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

Report of Inspection

Tri-Mission Coordination Brussels, Belgium

Report Number ISP-I-10-15, 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 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 report on Tri-Mission Coordination in Brussels should be read in conjunction with the separate 2009 inspection reports prepared on Embassy Brussels, the U.S. Mission to the European Union, and the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

- There is a growing convergence in the agendas and priorities of the Brussels Tri-Mission—Embassy Brussels, the U.S. Mission to the European Union (USEU), and the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (USNATO)—embracing a widening range of issues.
- Building on current efforts, there is considerable scope for enhancing communication and coordination among the constituent posts of the Tri-Mission on both policy and management issues.
- The European Media Center, commonly known as the Hub, is becoming a useful catalyst and platform for expanding U.S. media outreach in Europe. Its role is distinct from, but complementary to, those of the public diplomacy units of the three missions, each of which is fulfilling an important need.
- Budget cuts, position eliminations, extended staffing gaps, and (b) (2) hampered management operations throughout 2008, and had a noticeable effect on service quality and customer satisfaction.
- Despite these constraints, the joint administrative services (JAS) section is well run and generally provides good and equitable management support to all three Brussels missions. An improved budgetary outlook, the anticipated filling of vacant positions and personnel turnover are expected to raise JAS's performance levels.
- Over the next 5 to 10 years, several factors, notably including the continued expansion of U.S. relations with the European Union (EU), will generate increases in staffing for the Department and other U.S. agencies. In consequence, both Brussels and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (EUR) will need to define more precisely their expectations for future office space needs and how they can be met.

- The Tri-Mission has one of the heaviest visitor workloads in the world. The number of high-level visitors is especially high, in part because of the number of U.S. agencies that conduct important business in Brussels.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC between April 13 and May 1, 2009; and in Brussels, Belgium, between May 4 and June 10, 2009. (b) (6)(b) (6)
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CONTEXT

Brussels is home to two premier multilateral organizations—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU—that are the pillars of the U.S.-European relationship. It is also the capital of a nation that prides itself on being an active member of both organizations, as well as a close friend and ally of the United States. NATO and the EU constitute complementary dimensions of what is arguably our most important global partnership.

NATO and the EU have contributed to maintaining and strengthening security in Western Europe. NATO pursued this through creating a strong and defensive political and military alliance. Since the end of the Cold War, it extended regional security by enlarging its membership and developing partnerships. The EU enhanced stability by promoting progressive economic and political integration, initially in Western Europe, and later by welcoming new members elsewhere on the continent. These efforts drew a number of countries into the mainstream of European political and economic development, and many have joined both organizations.

While both organizations are regional in character, the substance of their agendas has become increasingly global convergent. With the strong leadership of the U.S., NATO has expanded the scope of its mission beyond Europe. Its new agenda encompasses both new and traditional threats to global security, to include energy and cyber security, missile defense, failed states, and violent extremism. Meanwhile, reflecting the wishes of its 27 members, the EU has also expressed an ambition to assume a greater role in the areas of foreign, international security, and defense policy. The commonalities of geography, overlapping membership, and shared aspirations are not well reflected in the way the two organizations communicate with each other. Indeed, no formal relationship existed between NATO and the EU until 2000, when a strategic partnership was created as a result of the Balkans conflict.

Similarly, the growing convergence in the work of the two institutions is at odds with the way that the Department is structured to manage U.S. relationships, both in Brussels and in Washington. With a few notable exceptions, the three Brussels missions operate with a high degree of independence, focusing on the specific issues that drive their respective policy dialogs. The separation that characterizes the work of the Brussels missions is mirrored in the structure of EUR. Responsibility for the EU lies with EUR's Office of European Union and Regional Affairs (ERA), while

the relationship with NATO is managed quite separately by its Office of European Security and Political Affairs (RPM). To the extent that the two portfolios have been brought together, it has been in the EUR front office, typically in the person of the principal deputy assistant secretary (PDAS), who in recent years has had oversight of both ERA and RPM.

The organizational structures in Brussels and Washington both reflect and contribute to two important problems. The first is a tendency to “instrumentalize” our relationships with both NATO and the EU in order to advance specific and discrete policy interests. As U.S. officials who deal with each of the organizations acknowledge, the understandable focus on the immediate issues at hand makes it difficult to focus on the larger institutional developments and their longer-term implications on U.S. interests. The second is a tendency to view the two organizations as competitors for U.S. attention and affection, rather than as central and mutually supportive pillars of a larger, overarching trans-Atlantic partnership.

While it may seem obvious, it is important to point out that the relationships of the United States to NATO and the EU differ in one crucial respect: we are members of NATO, but not of the EU. Thus, the primary function of USNATO is to steer an organization of which the U.S. is not only a member, but the acknowledged leader. The primary function of USEU, on the other hand, is to try and influence the decisions and direction of an organization that is our most important external partner. It is this reality that often leads American policymakers to prefer working through NATO when it comes to security issues rather than through the EU. That same reality may also reinforce a tendency to underestimate and underutilize our capacity to influence the policies and the workings of the EU. The challenge for both the Brussels missions and for Washington will be to develop a comprehensive framework that fully respects the distinctively different mandates and missions of the EU and NATO, while seeking to take full advantage of their complementary roles and respective capacities.

TRI-MISSION COORDINATION

Communications and Policy Coordination

The 2004 OIG inspection report of Embassy Brussels documented the growing convergence of the agendas and priorities of the Brussels Tri-Mission. That trend continues and embraces a widening range of issues. This is particularly evident in reading the Mission Strategic Plans (MSPs) prepared by the three missions (see chart below). Indeed, if one were to take USNATO’s five-point summary of key goals and substitute “EU” for “NATO”, the statement would be equally valid.²

Convergence of Tri-Mission Agendas and Priorities (Drawn from Mission Strategic Plans)	Embassy	USNATO	USEU
Counter Terrorism			
• Energy/Infrastructure Security	✓	✓	✓
• Cyber Security	✓	✓	✓
Defense (NATO/ESDP/National)			
• Increased European mil. capabilities	✓	✓	✓
• Attention to emerging threats	✓	✓	✓
Advancing Global Security/Stability			
• Afghanistan	✓	✓	✓
• Balkans	1	✓	✓
• Russia/Ukraine/Georgia	1	✓	✓
• Africa	✓	2	✓

1. Implicit in Belgium’s participation in both NATO and the EU.
2. While not listed as a priority, both NATO and USNATO have an interest.

By all accounts, the “religious wars” (as some veteran officers characterized them) —over the merits of the EU’s growing ambitions in the area of security and defense policy, and whether NATO or the EU should be the principal U.S. vehicle of European engagement—have ended. There is recognition by all concerned that, given the nature and magnitude of global security challenges, U.S. interests require a comprehensive approach that seeks to expand and make use of institutional capacities wherever they can be found.

Significant evidence of this evolution in U.S. thinking was seen in the Brussels visit of Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General David Petraeus in March 2009. While making the expected calls at NATO headquarters, General Petraeus spent most of his time briefing senior EU representatives and officials, underscoring the importance of the EU’s contributions to security, stabilization, and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Both substantively and symbolically, his visit signaled an intention to elevate the U.S.-EU dialogue on political and security matters, without downgrading the role that the United States has assigned to NATO as the primary organ of U.S.-European collective defense.

That recognition has been accompanied by a growing acceptance of the need for improved coordination and cooperation, especially between USEU and USNATO. This includes joint participation in classified, secure video conferences with Washington and some joint events. Notable in this regard is the detailing from the office of the U.S. Military Representative at NATO to USEU of an officer who has contributed importantly to USEU’s efforts to advise the EU on structuring its non-military programs in Afghanistan, which complement NATO activities.

This growing interaction has been strongly reinforced by the presence of leaders, both civilian and military, who clearly understand the importance of building more collaborative relationships among the missions and their elements and have made it a priority to do so. With rare exception—and in contrast to the situation the OIG inspectors found in 2004, when both personalities and institutional loyalties made for rough and sometimes contentious relationships—the current leaders of all three missions received high praise for their efforts to promote collegiality and cooperation.

The value of enhancing communication and cooperation among the missions was demonstrated in the run-up to the April 2009 NATO summit meeting. Quite by chance, Embassy Brussels became aware of concerns within the Belgian Government that threatened to block agreement on an important summit deliverable. Drawing on its network of government contacts, the Embassy was able to allay Belgian concerns and clear the way for the announcement of an important Afghanistan-related agreement at President Obama’s first summit.

The ending of the religious wars has not, however, meant the end of history, or of institutional parochialism. Naturally and understandably, differing perspectives give rise to legitimate disagreements over specific policy and operational questions. During the period of the inspection, all three missions were passionately engaged in energetic debate over which institution, NATO or the EU, should have the most prominent role in efforts to counter piracy in the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. The debate was driven in no small measure by the publicly declared view of high-level officials in Washington that NATO, as the leading defense organization, should play a major role. That view, however, seemed to contradict the preference of some key European governments that the EU should be given the lead. Supporters of the latter view pointed out that the EU had already deployed naval assets to the area, including a Belgian naval vessel with a U.S. exchange officer on board. It also found sympathy with some U.S. military commanders in the region who were comfortable with their existing cooperation with EU forces, and with the EU's more robust rules of engagement.

The piracy issue illustrates not only the growing convergence of issues and agendas, but also the potential for increased friction, and the consequent need for additional efforts to manage inter-mission communication and cooperation. Again, as one looks at the increasing convergence of the missions' agendas and priorities—reconstruction and capacity building for countries within Europe and beyond, counterterrorism, energy and infrastructure security, other emerging security threats—it is inevitable that such rubs and frictions will also increase.

Tri-Missions Role in Policy Development

Beyond the importance of practical and operational coordination at the local level, the piracy issue also highlights a potential opportunity that exists for the three Brussels-based missions to identify and frame issues that require attention and decision in Washington. With regard to the piracy issue, the proper response of senior leaders in the Brussels missions was to agree to present the issues, options, and tradeoffs to policymakers in Washington, in a way that would hopefully facilitate and expedite needed policy decisions.

In effect, the three missions form a microcosm that encompasses the principal dimensions of U.S. engagement with Europe. Together, they constitute one of the principal repositories of knowledge about the evolution of Europe's two most prominent multilateral organizations and the ways in which their missions and roles

are intersecting. By virtue of their proximity, the three missions may be in a better position than Washington to monitor and understand this evolution, its potential impact on U.S. interests, and its implications for how we engage both institutions. The important contribution that Embassy Brussels is in a position to make in this process is to underscore the critical need for timely and actionable lateral communication between both USEU and USNATO on the one hand and our embassies in capitals on the other, in order to maximize opportunities for U.S. influence.

As the OIG report was being drafted, the Obama Administration appeared to be moving expeditiously to fill the senior leadership positions in all three missions. The new Ambassador to NATO, a widely respected expert with prior government policy experience, was the first to arrive in mid-May 2009, and the processing of nominees for both Embassy Brussels and USEU was well under way. Their arrivals will hopefully usher in a much needed period of stability in mission leadership; it will also create a new opportunity to strengthen Tri-Mission cooperation, building on the important initiatives that have already been taken. The OIG inspectors offered a number of suggestions as to how coordination might be deepened and formalized, many of them originating with representatives of the three missions. They include:

- Continuing the practice of having chiefs of mission (COM) and deputy chiefs of mission (DCM) meet at least monthly to review areas of substantive convergence and opportunities for collaboration;
- Establishing informal Tri-Mission working groups on issues of shared interest;
- Regularizing the practice of having USEU and USNATO ambassadors participate in secure video conferences with Washington;
- Expanding the use of classified video conference facilities at USEU and USNATO to facilitate communication among the missions;
- Identifying issues on which joint reporting would enhance the understanding of Washington constituencies and embassies in European capitals;
- Scheduling regular--perhaps quarterly--Tri-Mission sessions to examine institutional changes occurring at the EU and NATO, and the implications of the US engagement with both organizations;
- Preparing periodic joint think-pieces that could help frame policy issues that merit discussion and decision in Washington;
- Encouraging missions to offer comments on each other's MSPs; and
- On a pilot basis, jointly accrediting some USEU and USNATO staff in specific areas where their knowledge and expertise would be relevant to our policy discussions with both institutions.

Recommendation 1: Embassy Brussels, the U.S. Mission to the European Union, and the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should develop a plan for expanding and formalizing communication and coordination among the missions on issues where their respective policy agendas converge. (Action: Embassy Brussels, USEU, and USNATO)

Public Diplomacy and the European Media Center (The Brussels Hub)

Each of the three missions in Brussels has its own public diplomacy (PD) section dedicated to the specific needs of its host. While they may share some contacts and occasional programs, their principal efforts are to develop and execute effective public diplomacy programs and campaigns in support of the mission in which they serve.

A mission's programs and tasks are often independent and discrete from those of another and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to administer them from a single office. For example, USEU and Embassy Brussels have Fulbright programs, USNATO does not; USNATO runs the NATO Tours program, the other two missions do not; international and voluntary visitors are selected according to different MSPs; speechwriting requirements differ for each PD section and often reflect the personality of the principal officer of the individual mission; Embassy Brussels focuses on bilateral issues, while USNATO and USEU do not. Therefore, the OIG inspectors believe that each embassy requires and deserves its own PD operation.

A fourth public diplomacy unit in Brussels, the European Media Center, known as the Brussels Hub, is a regional facility servicing all U.S. European missions and several in the Caucasus. Although it is administratively under the USEU umbrella, it reports to the Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (R Bureau) in Washington. The OIG team believes that this is a more rational arrangement than going through London. The Hub is available to help the PD sections of the three missions enhance their operations, but it is not meant to replace them. It has its own duties that are independent from those of the other PD operations.

Hub Operations and Capabilities

The Hub has been a catalyst for Washington VIPs interaction with the media in Europe. It has focused Washington minds on its usefulness in delivering and amplifying policy messages to Europe. Having the Hub in the same geographical region and within the same cultural space as its audience has its advantages. Also, since the Brussels Hub is six hours ahead of Washington, it can get media reaction to its audience there more quickly and efficiently than would be possible if this were done in the United States.

There are between 1,200 and 1,600 journalists active in Brussels, most of whom cover both EU and NATO issues. The public affairs officers (PAOs) at Embassy Brussels, USEU, and USNATO can offer print journalists off-the-record roundtable discussions. In contrast, the Hub is focused on broadcast media, and everything it does with journalists is on-the-record. Its journalist contacts are often in the host countries and are not among those assigned to other missions in Brussels. About 60 percent of the Hub's journalist contacts work outside Brussels.

Using a well-equipped studio near the Embassy, the Hub arranges and produces television and radio interviews by U.S. officials for use in European media markets and the Internet. Newsmarket, the service contracted by the Hub to place the interviews on the Internet, keeps track of the number of hits, but it has not been forthcoming in advising the Hub about specific placements. The Hub has stumbled across placements by surfing Web sites of organizations that have visited the Hub's video clips on Newsmarket. It is seeking easier ways to gather placement information. The OIG team informally recommended that the Hub negotiate with Newsmarket to provide the Hub with interview placement information.

The Hub prepares and distributes the daily Early Alert, which provides a snapshot of European news for all U.S. missions in Europe as well as the National Security Council, EUR, and the rapid response unit. It contracts media professionals to train U.S. officers, including information officers, DCMs, and ambassadors throughout Europe and the Caucasus on conducting broadcast interviews.

The Hub occasionally provides technical or other assistance to the other public diplomacy units in Brussels. NATO and the Hub each have broadcast studios; however, a USNATO speaker may use the Hub studio instead of the one at NATO if it is more convenient. USNATO will provide names of its journalist contacts to the Hub for these broadcasts. Also, the Hub once lent equipment to Embassy Brussels when its equipment failed.

Recently, USNATO sponsored a visit of two Afghan governors to Brussels, which was an excellent demonstration of the admirable cooperation and coordination among the four PD offices. For example, after their NATO commitments were completed, the Hub interviewed the governors and uploaded segments of the interview using Newsmarket. USEU then arranged interviews for them with think-tanks and with some EU ambassadors. Embassy Brussels also arranged interviews for them with members of the Belgian press.

Coordination of Public Diplomacy Efforts

The function and activity of the Hub is fairly discrete from the PD efforts of USNATO and Embassy Brussels, and less so with that of USEU. Prior to the arrival of the PAO at USEU, the Hub director filled in as acting PAO. Wearing a double hat, she assigned work easily and there was no overlap in duties between the Hub and USEU. With this experience and the arrival of a skilled PAO at USEU, the two offices have usually managed to avoid a duplication of efforts, but this has not always been possible.

Both operations share contacts in a common media corps. Although the Hub concentrates on broadcast media and USEU on print media, they use both and sometimes feel no obligation to advise the other that this is happening. They may also neglect to inform each other of potentially useful contacts. For example, although the Brussels-based freelance journalist contracted by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty has worked with the Hub, he was unaware that USEU had a press office. There is a possibility that if the Hub and the USEU public affairs unit lose a clear focus or if cooperation and coordination between them falter, the function of the information officer at USEU will be compromised, and the Hub will assume some of the information officer duties. It is imperative that USEU and the Hub continue to keep each other informed regularly about broadcast media outreach and to avoid duplicating their efforts and functions.

Collaboration among the various PD units appears to be very good, owing in large degree to the professionalism of the four directors and their conscientious efforts to promote cooperation, but they rarely meet as a group. The OIG team informally recommended that they meet regularly, perhaps as often as once a month. Also, many in the Tri-Mission community were unclear about the units' respective capabilities, roles, and responsibilities. Accordingly, the OIG team believes that the Hub and the public affairs offices at Embassy Brussels, USEU, and USNATO should brief all incoming officers at the three missions who will be engaged in media outreach about

the function and activities of their media operations. Using briefings and printed materials, they should similarly advise their journalist contacts, mission supervisors, and desk officers in Washington, as well as VIPs planning on travel to Brussels. The OIG team made similar recommendations in the inspection reports on Embassy Brussels, USEU, and USNATO.

Recommendation 2: The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs should require that the European Media Center develop guidance that clearly defines its roles, capabilities, and services and brief Tri-Mission officers on the functions and activities of its media operations. This guidance should also be disseminated to journalists, mission supervisors, and desk officers in Washington, and VIPs traveling to Brussels. (Action: R)

Clearly, mission staff must develop a greater appreciation for the real resource constraints affecting JAS's ability to sustain adequate administrative support for all three missions. In particular, the OIG team discussed with the leaderships of all three missions the importance of taking collective ownership of and responsibility for JAS, sharing the burden of communicating with their respective communities with regard to administrative support issues, and lending their combined support to efforts to address critical management challenges. The role played by the three DCMs in the fall of 2008 in addressing fundamental service problems in both the housing board and the JAS housing unit is a good example of how this can work. In addition, there will certainly be times when the leadership of the three missions will be called upon to deploy their collective influence with senior management officials in Washington in addressing critical staffing and funding issues.

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- In addition, the OIG team urged the leadership of all three missions to become more engaged with respect to:
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- Efforts to strengthen JAS's customer service culture and practice;
- Planning for the anticipated departure over the next several years of some of JAS's most experienced LE staff;
- The current JAS review of the Tri-Mission housing pool and how well it matches the changing demographics of those assigned to Brussels; and
- Ensuring that requirements for Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and other workplace issues are understood and met.

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Marine Security Guard Support

At most overseas posts, the Marine security guard detachment (MSG) serves an important added function as a center and catalyst for the official American community. (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)
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(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2) The current detachment commander, who is nearing the end of his tour, deserves great credit for his personal outreach efforts over the last year, and his success in rebuilding relationships with the disparate elements of the community, to include the very large U.S. military presence in and around Brussels. The front offices of all three missions should strive to ensure that the new detachment commander has their full support in continuing these efforts.

Mentoring First and Second Tour Officers

The Tri-Mission currently hosts several first- and second-tour (FAST) officers and staff, including a small number from agencies other than the Department. Senior leadership at all three missions were fully aware of and actively fulfilling their special responsibilities for the mentoring of FAST employees from the Department and mindful of the presence of others who should receive similar attention. In 2007, the DCMs of the three missions instituted a Tri-Mission-wide orientation program designed to expose FAST employees to the wide range of issues and activities at the three missions. The program lapsed, in part because of changes in leadership personnel. The OIG team found some interest among FAST personnel for reviving the program and informally recommended that the DCMs of the Tri-Mission further explore how such a program might be organized, taking into account the schedules and workloads of all who would have to be involved.

Visitor Support

Together, the three Brussels missions have one of the heaviest visitor workloads in the world. The number of high-level visitors is especially high, in part because of the number of U.S. agencies that conduct important business in Brussels. In addition, the three missions are visited by an average of one congressional delegation (CODEL) each week. The JAS travel, visits, and conferences (TVC) unit handles

all arrangements for CODELs and staff delegations. It also supports visitors at the Assistant Secretary level and above. USNATO alone handles approximately 5,500 visitors a year. The regional security officer (RSO) is heavily involved when visitors require special security arrangements or are accompanied by their own security details. USNATO and JAS work closely on the participation of the Secretaries of State and Defense in NATO ministerial meetings, which occur at least four times a year. USNATO and USEU also collaborated on the successful 2009 visit by Vice President Biden. With the additional staffing at JAS and USNATO since the OIG's last inspection report in 2004, the capacities of the Tri-Missions in the area of visitor support appear—at least for the time being—to be adequate. The TVC unit supervisor has developed checklists and action plans to guarantee the effectiveness of visit support. Indeed, she wrote the instructional materials used by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) for teaching visitor support.

Physical Plant and Future Staffing Growth

With the exception of USNATO, offices for the elements of the Tri-Mission are located in a complex of five separate buildings in central Brussels. Three, including the chancery, the USEU office building, and the JAS office building, are government-owned or leased. The other two are nearby private office buildings in which the U.S. Government rents space. Maintaining the physical plants and rendering them serviceable has been a full-time preoccupation of the JAS leadership, which has found ways to scrape together funding to address some of the most critical fire and life-safety issues.

Looking to the future, however, it seems clear that this complex of buildings is rapidly nearing the end of its serviceability. Moreover, both space and security considerations severely limit the possibilities for adding additional staff. In contrast, in examining the trends in expanding U.S. relations with the EU in particular, it is reasonable to anticipate a need for increased staffing, for the Department and other U.S. agencies. The OIG team understands that Brussels is on the EUR wish list for possible construction of a new embassy/USEU office complex in the 2015 time-frame. If that prospect is realized, the tri-missions and EUR will need to define more precisely their expectations for future office requirements.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	US Direct-Hire Staff	FMA & EFM's	LE Staff	Total Staff	Funding FY 08
State Program	32	1	18	51	\$6,990,500
ICASS	24	11	148	183	29,667,700
Diplomatic Security	25	3	30	58	8,480,600
OBO	3	0	1	4	6,898,607
Public Diplomacy	1	0	9	10	1,941,900
Consular MRV	-	-	-	-	98,771
State Gift	-	-	-	-	37,818
State Representation	-	-	-	-	50,200
Public Diplomacy Representation	-	-	-	-	8,600
Subtotal	85	15	206	306	\$54,174,696
American Battle Field Monuments	4	-	36	40	-
Commerce	1	-	7	8	1,257,300
Department of Homeland Security	4	-	1	5	-
Department of Defense	18	-	5	23	-
Department of Justice	9	-	0	9	-
Department of Health and Human Services	2	-	1	3	-
Department of Transportation	9	-	3	12	-
Subtotal Other Agency	47	0	53	100	1,257,300
Total	132	15	259	406	\$55,431,996

This table contains staffing and budgets for Tri-Mission support as well as for Embassy Brussels.

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The management counselor and the deputy JAS director acknowledged that better communication and coordination are crucial and improvement is essential. They have implemented regularly scheduled meetings with the DCMs of the three missions, the USNATO management team, and JAS management sections. This type of outreach needs to be continued, expanded to include other agencies and mission section heads, and replicated by JAS management section heads and LE staff. Staff at all missions compliment the management counselor and deputy director's efforts thus far to address resource issues and improve customer service. The mission staff also praised support from the Bureaus of European and Eurasian Affairs and International Organization Affairs (EUR/IO) on resolving LE salary issues. The OIG team made informal recommendations to improve operations.

Despite the resources issues that largely affected customer service during 2008, JAS continues to be a place of innovation and a pilot site. Brussels is one of the few missions worldwide that has computer programmers in its information technology section. The information technology section has developed over 90 locally produced software applications that JAS uses to accomplish its management tasks.

JAS continues to maintain its International Organization for Standardization (ISO 9000) certification. Five LE staff members are members of the EUR/IO executive corps. The mission is piloting Department initiatives such as just-in-time furniture delivery, property disposal, and the LE staff contracting officer program. JAS has the highest efficiency ratio of direct service providers to customers in EUR/IO. This means that each direct-hire management official at JAS supports 43.25 staff members. To put this in perspective, other posts, including Rome, Paris, and Vienna which also service three missions, have efficiency ratios of 22.00, 22.21, and 19.64, respectively. This statistic legitimizes JAS's requests for additional staff such as a deputy facilities maintenance manager, which the OIG team supports.

General Services Operations

Extended illnesses of American and LE staff and prolonged staffing gaps had a noticeable effect on service quality and customer satisfaction. Operating under a budgetary continuing resolution for an extended period and budget cuts also hampered operations. (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)
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rent increases and other leasing terms. He works with the housing assistants to identify and cultivate responsible landlords and pursue renting additional properties from them. Short-term leases are rarely over the \$50,000 per year cut off requiring lease waiver approval from Washington.

The deputy GSO manages a large portfolio of 270 rental units, two government-owned apartment buildings with 28 apartments each, and 33 government-owned properties including three chief of mission residences and two DCM residences. All were in good condition and well appointed except the USNATO DCM residence. A cross-section of houses and apartments at the standard, midlevel, and executive sizes were appropriately sized and configured, properly furnished and maintained, and adequate to personnel needs. The housing section maintains and updates a detailed housing market survey for Brussels with pictures and property comparisons as well as market data.

Incoming staff are sent a housing preferences questionnaire which serves as the basis for a selection of two or three options for them to consider. The questionnaire helps prioritize the importance of issues such as proximity to schools and public transportation, and willingness to accept smaller housing for an urban location. An email with detailed pictures inside and outside the property, size statistics, and neighborhood information is sent to each incoming staff member. There is a sense that the new IAHB, while not offering guarantees, is making a greater effort to accommodate family preferences and needs.

Based on success with the two government-owned apartment buildings, the real property manager is working with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) to purchase another apartment building with twenty-nine apartments, which is in a good location. This should also improve the quality of housing and reduce cost.

Facilities Maintenance

The regional facility manager (RFM) is an experienced, highly-motivated expert who has become adept at multitasking. He is also overworked and stressed by inadequate staffing but continues to provide outstanding service to the mission. Residential building operations and maintenance was the fifth-highest rated service of the 29 on the 2009 ICASS survey, with scores considerably above the EUR/IO averages and the worldwide averages. The OIG inspectors heard mostly favorable comments about the service and responsiveness of the maintenance unit. On occasion, the staff

encountered difficulty getting landlords to perform requested maintenance on leased residences and office space and were forced to perform the needed maintenance themselves. The housing section reduces landlord rental payments to compensate for these costs.

The RFM took the inspectors to the chief of mission residences and deputy chief of mission residences, personally supervised completion of one major controlled-access area construction project and the start-up of another, carried out his regional responsibilities by making a one-day visit to Embassy Luxembourg, oversaw all maintenance and repair for residential and nonresidential properties, and still had time to review the functional questionnaires in detail with the inspectors. The maintenance work spaces at the offsite warehouse were efficiently configured, remarkably clean and clutter-free, and conducive to getting the job done. Given the overwhelming workload shouldered by the current RFM, the post is working to upgrade his position from a FS-03 to a FS-02 and to add a deputy facilities manager position in Brussels, especially in light of the likelihood of a number of large projects continuing into the immediate future. The OIG team supports these efforts.

Safety, Health, and Environmental Management

The regional facilities manager is the Post Occupational Safety and Health Officer (POSHO). The regional facilities manager pays serious attention to post safety issues. In March and April 2009, two OBO safety inspectors conducted a Safety, Health, and Environment Management (SHEM) synergy visit. Their report highlighted many of the positive aspects of the SHEM program including the carbon monoxide program, residential safety, integrated pest management, workplace safety, and training. The report found 48 findings and recommendations, which the Tri-Mission will be working to solve in the near future, as resources permit (since many recommendations are subject to additional Washington funding).

One problem brought to the attention of inspectors was the safety and emergency egress situation at the “40 Regent” building where a number of U.S. Government offices are located. The POSHO had already been addressing the issues with the landlord. New signage was installed to direct people to exits, panic-bar doors were being ordered for a number of otherwise locked doors, exit routes were mapped in each office area, floor wardens were to undergo training, and a practice evacuation drill exercise was planned. The mission conducted a fire drill at this site during the inspection.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Brussels should require that all actions related to promoting safe egress from the “40 Regent” building have been taken and appropriate equipment installed, with practice evacuation drills to ensure all U.S. residents know how to safely exit the building. (Action: Embassy Brussels)

The OIG inspectors also informally suggested to the community liaison office (CLO) coordinators that they publish in the employee bulletin and in the materials sent to new arrivals, examples of the emergency signage (e.g., exit doors, evacuation routes) required under Belgian law, so that all staff will be familiar with them. The signage differs from that used in the United States.

Procurement

The staff members are well trained, experienced, and knowledgeable about contracts, blanket purchase agreements, purchase orders, and the use of the purchase cards. The section effectively processes procurements valued at about \$10 million annually. The staff is committed to following Department regulations and internal standard operating procedures, but customer service and feedback to requestors need to be improved.

The procurement section received mixed reviews. Some embassy staff members complimented the procurement services they received while others voiced complaints. The procurement section ICASS scores were lower than worldwide and European post averages. In 2009, procurement section ICASS scores were lower than the previous 2 years.

One reason for the mixed reviews and lower ICASS scores is because the procurement process is complicated and requestors often do not understand all of the administrative processes and regulatory barriers. Another reason is that delivery times to the requestor can be unpredictable. The staff stated that this is attributable to insufficient information about the request, the need to obtain multiple bid quotations, and delays in getting funding information from the financial management section, all of which contribute to delays in receiving goods and services.

Delivery times for the receipt of goods are estimates, and can vary based on the type of item procured; whether it is a secure procurement, locally procured, or a U.S. purchase; and whether funding is available. In some instances, the OIG team found that these factors were not explained to the requestor.

The resulting uncertainty is a source of dissatisfaction for mission personnel, particularly to first-tour officers and agency personnel unfamiliar with Department regulations. It is also a source of frustration for the procurement staff because once an order is placed with a vendor, they do not have control over how long the vendor takes to deliver the goods or services.

Because the procurement process is complicated and delivery times are estimates, follow-up is important. The lack of follow-up on procurement requests was the biggest complaint and needs improvement. The JAS deputy director acknowledged that customer service has been an issue and now meets with the staff weekly to discuss the status of procurements. The OIG team made informal recommendations in this area.

Under a pilot program, the LE procurement supervisor is given a contracting officer's warrant and can approve procurements up to \$25,000. Once a month, the GSO and LE supervisor review all procurement that the LE supervisor approved. Quarterly reports are sent to the Office of Procurement Executive for their review. This program works well because it relieves the burden placed on the GSO in charge of procurement. Brussels is one of only a few posts where LE staff has been given this authority.

In April 2008, the director of the Office of Procurement Executive conducted a detailed review of the procurement section, which was conducted as an integral part of the LE staff contracting officer pilot program. His report outlined three operational deficiencies as well as required actions to resolve findings. The OIG team verified that these weaknesses have been corrected.

There were some unauthorized commitments. Requestors and staff should carefully document sole source justification, particularly at the end of the fiscal year when funding is dumped. The OIG team made informal recommendations in this area.

Personal Property Management

The personal property management section does an outstanding job of managing the tri-mission's property, valued at about \$13.3 million. The 2008 Brussels nonexpendable property shortage was exceptionally low at \$33,487 or 0.26 percent. Of this amount, there was only a \$3,000 inventory shortage found at the warehouse. The section also manages Embassy Luxembourg's personal property valued at about \$854,000.

The warehouse is designated as the central receiving point, but on occasion, some items are received at the chancery or other locations. Receiving items in locations other than the receiving clerk at the central receiving point circumvents management controls. The 2008 nonexpendable inventory overage was \$165,676 or 1.27 percent. This inventory overage shows that some items were not properly received and inventoried at the time of shipment; the majority of these were information technology equipment. During the inspection, the personal property section reemphasized to embassy staff the importance of following this procedure. The OIG team made an informal recommendation to correct this deficiency.

The mission is piloting the just-in-time furniture program that allows the shipment of furniture and appliances directly to an officer's assigned residence. This program is designed to reduce warehouse cost. Under this program, the mission received 25 much needed sets of furniture and appliances valued at \$1 million. Another test pilot is the disposal of inventory. Under this pilot, the LE warehouse supervisor is allowed to dispose of some inventory items without approval from the property management board. The section also uses a contract to supply, repair, and dispose of appliances.

Motor Pool Operation

The motor pool operation at the Tri-Mission involves four pool drivers, ten dedicated drivers, and four MSG drivers. One driver currently functions as acting dispatcher until the newly-hired dispatcher comes on board. Direct vehicle operations (motor pool) were rated in the median ICASS ratings, slightly below the EUR/IO and worldwide averages. The inspectors heard mostly positive comments about the motor pool.

Management controls are in place. Motor vehicle inventory records, the use and maintenance records, vehicle disposition records, and daily vehicle use records are in order and complete. There is an active preventative maintenance program, with servicing and repairs contracted out to several local garages and parts ordered through them. Each vehicle has a credit card for making gasoline purchases; billing invoices are compared to usage records.

The OIG team reviewed the motor pool operation. The Tri-Mission experienced eight safety incidents in 2008 and nine incidents in 2009. No accident involved injury or serious damage; however, four of the 2009 incidents involved Marines or Marine drivers, so the OIG team informally recommended remedial safety training for the Marines and Marine drivers, as well as issuance of a management bulletin promoting safe driving and safety awareness. The post should also ensure that no Marines

under 25 years old are driving a government-owned vehicle without a finding of overwhelming or compelling need, a written exception from post management, and a thorough evaluation of the youthful driver's performance.

Under Department policy, no driver may use a handheld phone while driving. According to Belgian law, it is also illegal for drivers to use cell phones unless in hands-free mode. Many vehicles had hands-free kits but the Tri-Mission recently changed to different phone models which do not fit these kits. The OIG team left an informal recommendation that hands-free kits to fit the current cell phones be installed, but that only critical communications should be permitted using hands-free cell phones, as most hands-free devices still distract the driver when they look at the phone to answer or make calls. Drivers should otherwise hand the phone to a passenger or wait until the vehicle can be pulled off the road to answer, return, or make calls in accordance with current SHEM guidance.

Customs and Shipping

Mission personnel often complained about the amount of time it takes to receive Belgian identification cards, diplomatic license plates, personal vehicles, and household effects. Belgian identification card processing usually takes about 6 weeks. Upon receipt of the Belgian identification card, diplomatic license plates processing takes an additional 4 weeks. Shipment of personal vehicles, household effects, and customs clearance can range from 6 to 8 weeks. The OIG team learned that paperwork for the receipt of these items is normally delivered to Belgian Governmental entities within 1 to 3 days. Upon delivery of paperwork to Belgian ministries, the time it takes to receive these items is beyond the control of the management staff.

There were also complaints about the newly mandated International Through Government Bill of Lading program (ITGBL), which is a door-to-door moving service for household effects. Under the ITGBL method, a survey is conducted at the residence that results in a weight estimate, the effects are packed at the residence, and the effects are weighed at the warehouse on a calibrated scale, banded, marked, and shipped. Previously, a preliminary weight was taken at the residence before shipment to allow customers to adjust their household effects if items exceeded weight limits. Under ITGBL, customers must arrange to go to the warehouse and have the staff remove items from crates at their expense if they exceed weight limits.

Travel, Visits and Conferences

The TVC section consists of four specialists who focus on official travel, visits, and conference support. Carlson Wagonlit previously maintained an expensive onsite office for travel services, and JAS modified the contract to allow it to provide services offsite. This loss of convenience has been a source of some employee dissatisfaction with travel services, but users are still able to accomplish travel arrangements via email, and complaints have diminished. This move saved ICASS over \$300,000 per year but has had a negative impact on the ICASS score. In the 2009 ICASS survey, travel services was sixth from the bottom, considerably lower than the EUR/IO and worldwide averages and lower than its previous year's score. The newly mandated E-2 Travel Service was also a source of frustration for customers; customers complain that its software is not user-friendly and is difficult to learn.

Human Resources

The human resources section is bouncing back after having suffered a problem-plagued year in 2008. The Tri-Mission lost the deputy human resources (HR) officer position in 2008 to the GRP initiative. The HR officer was on mandatory home leave during the summer. The section also experienced resignations in the LE staff complicated by an unusually high level of sick leave being taken due to surgery and maternity leave. At times, the section had to be staffed with summer-hires. The section had to be temporarily relocated for 4 months due to a renovation project. These circumstances led to losses of documentation, disruptions in service, and likely reduction in customer service quality.

The 2009 ratings in the ICASS survey indicated that American and LE personnel services were rated near the bottom of all services (23rd and 27th respectively out of 29 categories). In both cases, the results were significantly lower than the averages for all inspected EUR/IO posts as well as those posts inspected worldwide. They were also considerably lower than their 2008 rankings.

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The inspectors received comments from a variety of sections in the Tri-Mission that the loss of the deputy HR position was a noticeable blow to the services provided by that section; many recommended that the position be restored. The loss of the position has resulted in less time for the HR officer to dedicate to the direct management of LE staff and difficulty in supporting USNATO as actively as before.

Recommendation 4: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Human Resources, should reestablish the deputy human resources officer position (position number 54001001) and fill it as quickly as possible. (Action: EUR, in coordination with DGHR)

Recognizing these personnel problems, the HR officer, despite already being overloaded with work, has taken several remedial actions. He filled all vacant LE positions in HR and organized on-the-job training for new and recent arrivals. He organized team building activities, both on and off site, on a quarterly basis. He established an HR reception email address to facilitate establishing contact with clients. He expanded his initiative to hold periodic onsite “office hours” at USNATO to make it a weekly function; he is currently expanding that to twice weekly. This will include having his check-in/check-out staff on site at USNATO during the summer transition period to facilitate processing at least weekly. HR has offered workshops for employees on recruitment, performance evaluation, and orientation of employees.

The Tri-Mission has developed training opportunities locally, in Frankfurt and in the United States, but these are obviously constrained by the budget. The expense for training sponsored in 2008 was just one-third of that spent for training in 2007. For this year, the budget has been increased significantly and HR plans to have five or six of its staff members attend some sort of training. The OIG team informally recommended requesting customer service training for the HR employees (as well as for other administrative sections), especially for new personnel, possibly with help from a team at the Frankfurt Regional Center.

As requested by the HR employees, the section has clarified job responsibilities and is having all positions classified under the Computer Aided Job Evaluation (CAJE) system by HR/OE. The section is working on cross training so that each person has a back-up to facilitate coverage. Both the HR officer and his LE CAJE coordinator are recognized by the Department as experts in CAJE work and have been asked to teach the process in several locations.

The Interagency Joint Awards Committee administers the awards program for USEU, the embassy, and JAS, and conducts two awards ceremonies per year. The OIG inspectors reviewed the most recent award activity and found it appropriate and diversified. USNATO conducts its own awards program.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Three Washington-trained American officers and two LE staff confidants manage EEO matters for the Tri-Mission; their names and contact information are prominently displayed on posters and on the Tri-Mission Web site.

Confidants are trained by the Belgian Government, which requires that all large organizations appoint at least one employee to counsel and advise fellow employees who complain of either sexual or moral harassment; moral harassment ranges from perceived unequal work assignments to racial and religious discrimination. In Brussels, the confidants advise not only local staff but American officers and family members as well. Most cases do not rise to formal actions, although they can. In general, to protect the clients' privacy, files are not kept for confidants' cases..

There are no active, formal EEO cases in Brussels, but there are cases of counseling. The lead American counselor is planning to hold an embassy-wide meeting to present EEO information to the entire staff. He will also send the mandatory monthly reports to Washington.

While the counselors' and confidants' responsibilities do not correspond, they do complement each other. All agree that they would benefit from consulting together regularly, and the OIG team informally recommended that they hold monthly meetings.

The inspectors learned of several cases in which American officers and family members needed advice, but they were not aware that the confidants were available to them. The OIG team informally recommended that the roles and responsibilities of the counselors and confidants be explained in a public meeting and on the Tri-Mission Web site, so that staff members and dependents will know to whom they can go for help. The inspectors also suggested that the missions might also consider an ombudsman system as a complement to these existing support services.

Federal Women's Program

The director of the European Media Center is the Federal Women's Program coordinator for the Tri-Mission, a voluntary position. Appointed only 2 weeks before the inspection began, the coordinator is familiar with the program's history and goals, and with her role in it. She has canvassed but not yet found any complaints, grievances, or questions to address, but she intends to talk to female officers at all three missions to learn which program initiatives might be most usefully applied in Brussels.

Financial Operations

Overall, the financial management section provides excellent support to the Tri-Mission, including 44 governmental entities. Cashiering, accounts and records, and budgets and financial plans received high ICASS scores. Voucher processing was rated slightly below worldwide and European post averages. The lower voucher processing score resulted from the section losing five experienced LE staff—three LE staff members retired, one LE staff member sought other employment, and one LE staff member was on extended sick leave. All vacant positions have been filled and voucher processing scores are expected to increase.

During these vacancies, the section outsourced some of its travel voucher processing to the Charleston and Bangkok Financial Service Center's post support units. This arrangement has had varying degrees of success. Initially, the post support units' voucher processing service was error prone and slower than advertised, but service is now adequate and travel vouchers are processed within 10 days. Two LE staff members have certification authority. One has authority for up to \$250,000 and the other up to \$50,000. One has authority to conduct monthly cash verifications.

Banking

(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2) This cash is largely used to provide accommodation exchange services for about 321 U.S. direct-hires working at the Tri-Mission. Although the Bureau of Resource Management generally prefers employees to get accommodation exchange through commercial banks, finding a bank that will provide this service is problematic. Embassy officials say that, in general, commercial banking institutions find that providing accommodation exchange services is not profitable.

International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

ICASS functions well at the Tri-Mission. Relations among agencies are professional and productive. The ICASS council meets regularly. The ICASS council has adopted the Department's uniform performance standards and monitors compliance with these standards. The 2009 annual ICASS survey shows that users are satisfied with many administrative services, but scores show that human resources, housing, procurement, and customs and shipping need to improve.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS SECURITY

Information management operations in Brussels consist of four separate technology infrastructures: two managed by USNATO and two at Embassy Brussels and USEU. Connectivity between the networks allows information sharing and collaboration at the Tri-Mission. Despite staffing shortages, the information management offices at the Tri-Mission have provided outstanding support to the Tri-Mission, Department of Defense, and official delegations.

Previous JAS and USNATO information management officers developed a white paper proposing the consolidation of Tri-Mission technology infrastructure into one distinct entity. The OIG team endorses the proposal to align services and integrate information management teams under the leadership of a single information management officer. Due to the special challenges encountered at USNATO, which has four different information technology infrastructures to manage, the OIG team further supports the proposal to locate the information management officer position at USNATO. In merging the two information management officer positions, the

Initiatives

The Brussels information management section is proactive. Recently, an information overload committee was established to study and discuss technological innovations. U.S. direct-hire and LE staff from a variety of occupations and sections are participating in this endeavor to discuss new products. The Department faces a dilemma in deploying popular new products such as Twitter and Facebook applications that provide a collaborative environment. However, the programs take up significant bandwidth which is unavailable at this time.

The WEBPASS software application does not meet the needs of JAS management sections and the regional security office. One information systems center (ISC) programmer has developed a variety of interfaces for customers, which have the potential to be used by other missions. The post has an active, local configuration control board which reviews, tests, and approves locally developed applications and communicates its decisions to the Department's Information Technology Configuration Control Board. These local applications have been developed using visual basic and java script. Applications for management customers include reconciliation vouchers, contract information for new leases, and property maintenance systems. There is a cost-tracking system in place for housing payments which interfaces with real-estate management systems. WEBPASS does not account for rental payments for leased properties and a specific application was developed to meet the financial management center (FMC) needs.

The information systems center programmers have developed 150 central applications and close to 130 local applications, including the web-based Customer Relationship Management (CRM), currently being piloted by the public affairs section and the protocol office. CRM is based on the Microsoft dynamics net framework and all the functionalities of Goldmine, a popular contact management system, were merged into the program. Yet it is easier to maintain and cost effective. The necessary clearances for using CRM were obtained. The CRM application is robust and photographs can be included. The OIG team reviewed the CRM and believes that it would be beneficial for Washington to test it for potential worldwide deployment in the field. JAS customers are pleased with the applications that information systems center has developed.

Challenges

Despite staff shortages, information management staff members have rotated through the sections and have cross-trained as much as possible. In addition, many U.S. direct-hires have obtained computer certifications, motivated in part by the

QUALITY OF LIFE

EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

The Tri-Mission Association of Brussels has over 530 members and three employees. Its services include a retail store, video rentals, a daycare center, dry cleaning, a gym, sale of gas coupons, and a cafeteria. Employees also have access to a military commissary located at the U.S. Army/U.S. Air Force Base located at Chièvres, Belgium, less than one hour's drive from Brussels.

In January 2009, a commissary and recreational affairs team conducted a detailed internal review of the Tri-Mission Association of Brussels operations. Its report outlined financial and operational deficiencies as well as required actions to resolve findings. The OIG team verified that these financial and operational weaknesses were corrected and found no additional discrepancies.

The most controversial association decision is the proposed September 1, 2009 closing of the daycare center. The daycare center is located close to the chancery thereby making it easy for working officers to drop off and pick up their children. However, the daycare center is not in full compliance with local labor law, it is not accredited, it is not financially viable, and it is not secure. For these reasons, the association voted to liquidate this business venture. JAS and the OIG team support this decision.

Parents and incoming officers were notified of the association's planned closure of the daycare center and given the name of an alternative daycare center. A list of daycare centers located near the chancery is being compiled. The CLO has also been notified of the planned closure.

SCHOOLS

The Brussels area is served by several U.S.-accredited schools with high academic standards. (b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)
(b)(2)(b)(6) Some Tri-Mission families deliberately chose Brussels

assignments due to this school's robust and innovative special-needs program. The Office of Overseas Schools believes that ^{(b)(2)(b)(6)}_{(b)(2)(b)(6)} program is the best program among the 195 schools that it assists worldwide. The school also has the strongest International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement Programs in the Brussels area. Other educational options are (b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6) which also provide special education and Advanced Placement Programs, with (b)(2)(b)(6) an International Baccalaureate diploma as well.

The regional education officer of the Office of Overseas Schools visited Brussels area schools in 2008, and reported a few parental complaints relating primarily to ^{(b)(2)(b)(6)}_{(b)(2)(b)(6)} but in general, Tri-Mission families report high satisfaction with the education available for their dependents.

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

The Tri-Mission has two committed and highly motivated CLO coordinators, who effectively carry out their duties, which include publication of the weekly employee bulletin, promoting family employment, serving on mission employment and emergency action committees, participating in country team and management meetings, and managing the new arrival sponsorship program. The CLO coordinators have an effective outreach program and organize events that draw participants from all mission communities. CLO services received high marks.

The CLOs work closely with JAS to make sure that they have the most complete information for distribution to potential new arrivals. They have helped organize 21 "neighborhood clusters" of people living close to each other, each with two neighborhood captains to promote interaction. Likewise, they organize a predeparture seminar to prepare employees for outprocessing.

As noted earlier in the Residential Maintenance section, the OIG inspectors left an informal recommendation that the CLO coordinators help to publicize the Belgium-specific safety signage.

HEALTH UNIT

Since Brussels has excellent healthcare facilities and doctor coverage, the principal role of the health unit, except for emergencies, is to refer employees to suitable medical treatment in Brussels. This Office of Medical Services policy has created grumbles in the Tri-Mission community because many employees come to Brussels from countries with inadequate medical care where the regional medical officer or nurse is much more active in providing medical services. Information about health care services and policies in Brussels is sent in advance to potential new arrivals. In some instances, employees expressed dissatisfaction with the local medical providers to whom they were referred by the health unit, prompting some to make their own arrangements.

The health unit is effectively managed by an American Foreign Service Health Practitioner (FSHP) aided by a Belgian registered nurse, a part-time registered nurse (currently vacant), and an administrative aide/receptionist. The unit has more than adequate facilities, equipment, furnishings and supplies, but will soon be relocated to a comparable office space on the first floor of the JAS building. Storage of controlled substances (being phased out), perishable medical items, and medical records are all in accordance with Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) requirements. Visits by the regional medical officer, regional manager, and regional medical technician were adequate.

The FSHP notes that the major medical concern in Belgium is pollution and poor air quality, increasing the incidences of allergies and asthma, especially in winter, but this is similar to other major European cities. An often-mentioned service issue for the health unit is its location, which is at a distance from the USNATO mission, making it inconvenient for those employees to consult with medical personnel. The FSHP visits USNATO twice a year to give a health unit services briefing to new arrivals and to offer flu shots.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Chiefs of mission have the responsibility for certifying the adequacy of management controls at their specific post. A description of management controls at Embassy Brussels, USEU, and USNATO is found in the inspection reports for each of the three missions.

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.

Public Diplomacy

Newsmarket, the service contracted by the Hub to place its interviews on the Internet, keeps track of the number of hits, but has not been forthcoming in advising the Hub of placements. The Hub is seeking easier ways of gathering placement information.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Brussels should negotiate with Newsmarket to provide it with interview placement information.

The PAOs of the three missions in Brussels do not meet regularly to review the public diplomacy environment, to avoid overlapping programs, and to improve the communications flow among them.

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

Mentoring Officers

In 2007, the DCMs of the three missions instituted a Tri-Mission-wide orientation program designed to expose first- and second-tour employees to the wide range of issues and activities at the three missions. The program lapsed, in part because of changes in leadership personnel. The OIG team found some interest for reviving the program.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Brussels, the U.S. Mission to the European Union, and the U.S. Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization should require that the deputy chiefs of missions of the Tri-Mission explore how such an orientation program might be organized, taking into account the schedules and workloads of all who would be involved.

Management Operations

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Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Brussels should conduct team building exercises and activities for the joint administrative services management sections.

Safety, Health and Environmental Management

Some employees were unfamiliar with the building safety signage required by Belgian law.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Brussels should require that the community liaison office coordinators publish in the weekly bulletin and in the materials sent to new arrivals, examples of the emergency signage (e.g. exit doors, evacuation routes, etc.) required under Belgian law, to familiarize mission staff.

Procurement

Some employees complain that procurement processing take too long.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Brussels should issue an administrative notice reminding staff about the length of time and staff requirements involved in unclassified and secure procurements.

When there are delays in processing procurement requests, in some instances the financial management and procurement sections did not notify the requestor that the mission is operating under a continuing resolution and cannot fill the request.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Brussels should issue a management notice reminding mission staff that certain types of goods and services such as information technology equipment cannot be ordered during a continuing resolution and can cause some procurement requests to go unprocessed for long periods.

The procurement received low ICASS scores and mixed reviews about customer service.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Brussels should provide customer service training to the procurement staff.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Brussels should include customer service orientation attitude as an element in American and locally employed staff evaluations.

The procurement unit frequently receives incomplete procurement requests.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Brussels should redesign its procurement request form highlighting required fields of information.

Procurement ICASS standards measure how long it takes to process a request, but do not measure customer service.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Brussels should send out a customer service satisfaction survey that measures customer service satisfaction.

The procurement section does not monitor its compliance with ICASS standards.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Brussels should expand the procurement section's duties to include compliance with International Cooperative Administrative Support Services.

There are inefficiencies in the interaction between procurement and other management units. For example, obtaining funding for goods and services has caused some delays.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy Brussels should develop procedures in coordination with other management sections to facilitate faster procurements for goods and services.

The procurement section discusses procurement orders that are still pending beyond 30 days. Although late procurement orders are discussed among the procurement staff, sometimes this information is not relayed back to the requestor.

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy Brussels should take minutes of these discussions and make them available to requestors.

In a few instances, required documentation for some contracts, purchase orders, and blanket purchase agreements was not always filed.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy Brussels should complete Forms DS-1918, Purchase Order File; DS-1919, Delivery Order File; and DS-1920, Blanket Purchase Agreement File to record relevant data and document information pertaining to acquisitions.

Informal Recommendation 16: Embassy Brussels should document evidence of competition or sole source justification on purchase orders, blanket purchase agreement forms, and contract files.

At year end when funding is dumped, the number of sole source justifications increases and competition guidelines are not always followed.

Informal Recommendation 17: Embassy Brussels should encourage requestors to submit their procurement wish lists several months before year end so that sole source justification can be limited and competition guidelines can be followed.

Over a two year period, Embassy Brussels had three unauthorized procurement actions. Two invoices were below \$1,000 and the management counselor can ratify the procurement. One other agency procurement was for an automobile and was over \$1,000, and did not have appropriate procurement documentation. These transactions are unauthorized commitments and require ratification by the procurement executive.

Informal Recommendation 18: Embassy Brussels should research and report the unauthorized commitments without proper procurement action that were taken prior to certification of funds availability that met criteria for ratification, to the management counselor.

Informal Recommendation 19: Embassy Brussels should research and report to the Bureau of Administration's Office of the Procurement Executive the unauthorized commitment above \$1,000 that requires ratification or have other agencies report to their Offices of the Procurement Executive their procurements requiring ratification.

Informal Recommendation 20: Embassy Brussels should reissue its management notice on unauthorized commitments reminding mission staff that only contracting officers have authorization to procurement goods and services.

Motor Pool Operation

In 2009, there were motor vehicle incidents, of which four involved Marines or Marine drivers.

Informal Recommendation 21: Embassy Brussels should conduct remedial safety training for the Marines and Marine drivers, as well as issue a management bulletin promoting safe driving and safety awareness. Marines under 25 years old should be restricted from driving a government-owned vehicle without a finding of overwhelming or compelling need, a written exception from post management, and a thorough evaluation of the youthful driver's performance.

In Belgium it is illegal for drivers to use cell phones unless in hands-free mode. Many embassy vehicles had hands-free kits but new cell phones were issued to drivers and these hands-free kits do not fit the new cell phones.

Informal Recommendation 22: Embassy Brussels should install hands-free cell phone kits to fit the current cell phones but require that only critical communications be permitted using hands-free cell phones. Drivers should hand the phone to a passenger or wait until the vehicle can be pulled off the road to answer, return, or make calls.

Personal Property Management

Although the warehouse is designated as the central receiving point, on some occasions, some items are received directly at the chancery or other locations.

Informal Recommendation 23: Embassy Brussels should issue a management notice notifying mission staff that the warehouse is the designated central receiving point and all procurements should be received by the receiving clerk.

Human Resources

Complaints were voiced about the HR staff having poor customer service.

Informal Recommendation 24: Embassy Brussels should request customer service training for the human resources staff as well as for some other administrative sections, especially for new personnel, possibly via a team from the Frankfurt Regional Center.

Equal Employment Opportunity

While the EEO counselors' and confidants' responsibilities do complement each other, they do not correspond.

Informal Recommendation 25: Embassy Brussels should require that the Equal Employment Opportunity counselors and confidants consult together regularly and hold monthly meetings.

The OIG inspectors became aware of several cases in which American officers and family members needed advice, and were not aware that the confidants were available to them.

Informal Recommendation 26: Embassy Brussels should explain the roles and responsibilities of the Equal Employment Opportunity counselors and confidants in a public meeting and on the Tri-mission Web site, so that staff members and dependents will know to whom they can go for help.

Information Management and Information Systems Security

The Tri-Mission intranet webpage provides a variety of information and can be overwhelming to newcomers because all of the missions are represented. Embassy Brussels utilizes a web captain approach to manage Brussels Infonet; however, there is a lack of oversight. For example, the web page links "e-Suggestion Box" and "view PO" under JAS online services are not operational. This can be frustrating to customers seeking information.

Informal Recommendation 27: Embassy Brussels should require that web captains develop a plan to monitor, verify, and update links in a timely manner.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

See Inspection Report for Embassy Brussels

ABBREVIATIONS

CAJE	Computer Aided Job Evaluation
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CLO	Community liaison office
CODEL	Congressional Delegation
COM	Chief of mission
COMSEC	Communications security
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFM	Eligible family member
ERA	Office of European Union and Regional Affairs
EU	European Union
EUR	Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
EUR/IO	Bureaus of European and Eurasian Affairs and International Organizations
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
FAST	First- and second-tour
FMC	Financial management center
FSHP	Foreign Service health practitioner
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
GRP	Global Repositioning Program
GSO	General services officer
HR	Human resources
HR/OE	Bureau of Human Resources, Office of Overseas Employment
IAHB	Interagency Housing Board

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ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IM	Information management
IMO	Information management officer
IPC	Information program center
IRM	Bureau of Information Resource Management
ITGBL	International Through Government Bill of Lading
JAS	Joint administrative services
LE	Locally employed
MED	Office of Medical Services
MSG	Marine security guard
MSP	Mission Strategic Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PAO	Public affairs officer
PD	Public diplomacy
PDAS	Principal deputy assistant secretary
POSHO	Post occupational safety and health officer
RFM	Regional facilities manager
RPM	Office of European Security and Political Affairs
RSO	Regional security officer
SHEM	Safety, health, and environment management
TVC	Travel, visits, and conferences
USEU	U.S. Mission to the European Union
USNATO	U.S. Mission to NATO

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