important continuity, particularly in administrative areas where U.S. diplomatic missions would normally rely on LE staff. These exceptions can also deprive the mission of energetic and policy-savvy staff who recently served in Washington. Officials in the Departments of State and Defense told the OIG team they would prefer to have employees at USNATO rotate on a regular basis from offices in Washington that deal with NATO issues. Excessive differences in the length of tours for employees from different agencies can also undermine the mission's sense of unity, and hamper the

introduction of new policies and procedures. Senior Defense officials at the mission believe the rotation policy requires more consistent and rational application, balancing considerations of continuity and innovation.

Department of the Army personnel officials told the OIG team that some of the guidance currently available to USNATO on dealing with exceptions to the 5-year rule is outdated. Prior to the inspection, these officials indicated to the OIG team a willingness to review the current rotation policy. The OIG team believes this issue would benefit from a cooperative solution involving senior Department of Defense officials both in Washington and at USNATO. Post leadership strongly supports the OIG team's recommendation and approach.

Recommendation 8: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization develop and implement procedures to ensure chief of mission approval for all requests for extensions of employment beyond the normal tour of duty and to ensure annual chief of mission approval of requests for additional extensions. (Action: USNATO)

Deputy chief of mission Residence

The DCM residence was in good condition, yet some of the furniture and fixtures were in very poor condition. Many of the guest bedrooms had unmatched, worn out furniture. The carpeting was dirty and worn in some areas. In some guest bedrooms, fragments of carpet were apparently pieced together.

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, Office of Residential Design and Cultural Heritage, last visited the residence in 2001. Their next visit is scheduled for 2017. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the general service officer video tape the rooms and furnishings to show their condition, and request immediate remedial assistance.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS SECURITY

The information management (IM) office operates a comprehensive information and systems security program, which is discussed in detail in the Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels inspection report. The information management officer (IMO)

effectively manages management and security requirements under a strong Defense footprint. Communications Security was audited and received an outstanding rating. Cost savings and operational synergies could be realized by consolidating USNATO's IM office with JAS, under the leadership of a single IMO. Such an arrangement could also provide a unique opportunity for Foreign Service technical officers to utilize USNATO for cross-training and career development.

Accomplishments

The office has 14 U.S. direct-hires and three noncommissioned officers. All staff members are U.S. citizens due to security restrictions. The U.S. direct-hire employees did not receive briefings or training on Department of Defense systems prior to their arrival. Yet, by all accounts, they provide superb customer support on Department of Defense and Department of State systems to approximately 6,400 yearly visitors. (An exception, as noted earlier in the report, is the need to provide the political section with NATO Minerva documents more frequently.) In 2007, there was a complete staff turnover, with the exception of two entry-level IM specialists. The office struggled, but ultimately rose to the challenge, learning the systems on the job in 7 months. The OIG team commends the staff for their efforts to expand their technical expertise to such varied systems and products.

Challenges

At USNATO, there is no continuity of knowledge of the Department of Defense system; the staff does not receive training on handling system support and customers' demands and during a complete staff turnover, the office had to learn how to handle these duties without preparation from Washington. Despite these efforts to overcome this challenge, the lack of continuity of knowledge of Defense systems persists. The Department would benefit from having a technical briefing course developed for information management personnel to become familiar with Department of Defense culture and technical requirements. Such a course would be practical for Baghdad, Kosovo, Kabul, the Brussels Tri-Mission, and wherever there is a large military element. Per 13 FAM 022.1 (1), the Foreign Service Institute responsible for designing appropriate training courses to meet the Department's needs.

Recommendation 9: The Foreign Service Institute, in coordination with the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Bureau of Information Resource Management, should develop a course to prepare personnel being assigned to posts that support Department of Defense customers. (Action: FSI, in coordination with USNATO and IRM)

Universal trouble-ticket helpdesk requests were reviewed and customers stated they were pleased with the section's service and support. An entry-level U.S. direct-hire position is unfilled; the remaining staff must provide coverage to a demanding customer base. A new USNATO facility is under construction that would be large enough to allow cross-training among technical specialists at the Tri-Mission. Many JAS IM specialists are on their second or third tour and would greatly benefit from cross-training with their counterparts at USNATO. The Department would also benefit from having a larger cadre of IM specialists trained on Department of Defense systems.

The Regional Information Management Center technician is based at JAS and has spent time at USNATO troubleshooting the systems. The Tri-Mission benefits from this communication and collaboration on technical issues; similarly, JAS and USNATO specialists could benefit from rotational assignments. Support and cross-training between JAS and USNATO is possible and would be beneficial to the Tri-Mission—such efforts comply with the Department's career development goals as stated in 13 FAM 011.

Recommendation 10: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in coordination with Embassy Brussels, should develop a rotational assignment program for their information technology staff. (Action: USNATO, in coordination with Embassy Brussels)

Leadership

There have been attempts to consolidate the JAS and USNATO IT sections, which are led by two excellent IM technology officers. However, Embassies Rome, Paris, and Vienna, which also support three missions, have a single IT section that provides IM technology service to all missions. Embassies Baghdad, Bangkok, Berlin, Bogota, Mexico City, and Panama City are larger missions that service more customers and service more networks. Some of these embassies have large constituent posts, with a Department of Defense presence that is similar to USNATO. All these embassies have one IT section under the leadership of one IMO. USNATO is the only exception.

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Previous JAS and USNATO IM officers developed a white paper noting that:

With the evolution of the tools and technologies available, it is now possible for us to pursue the consolidation of the four technology infrastructures into a distinct infrastructure, using the professional talents of our Bureau of Information Resource Management full-time equivalent and LE staff who capitalize on the unique working environment of each location.

Merging the two IM sections would result in complete staff support for all of the missions, and the Department would save resources through less duplication of services and achieve a more rightsized mission.

In *Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels, Belgium*, ISP-I-10-15, the OIG team made a recommendation that USNATO and Embassy Brussels consolidate their IM sections and locate the single IMO at USNATO.

QUALITY OF LIFE

This topic is covered in *Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels, Belgium*.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The July 31, 2008, USNATO chief of mission Management Controls Statement noted that, taken as a whole, the system of management controls was effective and provided reasonable assurance that management control objectives were achieved. No management control weaknesses were reported. The deputy management officer is the designated internal control officer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs and Overseas Buildings Operations, should report its views on whether space in the new North Atlantic Treaty Organization headquarters building should be configured to integrate work space for diplomatic and military representatives. (Action: USNATO, in coordination with EUR and OBO)

Recommendation 2: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should request authorization from the Bureau of Human Resources to reprogram one office management specialist position from the mission's political section to its public affairs section. (Action: USNATO, in coordination with EUR and HR)

Recommendation 3: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should develop and implement a plan for sending timely guidance to the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization by record traffic that reflects the clearance of all relevant agencies. (Action: EUR)

Recommendation 4: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should include in its requests for official guidance its own recommendations for such guidance with an indication that it will deliver them unless instructed otherwise. (Action: USNATO)

Recommendation 5: The Bureau of Human Resources, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs and the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, should redesignate the management officer position number 51234001 as management/political in order to ensure that bidding tools make clear both the management and the political qualifications needed for the job. (Action: HR, in coordination with EUR and USNATO)

Recommendation 6: Embassy Brussels should establish and implement procedures to provide the necessary fiscal data to embassies nominating North Atlantic Treaty Organization Tour participants no later than 1 week before a tour is to begin. (Action: Embassy Brussels)

Recommendation 7: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in coordination with Embassy Brussels, the Bureau of Human Resources, and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should upgrade the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Tours program officer position number 60888049 from FS-03 to FS-02. (Action: USNATO, in coordination with Embassy Brussels, HR, and EUR)

Recommendation 8: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization develop and implement procedures to ensure chief of mission approval for all requests for extensions of employment beyond the normal tour of duty and to ensure annual chief of mission approval of requests for additional extensions. (Action: USNATO)

Recommendation 9: The Foreign Service Institute, in coordination with the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Bureau of Information Resource Management, should develop a course to prepare personnel being assigned to posts that support Department of Defense customers. (Action: FSI, in coordination with USNATO and IRM)

Recommendation 10: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in coordination with Embassy Brussels, should develop a rotational assignment program for their information technology staff. (Action: USNATO, in coordination with Embassy Brussels)

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.

Political Section

Political officers are frustrated that documents needed for NATO committee meetings often reach them late, even though the mission IT center transfers them several times daily from NATO's Minerva system to the mission's computer system. This is a serious policy problem that needs to be fixed to provide adequate time for officers to review the documents and prepare the U.S. Government's response.

Informal Recommendation 1: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should require that the information technology section transfer documents more frequently from the Minerva system to the mission's computer system to provide adequate time for the U.S. Government to review the documents and prepare its response.

Public Diplomacy

The PAOs of the three missions in Brussels do not meet regularly to review the public diplomacy environment, to avoid overlapping programs, or to improve communication.

Informal Recommendation 2: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should require that the public affairs officer meet with counterparts at Embassy Brussels, the U.S. Mission to the European Union, and the European Media Center on a regular basis, as often as once monthly.

Management Operations

The furnishings in the DCM's residence are in poor condition and mismatched, and the carpeting is worn.

Informal Recommendation 3: The U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should video tape the rooms and furnishings to show their condition and request remedial assistance from the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, Office of Residential Design and Cultural.

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Informal Recommendation 4: (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)
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PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Kurt D. Volker	08/08*
Deputy chief of mission	Walter Andrusyszyn, Acting	01/09*

Chiefs of Sections:

Administrative	Robert A. Glacel	03/03
Political	Alejandro Baez, Acting	09/07
Public Affairs	Kate M. Byrnes	08/07
Regional Security (at Embassy Brussels)	Kevin Bauer	08/06
Defense Advisor	W. Bruce Weinrod	08/07

Other Agencies:

Federal Emergency Management Agency	David G. Passey	08/07
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*Both the Ambassador and DCM completed their tours and left post during the inspection. Their permanent replacements arrived at the end of the inspection.

ABBREVIATIONS

DCM	deputy chief of mission
EU	European Union
IM	information management
IMO	information management officer
IT	information technology
JAS	joint administrative services
LE	locally employed
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OMS	office management specialist
PA	public affairs
PAO	public affairs officer
USEU	U.S. Mission to the European Union
USNATO	U.S. Mission to North Atlantic Treaty Organization

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