

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

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

Report of Inspection

Embassy Buenos Aires, Argentina

Report Number ISP-I-06-49A, September 2006

~~IMPORTANT NOTICE~~

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

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY JUDGMENTS 1

REPORT SUMMARY 3

CONTEXT 5

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION 7

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION..... 9

 Political Affairs..... 9

 Law Enforcement and Regional Security Coordination 11

 Economic Affairs and Business Advocacy..... 15

 Commercial and Agricultural Affairs Coordination..... 17

 Environmental, Science, Technology, and Health Issues..... 18

 Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs 20

 Consular Affairs..... 29

 Avian Influenza Preparedness..... 40

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT..... 41

 Overview 42

 Administrative Operations 42

 Rightsizing and Regionalization 44

 Human Resources 46

 Financial Management Operations..... 51

 Embassy Contract Guard Force 53

 General Services Office..... 54

 Information Management and Information Technology Security 61

QUALITY OF LIFE 67

 American Employees Association 67

 Community Liaison Office 67

 Health Unit 68

 Schools..... 69

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS 71

 Premium Travel 71

 Rest and Recuperation Travel 72

 Local Guard Contract 72

 Use of Official Telephones 73

 Official Residence Expenses 74

 Representation Allowance 74

 Consensual Relationships 75

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS 77

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS 81

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS 91

ABBREVIATIONS 93

KEY JUDGMENTS

- Embassy Buenos Aires is led by an exceptionally popular and capable career Ambassador and an able deputy chief of mission (DCM). This front office team has fostered excellent interagency cooperation and has orchestrated impressive law enforcement and security cooperation with Argentine authorities.
- Active and creative public affairs and public diplomacy programming supports all Mission Performance Plan (MPP) goals. To improve the overwhelmingly negative public opinion about the United States, which complicates U.S. diplomatic efforts, the public affairs section needs more tools to allow it to concentrate on programming with the most impact.
- The mission's substantive reporting has been timely, comprehensive, and well received by Washington end-users.
- The consular section is still working hard to rebuild its capacity in the wake of Argentina's 2002 loss of the visa waiver program and the country's unexpectedly robust economic resurgence. Focus on the nonimmigrant visa workload has limited attention devoted to other important areas, but a planned increase in officer staffing should redress this situation.
- Growing crime and illicit drug trafficking in Argentina, combined with the impact of regional political shifts signaling reduced cooperation by neighboring governments with counternarcotics programs, have increased the need for bilateral cooperation with Argentine law enforcement officials. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs needs to adjust its program for the Southern Cone accordingly.
- The embassy organized the President's participation in the November 2005 Summit of the Americas held at a resort town at a distance from the capital city. This remote location and the lack of suitable hotel and transport options created severe challenges for the management section. Post's overall performance in support of this summit was very good, but some financial issues remained unresolved at the time of the inspection.
- The Ambassador and DCM provide strong support to the post security program. In the face of rising levels of crime directed against mission employees, the Ambassador requires all mission staff members to pay attention to post security practices and procedures.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between April 17 and 29, 2006, and in Buenos Aires, Argentina, between May 2 and 22, 2006.

REPORT SUMMARY

Embassy Buenos Aires is well run and productive. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) inspection examined issues specific to this embassy alone, such as the post's processing of travel vouchers (see Management Controls section), as well as issues that potentially are shared by a number of other embassies in the Western Hemisphere or worldwide, such as the lack of clarity over the use of the living quarters allowance by Department officers at posts that do not have an approved living quarters allowance program (see the General Services Office section). The highlights of the findings are described below.

Embassy Buenos Aires provided support for the 2005 Summit of the Americas. As part of this support the embassy secured hotel rooms, local transport, and other logistical support for the President's staff. At the time of the inspection there were still unresolved financial issues relating to logistical support. The OIG team was not in a position to audit the contractual arrangements entered into by the embassy in connection with the summit but it is clear that the embassy needed more guidance from the Department at an earlier stage in planning than was the case. The OIG team recommended the creation of a user-friendly web site to capture lessons learned from specific summits so that other posts could avoid common mistakes (see Recommendation 12).

Recent changes to the Department's policy on rest and relaxation travel gives officers greater latitude in choosing a destination city in the United States for their R&R travel. The inspection found that financial managers at post were unclear as to the travel costs allowable under this allowance with the result that some travel costs had to be repaid by an official traveler (see Recommendation 33).

The embassy was leasing properties specifically to house interns without authorization from the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (see Recommendation 21).

The OIG team questioned (see the Housing and Living Quarters Allowance section) the embassy past practice of approving a Department officer's request to be issued a living quarters allowance in connection with that officer's purchase of a personally owned residence in Buenos Aires rather than living in the short term leased

or United States government-owned housing in the interagency housing pool. In addition, the team questioned the embassy's practice of using Department funds to enhance security at short-term privately leased residences occupied by officers receiving living quarters allowances, absent evidence that suitable efforts had been made to identify housing that already met security requirements or to have the security upgrades paid by the landlord.

Embassy Buenos Aires, like many other embassies, is not reconciling the monthly guard contract invoices with the electronic guard monitoring reports to verify that the residential mobile patrol and the Marine House static guard charges are accurate (see Management Controls section - Recommendation 34). If the electronic guard monitoring reports show that the guards did not actually perform all their assigned duties, deductions should be made from the contract payments.

CONTEXT



Argentina is a nation of immigrants, whose society, culture and language have been uniquely shaped by repeated waves of European immigration. Its territory extends from the tropical jungles in the north to the glacial peaks in Tierra del Fuego in the south and is roughly the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River. Roughly half of Argentina's 39 million inhabitants live in and around the capital city of Buenos Aires, leaving most of the country sparsely populated.

While Argentina has a democratic federal system of government, the country has been plagued by political instability and frequent disruptions to the constitutional process. Only two of Argentina's 30 presidents since 1930 completed their terms in office. President Kirchner, elected in April 2003, currently enjoys historically high approval ratings. His political allies have a comfortable majority in the Senate and a near majority in the Lower House. Two key issues confronting the Kirchner Administration are the rising crime rate and the re-emergence of the problem of inflation. Opposition parties are weak and fragmented, leaving them unable to pose a serious challenge to Kirchner.

Argentina's economy has recovered at a rapid rate since the economic crisis of 2001-2002 and is on track to perform well in 2006, provided that Argentina is able to attract more investment and keep inflation under control. The production of grains, cattle, and other agricultural goods continues to be the backbone of the Argentine economy. Energy products, high technology goods, and services are emerging as significant exports. U.S. trade with Argentina grew an estimated 20 percent in 2005, with two-way trade totaling almost \$8.5 billion.

The government of Argentina is a close and productive partner of the United States in counterproliferation, counternarcotics, and counterterrorism activities. Argentina is the only South American country that has endorsed the Proliferation Security Initiative. It has implemented the Container Security Initiative; and is in the final stages of negotiating a memorandum of understanding on the Megaports Initiative – the first such agreement in South America. Argentina cooperates as a major non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally in regional security and contributes troops to the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti. The U.S. and Argentine governments have exceptionally active science and technology cooperation with a strong focus on nuclear nonproliferation. In January 2005, Argentina assumed a two-year seat on the UN Security Council, where its votes track with those of the United States 80 percent of the time.

Embassy Buenos Aires houses nine federal agencies and employs 349 individuals (116 direct-hire Americans, ten locally hired Americans and/or eligible family members (EFM), and 223 locally employed staff (LES)). For FY 2006, the budgets of all mission agencies total approximately \$12.2 million.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

A seasoned and highly capable career Ambassador and his able senior Foreign Service DCM lead embassy Buenos Aires. The Ambassador's and the DCM's coordination of interagency policy and issues is exemplary, focused on a "One team, One mission" approach designed to maximize the utility of resources each agency can bring to the table, and to ensure that key goals and objectives are met in a collegial and productive atmosphere. Several senior agency heads characterized this front office team as exceptionally good. The Ambassador meets twice a week in formal country team sessions, conducted in a brisk and efficient manner, during which he examines issues from a broad perspective incorporating the equities of all country team members. Dialogue at these meetings is genuinely lateral and not simply a series of one-on-one conversations with the Ambassador. In addition to formal country team meetings, both the Ambassador and the DCM have an open door policy and encourage country team members and section chiefs to meet with them on an informal basis whenever needed. Both the Ambassador and DCM manage by walking around the chancery on a regular basis. Employees are pleasantly surprised by the fact that the Ambassador knows most staff members, including the Foreign Service nationals (FSNs), by name. The Ambassador and the DCM provide their full support to the goals and objectives of the post Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program.

The DCM chairs a series of issue-focused meetings to include a law enforcement working group, homeland security working group, counterintelligence working group, and an economic/commercial working group, among others, where a broad range of embassy staff coordinates strategy and tactics for implementation of MPP goals and objectives. The DCM also meets with Department of State (Department) section chiefs on a regular basis in a series of standing weekly or bi-weekly meetings to discuss progress in meeting section goals and objectives.

The embassy does not take full advantage of the National Security Decision Directive-38 (NSDD-38) process to insist that other agencies complete the approval process before starting operations. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has operated the Container Security Initiative in Argentina since October 2005 using a series of temporary duty agents/staff to perform the work. The embassy has notified DHS of the need to file the requisite NSDD-38 request. The Ambassador and the DCM were encouraged to press DHS to complete this process.

The DCM chairs a mission-wide collaborative process to develop the MPP. Heads of other agencies report satisfaction with the level of inclusion their issues received in this document. At the time of the inspection, the mission was waiting for final guidance from the Department on the most recent MPP submission. Once the MPP is approved, it becomes the basic reference document for allocation of mission resources. Public diplomacy issues are reflected appropriately in the MPP. Due to the fact that the approval ratings of the United States among Argentines are the lowest in South America, the Ambassador and the DCM devote considerable attention to the public diplomacy program.

The regional security officer (RSO) reports a high level of satisfaction with the support that the Ambassador and the DCM provide to the post security program. In recent months, the mission has embarked on a more vigorous program of planning for emergency preparedness. The Ambassador has given his full support to this initiative. The embassy is scheduled for the construction of a new chancery, starting five to six years from the time of the inspection. Within the limits of what can be done to bring the current chancery into compliance with the most recent security standards, the Ambassador and the DCM have been active in efforts to secure funds and resources from Washington for needed security enhancements.

Morale among the U.S. direct-hire staff, although good, has been dampened by the rising crime rate and by the necessary steps the mission is taking to bring its housing profile in line with U.S. government standards. Morale among local staff is on the decline because rising inflation is eroding their buying power. The Ambassador and the DCM have sought approval from the Department to provide a new supplemental retirement fund for FSNs. They have also requested a salary review for the higher-grade employees who received only a four percent increase during the last wage survey. The front office is to be commended for such efforts to retain key staff. The OIG team suggested informally that post leadership finds ways to engage in a more active dialogue with a representative group of FSNs with a goal of identifying mutually beneficial ways of improving the sense of community and shared purpose.

The mission has an active and comprehensive mentoring/training program for entry-level officers (ELO), both generalists and specialists. ELOs from other agencies are also invited to participate in this program. Feedback from those ELOs interviewed was highly positive on the commitment to this program exhibited by both the Ambassador and the DCM. The issues ELOs raised were not post-specific. For example, many expressed disappointment with back-to-back assignments to positions outside of their chosen cone and concern over their tenure prospects because of lack of exposure to work in their cone.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

A political counselor with broad expertise in Latin America deftly directs the political section. The section comprises a labor attaché who simultaneously covers human rights and trafficking in persons issues, two political-military officers handling the nonproliferation and counterterrorism portfolios, a domestic political affairs analyst, an ELO covering narcotics affairs/law enforcement and coordinating MPP preparation, an office management specialist (OMS), and two FSNs. Besides traditional analytical reporting, the section actively conducts provincial travel and public outreach programs, coordinating closely with other sections and agencies throughout the embassy.

Washington interagency consumers, along with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) and Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), are very pleased with the quality and timeliness of the political section's reporting. In large part, this is a reflection of the strong language skills of the section's officers. Spot reports - tasked by the front office or the Department - are drafted, cleared, and sent the same day. In-depth analytical pieces put a premium on conciseness and invariably include comment sections with clearly focused insights for Washington policymakers. A review of the embassy's reporting plans for 2005 and first quarter 2006, indicated the political section had clearly met – and in many instances exceeded – its requirements.

The November 1-5, 2005, Summit of the Americas was a major logistical and substantive challenge for Embassy Buenos Aires. Mar del Plata, the conference site, lay over 250 miles from the capital. The President and Secretary of State attended the summit, generating extensive bilateral reporting and complex orchestrating of diplomatic activity with third countries. In Washington meetings with the inspection team, senior WHA officials gave the embassy high marks for sustained all-around effort, describing the embassy's support for the summit as “truly a heavy lift.”

The political section stands at the forefront of the Department's digital initiatives and post-September 11, 2001, information sharing. In July 2004, the embassy posted a web site on the U.S. government's closed and encrypted Internet network. This has produced concrete results at several levels. First, the web site now showcases all of the embassy's substantive reporting, making it available to a much larger audience than is available through traditional telegraphic channels. The embassy's classified web site averages over 750 hits per week and is growing. Second, a year later, in a pilot project with the Department's e-Diplomacy staff, the political section's OMS moved the embassy biographic files, previously stored in several safes, on-line. He selected 350 biographic files, some dating back to the 1950s, for scanning and entry by interns. In addition to improving the embassy's search capabilities, the new system has greatly simplified the entry of new data and dramatically reduced the number of Washington requests for biographic information. Third, the political section is now nearly paperless. With the web site in place, the section no longer assembles and circulates hardcopy read files; officers' chronological files are automatically maintained electronically; taskings within the section are electronic; and the tickler file to track taskings is electronic.

The section faces two special challenges. One is that President Kirchner and his tight circle of closest advisors - who call themselves "the penguins" as they all come from southern Patagonia - are sensitive about public dealings with the United States and suspicious of American motives. To ensure that "the penguins" receive a clear and consistent message, the Ambassador and DCM early on established a hierarchy for embassy contacts: the Ambassador handles top-level government and opposition leaders; the DCM engages with cabinet level officials; and embassy officers meet the remaining levels. Adherence was especially close during last year's elections. Since then these contact procedures have eased considerably, allowing a wider, more natural and reinforcing engagement with Argentine political players. Second, the fight against narcotics trafficking is one of the embassy's top MPP priorities. However, the section will lose its only ELO position - devoted approximately 50 percent to activities related to the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) - this summer, owing to the Department's restructuring of overseas positions. Argentina remains a key transit country for cocaine and heroin coming out of the Andes, with rising domestic use of illicit drugs. At the same time, the election of Evo Morales as president of neighboring Bolivia is likely to undermine regional counternarcotics cooperation. (See the separate report section on counternarcotics and law enforcement cooperation.)

Leahy Amendment (Human Rights Vetting)

The embassy is fully compliant with the Leahy amendment's requirements for vetting host nation personnel selected for training at U.S. government expense. The DCM formally approved written vetting guidelines on August 23, 2004. The political section OMS serves as embassy coordinator, maintaining a complete set of electronic files and a back-up set of signed hard copies. Before sending names to the Department, the OMS runs a file check with appropriate embassy sections and agencies, and does an on-line search of the extensive files maintained by Argentina's leading nongovernmental human rights organization. The military group is the embassy's largest submitter, followed by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) working with the political section's narcotics affairs/law enforcement officer. The economic section has submitted one list so far, and the environment, science, technology and health section (ESTH) reports it will be sending its first list later in the year.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND REGIONAL SECURITY COORDINATION

Law Enforcement Coordination

Embassy Buenos Aires is a medium-sized mission with an increasing law enforcement presence. Interagency law enforcement coordination is excellent. Five law enforcement entities have personnel permanently assigned to the embassy:

- Drug Enforcement Administration, with a DEA attaché;
- Federal Bureau of Investigation, with a legal attaché;
- Department of State, Diplomatic Security (DS), with a regional security officer;
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Transportation Security Administration (TSA), with a TSA representative; and
- Department of Treasury, Office of Technical Assistance (OTA), with a Treasury representative.

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (DHS/ICE) office at Embassy Montevideo provides regional support for Embassy Buenos Aires. DHS is considering the submission of an NSDD-38 to transfer the Montevideo DHS/ICE agents to Embassy Buenos Aires. Separately, four U.S.-based DHS/ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel on temporary assignment (TDY) to Argentina, support the Container Security Initiative.

However, as they approach their 12 months of TDY status at Embassy Buenos Aires, an NSDD-38 submission is required in accordance with 2 FAH-2 H-114.1(a)(2). Embassy Buenos Aires has informed DHS of the need to request formal NSDD-38 approval for the extension of this program.

Embassy Buenos Aires' law enforcement community greatly benefits from effective mission leadership and a collaborative spirit of interagency coordination. All agencies told the OIG team that the Ambassador and DCM are interested in and fully support their missions. When needed, they have immediate access to the DCM and Ambassador. Weekly law enforcement working group (LEWG) meetings, chaired by the DCM, directly contribute to the high level of interagency coordination. The LEWG is the embassy's formal forum for coordinating law enforcement and crosscutting issues. The embassy has included key non-law enforcement agencies and mission section chiefs (military group, defense attaché, political, economic, and consular, for example) in the LEWG, further enhancing interagency coordination. The OIG team informally suggested the embassy consider the addition of the ESTH counselor to the LEWG.

Law enforcement agency heads describe the LEWG as focused and well organized. The DCM skillfully uses the LEWG as a venue for agency heads and section chiefs to brief the broader group on the progress of their initiatives. This allows the LEWG to address possible conflicts, identify crosscutting issues, and detail lessons learned. This formal coordination is supplemented by frequent and productive informal coordination.

Counternarcotics and Law Enforcement Coordination

Growing crime and increased illicit drug trafficking in Argentina have increased the need for cooperation with Argentine law enforcement officials. In the past two years, the political section's narcotics affairs/law enforcement officer has worked closely with DEA to formulate a "Law Enforcement and Judicial Systems" MPP goal paper. Together, they have mapped out and begun implementing a well-integrated plan to provide training and equipment to counternarcotics police units and judicial sector officials, as well as establishing metrics for measuring progress. Exemplary of that cooperation is the Northern Border Task Force, which accounts for 20 percent of hard drug seizures in Argentina. It stands as a model for law enforcement cooperation between federal and provincial police. In an effort to replicate that success, work is underway to set up a task force in two ports outside Buenos Aires to go after drugs moving by container.

Several other examples of interagency cooperation in support of the MPP deserve mention:

1) Treasury OTA, the legal attaché, and the economic section all work with Argentine officials to improve Argentina's ability to identify, investigate, and prosecute money laundering crimes. Although each agency approaches the issue from a different perspective, they keep lines of communication open to ensure that their efforts complement one another. The agencies work together to determine which office or offices are best positioned to meet particular training or consultation requests. The legal attaché focuses on training and capacitation work, but also assists local law enforcement to obtain information on ongoing local investigations from U.S. agencies.

2) DEA and the political officer used DEA and INL funding to convene a five-day airport security seminar on narcotics interdiction that included participants from every major airport in Argentina as well as representatives from Chile and Uruguay. Recognizing that most airport security personnel do not focus entirely on narcotics interdiction, DEA invited the TSA representative at post to provide instruction relating to the nonnarcotic aspects of airport security. This seminar, funded by DEA, administered by the narcotics affairs/law enforcement officer, and with instruction provided by DEA and TSA, embodies the mission's country team approach to maximizing training resources.

3) TSA initiated a series of meetings with representatives of all the agencies and companies involved in airport security at Buenos Aires' international airport to try and increase communication among the U.S. airlines, the private security companies charged with passenger/baggage screening, and the Argentine officials in charge of overall airport security. As the topic of the meeting was overall airport security, embassy representatives from TSA, DEA, the consular section, the regional security office, the economic section, and the political section's narcotics affairs/law enforcement officer all participated in the meetings, giving their Argentine counterparts a valuable example of interagency cooperation.

On a different note, the embassy expressed consternation that for the past few years, INL has either not informed the embassy of its global conferences or has declined to invite the political section's narcotics affairs/law enforcement officer, even when the mission offered to cover all his travel expenses. The feeling, shared by DEA, was that this seems to run counter to effective implementation of counternarcotics and law enforcement objectives and programs.

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, should invite Embassy Buenos Aires to send a designated officer to future global and regional counternarcotics conferences. (Action: INL, in coordination with WHA)

DEA expressed strong concern about the Department's plans to eliminate as of summer 2006 the political section's position handling the narcotics and law enforcement portfolio. DEA stressed that drug seizures are up for the fourth year in a row, signaling that illicit drug flow into and through Argentina is on the rise. Local drug availability has jumped as those involved in the trade are increasingly paid in-kind for their services. DEA further believes that political developments in Bolivia heighten prospects of reduced regional law enforcement cooperation, especially on Argentina's porous northern borders. DEA strongly supports the Ambassador's request for the Department to reconsider its decision. DEA also voiced support for the idea of a regional INL representative with responsibilities for the Southern Cone, noting that this would reinforce DEA's efforts to promote regional law enforcement cooperation.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Buenos Aires should request the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to establish a regional representative position in the Southern Cone. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires, in coordination with INL)

The legal attaché plays a significant role in formulating the embassy's MPP. Like other agencies, the FBI applies its core mission to MPP strategic goals, establishing a synergy of interagency coordination and maximizing resources. For example, the FBI supports implementation of the MPP goal paper on international crime and drugs by coordinating formal U.S. and Argentine extradition requests and facilitating timely criminal prosecutions in both countries. Working with DEA, DHS/ICE, and the consular section, the legal attaché is now processing 18 extraditions. The FBI supported the counterterrorism MPP goal with its participation in a coordination meeting involving Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and the United States to establish responsibilities, share information, and deconflict issues relating to counterterrorism in the tri-border region.

Regional Security Coordination

The mission's two Department of Defense entities -- the military group and the Defense attaché office (DAO) - also play a significant role in formulating and implementing the MPP. The military group skillfully integrates its own mission requirements, which are funded by Southern Command, to support all MPP strategic objectives. This maximizes the resources available to advance MPP goals and enhances interagency coordination. The military group works closely with other agencies and sections to provide training and equipment to strengthen Argentina's capacity to combat terrorism. The military group and DAO coordinate U.S. military assistance for Argentine forces in Haiti, promoting regional security. In democracy and human rights, the DAO and military group work with the political section to provide civic education programs for Argentine military personnel emphasizing effective civilian leadership and control of the armed forces. Additionally, the military group incorporated the recently established U.S. Army International Technology Center into the mission's efforts to bolster Argentina's national security communications system in support of regional stability.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS ADVOCACY

An experienced minister counselor very ably leads a strong economic section. The section includes a finance and development officer, a trade and investment officer, two economic sector officers, an OMS (shared with ESTH), two FSN specialists who are trained professional economists, two year-round Argentine interns, and one U.S. intern. In January 2006, Treasury closed its attaché office in Buenos Aires, leaving the economic section to assume the responsibilities of the former treasury attaché, with no additional staff. (As described in the law enforcement coordination section of the report, Treasury still has an OTA officer assigned to post.) The section divides its time almost evenly between traditional economic reporting, cooperative operational activities with Argentine authorities, business advocacy on behalf of U.S. companies, and support to official U.S. visitors. The section actively conducts public outreach.

Consumers in the Department and other agencies in Washington are extremely pleased with the quality and timeliness of the reporting. To the section's credit, there was no decline in quality or quantity of macroeconomic/financial reporting after the treasury attaché's departure. Cooperation with the commercial section is especially close, with the economic section reporting on issues relating to sectors and the U.S.

Commercial Service (USCS) covering concerns of individual companies. The Department of Commerce routinely places the section's sector reports on its Washington web site, using them as industry studies. The economic section has free access to the FSNs in the commercial section, routinely tapping them to gather company-specific information. Cooperation with the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) is also excellent. The agricultural counselor shares information with economic officers, who then put it into cables for Washington. The section coordinates its Tri-Border reporting with Embassies Asuncion and Brasilia and the reporting on ports activities with the DHS/ICE attaché in Montevideo. Products on such topics as macroeconomic developments, private debt renegotiations, negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, trade developments (e.g., a ban on beef exports), ongoing investment disputes, strikes and disruptions in the oil and aviation areas, sector reports, and required annual reports were reviewed. In short, the section is meeting fully - and, in some areas, greatly exceeding - its post reporting plan requirements.

The economic section effectively conducts cooperative operational activities with a wide range of Argentine government officials, despite the sometimes mercurial behavior of Argentine leaders who often adhere to views fundamentally at variance with U.S. interests. Especially noteworthy are recent achievements in the areas of aviation safety, port security, anti-money laundering, and antiterrorism finance. Together, these represent a positive trajectory in the bilateral relationship, one behind the scenes that reinforces mutual long-term interests of the two countries.

Business advocacy by the section is extensive and continuous. At present, Argentina has the largest number of international arbitration cases pending before the World Bank's commission for settlement of business disputes. At the same time, though, the Argentine market remains attractive. U.S. investment now stands at \$11.6 billion, accounting for 24 percent of total foreign direct investment and has been growing. American exports to Argentina rose to \$4.0 billion in 2005, and imports from Argentina climbed to \$4.5 billion during the year. Some U.S. companies are experiencing difficulty with previous business interests in Argentina, while others are seeking to conclude new contracts or investments. Requests for assistance often arrive directly in the economic section and at other times come to the commercial section. Either way, the sections immediately coordinate a reply and encourage submission of a Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee advocacy questionnaire. When there are meetings with Argentine officials to support a U.S. company, representatives from both sections go together. USCS told the OIG team that cooperation on business advocacy with this mission's economic section is impressively seamless.

Buenos Aires attracts steady waves of official U.S. visitors, including cabinet level officers and congressional delegations. To accommodate them, the section works hand-in-glove with other sections and agencies. For example, during a recent congressional delegation visit, the economic counselor prepared a scensetter cable, the agricultural counselor was control officer, the senior commercial officer organized a meeting with the American Chamber of Commerce, the political counselor was a note taker at meetings, and the economic section prepared the final reporting cable. The section estimates that support for official visitors accounts for 20 percent of its time.

The economic section has introduced several noteworthy innovations. One is the use of Argentine interns, described by the Department (in 06 State 4704) as a best practice in transformational diplomacy. Through this program, the embassy provides educational and professional development opportunities to talented local students, who become invaluable interlocutors in student university circles and with Argentine society at large. Another is assembling an electronic economic library that ranks as one of the largest in Argentina. Updated electronically, it contains official Argentine statistics, the Argentine government's daily gazette, major financial and trade journals, and the in-house studies and newsletters of economic think tanks. The section also maintains electronic folders on topics of interest, with articles drawn from the daily newspaper of record. Still another innovation is converting the former Treasury attaché's weekly economic and financial report from a classified cable into an unclassified e-mail. The newer platform allows news and views to get out more quickly and to a much larger U.S. government-wide community. Washington consumers have warmly welcomed it.

The biggest challenge facing the economic section is the complete turnover of its American officers in the summer of 2006. The new counselor will come with previous experience in the section, but the other officers face a steep learning curve.

COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COORDINATION

USCS, FAS, and the economic section have an unusually close partnership in framing and implementing MPP goals. In meetings with the OIG team, USCS and FAS frequently referred to the relationship as one of "three sister sections." In recent years, the economic section has taken the lead in coordinating a review of the sections' commonly shared MPP strategies. Together, the sister sections assign MPP implementation responsibilities – usually multiple or joint – and then fine tune the metrics for measuring performance. USCS and FAS give the economic section high

marks for its broad vision and ability to connect the dots. Both agencies are satisfied with the high level of attention and support provided by both the Ambassador and DCM for their programs to promote U.S. business interests. FAS praised the Ambassador for his grasp of technical agricultural topics and appreciation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's regional approach to issues. USCS stressed that the Ambassador has always stood ready to host representational events or make interventions with senior Argentine officials on behalf of American companies. Both agencies are pleased with the management section's administrative support.

USCS highlighted the effectiveness of day-to-day integration of the efforts of USCS and the economic section staff. When an American company approaches USCS or the economic section for advocacy assistance, the receiving section immediately contacts the other section. The two sections then share information and map out a plan for how best to help the company. USCS noted, though, that Argentina tends to be a magnet for very complex advocacy cases, ones not seen at many other embassies. Globalization blurs ownership lines and marketing patterns, raising questions of whether it is appropriate for an embassy to support a company claiming to be American. In such cases, Washington makes a decision based upon the interagency Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee advocacy questionnaire submitted by the company. (On a related note, USCS reported that the Department's Office of Commercial and Business Affairs had initiated an advocacy data bank of its own, paralleling the interagency one maintained at Commerce headquarters for the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee.) One example of this complexity is an Argentine military aircraft, the attack/trainer La Pampa, assembled by Lockheed Martin at a plant in Cordoba - for which the company is launching a marketing effort with the Israeli Defense Force. After receiving Washington approval, on the basis of the substantial U.S. content of the aircraft, the embassy has launched a broad-based support effort - involving the economic section, USCS, DAO, and the public affairs section (PAS), along with the Ambassador and DCM.

ENVIRONMENTAL, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND HEALTH ISSUES

An energetic counselor leads the ESTH section, which is colocated with the economic section. ESTH's deputy is a rotational ELO from the consular section, who typically serves no more than ten months in the section. A third officer covers ESTH's highly technical nuclear portfolio. The staff also includes an OMS (shared with the economic section) and an FSN specialist.

The section reports on environment and scientific developments in Argentina, supports other U.S. government agencies implementing cooperative agreements with Argentine institutions, and coordinates official visitors from those agencies. Its portfolio ranges from environmental issues and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, to disaster relief, and, most recently, avian influenza cooperation. Bilateral cooperation on these issues is defined in a patchwork of bilateral accords, some dating back nearly five decades, which includes three framework agreements, a dozen nuclear accords, and six agreements on space exploration and satellites.

Coordination of this massive bilateral effort is a daunting challenge. First, there are the numbers. At any given time as many as ten U.S. agencies are implementing programs in country. As Argentina is a nuclear power country, the Department of Energy (DOE) is far and away the largest player. In 2005 alone, DOE sent 35 delegations to Argentina, totaling over 90 personnel. Second, many of the nuclear programs inherently touch on sensitive policy concerns and international commitments, with which DOE's visiting technical experts often are not sufficiently versed. To provide effective U.S. government coordination (e.g., compliance with International Atomic Energy Agency requirements), ESTH closely monitors intending visitors and their proposed activities through a rigorous country clearance process. Second, the ESTH counselor briefs delegations after their arrival and before their departure. If there are any meetings with Argentine policy officials, ESTH accompanies the delegation. Third, as a further safeguard, ESTH recently instituted a requirement that all country clearance requests be cleared by the Department office now responsible for such nuclear nonproliferation cooperation.

The OMS for ESTH who handles the voluminous country clearance requests also supports the economic section. At times, the workload is overwhelming. The OIG team informally recommended that ESTH consider ways to augment the OMS's efforts, such as use of interns and/or EFMs.

Another coordination challenge has recently emerged. The Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation is actively advancing an interagency dialogue for international export controls-related border security programs (EXBS). In recognition of its nuclear technical expertise, ESTH is the embassy lead for EXBS. Elsewhere in the embassy, other agencies and sections have interests relating to border controls and enhancement of Argentina's border security (e.g., the Defense attaché office (DAO), DEA, the economic section, legal attaché office, military group, political section, regional security office, and DHS/TSA). The other sections and agencies are not well informed regarding EXBS and how it relates to their equities. Including ESTH in the LEWG, as noted in the law enforcement and security coordination section of the report, should bring about better coordination.

ELOs who have served in ESTH speak glowingly of their experiences. The rotation has provided them with invaluable on-the-job professional training as well as a welcome break from the stresses of the visa line. However, with the ELO's staying less than a year, the ESTH counselor invariably devotes a large portion of her time to running a continuous training camp in basic drafting and diplomatic tradecraft.

ESTH enjoys strong support from the DCM - himself a former ESTH officer in a neighboring country - and works closely with the economic section, USCS, and the public affairs section on a daily basis. In addition, ESTH coordinates with Embassy Brasilia's regional environmental office and contributes items to a regional newsletter. However, ESTH reported that Embassy Brasilia's regional environmental office tends to be Amazon-centric and has expressed only limited interest in Argentina's separate issues.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Argentina has a long history of anti-Americanism, with roughly half of Argentines traditionally viewing the United States as a hostile rival. Since September 2002, however, only 30 percent of Argentines have had a favorable opinion about the United States. This negative popular perception, the lowest in Latin America, greatly complicates U.S. diplomatic efforts. President Kirchner tapped into this anti-Americanism to score political points when he publicly criticized the United States during the November 2005 Summit of the Americas. Policymakers told the OIG team they would like to know how the embassy and Department could improve public opinion. The experienced public affairs officer (PAO), who arrived in August, is fully seized with this task. The PAO, whom Washington interlocutors praised as "one of the most creative thinkers we have," manages the section well. Its active programming is professional, well conceived, and almost always takes advantage of multiple tools to increase impact. But key employees are feeling pushed to the limit. Strengthening performance measurement, getting an effective contact management system, determining which programming yields the most impact, and clarifying organizational and administrative issues will allow PAS to focus its efforts, resulting in more influence and engagement. The Department, as well, can provide timely Spanish-language information to expand exponentially the section's outreach.

PAS is divided into a press office and a cultural office, which coordinate closely. The Information Resource Center (IRC), supervised by the cultural affairs officer (CAO), facilitates the work of both offices. The IRC in particular, and PAS as a whole, benefit greatly from the advice of the regional information resource of-

ficer (IRO), who also supports the embassies in Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay. In addition to its talented American officers, the section is distinguished by committed and knowledgeable FSNs, many of whom have worked at the embassy for more than 20 years. Its FY 2006 program budget of almost \$1.7 million is supplemented by approximately \$25,000 in Washington-based funds.

Mission Coordination, Planning, and Assessment

The PAO has shifted PAS programming to support more evenly the mission's five MPP policy advocacy goals. PAS coordinates with embassy sections and agencies to implement the sixth MPP goal paper, International Public Opinion. Given the difficulty in measuring how successful an embassy is at changing public opinion, it is hard to craft performance indicators that focus on outcomes, not outputs. PAS worked closely with the Office of Policy Planning Resource in the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to improve its MPP performance indicators. However, only one includes a true outcome measurement - measuring the percentage of increase in positive editorials supporting U.S. policies on MPP priority themes. The remaining four indicators provide for increased use of PAS information or requests for PAS programming. Such indicators may indirectly indicate that the embassy is successfully changing elite and public opinion – but not by how much. Nor do they provide the embassy with a tool to measure which efforts are most effective. Finally, three performance indicators require gradually increasing the quantity of programs, which may not increase their overall impact and could require additional staffing. PAS now surveys every exchange grantee before and after travel to the United States to attempt to measure immediate changes in attitude/behavior. Although grateful for efforts that the Department has made to provide better guidance on performance indicators, PAS staff indicated that they would appreciate further guidance on crafting performance measurement tools as well as MPP performance indicators that capture outcomes, not outputs. This would do much to allow PAS staff to focus their time advancing activities that are the most effective at changing public opinion.

Recommendation 3: The Office of Policy Planning Resources in the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs should give Embassy Buenos Aires suggestions for effective performance measurement tools as well as performance indicators that allow the embassy to capture the impact of public diplomacy and public affairs programming. (Action: R/PPR)

PAS collaborates well with other embassy sections and agencies, which appreciate PAS efforts to publicize and promote their activities. PAS staff noted that other sections are increasingly including PAS early enough in the planning process for visits and in-country travel to allow PAS to provide effective support. Creative linkages that increase impact characterize PAS programming. Washington users called PAS's results reporting measured but top notch. PAS has increased its results reporting in the past few months, but the team informally recommended that PAS explore how it might involve its FSNs to generate results reporting more easily. PAS noted that it would like to have greater coordination and information sharing with entities of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, including the Voice of America (VOA) stringer in Buenos Aires and with the two regional VOA affiliates in Argentina. PAS helps the regional affiliates get equipment replaced, provides support materials for radio anniversaries, and administers VOA tests at post. PAS used a May training program for regional VOA affiliate stations to strengthen links.

PAS's influence analysis report is up-to-date. But more importantly, the PAO took the initiative to commission and fund a series of focus groups throughout Argentina, which the Bureau of Intelligence and Research carried out in February. The results were sobering – negative views of the United States are widespread through all demographic groups. Images that come to the top of most Argentines' minds include war, control, blood, domination, racism, oil, violence, hypocrisy, and arrogance. With input from his staff, the PAO provided the Ambassador with a sophisticated analysis of the challenges, suggested overarching talking points to address them, and proposed programming activity to turn public opinion around. As a result, the Ambassador plans to convene the first mission-wide discussion of public diplomacy programming, which will further improve the impact and comprehensiveness of PAS activities. The OIG team informally recommended that the Ambassador or DCM convene mission-wide reviews of public diplomacy programming at least annually.

A key to PAS work is connecting content and programs with the right contacts. As described in the information management and information technology section of the report, PAS needs a system, such as Goldmine, that meets the requirements in the September 2004 e-diplomacy report on contact management. This would allow it to analyze appropriate audiences, customize its outreach efforts, and improve results tracking of audience contact and activity over time. PAS could then determine whom it is not reaching on what specific issue, leading to the full circle of program modification and review. PAS may also want to consider creating a part-time position for an audience researcher, as Embassy Brussels has.

Information Advocacy and Media Outreach

Policymakers want the embassy to improve how the Argentine public views the United States. The PAO has challenged the press office, staffed by an information officer and five FSNs, to secure media coverage for every U.S.-sponsored visitor as well as U.S. contributions to Argentina's development. This has increased the press office's workload greatly. It is trying to develop new media contacts in every area of mission activity. This is not an easy task given Argentina's large and sophisticated media, which perpetuates historic Argentine antipathy to alleged U.S. hegemonic tendencies, as well as more recent Argentine opposition to U.S. military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan. The press office is concentrating on strengthening outreach to broadcast journalists because Argentines get their news first from television, then from radio, and finally from the print media.

The press office is also interested in establishing more contact with journalists and influential institutions in the provinces and increased training for and programs with journalists, particularly TV Co-ops. To contrast with President Kirchner, who does not give press conferences, the press office would like to underscore the value the United States places on transparency by making the mission more receptive to press, including a low-budget revamping of the PAS conference room to create a more professional impression. The press office arranges frequent media sessions, including press conferences, digital video teleconferences, press interviews, and back-grounders. PAS arranged a very effective session during the inspection to prepare the Ambassador for an important television interview. It is also using audio op-eds, brief sound bytes from the Ambassador, on key U.S. policy priorities for use by radio stations.

Doing all of this is a tall order. WHA indicated to the team that it could not make it a priority to create the assistant information officer position that the embassy has requested in its last three MPPs. Instead, PAS should consider hiring two additional FSNs - one for outreach and programming, the second for interpreting and translation. The following are ways to structure the press office to function with maximum efficiency:

- institute an Outlook calendar with all press office staff meetings, programs, and leave plans;
- include only articles of public affairs and public diplomacy relevancy in PAS's daily Spanish-language *Synthesis* and other PAS written products. PAS is currently serving as the embassy's primary monitor and archivist of media coverage of issues of interest to the U.S. government. This is not an effective use of public affairs funds or staff. This function should be

shared with the reporting sections, ideally facilitated by frequent coordination with FSNs in the reporting sections who monitor media in support of their respective reporting responsibilities;

- electronically file only those print clippings that are relevant to public affairs and public diplomacy relevancy; and
- transfer the audio-visual technician to IRC to give him more day-to-day supervision and free up the information officer.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Buenos Aires should implement steps to allow the press office to function more effectively, including ensuring that the press office's written products serve public diplomacy and public affairs needs. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

At the inspection team's request, PAS identified three concrete ways that the Department can support the mission's efforts to influence public opinion. PAS uses a number of Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) print products extensively but is not getting the benefit from them that it could. PAS finds the products from the Department's rapid response unit useful for internal use. But PAS would like to see the Department provide more strategic guidance for how embassies can emphasize that the United States is the worldwide model for observing human rights, despite press bashing to the contrary. Over 95 percent of the people PAS needs to reach in Argentina are not fluent English readers or speakers; the mission cannot inform or influence them without Spanish-language materials. PAS staff unanimously agrees that it needs additional and more timely Spanish-language print and electronic IIP products on MPP themes, including Washington File articles, Article Alert summaries, electronic journals, publications, and poster shows. PAS would be able to dramatically increase its distribution and impact of these resource-intensive products if IIP provided them in Spanish. The per capita translation cost for each embassy would also be reduced if the materials were provided to the other 18 embassies in Spanish-speaking countries as well.

1) PAS is not able to shape national media coverage on breaking issues because IIP disseminates Spanish-language translations up to two days after it provides the original English-language news stories in the Washington File. Unless PAS receives same-day translations of newsworthy items, the translations are of little use.

2) The IRC sends IIP's English-language Article Alert summaries monthly to English-speaking Argentine academics and researchers. However, because their frequency has diminished, PAS staff has begun compiling their own electronic docu-

ments, taking time away from outreach. PAS could influence many more contacts if IIP provided Article Alert summaries in Spanish. PAS sent a proposal to IIP to translate the full text of quarterly Article Alerts into Spanish in Argentina at an estimated annual cost of \$52,400, or \$2,757 per embassy in the 18 Spanish-speaking countries.

3) PAS highly values IIP's electronic journals (e-journals) for their expert discussion of MPP themes. However, PAS needs to receive the Spanish-language version in a printable document format such as Adobe Acrobat at least one week before the date it is to be used. For example, PAS was not able to use IIP's excellent e-journal on emerging media to support World Press Freedom Day programming because it did not receive the file in time. PAS proposed that IIP accelerate its planning cycle so that English-language versions of products intended for print distribution (including e-journals, publications, and poster shows) are ready for translation into Spanish and other languages at least six weeks before their release date.

Recommendation 5: The Bureau of International Information Programs should conduct a cost benefit analysis to support funding same-day Spanish-language translation of newsworthy products, timely distribution of date-linked products, and offshore translations of quarterly Article Alert summaries. (Action: IIP)

Public Diplomacy Outreach

Public diplomacy engagement plays a critical role in changing hearts and minds. The CAO leads PAS's cultural office, which includes an assistant cultural affairs officer (ACAO), an EFM, and 11 FSNs. The cultural office engages in a wide range of active and labor-intensive programming to reach its target audiences of media, political, intellectual, civic, and cultural elite, as well as the successor generation. In all of its efforts, however, the cultural office should consider if the impact of the programming justifies the amount of effort needed. The OIG team made suggestions to the section on how to integrate other mission entities more effectively into planning and implementing public diplomacy programs. A more structured embassy speakers' program would also be useful, particularly to reach youth.

PAS supports an active program of the full range of Fulbright, international visitor, and voluntary visitor exchanges. The Fulbright Commission's annual budget is \$2 million. Argentina has the second highest number of exchange alumni in Latin America who have registered on the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs' alumni web site. PAS maintains contact with exchange program alumni through

newsletters as well as invitations to speaker and representational events. PAS nominated most of the international visitor candidates in FY 2005. For FY 2006, PAS is seeking single-country programs on MPP themes and will work closely with other sections and agencies to get nominations.

Education and English-language Teaching

A network of 16 binational centers, autonomous and self sustaining Argentine cultural institutions dedicated to teaching American English and deepening mutual understanding between the United States and Argentina, span the length of Argentina. The Fulbright Commission and the seven larger binational centers have student advisors for people interested in studying in the United States.

Strengthening English language teaching is also a PAS priority. Ninety percent of public school teachers teaching English are uncertified. Existing English-teaching is heavily biased toward Great Britain. PAS will receive WHA funding to implement two pilot English-teaching programs, including for journalists. The regional English-language officer visited in April and left a number of suggestions to improve outreach.

Cultural Office Management

Just as with the press office, there are a number of steps that the cultural office can take to improve its effectiveness. These include:

- instituting an Outlook calendar with all cultural office staff meetings, programs, and leave plans;
- clarifying the ACAO's managerial responsibilities;
- moving the ACAO physically closer to CAO and cultural office staff;
- freeing up the CAO for more strategic management by having FSN staff take on routine duties;
- developing standard templates and shared folder documents for speaker programs and when the office plans programs, making it clear from the outset which employee is responsible for what;
- circulating a written list of job responsibilities for the two office assistants; and
- developing two activity clusters, formalizing primary and secondary back-up responsibilities, and cross-training staff.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Buenos Aires should implement steps to allow the cultural office to function more effectively, including developing and maintaining programming templates on the shared drive and clarifying managerial, and backup relationships. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Information Resource Center and Embassy Web Site

In recognition of the IRC's excellence, the Foreign Service Institute chose to conduct a digital training session with the IRC to train new public diplomacy officers on best practices in integrating IRCs into mission work. After the session, the IRO asked the Foreign Service Institute what else the IRC could be doing. The response was "walk on water." Three professional librarians and two assistants staff the IRC. Interpersonal relations are excellent, characterized by fluid teamwork and continuous brainstorming. The resident IRO provides excellent advice and support to the IRC. But to ensure that the IRC is fully able to take advantage of program synergies, the CAO could meet monthly with IRC to be briefed on progress and explore programming linkages. The consular affairs section of this report includes an informal recommendation that PAS resume managing the consular portion of the embassy's public web site after the consular section completes its update.

Approximately 30 percent of Argentines use the Internet, the second highest level in Latin America. Under the guidance of the PAO and with the active support of the IRO, IRC staff revamped and updated the embassy's public web site. In addition to making the web site's audio-visual content more attractive and accessible, PAS included interactive features to provide new opportunities for bilateral dialogue. The IRC's innovative marketing plan has expanded usage of the web site. A press release issued during the inspection was carried by five publications, resulting in a 300 percent spike in web site readership in one day.

To better engage Argentines, the embassy established its first virtual presence post (VPP) in the remote Patagonian region. Patagonia is the birthplace of President Kirchner and the site of large natural gas reserves. But these outreach efforts have limited impact due to the province's sparse population, low rate of Internet penetration in Patagonia, and geographic distance. The DCM launched an outreach program, bolstered by mission-wide Patagonia-specific content on the embassy's web site. However, without a formal program linking a reporting officer to Patagonia, it may well prove difficult to maintain momentum. The OIG team informally recommended that the embassy conduct a cost/benefit analysis to determine if the impact of its VPP outreach to Patagonia justifies the effort needed to maintain the

VPP. This is particularly important because although the Office of e-Diplomacy has touted VPPs as a best practice for missions, there is still no agreement in the Department on whether they should be supported by IIP or the Bureau of Information Resource Management.

Grants Management and Section Administration

Except for the grants to the international school, the only other grants issued by the mission were issued by PAS under the authority of Fulbright Hayes and Smith Mundt acts. The PAO has a grant warrant up to \$25,000; the CAO's grant warrant is up to \$10,000. The PAS effort over the past three months to bring the last three years of grant files into compliance is commendable. The files were in excellent order, each indicating that the grantee had been vetted against the Excluded Parties web site; financial reports and receipts were available as were most program reports. In FY 2005 and thus far in FY 2006, PAS issued 87 awards in excess of \$400,000 and 23 awards for \$131,275 respectively. Grants have been properly funded and executed. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that PAS establish a process addressing good grants management. Reports and receipts should be received and filed in a timely fashion.

PAS is in the process of hiring an FSN administrative assistant for the FSN administrative specialist. PAS does not need a second administrative assistant. Instead, there are a number of steps that the section should take to streamline and improve section administration. These include:

- submitting all information technology support requests by work orders to permit them to be tracked, as noted in the information technology section of this report;
- developing collaboratively, implementing, and periodically reviewing standard administrative operating procedures (SOP);
- submitting administrative documentation electronically whenever possible and storing that documentation on a shared drive so all have access;
- working with the financial management section to determine if providing fund cites can be streamlined; and
- developing and including on the shared PAS drive spreadsheets that indicate the status of various requests.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop and implement standard operating procedures for public affairs section administration. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Overview

A medium-sized operation, Buenos Aires' consular section has experienced significant workload growth in the past three years and anticipates sustained growth in the near future. Historically there has been a clear relationship between Argentina's economic performance and visa demand. Argentina participated in the visa waiver program for five years until the 2001 economic crisis staggered businesses, eroded personal savings, and encouraged an uncustomary outflow of Argentine citizens in search of work in the United States. During the visa waiver period, consular staffing levels for both officers and local staff were low. When the economy rebounded more quickly than many expected, the nonimmigrant visa (NIV) workload began to grow steadily before the section was able to rebuild its visa processing capacity through hiring and training new staff. The section is still awaiting the arrival of two new consular officers and anticipates a third in FY 2007. Meanwhile, U.S. tourists and students are taking advantage of the favorable exchange rate, and Argentines who worked in the United States during the crisis years are returning home with U.S.-born children. The American citizens services (ACS) unit has experienced a concomitant workload boom.

The Bureaus of Consular Affairs (CA), Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO), and Diplomatic Security (DS) responded with a series of five building and maintenance projects that expanded the public waiting area, reconfigured the employee work area, and upgraded air conditioning, electrical and telephone systems. Upon completion of some remaining modifications in the next two to three months, the section will have adequate room to accommodate three or four additional staff. At the onset of FY 2006, NIV demand stood at 29 percent over that of FY 2004 based on an analysis of actual interviews scheduled, the appointment backlog, and the number of monthly requests for appointments. Continued NIV workload growth at the current pace will certainly put pressure on consular space and staffing within

the next two to three years. Buenos Aires is scheduled for a new embassy building in 2014, but the consular section will not be able to accommodate sustained workload growth until that time if the Argentine economy continues its return to pre-crisis levels.

Management Issues

For a mission of its size, Buenos Aires has an unusual consular management structure. Several years ago management decided that all of the operational units—NIV, immigrant visas (IV), ACS, and fraud prevention (FPU)—would report to the FS-02 deputy rather than have any unit chiefs report directly to the consul general. In fact, only the largest consular sections have positions identified as deputy consuls general per se; rather, in small to medium sized sections, one of the unit chiefs represents the consul general in his or her absence and in that respect may act as deputy for limited periods of time.

In Buenos Aires, given the increase in workload and staffing, the current structure is affecting the section's efficiency. Both the deputy and the consul general have open door policies, and the ELOs applaud their accessibility, but the delays that result when sensitive ACS cases or written products flow from the line officer through two management levels affects the section's ability to respond rapidly. In addition, employees sometimes feel obliged to consult two supervisors before implementing a decision. Finally, the consul general may not be aware of management decisions that have section-wide impact at the outset when input is most needed. With the imminent arrival of a full-time, mid-level ACS officer, the consul general should assume direct supervision of that officer and any ELO assisting in that unit. In the future, if Buenos Aires is able to identify a full-time fraud prevention manager, the consul general should also supervise that position. The FS-02 visa chief would act as the deputy when required but would be able to focus on oversight and training of the burgeoning NIV and the long overlooked IV units.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Buenos Aires should rewrite the work requirements statement for the American citizens services officer so that the incumbent reports directly to the consul general. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

As part of their responsibility for ELO development and in order to encourage ELO initiative, consular management rotates all but one of the ELOs through at least three and usually four of the units in the consular section during their two-year

assignment.¹ In order to sustain this rotation, ELOs change responsibilities every four months. This program has advantages. It exposes officers to all aspects of consular work; it minimizes burnout on the NIV line; and it enables every officer to be in charge of a unit. On the downside, the ACS and IV units lose officers just as they are developing the expertise that is most useful to the unit's long-term productivity. Frequent rotations into decision-making positions sometimes also affect efficiency.

Consular management has empowered the rotating unit chiefs to make significant management decisions about scheduling and process. The OIG team commends management's commitment to preparing ELOs for future management challenges, but there are some areas in which senior management should retain control in order to encourage consistency and efficiency. For example, an ELO team lead recently advised the call center to reduce the number of emergency appointments during the summer transfer season, when, in fact, an increase to the number of emergency appointments is vital to reduce pressure on the appointment system when resources are limited. Team leaders have an important role to play in the coordination of the interview function and in the oversight of controlled supplies. If the consular section is to maintain its tight rotation schedule, however, an experienced manager should regain authority for workload scheduling, call center liaison, and other best practices that enhance a section's efficiency.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop standard operating procedures for the consul and the entry-level team leaders that clearly delineate the responsibilities of each and assign the consul responsibility for workload scheduling and other decision-making affecting the section's productivity. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Consular management is engaged in a constant struggle to keep up with the growing demand for visa services. When Argentina lost the visa waiver, CA responded quickly with temporary assistance and then identified new officer and local staff positions to address the additional workload. Inevitably, the new consular officers all arrived at the same time to respond to this need, and every two years the section is faced with the rotation of virtually its entire ELO contingent at the same time, leaving significant staffing gaps in most positions. Consular management is aware that it needs to shift the transfer cycles of a portion of the ELO contingent to alternating years, but the regulations involving the length of ELO assignments limit

¹ An officer who spends one year in the ESTH section and one year in the consular section usually remains in the NIV unit rather than participating in the consular rotation program.

their ability to resolve this dilemma until new positions are created to address the growing workload. In the meantime, the section has made good use of temporary duty officers from neighboring posts to address its staffing shortfalls.

Historically, one of the ACS local staff served as the subcashier for the consular fees. With the growth in ACS workload, consular management reassigned the subcashier function to two FSN-07 in the NIV unit. They have other responsibilities and intended to rotate the cashiering job between them. In order to facilitate accountability, there should be a primary consular subcashier, with designated backups used only during the absences of the primary subcashier. Furthermore, consular subcashiers are usually at the FSN-05 or 06 grade level, the latter if the subcashier has collateral duties that entail a higher grade. Assigning the subcashier responsibility to either the ACS or NIV units is also undercutting productivity in those overtaxed units. The embassy should request a new position for the consular subcashier and determine collateral duties that permit appropriate attention to the primary fiscal responsibilities.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Buenos Aires should request a new consular subcashier position from the executive office of the Bureau of Consular Affairs. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires, in coordination with CA)

Workflow and documentation in the Buenos Aires consular section are remarkably well organized. The section is uncluttered; design has taken into account lines of sight; the limited amount of workspace is open and light. Management has implemented a number of best practices: a plasma television for the waiting room that will be used to broadcast instructions for fingerprint collection and other useful information; databases for consular fee collections, fraud prevention statistics, and scheduling; increasing use of appointments for routine ACS work; remote data entry and electronic visa application form use; and a user-friendly consular portion of the embassy web site.

Some other best practices are still in development. Management was encouraged to continue efforts to systematize training of new officers. There is currently a training schedule that puts new officers at the interview windows on their own on their fourth day at post. There is no personal training manual that new officers can keep with them and build on as they learn new skills, although there are SOPs handy in the section. An ELO is developing a more comprehensive training program, and the team informally recommended that the training officer portfolio be given some

priority until consular management is able to implement a longer training period and compile a training manual. The training officer has had success in encouraging local staff to take on-line courses and in securing their participation in Foreign Service Institute workshops in Washington or the region.

The consular section has never had sufficient resources to undertake validation studies. As Buenos Aires reaches a more acceptable staffing level in the next three months, management is anxious to focus on this issue, which will be discussed again in the referral and fraud prevention sections.

Public Access Control

Processing large numbers of consular clients through embassy public access controls is problematic worldwide. Buenos Aires is no exception. There are two public entrances to the embassy compound. One is designed as the consular entrance. Before visa applicants enter the compound and proceed to the waiting room, they go through two steps. The first involves handing their documents in at a reception window and getting a receipt to show that they are ready for admission. This process is very efficient, and there is a well-marked system for queuing according to appointment times.² Contract representatives from the call center shepherd the lines and assist at the reception windows to provide for the smooth intake of documents.

Applicants then proceed to the next step: security screening. After handing in their documents, applicants often wait for a prolonged time in a second line before being admitted to the security screening area. There is no shelter during inclement weather, and applicants line up on the sidewalk where they are vulnerable in the event of any security incident. Some other sections of the embassy also opt to use this entrance to admit their visitors even though there is another entrance available for non-consular visitors. This delays access for consular clients who have no alternative entrance to use. The process was observed on multiple days. On some days, there are only two contract guards in the screening area to process consular customers. In that case, one guard reviews the metal detector and x-ray process, interrupting that process to return cell phones and other electronic equipment to departing clients. Another guard notes client identification details in a computer. On days when there are four contract guards in the screening area, the process is smooth, but there appears to be no consistency and considerable duplication of work. Consular employees already check off all visa applicants entering the consular section on a

² ACS clients are screened at a separate window.

computerized list that contains applicants' biographic information. That list is available to the RSO at all times; contract guards are duplicating information that another employee collects minutes earlier. The OIG team informally recommended that the embassy assign adequate staff for security screening at the consular entrance, set up a procedure to eliminate duplication of effort, and give priority to consular clients during the morning hours.

American Citizens Services

Even though the economy has rebounded from the 2001 economic crisis, the favorable U.S. dollar-peso exchange rate has made Argentina an extremely attractive destination for American tourists, students, and retirees. The embassy has also seen a corresponding increase in reports of petty crimes targeting these groups. The demand for emergency assistance, including replacement passports, has had an impact on the ACS unit. Incidents involving tourists climbing in the Andes or adventuring in Patagonia and the northern tri-border area also stress the resources of the small staff because, by definition, they occur at a great distance from the embassy. ACS manages an average of eight death cases at any one time.

There is no memorandum of understanding between the Department of Justice and their Argentine counterparts on extraditions. Consequently, the consular section is responsible for not only the exchanges of diplomatic notes but also for all follow up and liaison on extradition cases. At the time of the inspection, the ACS unit was monitoring 18 cases. The number of extradition requests appears to be growing steadily, and the consul general spends a significant amount of time overseeing these cases.

The ACS unit has always been managed by an ELO who is regularly pulled off ACS duties to assist on the visa line. The embassy anticipates the arrival of an experienced, mid-level ACS officer before the end of FY 2006. Having a full-time officer dedicated to ACS work, assisted by an ELO as needed, should enable the unit to address its complex and growing workload.

The ACS local staff are experienced and capable, but they acknowledge that tight staffing has affected the timeliness of their reporting on prison visits and their success in managing the warden system. Consular management has routinely requested peak season staff for its NIV unit but not for the ACS unit. The OIG team informally recommended that the embassy submit a justification for temporary ACS assistance in the January-March peak season to help ease the burden on the small local staff contingent.

The embassy uses an e-mail list to reach out to the U.S. citizens who have registered with the consular section. This essentially constitutes the warden system. In the event of a natural disaster in a remote area, however, the embassy does not have a program where wardens would automatically take responsibility for contacting residents or transients in their area in a scenario where communication with the capital is interrupted. The warden system does not include hotels, hostels, tour groups, or similar resources that could be used to locate Americans in an emergency, although the embassy does have a list of hospital and police personnel to contact when needed. The team made an informal recommendation that, with the arrival of a full-time ACS officer, the unit update its warden system, include parties other than resident Americans in its e-mail alert system, and reach out to the Ministry of Tourism to increase the data base of emergency contacts. Contractors arrived to install ACS Plus in the consular section just as the inspection was wrapping up, so the OIG team was not able to evaluate its impact.

Federal Benefits Unit

The Social Security Administration (SSA) funds and trains two full-time federal benefits unit (FBU) staff, who are colocated with the ACS unit. Buenos Aires is a claims-taking post with regional responsibility for Chile, Paraguay, Brazil, Uruguay, and Bolivia. SSA reports that Buenos Aires is one of its more efficient hubs in the region, and the supervisory SSA officer in Costa Rica hopes to add a third position and three more countries to its portfolio. Consular management has identified a small space to accommodate one more SSA position when it is authorized.

There is considerable interaction between the ACS and FBU staff, because many FBU applicants are referred to ACS for services that accompany their claims for benefits. In the near future, all infants who require social security numbers as part of the consular report of birth process will be referred directly to the FBU rather than completing forms that are mailed to SSA headquarters. FBU's current computer system is cumbersome and unreliable. It experiences frequent downtime, and applicants for federal benefits, mostly elderly persons, are often required to wait an hour or more for it to operate. The FBU has requested connection to the SSA mainframe to redress their computer problems. SSA's staffing levels and the dependability of their computer links have a direct impact on the workflow of the ACS unit and the capacity of its small, shared waiting area. Consular management is prepared to support SSA's efforts to improve its operations in any way possible.

Nonimmigrant Visas

The NIV unit is the thousand-pound gorilla in the Buenos Aires consular section. As discussed earlier, the loss of the visa waiver in 2002 and the unexpected rapid upturn following the 2001 economic crisis left the consular section understaffed at all levels and struggling to address demand. Not only did CA have to increase section staffing to compensate for the loss of the visa waiver, but enhanced processing requirements in the wake of September 11, 2001, required a buildup in excess of officer and local staff levels prior to the onset of the visa waiver program. For FY 2006, the consular section is on track to surpass its FY 1996 pre-visa waiver numbers.

Consular management is rightly concerned about its appointment backlog. With a visa refusal rate averaging ten percent and a sophisticated clientele that interviews easily and complies with instructions readily, consular officers can process applicants rapidly once they are inside the waiting room. During the inspection, visa demand was forcing the appointment backlog upwards to 60 days-during the Argentine off-peak winter season. Even in the best-case scenario, existing officer staffing levels make it difficult to reduce the backlog in off-peak periods to less than 30 days. With lengthy backlogs, applicants with time sensitive travel stress the call center and the emergency appointment system with requests to advance their interviews. This creates a mini bureaucracy, involving the call center, a locally employed staff supervisor, a consular manager, and sometimes other embassy officers (see the section on the referral program) to deal with expedited appointments.

The OIG team informally discussed with consular management ways to make the expedited appointment process less labor intensive, as well as ways to increase applicant numbers without significantly extending interview hours. The team also informally suggested increased cooperation with the public affairs section in order to get media placement for articles and interviews about the visa process.

The ELO interviewers are highly skilled. Officers know how to tailor their interviews, waste no time with qualified applicants, and essentially adjudicate as they collect the biometric fingerprints. They write cogent notes in the case files. They are appropriately alert to fraud indices. They do not hesitate to seek guidance from the team lead or one of the consular managers in more complex cases. The call center schedules appointments by individual rather than by case³ and the inspection team informally recommended that consular management determine if allocating appointments by case would free up more appointments and whittle away at the backlog.

³ A case would include the principal applicant, spouse, and all children under 21.

Neither the consul nor the consul general routinely interviews visa applicants. The team informally counseled both on the need to lead and train by example when the new officer contingent comes on board this summer. At least one of the management team interviewing for a part of each morning would also go far towards maintaining morale, increasing the number of appointments, and evaluating the dynamic visa process.

Referrals

The appointment backlog has put considerable pressure on the referral system. The consul general adjudicates the class A referrals according to CA's SOP, and their number is limited. The volume of class B referrals varies with the appointment backlog but has averaged 170 per month. The SOP does provide for class B referrals where assisting a key contact with a visa request would promote U.S. public diplomacy efforts. Given the delays in obtaining visa appointments and the volume of bona fide travelers, almost any referral would promote U.S. public diplomacy efforts, and the B referrals are being used more generously than would otherwise be the case if appointments were readily available. The OIG team sampled class B referrals from the previous six months and noted that consular management had taken steps to comply with the referral guidelines and weeded out most of the inappropriate referrals before they were even submitted for interview.

There were two concerns with the class B referral process. The SOP specifically states that a supervisory consular officer should adjudicate class B referrals. The consul does authorize each visa by reviewing the notes in each case and pressing the authorizing command on the automated visa system, but the cases are interviewed by ELOs. This does not comply with the clear intent of the SOP, and it does not protect the ELO from the potential for inappropriate pressure that the referral program is designed to prevent. Furthermore, class B referral applicants report to the consular section at specified times with the clear expectation that they are receiving a courtesy extended by their embassy contact. Once they arrive, they are interviewed in the same way and by the same officers who are dealing with the other applicants in the waiting area. This can have repercussions for the contact's relationship with the referring officer or agency.

Recommendation 11: Embassy Buenos Aires should rewrite the work requirements statement of the FS-02 consul to include the primary responsibility for interviewing and adjudicating the class B referrals. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Buenos Aires had been unable to conduct a validation study of its referrals as required by the SOP. Although consular management intends to undertake validation studies in a number of areas (see the fraud prevention section), its staffing shortfalls have prevented it from doing so. The team proposed ways that the consular section could begin targeted validation studies even with limited resources.

Visas Viper

The DCM chairs a weekly law enforcement meeting where participants are encouraged to raise any Visas Viper issue. One of the meetings each month is expressly designated as the Visas Viper session. Cooperation between law enforcement agencies and the consular section appears to be exemplary.

Immigrant Visas

Buenos Aires' IV workload is modest. Although Argentines qualify for the diversity visa program, its impact on the total IV workload is not significant. The IV unit is composed of three local employees under the direction of a full-time ELO. Until recently a part-time ELO shared her time between the IV and NIV units. Despite the consul's responsibility for the oversight of both IV and NIV issues, the inevitable focus on the NIV workload resulted in some important processing oversights on the IV side. Locally employed staff were not identifying cases where children were about to reach 21 and lose immigration benefits. Applicants were not paying certain fee supplements. Some applicants were summoned from the United States to process their immigrant visas when there were no visa numbers available for them. Once consular management realized the level of oversight that was required, they immediately adjusted the IV officer rotation schedule to provide for greater continuity and made the IV officer a full-time position that assists NIV only at times of severe need. Consular management acknowledges the need to devote more supervisory attention to this small unit and is working hard to improve staff performance.

Fraud Prevention Unit

Levels of fraud in Argentina are relatively low, and consular management has assigned an ELO to work with FPU's two local employees two days a week. This level of attention appears to be adequate for the time being, but the results of validation studies in the coming year may indicate the need to increase focus on fraud prevention efforts.

The senior LES spearheads liaison with law enforcement and airport authorities. He is available around the clock for calls from airlines and has assisted them in developing a number of cases involving fraudulent travel documents presented by foreign nationals using Argentina as a transit point to the United States. He has developed impressive databases to track fraud cases and trends. In coordination with the airlines, a team of officers periodically screens U.S.-bound passengers at the international airport, coordinating with another officer in the embassy who checks data on the consular system. Because U.S.-bound flights are late at night, this requires considerable effort, overtime, and dedication.

Returning to the issue of validation studies, methods were discussed for undertaking targeted validation studies with consular management and with FPU staff. The OIG team informally recommended immediate attention to validation of class B referrals but also suggested that the NIV interviewers identify several applicant profiles for a series of studies over the next few months. The results of these studies can both reaffirm issuance decisions and also isolate profiles where the issuance rate may be unreasonably high or where fraud may be indicated. Consular management was reminded that ACS and IV fraud are normally the priority areas for investigation and made an informal recommendation that FPU develop a strategy to determine if there are incidences of fraud in those areas.

Consular Web Site Management

The consular portion of the embassy web site was found to be clear, concise, and user friendly. An ELO and an LES have spent a significant amount of time and effort over the past months to update the consular segment into the new worldwide web page template. Both were trained in the Content Management System (CMS) software and authorized by the public affairs section to make changes directly to the web site. The consular section was fortunate to have an ELO with an information technology background to lead this project, but it is not a normal consular responsibility to play such a hands-on role in web site maintenance. Consular sections are expected to review their portion of the embassy web site regularly for content accuracy and to pass changes to the embassy webmaster for execution. The OIG team recommended to consular management that, upon conclusion of the update project, they return responsibility for CMS changes and execution to the embassy webmaster where it belongs. The consular section would continue to initiate changes for substantive content, review current materials, and translate any new text for inclusion, but the embassy webmaster would again be responsible for all changes within the CMS.

AVIAN INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS

The DCM chairs the interagency Avian Influenza Mission Task Force, which consists of an ESTH coordinator and representatives from the consular section, RSO, PAS, management, FAS, the military group, and the community liaison office (CLO). The task force established tripwires and near-term avian influenza preparation taskings, validated them with a mission-specific exercise, and adjusted them as appropriate based on results. ESTH actively monitors the tripwire status. ESTH maintains ongoing contacts with the government of Argentina's interagency avian influenza working group and reports on their pandemic preparations and needs.

ESTH arranged for the March meeting of the Centers for Disease Control director's visit to Argentina with the Minister of Health to discuss areas of possible bilateral avian influenza cooperation. PAS organized a television interview for her with an influential science reporter to underline the need to prepare for the unpredictable, yet deadly, avian flu virus. PAS is in the process of arranging a digital video-conference for officials at the Ministry of Health, local news media, and Centers for Disease Control staff. The public affairs section has reached out actively to the local media to disseminate the U.S. national avian influenza strategy.

The consular section is developing a 50-name contact list in the event of the pandemic's arrival in Argentina. Those 50 contacts will then disperse information to a broader network of cascading contacts that includes hospitals, missionaries, and private citizens. The CLO is responsible for updating embassy staff on Department avian influenza guidance.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff Authorized/ Filled	US Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff Authorized	Total	Total Funding FY 2006 ⁴ (nearest thousands)
State – D&CP ⁵	43	1	31	75	2,138
State – ICASS ⁶	12	6	126	144	4,056
State – Public Diplomacy	5	1	18	24	1,395
State – Diplomatic Security ⁷	0	0	1	1	407
State – Marine Security Guards	6	0	0	6	137
State – Representation	0	0	0	0	51
State – OBO ⁸	1	0	0	1	1,757
Department of Treasury	1	0	0	1	21
Foreign Agricultural Service	2	1	16	19	351
APHIS ⁹	1	0	2	3	152
U.S. Commercial Service	2	0	15	17	594
Department of Homeland Security – Transportation Security Administration (DHS/TSA)	1	1	0	2	156
Department of Justice- Drug Enforcement Administration	7	0	3	10	226
Defense Attaché Office	13	0	3	16	307
Department of Defense – Military Group	19	0	7	26	417
Department of Justice - Federal Bureau of Investigation	3	0	0	3	66
Open Source Center (FBIS)	0	0	1	1	n/a
Totals	116	10	223	349	12,231

⁴ Does not include costs of U.S. direct-hire employees

⁵ Diplomatic and Consular Programs, includes two FSNs from the Social Security Administration

⁶ International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

⁷ All other Diplomatic Security positions are included in the State D&CP figures

⁸ Overseas Buildings Operations

⁹ APHIS Buenos Aires shares funding with APHIS Montevideo

OVERVIEW

Overall, the management section effectively provides administrative services to embassy Buenos Aires. The U.S. direct-hire officers have good team rapport and work in a collaborative manner to accomplish their goals. Department direct-hire Americans and other agency heads rated the management section as functioning satisfactorily on OIG questionnaires. The FY 2008 MPP includes a goal paper on management and organizational excellence that stresses optimizing management services during a time of scarce resources and increasing the physical security of the embassy.

The management counselor is supported by a financial management officer (FMO) (it should be noted that the position has been vacant since January 2006), a regional human resources officer (HRO), a general services officer (GSO), an EFM assistant GSO, an information management officer (IMO) with three direct-hire American subordinates, a facility maintenance manager, and two community liaison office (CLO) co-coordinators who job share.

ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

No doubt the single biggest challenge the mission has faced recently was President Bush's November 2005 visit to participate in the Summit of the Americas. The summit posed unique operational and logistical challenges. It was held at a seaside resort where there was no U.S. presence, 300 miles from Buenos Aires. The town had limited hotel space and the embassy had to vie with the government of Argentina and other Western Hemisphere embassies for rooms. Although the White House was happy with the logistical arrangements and kudos must be given to the management counselor for the big role in handling the sheer enormity of the job, there are some residual financial problems that were resolved during the period of the inspection. The embassy sought to maintain control over the summit, which resulted in a disconnect with temporary duty personnel whom the Department had advanced to support the summit. The embassy also did not receive timely responses to its logistical and budgetary requests. The Department does not have a mechanism to develop and then convey lessons learned to overseas staff tasked with the organization of summits. This is particularly true for lessons learned from summits held in cities where the embassy has no facilities and resources are at a premium.

Recommendation 12: The Bureau of Administration should develop an on-going mechanism to capture lessons learned and best practices for posts organizing a summit visit. (Action: A)

U.S. direct-hire employees and local staff consistently complain about poor communication with the management section. According to 2 FAM 122.2.b(1), the Ambassador is charged with the responsibility to issue uniform local rules and practices to implement regulations effectively. At Embassy Buenos Aires administrative policies could not be found in a single location, either in written or electronic format. Information is disseminated in a shotgun approach. Some information is forwarded via e-mail; other information can be found on one of the various web pages; sometimes information is repeated in the embassy newsletter. One policy, changing travel reimbursement to actual subsistence, was sent to section heads directly by the DCM. Unfortunately, several section heads were not addressees, and many of those who were did not forward the policy on to their staff. Another example of poor communication was the discontinuance of providing bottled water. The management counselor correctly identified that bottled water cannot be paid from official funds because water in Buenos Aires is potable. However, the water coolers had been disconnected years ago when city water was not potable. Management did not quickly disseminate information that the water coolers would be reconnected within 24 hours, leaving employees wondering what happened to the bottled water and when the water coolers would be fixed. These policies should be arranged on the embassy's Intranet web site home page by topic (such as management, human resources, general services, security, EEO), rather than by date.

Recommendation 13: Embassy Buenos Aires should consolidate all mission policies in a consistent format both in hard copy and on a single web page on its Intranet home page. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

The mission has a 22-member FSN committee. The committee would like to have standing quarterly meetings with mission management (human resources officer, management counselor, and DCM). Both the DCM and the management counselor have had ad hoc meetings with the committee, but neither the committee nor the front office has been proactive in scheduling the appointments regularly. The committee was advised to organize itself better by nominating a chair to be the voice to management and a secretary to be the conduit for communications with those they represent.

RIGHTSIZING AND REGIONALIZATION

Embassy Buenos Aires provides regional support services to other Western Hemisphere missions to include the Department's human resources, medical, information resource centers (PAS) programs. Other agencies based in Buenos Aires also provide regional coverage to include the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Social Security Administration, the U.S. Commercial Service, and the Drug Enforcement Agency. According to an analysis done by the Office of Rightsizing, the embassy's current staffing appears to be generally appropriate, based on traditional criteria. Embassy Buenos Aires is scheduled for a complete rightsizing review in FY 2008. Duplication of services is not an issue at Embassy Buenos Aires due largely to the fact that the other agencies present do not have large administrative sections leading to redundancies.

As discussed in the public diplomacy and public affairs section of the report, the mission included a request for a new assistant information officer position in its last three MPPs. WHA indicated to the inspection team that it is not a WHA priority to create such a position. PAS should restructure the allocation of work responsibili-

ties in the information office and also give consideration to the hiring of two additional FSNs - one for outreach and programming, the second for interpretation and translation - to address the press office's rising workload.

In December 2003, the embassy received an ELO position as part of the diplomatic readiness initiative with the understanding that it was a one-time fill. The officer's assignment is now coming to an end. The Ambassador, with DEA support, has asked the Department to reconsider the decision to eliminate this ELO position in the political section due to the important INL work performed by the incumbent. Embassy Asuncion also has a political officer overseeing a very active set of INL programs in Paraguay. DEA sees a need for a regional INL representative with responsibilities for the Southern Cone countries to take advantage of synergies among regional programs. This would reinforce DEA's own efforts to promote regional law enforcement cooperation. In light of all these factors, the team recommended in the law enforcement and security coordination section of the report that INL formally consider establishing a regional counternarcotics position in the Southern Cone.

As discussed in the law enforcement and security coordination section of the report, DHS/ICE's office at Embassy Montevideo provides regional support for Embassy Buenos Aires. DHS is considering the submission of an NSDD-38 to transfer the Montevideo DHS/ICE regional office to Embassy Buenos Aires. As of the date of the inspection the embassy had not yet received a formal NSDD-38 request for such a move. Separately, four U.S.-based DHS/ICE and DHS/U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel on temporary assignment (TDY) to Argentina, support the Container Security Initiative. However, as they approach their 12 months of TDY status at Embassy Buenos Aires, an NSDD-38 submission is required in accordance with 2 FAH-2 H-114.1(a)(2). Embassy Buenos Aires has informed DHS of the need to request formal NSDD-38 approval for the extension of this program. Once the embassy receives the formal NSDD-38 request, it will be able to evaluate the program value and all of its International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) implications.

The understanding between Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and WHA is that the HRO should visit Montevideo quarterly for at least five working days. Although the HRO has tried to schedule regular five-day visits, she has not consistently done so. Montevideo is in communication with WHA to request a change of regional support for HR service to the Florida Regional Center. The Montevideo management counselor believes they will receive better service because the Florida Regional Center memorandum of understanding promises six annual visits versus the four required from neighboring posts.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The embassy's human resources office (HR) is headed by a regional HRO who is just completing a three-year assignment. She is the first HRO to be assigned to Buenos Aires in 12 years. The position was re-established in 2003 to coincide with the retirement of the senior locally employed HR specialist. Under the HRO's stewardship, the mission has had a number of significant accomplishments: increased dental benefits, leadership training for local staff, and corrected overpayments to the local retirement system and life insurance contractor. The mission is on the cusp of implementing a supplemental retirement plan that should significantly boost morale among the locally employed staff. Some 30 to 35 new Argentine local labor laws announced during the past three years complicate the HRO's work. These laws increasingly favor the employee. For example, recent legislation doubled the severance payment requirement for separating an employee without cause (e.g., a reduction-in-force).

Customer Service

The OIG team received numerous complaints from both the American and locally employed staff about the quality and timeliness of customer service from the HR office. The team reviewed HR's processes and found they comply with standard operating procedures. However, a number of weaknesses in policy implementation were identified. The inspection team made an informal recommendation that the human resources LES be fully trained on the rules, regulations, and guidelines for their individual portfolios. They also need to be able to develop a network of resources. In short, they should be encouraged to become professional resources within their area of responsibility. Then they would be able to provide authoritative, prompt information to their customers.

Locally Employed Staff Hiring and Nepotism

So far this fiscal year, the embassy has advertised 18 positions. Applicants for several of these positions were family members of local staff. The mission has three different mission nepotism policy statements:

1) The July 2004 Hiring Policy for Locally Employed Staff states, "No employee shall:

- Exercise supervisory responsibilities with respect to another member of the employee's family;

- Participate in the selection process who has a family member among the applicants;
- Intervene directly or indirectly in support of employment for a family member.”

2) Vacancy announcements issued before April 24, 2006, stated “Management will consider nepotism/conflict of interest, budget, and residency status in determining successful candidacy.”

3) After April 24, 2006, vacancy announcements read: “Management will consider nepotism/conflict of interest, budget, and residency status in determining successful candidacy. It is contrary to mission policy to employ more than one local employee (“Foreign Service National” or “FSN”) family member, or to employ a close relative of an FSN already employed.”

Mission management did not clarify any of these changes. The locally employed staff expressed dismay at what appears to be a capricious change of policy especially in light of the fact that 8.5 percent of the local staff are related to someone already on the embassy staff, including some working in the same section. 3 FAM 8312, 3 FAH-1 8310, and the Department’s March 2006 Recruitment Policy provide guidance on nepotism policy. None of the mission’s statements on nepotism define family members, address supervisory chain of command, or address other conflicts of interest.

Recommendation 14: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop, promulgate, and implement a written nepotism policy and enforce it consistently. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Eligible Family Member Employment

Spousal and member of household employment is a major morale factor at the mission. Fifteen family members currently work in the embassy. The March 2006 Recruitment Policy provides for a uniform and equitable interagency system that assures positions are staffed with qualified individuals, giving appropriate preference to U.S. citizen eligible family members and veterans. The review of the mission’s hiring practice revealed that the mission has implemented a process to comply with the policy, but members of the embassy community stated that the policy is not applied consistently. The community voiced a perception that qualification requirements are

either artificially high, especially in Spanish language skills, thereby eliminating family members or tailored specifically to match the qualifications of a preferred candidate. These allegations could not be verified, but the team made an informal recommendation that the HRO personally review position descriptions and qualification requirements to ensure that they are appropriate for the position.

There is also a perception that EFMs are not held to the same performance standards as other local staff. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the HR office apply work requirements, performance reviews, counseling, and adherence to time and attendance regulations consistently to all employees within the mission.

Converting Contract Guard Force to Locally Employed Staff Positions

The embassy has given some preliminary consideration to the merits of converting its guards from the local guard contract to personal service agreements. There is no single Department preferred hiring model. Some U.S. embassies have contracts with security companies that provide the management of the entire local guard program (LGP), while other U.S. embassies create direct hire guard positions to engender better morale among the guards and thereby greater loyalty.

DS has a process to assist posts that are considering converting from a contract guard force to employing guards on personal services agreements. In its web-based e-guide entitled PSA versus Contract LGP Services, DS provides excellent documentation and advice, including important administrative requirements that need to be taken into consideration. Adding approximately 80 employees to the embassy payroll increases the number of personnel actions, employee evaluations reports, time and attendance issues, and annual leave scheduling, just to name a few. The embassy would have to increase its ICASS staffing and funding to support these new positions. As noted in the resource management section of the report, the HR office is ill prepared to assume the additional workload that such a conversion would bring. Changing local labor laws are increasingly expanding employee entitlements that would exacerbate the financial and disciplinary consequences for the embassy should it decide to convert the local guards to personal services agreement status.

Recommendation 15: Embassy Buenos Aires should cost out all options and determine the most cost-effective method to obtain local guard coverage for the mission. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires, in coordination with DS)

Training

Local staff complained to the inspection team that training was not available or equitably provided. In fact, the mission does have a training program, although it has no dedicated training budget. Training opportunities include a mix of on-line courses, programs at the Foreign Service Institute, Vienna, Santiago, other cities, and locally. HR works with every embassy section to develop an annual training plan. Training opportunity notices are sent to American supervisors who may not always forward them to staff members. To facilitate better information sharing and transparency, the OIG team made an informal recommendation that the embassy's Intranet site include a training link. Employees would then be able to access information quickly on availability of programs and distance learning opportunities. The participants' rosters were reviewed and no basis for the allegations of favoritism was found.

Time and Attendance

Several employees complained that some supervisors were approving flexible schedules that allowed local employees to work through their lunch breaks and depart the office one hour earlier on a regular basis. As stated in 3 FAM 7412.1, the basic workweek for a full-time FSN will generally consist of not less than 40 hours of work, exclusive of lunch periods.

Recommendation 16: Embassy Buenos Aires should update Chapter IV of its Personnel Policies and Practices for Local Employees to incorporate the 40-hour workweek (or 48 hours for some employees) exclusive of lunch period and implement the policy across the board. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Equal Employment Opportunity

The mission has an EEO counselor and Federal Women's Program Coordinator embodied in one person who assumed responsibility for both positions in August 2005. This arrangement is problematic because the Federal Women's Program coordinator's role is limited to concerns relating to enhancing employment and career advancement for women. Should the Federal Women's Program coordinator learn of a specific allegation of discrimination, the individual must be directed to an EEO counselor for assistance. Assigning both Federal Women's Program and EEO responsibilities to the same individual limits the assistance available to employees and

results in an inappropriate separation of duties. Per the Office of Civil Rights mission statement, the EEO counselor and the Federal Women's Program coordinator cannot be the same individual.

Recommendation 17: Embassy Buenos Aires should designate an individual other than the Equal Employment Opportunity counselor to be the Federal Women's Program coordinator and should establish a separation of duties and administer the programs separately. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

The name of the EEO counselor/Federal Women's Program coordinator is prominently displayed on a bulletin board outside the cafeteria. Information about the EEO program is also displayed both in English and in Spanish. The mission disseminated Secretary Rice's statement on discrimination and sexual harassment in both languages. In short, an EEO process is in place but has not been tested. Because pending local legislation would make sexual harassment in the work place a felony, the team made an informal recommendation that a second EEO counselor be named to serve a community that has more than 330 employees.

Local Labor Law

Argentine labor law is shifting sharply in favor of the worker to the detriment of the employer. The embassy must adapt the local compensation plan constantly to accommodate these changes. In many instances the new regulations are in conflict with U.S. law in general and Department regulations in particular. An additional factor is the concept of "acquired rights" - even when laws change, employees retain their prior arrangements. HR must keep abreast of new regulations, get them approved by the Office of Overseas Employment, and then implement them. The embassy has a local law firm on retainer, as well as a local labor consulting firm, in order to have timely access to the latest opinions. The laws are so difficult to interpret and administer that at times these two legal advisors render different and conflicting opinions. In one case, the embassy consulted a legal firm about firing two employees and was provided language for the letters of termination. Later, the regular embassy lawyer said that the letters would not hold up in an Argentine court of law. Subsequently, the embassy was sued and the case is now in court. In a second instance, the embassy wanted to fire an employee who was downloading pornographic material onto his government-provided computer. The regular embassy lawyer said that before this employee could be fired, the embassy had to be sure that he had read a Spanish language translation of the policy prohibiting this activity and signed that he had read it. The employee was suspended for seven days but could not be fired unless he becomes a repeat offender subsequent to signing the policy.

Locally Employed Staff Access to Embassy Announcements

The embassy uses the sensitive but unclassified (SBU) computer system as its principal mechanism to convey important and time-sensitive information to mission staff. However, not all embassy employees currently have access to the SBU computer system. The OIG team informally recommended that all embassy employees, U.S. direct-hire as well as locally employed staff, have access to an SBU computer workstation and the training needed to use it properly and responsibly. At the very least, users should be able to sign on to a workstation and have access to e-mail and the Intranet. This will allow them to stay current with administrative notices, safety/health notices, security advisories, job listings, and other critical information as well as to send and receive e-mails to and from their supervisors. They will also have a mechanism to report unsafe workplace conditions, inappropriate actions, or security problems.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

The financial management section has been without a financial management officer since January 2006 and has also had two vacant voucher examiner positions. The Summit of the Americas placed an added burden on the section that is still evident, as described below. The section has provided satisfactory accounting and disbursing services for the mission, with the guidance of a locally employed senior financial management analyst, under the supervision of the acting financial management officer.

Vouchering

The vouchering section has suffered staffing gaps for several months. A newly created voucher examiner position has not been filled. Last February, one of the existing travel voucher examiners was transferred to the GSO section. These staffing gaps have resulted in delays in processing vouchers and in considerable overtime. At the time of the inspection, the OIG team received complaints regarding the time required to process travel vouchers. Currently, it takes about four weeks for a travel voucher to be processed from start to finish as opposed to the two-week ICASS standard. A new embassy requirement to itemize travel expenses added workload for an already overburdened and understaffed voucher examining staff and further delayed travel reimbursement by weeks. The voucher examiner positions need to be filled as soon as possible.

Recommendation 18: Embassy Buenos Aires should advertise and fill voucher examiner position numbers 53-101 and 53-205 as soon as possible. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Cashiering

The financial management section has one Class B cashier, two alternate cashiers and 12 designated subcashiers. Some of the subcashiers' supervisors have not performed and submitted unannounced cash reconciliations as required. The regulations, 4 FAH-3 H-397.2-3, require unannounced verification of subcashier funds at least monthly if the advance is \$1,000 or more and quarterly if less than \$1,000. If the cashier is unable to obtain the required reconciliations, the cashier's supervisor should assist, and if necessary, terminate the subcashiers' designation if verifications cannot be conducted and submitted in a timely manner. The addition of a consular subcashier is discussed in the consular affairs section of the report.

Recommendation 19: Embassy Buenos Aires should require the submission of subcashiers' monthly or quarterly unannounced cash reconciliations. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

ICASS in Buenos Aires services 27 subscribers from nine U.S. government agencies. The council was operating without a current signed charter and did not have a memorandum of understanding between the ICASS council and the U.S. government service provider as required by 6 FAH-5 H-101.1. At the time of the inspection, the mission updated both documents.

According to 6 FAH-5 H-305.4, an annual review of service standards is required. There has been no review of service standards since 2004. While the ICASS standard for processing travel vouchers is ten working days, it is taking the financial management office as long as four weeks to process the vouchers. An annual review of service standards would have revealed this backlog at an earlier date and would have allowed the ICASS council to explore remedies. This issue is addressed above in the vouchering subsection of the report.

Recommendation 20: Embassy Buenos Aires should review at least annually and update as necessary the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services standards. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

GENERAL SERVICES OFFICE

A seasoned professional leads Embassy Buenos Aires' effective and well-regarded general services section that displays a strong customer service orientation.

Property – Warehouse

The GSO warehouse is well lit and well marked, and it has a logical storage plan for its contents. GSO carefully covers open furniture and furnishings with plastic to protect them during movement and storage. This extends the usable lifetime of the furniture, and the proceeds during sales of surplus items are appreciably higher. Although it was being configured for an upcoming auction, the warehouse was one of the more organized warehouses the OIG team has encountered. The embassy has made a concerted effort to swap out older furniture for new replacements, selling off the items determined to be in excess of requirements.

The lease for the existing warehouse presents a problem. When it was last negotiated, during the Argentine financial crisis, the embassy got a rock bottom rate of \$2,500 per month. Now, with the economy roaring back, the renewal will be in the \$10,000 to \$12,000 range. This has forced GSO to look for alternatives, but these would require considerable start-up expenditures and would still be priced on the high side. Another option would be to cut back on the size of the warehouse, giving some of the space back to the owner. The OIG team informally suggested that the embassy work closely with the OBO area representative who is scheduled to visit in the near future to evaluate the alternatives.

Motor Pool

The 37-vehicle motor pool was the highest-rated GSO section, according to the team's surveys. The supervisor, a 30-year employee who began as a mechanic, runs a very service-oriented operation. He leads an active preventative maintenance program, emphasizes continuous driver safety training, and is meticulous in ensuring that his vehicle records are complete and accurate. The embassy's motor vehicle policy was updated in March 2006 and has been widely distributed.

Maintenance and Repair

The facility manager, only the second the mission has had, is a talented and highly motivated professional who has accomplished a lot in his three years in Buenos Aires. Due in large part to the efforts of the facility manager, there are a large

number of recently accomplished major construction and rehabilitation projects. Maintenance at the chancery suffers from the perennial creative tension between security requirements and the projects that need to get done. The regional security office and the facility maintenance office have been making efforts to coordinate better to address these dilemmas. One of the principal factors that caused these projects to last longer and cost more has been a lack of cleared escorts to facilitate work in the embassy. RSO policy requires every two contractors to have one escort person. This has resulted in the locally employed staff being used to escort contractors instead of performing their regular work. In the controlled access areas, American direct-hire staff are required to escort contractors. Although the embassy has tried to hire EFMs as cleared escorts, there has been little response in the embassy community, due to the relatively low pay offered. As a result, the facility manager has to personally perform these escorts on weekends and at night. The facility manager could work with the human resources section to create a broader scope of responsibilities for an expanded escort position, which could facilitate a higher pay scale.

During major construction projects, the facility manager could accelerate efforts to communicate with officers whose areas are to be disrupted by the work so that they can understand the nature and scope of the project, how much it would intrude on their work space, and how unexpected developments (such as discovering antiquated and unlabelled wiring during work in a ceiling area) and lack of escorts might cause delays to the project. This would promote understanding of the implications of a project and possibly reduce resistance to it.

The facility manager has been very effective at accomplishing major projects. Most recently, a fuel tank replacement project was delayed upon discovery of many electrical ducts, telephone lines, old wells, and water pipes both active and dead. A generator project was held up for three months due to delays in its delivery. These delays had a major impact because the high rate of inflation in Argentina meant prices to complete the work went up by 30 percent. The embassy rightly sent a cable to OBO requesting additional funds to complete these projects and even indicated several other projects where savings could be attained. With OBO's approval, these projects, if funded immediately, can be completed without cost overruns. Otherwise, the embassy could have faced a potential unauthorized commitment or anti-deficiency situation.

Safety, Occupational Health, and Fire Protection Programs

In September 2005, the embassy had a Safety, Health and Environmental Management Division Training for Overseas Posts visit that uncovered only a few minor deficiencies, in sharp contrast to earlier inspections which had pointed up a number of major deficiencies. These excellent results are based in large part on the efforts of the facility manager, who is also the post occupational safety and health officer and who has nine years of prior experience in OBO/Fire. In a couple of locations in the warehouse fire extinguishers were indicated but not present. They had been placed behind signs or furniture. The embassy took immediate action to correct this.

The Bosch Palace – The Embassy Main Residence

The Ambassador and his family live in a magnificent, 90-year-old residence called the Bosch Palace. Proper care of this classical structure necessitates large sums of OBO and mission project money. The palace also requires a dedicated maintenance staff that includes an architect and seven maintenance people. This extensive preventative maintenance operation is required to preclude a repeat of the massive and expensive rehabilitation projects recently completed to restore the building.

Two previous efforts to sell the palace met with significant resistance by elements of both the Argentine and the U.S. governments. The OIG team calculated preliminary annual cost estimates of \$150,000 for dedicated maintenance staff; \$35,000 for FY 2005 7901 project funds; \$20,000 for plumbing and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning repairs; \$37,000 for various program purchase orders and services; and \$56,500 for utilities. As a basis for any future evaluations of whether to retain the palace, the team informally recommended that the embassy and OBO work closely together to cost out the annual expenses of the ambassador's residence. This would mean assembling a more accurate picture of the recurring costs for operating the palace, including maintenance staff, utilities, repairs, and operational expenses, as well as the large, one-time rehabilitation project expenditures, both the ones recently completed and the currently envisaged future projects. These more accurate cost figures could then be balanced against the arguments for the retention of the palace, which is a symbol of the long-standing, strong ties between the two countries and which is used extensively and effectively for representation and official events to support policy advocacy and commercial activity.

Housing and Living Quarters Allowance

The embassy has an extensive pool of government-owned and short-term leased properties to house its personnel. They appear well furnished and well maintained. Most embassy personnel have housing that is in accord with the housing space standards. The minutes of the interagency housing board (IAHB) show that the board has been extremely accommodating to the requirements and requests of staff, agreeing to a number of moves to satisfy them. The OIG team informally recommended that GSO assemble a cost analysis to inform the members of the IAHB the cost implication each time a family is allowed to change its housing assignment.

It is particularly important that the IAHB scrutinize all potential property acquisition and lease possibilities for security and safety/health concerns. Per 12 FAH-8 H-131a, the embassy should strive to locate housing that provides the greatest security for the lowest cost. Based on the security survey, the cost of security upgrades should be a major factor in the IAHB decision to approve a lease for a proposed property.

The embassy has spent considerable sums in the past to get properties up to security standards in these areas. The OIG team informally recommended that the IAHB pay particular attention to the provisions of 12 FAH-8 H-131.1, which urge that every attempt should be made to acquire properties that either already meet the security standards appropriate for the mission's threat rating or on which the owner will make the necessary modifications. It is only when neither condition is possible that U.S. government funding of residential security enhancements should be considered. This could preclude the necessity of expensive security enhancements. It is particularly important that post avoid security enhancement funding for living quarters allowance (LQA) properties.

Last year OBO selected and purchased eight excellent houses -- a major upgrade to the mission's housing pool. The embassy has two properties under short-term lease that have garages that are too small for U.S.-sized vehicles and unsuitable for families in other ways, but which the embassy is employing to house summer interns who are invaluable to the political and economic sections. The embassy wants to retain these two properties in its housing inventory to accommodate interns, but it has no plans to use these properties in the near future to house permanently assigned personnel. The termination of the leases on these properties represents a potential savings for the embassy.

Recommendation 22: Embassy Buenos Aires should not renew the short-term leases on the two small properties that are used exclusively for interns. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Living quarters allowance, as stipulated in 15 FAM 120, “is available if U.S. government quarters are not provided.” In the past, the embassy had allowed individual Department direct-hire employees to purchase a private residence in their country of assignment and to collect a living quarters allowance based on the formula outlined in the Department of State Standardized Regulations Section 136. There was no record at the embassy to demonstrate that the decision to place the employee in LQA status was driven by a decision that the employee’s housing needs could not be accommodated within the existing interagency housing pool. There was also no record that the embassy had sought the requisite permission from OBO to establish an LQA program at post for State direct-hire employees as stipulated in 15 FAM 312.3. Based on an interview with one employee who had purchased a private residence in Buenos Aires and had collected an LQA allowance while residing in the home, it was ascertained that it was the employee’s desire to purchase a personal residence that drove the request for LQA status rather than any shortfall in the post’s ability to house the officer in the interagency housing pool. The officer collected an amount equal to ten percent of the base price of his residence plus the cost of utilities up to the maximum LQA allowance for Buenos Aires during each year that the officer was authorized LQA (approximately two years). The officer is now about to embark on a second tour of duty in Buenos Aires and still retains the residence in question.

The embassy has complied with the requirements to justify a short-term lease housing program, as detailed in 15 FAM 314. The decision to establish a short-term lease housing program was based on an evaluation of factors such as the comparative costs of short-term leased housing versus the cost of U.S. government-owned, long-term leased, or living quarters allowance programs. Based on cost, security, employee productivity, and the availability of suitable leased housing the embassy and the Department decided to offer short-term housing to the interagency housing pool participants. Some agencies have elected to offer their staff members living quarters allowance in lieu of participation in the interagency housing pool. The Department, however, places all State direct hire staff in U.S. government-owned housing or in residences leased by the U.S. government on a short-term basis.

A U.S. citizen employee, a spouse, or family member may not invest in real estate or mortgages on properties located in the employee’s country of assignment except in limited circumstances described in 3 FAM 4123.2-4. If the employee has a pre-existing investment in real estate, one made prior to knowledge of assignment to such country, or if inherited or obtained through marriage, bequest, or gift, the employee

must seek permission from the chief of mission (COM) to retain the investment. Based on 3 FAM 4123.2-4 it is clear that the Department wishes to minimize the risks and complications of an employee owning investments, to include real estate, in the country of assignment.

One of those circumstances when an employee may purchase real estate is when the COM authorizes the employee to purchase a house and land for personal occupancy at the time of assignment or at retirement. When the embassy determines that it is in the best interests of the U.S. government to place an employee in the LQA program, the FAM does allow the embassy to make LQA payments to an employee who is residing in a home that he/she owns personally. There are a number of reasons that would provide a legitimate basis for an embassy to place an employee who would normally be housed in the embassy's short-term leased housing program in LQA status to include an inability to provide suitable short-term leased or U.S. government-owned housing due to an unusual family size, a special needs employee or a dependent with unique needs for physical accommodations that cannot be met within the housing pool, or an employee whose normal work base is at a distance from the embassy and the sheer distance makes it impossible to provide adequate facility support services. "If appropriate U.S. Government-owned/long-term leased or short-term leased housing is available at a post, employees may not receive LQA/OHA if such housing would remain vacant," per 15 FAM 263.d.

The Department is the single real property manager for non-military U.S. government property abroad. This authority is delegated to OBO. Overseas the COM is responsible for implementation of all policies and procedures related to real property, but the COM normally will delegate daily responsibility to the senior management officer. The management officer assumes the single real property manager responsibilities to include implementing all policies, procedures, and regulations pertaining to the real property program. The management officer advises the COM on the allocation and use of U.S. government-held property and the IAHB on housing issues.

It is by no means unique to Embassy Buenos Aires to have officers who wish to purchase homes in their country of assignment and who request, and are granted LQA to defray the costs of living overseas. The regulations governing LQA clearly authorize payments to employees who are residing in their personally owned property, when properly approved by the IAHB, the COM, and OBO. The option to place an employee in housing owned or leased by the U.S. government or to allow them to collect LQA, however, is not the employee's but rather is the Department's. Furthermore, the decision to place an employee in LQA status should be based on a transparent evaluation that doing so is in the Department's best interests in terms of

prudent stewardship of U.S. government funds and is balanced against the inherent risks and complications of any investment made by an employee in the country of assignment. The inspection team discussed this issue with post management and made an informal recommendation that the embassy seek specific guidance from OBO and the regional bureau in any future case in which a Department employee requests the payment of an LQA allowance in connection with the purchase of a personal residence.

Department regulations require the RSO to conduct physical security surveys in accordance with 12 FAH-8, H-131.1a and b and 15 FAM 312.5 on all prospective residential properties, including those funded by LQA. Pursuant to 12 FAH-8, H-131.1, the potential occupant is required to make every effort to have the landlord perform the necessary security upgrades

Recommendation 23: Embassy Buenos Aires should verify that the interagency housing board does not allow anyone to occupy residential property until the board receives written confirmation from the regional security officer that all security requirements have been met. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

The team questioned the approximately \$13,000 of residential security funding used for physical security upgrades at several LQA residences. DS will fund residential security upgrades for short-term leases only if no suitable housing that already meets security standards or efforts to convince the landlord to fund the costs of security upgrades have failed (15 FAM 313.1a). Prior authorization and funding must be requested from DS in advance (15 FAM 165).

Recommendation 24: Embassy Buenos Aires should cease using funds for security upgrades at living quarters allowance residences and seek guidance from the Department concerning security upgrades at living quarters allowance residences. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Shipping and Customs

The shipping and customs operations are efficient and well in compliance with the regulations. They have a problem with incoming household effects arriving improperly or inadequately packed, resulting in a large number of damage claims. It was suggested that GSO more aggressively communicate with the losing posts of incoming employees to improve the proper packing and protection of shipments.

The embassy is predominantly using one vendor for packing and unpacking shipments but is constantly searching for alternative vendors to afford competition for the embassy's business.

There is a perception that shipping personnel are not always on top of the location and status of individual shipments. The OIG team informally recommended that GSO provide better and timelier feedback on incoming shipments to newly arrived employees.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY

The embassy's information systems center (ISC) provides good support to approximately 347 embassy employees. Information technology (IT), telecommunications, and Internet services all received above average scores in the OIG management questionnaire. The office's responsibilities include managing and securing the embassy classified and SBU networks as well as a dedicated Internet network (DIN). The office is also responsible for classified and unclassified pouch, mail, facsimile, radio, telex, telegraphic, and telephony communications.

An IT security inspection (report number IT-I-03-06T) was completed in January 2003. The inspection identified 14 recommendations. All deficiencies have been corrected.

The staff follows most Department policies and guidelines and generally meets their customers' needs. The areas that require immediate attention are: inventorying locally developed applications, security configuration management, and information systems security officer (ISSO) duties.

Information Management

The information management officer (IMO) oversees the ISC and information processing center (IPC). The information systems manager oversees the ISC day-to-day operations and reports directly to the IMO. The ISC staff supports the SBU network that consists of approximately 270 workstations and 15 servers. The information program officer (IPO) manages the IPC operations. The IPC staff support the classified network that consists of 38 workstations and five servers.

Locally Developed Applications

The ISC office has created local applications to fulfill certain requirements of its users. These applications have been tested and approved by the local configuration control board (CCB) and are approved for use on OpenNet but have not been entered into the information technology application baseline database as required by 5 FAM 864. The ISC staff was not aware of this requirement.

Recommendation 25: Embassy Buenos Aires should request access to the information technology application baseline database and should enter all locally developed applications into the database. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Configuration Management Plan

The embassy does not have a configuration management plan in place for OpenNet and ClassNet as required by 5 FAM 867. ISC believed the requirement for a configuration management plan was superseded by the requirement to have a local CCB. The configuration management plan is used to document changes approved by the local CCB. Configuration management is a systematic process that provides assurance to mission officials that an information system operation is in the correct configuration and that any changes made are reviewed for security consideration. Also, it ensures that changes take place in an identifiable and controlled fashion that does not adversely affect the functionality of an information system, including its security posture.

Recommendation 26: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop and implement a configuration management plan. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Network Diagram

The ISC office has not updated the network diagram for ClassNet. The ISC office did not realize a network diagram for ClassNet existed. The network diagram for ClassNet is out of date. Network diagrams are necessary for ISC staff to identify all network resources and to be able to react quickly to network issues. The OIG team made an informal recommendation to update the network diagram for ClassNet as major changes are made to the network.

Information Technology Support

PAS believes that ISC is not adequately meeting its IT needs. PAS requires program-specific technology in order to accomplish business needs that are not normally required by other embassy sections. PAS has its own budget to acquire IT resources to support PAS activities. The embassy requires that the ISC office give prior technical approval before all IT purchases. The IMO stated that the ISC is providing the proper IT support to PAS, within the constraints of established procedures. The team reviewed several work orders that PAS submitted to ISC. ISC appears to provide appropriate and timely IT support to PAS when PAS sends their requests in work order format. The IMO must follow procedures to protect the integrity of the computer system, while still meeting business needs. The team made an informal recommendation that PAS and ISC staffs meet on a quarterly basis to discuss IT issues and new initiatives.

Contact Management System

The embassy uses several individual databases to track contacts and for other needs, including protocol and public diplomacy. In addition to not meeting the current needs of sections, none of the databases provides the functionality in one program that the embassy requires to perform its mission. One of the databases is locally developed. However, it is so cumbersome and user unfriendly only the Ambassador's protocol assistant uses it for events such as the July 4 reception. Several sections maintain separate contact lists in order to be able to update data quickly and easily. PAS still uses the antiquated Distributed Records System Paradox software, a legacy U.S. Information Agency program, as its primary contact management system. This program includes over 3,700 records. PAS staff members also maintain supplementary contact systems, ranging from Outlook to rolodexes, to sifting through mounds of cards. PAS spends much time developing and communicating content and planning and executing programs. It has no tool to analyze appropriate audiences for outreach or to track all interaction with contacts. The IRC uses yet another database to track research requests. None of these systems is accessible to other mission sections and agencies. The lack of a unified, sophisticated contact management system reduces the amount and impact of PAS programming. PAS needs a system, such as Goldmine, that meets the requirements in the September 2004 e-diplomacy report on contact management.

The use and administration of multiple databases that contain similar data put a burden on ISC resources and result in additional costs to the embassy. For maximum efficiency, the entire embassy should adopt the same contact management system. This would allow staff from other sections and agencies to track their contacts'

interactions with the IRC, participation in embassy programs, and receipt of materials distributed by other embassy sections. A mission-wide database would make it easier to notify PAS when its media contacts are invited to receptions.

Recommendation 27: Embassy Buenos Aires should gather user requirements and, based on those requirements, identify, procure, install, and provide training for a mission-wide contact management system. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Technical Training

ISC staff has not received training on the newest operating systems at the embassy, which are Windows XP, 2000, and 2003 using Active Directory. Reasons range from lack of funding to lack of time. The complexity of these deployed systems is not conducive to learning through trial-and-error; formal training is necessary. The ISC office has created training plans for all ISC staff members. The Department, through the School of Advanced Information Technology, has on-line technical courses and courses on-site at regional training centers and in Washington. The team made an informal recommendation to provide sufficient training for ISC staff on the current systems and plan for future training.

Information Technology Security

Staff in both the ISC and IPC effectively maintain the security of their respective networks. They are proactive in responding to computer incidents, educating users, and adhering to many Department directives. However, issues concerning security configuration management and ISSO duties need to be addressed.

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

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

Recommendation 28:

Recommendation 29:

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

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

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

QUALITY OF LIFE

AMERICAN EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

The American Employees Association (AEA) plays a valuable role in support of the embassy's morale by providing a range of services and activities for the benefit and welfare of the employees of the embassy and their families. The general manager under the supervision of the AEA board is in charge of the day-to-day operations.

According to the association's bylaws, the treasurer is the only authorized person to disburse funds for payments to vendors or payroll. Contrary to the bylaws, the AEA requires that all checks issued for payment by the association have two signatures. Only the treasurer and the general manager have authorization in the bank to sign checks. While the treasurer is on official travel, the general manager has occasionally signed checks for payment, bypassing the two-signature requirement. At the time of the inspection, the AEA board was amending the by-laws to designate and authorize three board members to sign checks to enable compliance with the two-signature requirement.

Recommendation 30: Embassy Buenos Aires should require the American Employees Association to designate two people approved by the association board to sign all checks issued for payment by the association. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

The two community liaison office (CLO) co-coordinators have been on the job only two months but have already completed the CLO training course in Washington, helped support two visiting Congressional delegations, and conducted an active array of programs. These two highly enthusiastic EFM's job share the CLO coordinator function and complement each other in terms of background and experience.

Comments from some of the questionnaires that CLO programs were mainly aimed at families with children were raised by the inspection team. The coordinators responded that they were trying to figure out ways to advertise events that were equally aimed at singles and married couples without children and were looking to sponsor events tailored to those groups. The CLO co-coordinators have prepared a survey for the embassy community to solicit suggestions for types of activities that would be attractive to potential participants.

The CLO co-coordinators are heavily involved with the post orientation program. They send welcome cables with pre-arrival information to newly named officers, prepare welcome packets of post and city information for their use on arrival, and arrange for embassy sponsors for each new arrival to show them around and demonstrate survival skills. The CLO co-coordinators are fortunate to have the enthusiastic support of the Ambassador and the DCM to promote and publicize their community events and recruit sponsors. As a thank you to those who agreed to be sponsors, the CLO co-coordinators were organizing a potluck dinner to be put on by the newly sponsored employees.

The embassy weekly newsletter, El Gaucho, is an information-packed resource for the entire embassy community. Both in print and in electronic form, it provides an excellent communication vehicle to promote CLO activities, school programs, RSO security awareness themes, job opportunities, and community events. Until recently, a family member under contract had been editing it. Because that family member is leaving, the management officer was planning on giving responsibility for the newsletter to the CLO co-coordinators. The OIG team informally recommended that the embassy offer the opportunity to edit the newsletter as another contract to a family member and not burden an already pressed pair of CLO co-coordinators. It would also provide another employment opportunity to an EFM.

HEALTH UNIT

A regional medical officer, a local nurse, and a receptionist staff the health unit. The unit predominantly provides vaccinations, sees patients for urgent care, and provides referrals to the local medical community. The embassy is considering the possibility of hiring a part-time physician to provide additional coverage during the absences of the doctor. This may be more of a morale issue than a health care issue. Local care is readily available and excellent. Many doctors and specialists are trained in the United States and speak English.

Recommendation 31: Embassy Buenos Aires should determine if adequate primary care is available on the local market and in consultation with the Office of Medical Services, determine if additional medical coverage is needed. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires, in coordination with M/MED)

The health unit is addressing patient privacy concerns. Facilities maintenance is working with the medical unit to replace the door between the waiting room and the receptionist. This will allow the receptionist to make referrals and talk with patients about appointments without others in the waiting room overhearing. The unit has a small supply of controlled drugs that are kept in a safe in a locked room. The doctor, nurse, and receptionist all have access to the safe. Because prescription drugs can only be dispensed by the doctor, nonclinical staff should not have access to the safe. The team made an informal recommendation that the safe combination be changed and only be provided to the doctor and nurse. There were no shortages or anomalies in the inventoried supply of drugs. The inventory book showed when out-of-date medicines were destroyed and by whom. It was appropriately countersigned by a direct-hire witness.

SCHOOLS

The majority of embassy children in Buenos Aires attend the which is supported by the Office of Overseas Schools. The school has received Department grants to assist in security enhancements and pay for some direct expenses. In the inspection team's survey, respondents ranked the quality of education for family members at post among the top ten highest items.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Embassy Buenos Aires has satisfactory management controls for most operations. The risk assessment questionnaire completed shortly before the inspection and scored by the Bureau of Resource Management showed acceptable scores in all sections. The Ambassador signed the annual management controls certification on June 27, 2005, attesting that the system of management controls in place at the embassy provides reasonable assurance that the management control objectives were achieved. However, some weaknesses exist in several areas as described below.

PREMIUM TRAVEL

A review of travel vouchers for the last two years showed that premium travel is being approved properly, with one exception, although not documented as required by the regulations. 14 FAM 567.2-2B(a)(2) requires all authorizations for business class be accompanied by form DS-4087, Authorization Request for Business-Class Air Travel. An informal recommendation was made to submit form DS-4087 in all business travel requests.

A U.S. direct-hire employee attending a conference traveled to an overseas destination via Miami. Because the trip exceeded 14 hours, business class travel was approved. He was granted an exception to business class travel on his return for a 13 1/2-hour flight citing needs of the service. Concurrently, two local staff attended the same conference but traveled on a foreign carrier via Panama. The travel time using the foreign carrier was less than 14 hours and cost \$2,500 less than the trip through Miami. The traveler's reason for transiting Miami on business class does not justify its payment. According to 14 FAM 515(a), employees under official travel authorizations are expected to use the most direct and expeditious routes consistent with economy and reasonable comfort and safety. Furthermore, 14 FAM 561.2 states that employees on official travel are expected to exercise care in incurring expenses and will be responsible for excess costs.

Recommendation 32: Embassy Buenos Aires should calculate the excess cost of the unjustified business class ticket paid for by the embassy and collect the difference from the employee. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

REST AND RECUPERATION TRAVEL

The embassy is a designated rest and recuperation (R&R) post. The relief point for travel is Miami, Florida. As part of the R&R travel regulations, an employee can travel to the relief point, a selected U.S. city, a destination abroad, or to a U.S. territory. The allowance for the cost of airfare depends on the travel destination.

A review of the R&R travel vouchers showed only one anomaly. The embassy authorized an employee and his family members to travel on R&R to multiple U.S. cities at government expense. The travel authorization for the employee and his family did not show a selected city or the relief point as the R&R destination as required in 3 FAM 3725.3. Therefore, according to the regulations the authorized cost is limited to the amount for travel to the relief point only and not to multiple destinations.

Because the cost of the authorized ticket paid for the employee and his family exceeded the cost of the ticket to the relief point, the embassy should audit travel voucher no. 4102-521175 and collect the excess cost of the ticket from the employee as required in 14 FAM 561.2.

Recommendation 33: Embassy Buenos Aires should audit travel voucher 4102-521175 and collect from the employee the excess cost of the tickets paid by the embassy for rest and recuperation travel. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

LOCAL GUARD CONTRACT

The embassy's total local guard contract (including cost of guards plus overhead) for FY 2006 exceeds \$700,000. The mission has several methods available to provide contract oversight. These include guard duty schedules, daily manpower reports, incident reports, visual spot checks, and the Guards Electronic Monitoring System (GEMS).

Two of the components of the contract -- the residential mobile patrol and the Marine house static guard -- can be monitored using GEMS. Reports generated from this system are used to ensure that actual hours worked by local guards agree with the hours charged by the contractor. A review of GEMS reports by the OIG

team showed time gaps during several shifts, some as long as two hours. The embassy could not provide an explanation for the time gaps. As a result, there is no assurance that billings accurately reflect services rendered.

Recommendation 34: Embassy Buenos Aires should reconcile monthly guard contract invoices with electronic guard monitoring reports to verify that the residential mobile patrol and Marine house static guard charges are accurate and, if differences exist, make deductions from contract payments. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

USE OF OFFICIAL TELEPHONES

The mission is allowing the staff to make personal long distance calls from office and official cellular telephones without using a personal calling card. According to 5 FAM 523 and Department Notice 2004 04 043, occasional personal long distance calls are authorized provided a personal calling card is used and the call does not interfere with work. The regulations also state that employees must not make long distance calls even if they intend to reimburse the U.S. government. When the monthly telephone bills are received, the financial management office sends the bills to every office to determine the number of personal long distance calls to be billed to the individual users. This process creates an increased workload to the already shorthanded financial management section. 5 FAM 526.1 requires posts to establish a policy on whether personal use of cellular telephones is permissible. As post has not yet issued a policy regarding the use of cellular telephones, the OIG team recommends they be treated the same as landlines.

Recommendation 35: Embassy Buenos Aires should discontinue allowing employees to make personal long distance telephone calls from office and cellular telephones without using a personal calling card. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

OFFICIAL RESIDENCE EXPENSES

The household staff members employed at the ambassador's and DCM's residences do not have a written contract. Argentine legislation governing domestic personnel services does not require that a written agreement be in place stating the terms of employment. The local legal counsel informed the mission that it is common practice in Argentina to enter orally into agreements with domestic employees.

Recommendation 36: Embassy Buenos Aires should request advice from the Office of the Legal Adviser to determine whether the lack of written agreements with official residence domestic employees complies with Department policy and U.S. laws. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

REPRESENTATION ALLOWANCE

The embassy advances funds for representation events to take place at the ambassador's residence. 4 FAH-3 H-443.4 states that an advance for representation allowances may not be given. In addition, the Standardized Regulations Chapter 342 requires the submission of a voucher prior to the payment of any expenditure.

Recommendation 37: Embassy Buenos Aires should cease the practice of advancing funds for representation allowances. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

The embassy's representation policy states that U.S. executive branch employee presence in representation events should not exceed 50 percent of the guest list. Attendance of more than 50 percent of Foreign Service officers and/or local staff at some of the representation events has been necessary due to special circumstances. The OIG team informally recommended a revision to the representation policy to include the requirement for a waiver by the Chief of Mission when special circumstances require that U.S. executive branch personnel attending the event exceed half the total number of guests.

CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS

During the inspection, embassy staff brought to the team's attention cases of consensual relationships involving staff members in a supervisory-subordinate relationship. An examination by the team revealed compliance with 3 FAM 629.2-1(b) on reporting foreign national relationships to the RSO. However, reporting to the principal agency representative and counseling (3 FAM 629.2-3 to 3 FAM 629.2-7) was not documented and the required cutout of supervisory relationships was not put in place. As a result of the inspection, the mission is fashioning a policy to eliminate supervisory responsibility to avoid potential conflict of interest or the appearance of favoritism per 04 State 018630. (Refer to 3 FAM 4100 Appendix B that retains the original FAM cites shown above.)

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, should invite Embassy Buenos Aires to send a designated officer to future global and regional counternarcotics conferences. (Action: INL, in coordination with WHA)

Recommendation 2: Embassy Buenos Aires should request the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to establish a regional representative position in the Southern Cone. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires, in coordination with INL)

Recommendation 3: The Office of Policy Planning Resources in the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs should give Embassy Buenos Aires suggestions for effective performance measurement tools as well as performance indicators that allow the embassy to capture the impact of public diplomacy and public affairs programming. (Action: R/PPR)

Recommendation 4: Embassy Buenos Aires should implement steps to allow the press office to function more effectively, including ensuring that the press office's written products serve public diplomacy and public affairs needs. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 5: The Bureau of International Information Programs should conduct a cost benefit analysis to support funding same-day Spanish-language translation of newsworthy products, timely distribution of date-linked products, and offshore translations of quarterly Article Alert summaries. (Action: IIP)

Recommendation 6: Embassy Buenos Aires should implement steps to allow the cultural office to function more effectively, including developing and maintaining programming templates on the shared drive and clarifying managerial, and backup relationships. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 7: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop and implement standard operating procedures for public affairs section administration. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Buenos Aires should rewrite the work requirements statement for the American citizens services officer so that the incumbent reports directly to the consul general. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 9: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop standard operating procedures for the consul and the entry-level team leaders that clearly delineate the responsibilities of each and assign the consul responsibility for workload scheduling and other decision-making affecting the section's productivity. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 10: Embassy Buenos Aires should request a new consular subchief position from the executive office of the Bureau of Consular Affairs. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires, in coordination with CA)

Recommendation 11: Embassy Buenos Aires should rewrite the work requirements statement of the FS-02 consul to include the primary responsibility for interviewing and adjudicating the class B referrals. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 12: The Bureau of Administration should develop an on-going mechanism to capture lessons learned and best practices for posts organizing a summit visit. (Action: A)

Recommendation 13: Embassy Buenos Aires should consolidate all mission policies in a consistent format both in hard copy and on a single web page on its Intranet home page. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 14: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop, promulgate, and implement a written nepotism policy and enforce it consistently. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 15: Embassy Buenos Aires should cost out all options and determine the most cost-effective method to obtain local guard coverage for the mission. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires, in coordination with DS)

Recommendation 16: Embassy Buenos Aires should update Chapter IV of its Personnel Policies and Practices for Local Employees to incorporate the 40-hour workweek (or 48 hours for some employees) exclusive of lunch period and implement the policy across the board. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 17: Embassy Buenos Aires should designate an individual other than the Equal Employment Opportunity counselor to be the Federal Women's Program coordinator and should establish a separation of duties and administer the programs separately. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 18: Embassy Buenos Aires should advertise and fill voucher examiner position numbers 53-101 and 53-205 as soon as possible. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 19: Embassy Buenos Aires should require the submission of sub-cashiers' monthly or quarterly unannounced cash reconciliations. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 20: Embassy Buenos Aires should review at least annually and update as necessary the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services standards. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 21: Embassy Buenos Aires should hold quarterly meetings of the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council and require the presence of the deputy chief of mission. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 22: Embassy Buenos Aires should not renew the short-term leases on the two small properties that are used exclusively for interns. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 23: Embassy Buenos Aires should verify that the interagency housing board does not allow anyone to occupy residential property until the board receives written confirmation from the regional security officer that all security requirements have been met. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 24: Embassy Buenos Aires should cease using funds for security upgrades at living quarters allowance residences and seek guidance from the Department concerning security upgrades at living quarters allowance residences. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 25: Embassy Buenos Aires should request access to the information technology application baseline database and should enter all locally developed applications into the database. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 26: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop and implement a configuration management plan. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 27: Embassy Buenos Aires should gather user requirements and, based on those requirements, identify, procure, install, and provide training for a mission-wide contact management system. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 28:

Recommendation 29:

Recommendation 30: Embassy Buenos Aires should require the American Employees Association to designate two people approved by the association board to sign all checks issued for payment by the association. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 31: Embassy Buenos Aires should determine if adequate primary care is available on the local market and in consultation with the Office of Medical Services, determine if additional medical coverage is needed. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires, in coordination with M/MED)

Recommendation 32: Embassy Buenos Aires should calculate the excess cost of the unjustified business class ticket paid for by the embassy and collect the difference from the employee. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 33: Embassy Buenos Aires should audit travel voucher 4102-521175 and collect from the employee the excess cost of the tickets paid by the embassy for rest and recuperation travel. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 34: Embassy Buenos Aires should reconcile monthly guard contract invoices with electronic guard monitoring reports to verify that the residential mobile patrol and Marine house static guard charges are accurate and, if differences exist, make deductions from contract payments. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 35: Embassy Buenos Aires should discontinue allowing employees to make personal long distance telephone calls from office and cellular telephones without using a personal calling card. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 36: Embassy Buenos Aires should request advice from the Office of the Legal Adviser to determine whether the lack of written agreements with official residence domestic employees complies with Department policy and U.S. laws. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

Recommendation 37: Embassy Buenos Aires should cease the practice of advancing funds for representation allowances. (Action: Embassy Buenos Aires)

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Executive Direction

Local staff expressed concern that they are not treated as an integral part of the embassy and that their professional expertise is not being utilized.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Buenos must find ways to engage in a more active dialogue with representatives from the Foreign Service national community, with a goal of identifying mutually beneficial ways of improving the sense of community and shared purpose.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Law Enforcement and Security Coordination

Within the embassy, ESTH is responsible for the new border and export controls program being implemented by the Department. However, ESTH is not a member of the LEWG, where other sections and agencies regularly address a number of other programs and initiatives relating to borders, ports, and related security concerns.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Buenos Aires should add the environmental, scientific, technology and health section to its law enforcement working group.

Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

Washington users called PAS's results reporting top notch but would like more. PAS U.S. direct-hire staff, already stretched by other responsibilities, currently drafts all results reporting.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop standard procedures so that public affairs section locally employed staff are trained on how to draft results reporting and submit results reporting to their supervisors after each program.

The embassy has not been holding regular mission-wide discussions of public diplomacy programming to improve the impact and comprehensiveness of PAS activities. The Ambassador plans to convene such a discussion in May 2006 to review programming resulting from countrywide focus groups.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Buenos Aires should convene mission-wide reviews of public diplomacy programming at least annually.

Although there are provinces with much more influential audiences to engage, the embassy decided to launch a virtual presence post in Patagonia, which is sparsely populated, has a low level of Internet penetration, and is geographically distant. No reporting officer coordinates regular mission travel to Patagonia, and the embassy has not yet analyzed if public affairs, public diplomacy, and other labor-intensive outreach efforts are yielding an impact that justifies the amount of effort required.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Buenos Aires should conduct a cost/benefit analysis to determine if the impact of its virtual presence post outreach to Patagonia justifies the effort needed to maintain the virtual presence post there.

Public affairs section grant files were brought into compliance during the three months before the inspection. The section, however, does not have procedures to **keep them in compliance.**

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Buenos Aires should establish and implement procedures for good grants management, including the timely submission of reports and receipts.

Consular Affairs

The consular section uses a training schedule that puts new officers on their own at the interview windows on their fourth day at post. There is no training manual that officers can retain and build on as they acquire new skills.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop a training program that gives entry-level visa officers more time to observe and train before they begin interviewing applicants.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Buenos Aires should compile a training manual that new consular officers can retain and augment as they develop their skills and rotate through the consular section.

There are two entrances to the embassy compound. One is a designated consular access, but other embassy visitors sometimes opt to use that entrance as well, delaying the access of the consular clients. Security screening can cause significant delays in accessing the consular section, and there is some duplication of effort in the collection of biographic data for consular clients during the screening process.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Buenos Aires should assign an adequate number of contract guards to the consular public access control area during peak consular hours and direct non-consular clients to the second entrance during that period.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Buenos Aires should eliminate duplication in the collection of biographic information from consular clients whose personal information is already being verified by other employees before the clients approach the security screening area.

The ACS unit has experienced a surge in workload but has only four locally employed staff. During the January-March Argentine summer season, which is also the time local employees take holiday with their families, consular management routinely requests peak-season assistance for the NIV unit but not for the ACS unit.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Buenos Aires should include American citizens services needs in their annual request to the Bureau of Consular Affairs for peak-season assistance.

The embassy's warden system depends on an e-mail list to contact resident and other registered U.S. citizens. Many e-mail addresses are no longer accurate. Hotels, hostels, and tour companies are not included in the e-mail collective, yet they are the ones most likely to be a first line of communication during a natural disaster or in a welfare and whereabouts case.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Buenos Aires should request information from the Ministry of Tourism or other relevant agency responsible for the licensing of hotels, hostels, and tour companies, conduct appropriate outreach to those entities, and incorporate their contact information in an enhanced warden network.

The consular section relies on a call center to manage its NIV appointments. An LES supervisor, ELO team leads, and senior managers all play a role in the management of the appointment scheduling, and sometimes the call center is asked to adjust appointment levels several times in a month. Over-management of the appointment system is minimizing the advantages of having a call center.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy Buenos Aires should establish a process for scheduling appointments that minimizes the number of adjustments required and reserves essential scheduling decisions for consular managers.

Consular management has not taken advantage of the public affairs section to educate the public on the visa process. The public affairs section is prepared to organize journalist visits to the consular section and other outreach activities to defuse the mystery of the visa process.

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy Buenos Aires should design and implement a broad consular outreach plan using public affairs section resources.

The NIV unit releases appointments to the call center for a specified number of individuals each day. A family of six individuals over 14 years of age takes six appointment numbers. Although fingerprint collection takes more time for a large family unit, the adjudication process itself is the same for one or for several members of the same family.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy Buenos Aires should test the concept of scheduling by case instead of by individual and then revise its standard operating procedure if the scheduling-by-case scenario increases the number of persons interviewed without entailing significant increases in officer interviewing hours.

The consul general and the consul do not interview visa applicants routinely, although the consul general does handle the class A referrals personally. There are interview windows available, and the backlog for appointments is consistent. Although both consular managers are available for consultations, even their modest participation on the visa line could improve morale and help address the backlog.

Informal Recommendation 16: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop a schedule for its consular managers to include regular visa interviews not only for training and leadership purposes but also to reduce the appointment backlog.

The consular section has been unable to undertake any validation studies. The SOP on referrals requires validation of referral cases. The NIV refusal rate hovers around ten percent, and validation studies of targeted groups would help interviewing officers assess the accuracy of their decisions. The FPU is rarely involved in issues of ACS or IV fraud.

Informal Recommendation 17: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop a plan to validate its class B referrals first and then follow with validation studies that target specific profiles until it has the capacity to do a broader statistical review of its issuances.

Informal Recommendation 18: Embassy Buenos Aires should investigate a sample of the documents submitted in support of passport, report of birth, and immigrant visa cases to determine if there are fraud indicators that would require increased fraud prevention unit attention.

Consular staff has spent a significant amount of time and effort over the past months to update the consular segment of the embassy web site into the new worldwide web page template. Two staff members were trained in the CMS software and authorized by the public affairs section to make changes directly to the web site. Consular sections are expected to review their portion of the embassy web site regularly for content accuracy and to pass changes to the embassy webmaster for execution, but they should not replace the webmaster as the manager of web site content.

Informal Recommendation 19: Embassy Buenos Aires should return responsibility for the Content Management System changes and execution to the embassy webmaster where it belongs as soon as the consular section completes the update of the consular portion.

Resource Management

Administrative Operations

A section of the embassy issued instructions that no LES member in this section could take more than two consecutive weeks of annual leave.

Informal Recommendation 20: Embassy Buenos Aires should allow each direct supervisor to schedule annual leave for his/her staff members while at the same time making the direct supervisor responsible for adequate office coverage.

Human Resources

Embassy staff complained about the quality and timeliness of customer service from the human resources office.

Informal Recommendation 21: Embassy Buenos Aires should develop an individual development plan for the human resources staff focusing on job-specific training to make each staff member an expert in his or her field.

There is a perception that EFMs are not held to the same performance standards as other local staff.

Informal Recommendation 22: Embassy Buenos Aires should be consistent in applying requirements for establishing work requirements, completing performance reviews, providing counseling and adhering to time and attendance regulations.

Locally employed staff reported that training information was not readily available.

Informal Recommendation 23: Embassy Buenos Aires should include a training link on the embassy's intranet home page.

The designated EEO counselor may have insufficient time to fulfill the EEO responsibilities.

Informal Recommendation 24: Embassy Buenos Aires should consider designating a second Equal Employment Opportunity counselor.

The principal mechanism that the embassy uses to convey important and time-sensitive information is via the computer.

Informal Recommendation 25: Embassy Buenos Aires should provide all embassy employees, Americans as well as locally employed staff, computer workstations, intranet connectivity, and the training to use the tools properly.

General Services Office

The warehouse lease is coming up for renegotiation, and the rates have quadrupled. The embassy is weighing its options for renewal versus finding and negotiating a lease on a new warehouse.

Informal Recommendation 26: Embassy Buenos Aires should work closely with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations area representative who is scheduled to visit in the near future to evaluate alternatives.

The embassy has experienced resistance and complaints about the impact of construction projects in work areas.

Informal Recommendation 27: Embassy Buenos Aires should communicate with officers whose areas are to be disrupted by the work on construction projects so that they understand the nature and scope of the projects, how much the projects might intrude on their work space, and how unexpected developments (such as discovering antiquated and unlabelled wiring during work in a ceiling area) and lack of escorts might cause delays.

There have been two previous efforts to sell the Bosch Palace, which is the embassy main residence.

Informal Recommendation 28: Embassy Buenos Aires should work closely with the Office of Overseas Buildings Operations to analyze objectively the annual costs of supporting the embassy main residence so that actual costs can be evaluated alongside arguments for the retention of the residence.

The embassy interagency housing board has been extremely accommodating to the requirements and requests of staff to change housing assignments.

Informal Recommendation 29: Embassy Buenos Aires should prepare a cost analysis to inform the members of the housing board of the cost implication each time a family is allowed to change its housing assignment.

The embassy has spent considerable sums in the past to get potential property acquisitions or lease possibilities up to standard in the security and safety/health areas. 12 FAH-8 H-131.1 urges that every attempt be made to acquire properties that already meet the security standards appropriate for the mission's threat rating or on which the owner will make the necessary modifications.

Informal Recommendation 30: Embassy Buenos Aires should direct the interagency housing board to pay particular attention to Department provisions and make an attempt to acquire properties that already meet the security standards appropriate for the mission's threat rating.

In the past, the embassy has allowed individual Department employees to be paid a living quarters allowance if they decided to purchase a private residence rather than move into embassy-leased or U.S. government-owned housing.

Informal Recommendation 31: Embassy Buenos Aires should seek guidance from the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs when a Department officer requests a living quarters allowance that involves the private purchase of a local property as described in Department regulations.

The embassy has a problem with incoming household effects shipments arriving improperly or inadequately packed, resulting in a large number of damage claims.

Informal Recommendation 32: Embassy Buenos Aires should communicate more aggressively with the losing posts of incoming employees to improve the proper packing and protection of shipments.

At the embassy, there is a perception that shipping personnel are not always knowledgeable about the status and location of individual shipments.

Informal Recommendation 33: Embassy Buenos Aires should require the general services office to provide better and timelier feedback on incoming shipments to newly arrived employees.

Information Management and Information Technology Security

The ISC office has not updated the network diagram for ClassNet.

Informal Recommendation 34: Embassy Buenos Aires should update the network diagram for ClassNet as major changes are made to the network.

PAS believes that ISC is not adequately meeting its IT needs. PAS requires program-specific technology that is not normally required by other embassy sections in order to accomplish its business needs.

Informal Recommendation 35: Embassy Buenos Aires should require staff to use the work order system for all information technology requests and instruct the information systems center office and public affairs section to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss information technology initiatives.

ISC staff has not received training on the newest operating systems at the embassy, which are Windows XP, 2000, and 2003 using Active Directory.

Informal Recommendation 36: Embassy Buenos Aires should provide sufficient training for information systems center staff on the current systems and plan for future training based on the system upgrades the embassy receives.

Currently the ARSO is designated as the alternate ISSO. The ARSO has minimal computer experience and has not gone through the ISSO training.

Informal Recommendation 37: Embassy Buenos Aires should move the alternate information system security officer designation to an information systems center staff member and provide the required information system security officer training.

Informal Recommendation 38:

QUALITY OF LIFE

With the current editor of the embassy weekly newspaper leaving the embassy, the management officer intends to give responsibility for its publication to the CLO co-coordinators.

Informal Recommendation 39: Embassy Buenos Aires should offer the opportunity to edit the newspaper as another contract to a family member and not burden an already pressed pair of community liaison office co-coordinators.

Because prescription drugs can only be dispensed by the doctor, nonclinical staff should not have access to the safe, as is now the case in the health unit.

Informal Recommendation 40: Embassy Buenos Aires should change the safe combination and make it available only to the doctor and the nurse.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Premium Travel

The embassy is not documenting authorization for premium travel as required by 14 FAM 567.2-2(B)(a)(2).

Informal Recommendation 41: Embassy Buenos Aires should authorize business class travel only when Form DS-4087 is submitted with the request.

Representation Allowance

Attendance of more than 50 percent of U.S. Executive Branch personnel at some representational events is necessary due to special circumstances. Per 3 FAH-1 H 3244.3(b), the embassy's policy regarding representation does not include language to require the request for and approval of a waiver when circumstances require that attendance of U.S. Executive Branch personnel exceed 50 percent.

Informal Recommendation 42: Embassy Buenos Aires should revise the representation policy to include the requirement for a waiver by the Chief of Mission when special circumstances require that U.S. Executive Branch personnel attending an event exceed half the total number of guests.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival
Ambassador	Lino Gutierrez	09/03
Deputy Chief of Mission	Hugo Llorens	08/03
Chiefs of Sections:		
Consular	Susan K. Abeyta	07/05
Management	Gustavo A. Mejia	07/03
Political	Phillip H. Egger	09/04
Executive Advisory Office	Lon Augustenborg	07/04
Economic	Perry E. Ball	07/02
Environment, Science, Technology and Health	Kathleen W. Barmon	10/03
Public Affairs	Robert D. Banks	08/05
Regional Security	Paul C. Isaac	07/02
Other Agencies:		
Foreign Agricultural Service		
Agricultural Attaché	Robert K. Hoff	08/03
APHIS	Thomas C. Schissel	10/03
Department of Defense		
Defense Attaché	COL Douglas R. Lengenfelder	12/05
Military group	COL Joseph F. Napoli	07/05
U.S. Commercial Service	Brian C. Brisson	09/04
Department of Justice/DEA	Anthony Greco, Jr	01/03
Department of Justice/FBI	William Godoy	06/05
Department of Homeland Security/TSA	Joseph Ochoa	07/04
Department of the Treasury/OTA	Joseph M. Bognanno	07/05

ABBREVIATIONS

ACAO	Assistant cultural affairs officer
ACS	American citizens services
AEA	American Employees Association
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
CA	Bureau of Consular Affairs
CAO	Cultural affairs officer
CCB	Configuration control board
CLO	Community liaison office
CMS	Content Management System
DAO	Defense attaché office
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DHS/ICE	Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement
DHS/TSA	Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Agency
DIN	Dedicated Internet network
DOE	Department of Energy
DS	Bureau of Diplomatic Security
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFM	Eligible family member
ELO	Entry-level officer
ESTH	Environment, science, technology and health section
EXBS	International Export Controls-Related Border Security Program
FAS	Foreign Agricultural Service

FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FBU	Federal benefits unit
FMO	Financial management officer
FPU	Fraud prevention unit
FSN	Foreign Service national
GEMS	Guards Electronic Monitoring System
GSO	General services office
HR	Human resources office
HRO	Human resources officer
IAHB	Interagency housing board
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IIP	Bureau of International Information Programs
IMO	Information management officer
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
INR	Bureau of Intelligence and Research
IRC	Information resource center
IRO	Information resource officer
ISSO	Information systems security officer
ISO9001	International Standards Organization 9001 Quality Management System
IT	Information technology
IV	Immigrant visas
LES	Locally employed staff
LEWG	Law enforcement working group
LGP	Local guard program
LQA	Living quarters allowance
MPP	Mission Performance Plan
NIV	Nonimmigrant visa

NSDD-38	National Security Decision Directive
OBO	Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OMS	Office management specialist
OTA	Office of Technical Assistance, Department of the Treasury
PAO	Public affairs officer
PAS	Public affairs section
RSO	Regional security officer
R&R	Rest and recuperation
SBU	Sensitive but unclassified
SMS	System management server
SOP	Standard operating procedure
SSA	Social Security Administration
USCS	U.S. Commercial Service
VOA	Voice of America
VPP	Virtual presence post
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

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

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

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

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