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

# Report of Inspection

Embassy  
Kuwait City, Kuwait

Report Number ISP-I-10-33A, March 2010

## ~~IMPORTANT NOTICE~~

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## PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

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

### PURPOSE

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

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

### METHODOLOGY

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



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

*Office of Inspector General*

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

Harold W. Geisel  
Deputy Inspector General

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## CONTEXT

Embassy Kuwait City is the fifth largest mission in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), reflecting the country's strategic location in the Persian Gulf, the

pivotal role it has played in supporting our efforts in Iraq, and the importance of its petroleum resources.



Kuwait's cooperation has been crucial to Operation Iraqi Freedom. The country will remain an important partner as the President's decision to reposition troops and equipment from Iraq throughout 2010 and 2011 is implemented. A key issue is the role Kuwait will play in our wider regional strategy, once the repositioning is complete.

U.S. interests in Kuwait extend beyond military and strategic concerns, to include Kuwait's role as one of the world's largest exporters of crude oil, its role in combating terrorist financing, its potential as a platform for U.S. direct investment, and its efforts to strengthen democratic institutions. All these issues play prominently in the Embassy's FY 2011 Mission Strategic Plan (MSP).

Kuwait's economy is heavily oil-based. Some 75 percent of government revenue derives from oil exports. Banking is also an important sector of the economy. While Kuwait sits upon the world's fifth largest proven oil reserves, the country already is debating how to diversify its economy away from its heavy reliance on the petroleum sector.

Kuwait's social and political landscape is exceptionally complex. The country's population is roughly 3 million people, of whom only one-third are Kuwaiti citizens. The remainder is expatriate workers — largely from South and East Asia — and some 100,000 “bidoons,” stateless members of tribes of disputed ancestry and disputed claims to citizenship. Kuwaiti citizens, the vast majority of whom work for the government or state-owned enterprises, enjoy generous social and educational benefits and pay no taxes to the state. Expatriates, who work primarily in the service-heavy private sector, have limited access to government-funded social services.

Kuwait's political system is one of the most vibrant in the Gulf region, with a lively press and the region's oldest all-elected parliament, which currently includes four women members. In recent years, disputes between the Amir (and his cabinet) and the parliament have created a political deadlock on key issues, including allowing foreign participation in much-needed infrastructure development. These disputes have led to frequent elections in recent years following the Amir's dissolution of a recalcitrant Parliament: 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2009. Few observers see an end to these political disputes, in the near term.

Embassy staffing reflects its prominent role supporting U.S. efforts in Iraq. Department staff comprise only one-third of all direct-hire Americans at the Embassy. The largest contingent of employees under chief of mission authority is the Office of Military Cooperation-Kuwait (OMC-K), with a staff of 61. In all, more than 10 U.S. agencies are represented, including the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Commercial Service, and BBG.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

The State of Kuwait is a valuable strategic outpost in a region that remains central to evolving U.S. foreign policy priorities. The Ambassador provides clear, decisive leadership that reflects her activist, hands-on management style. A new deputy chief of mission (DCM), hand-picked by the Ambassador, arrived in summer 2009 and is off to a strong start. Together, they have assembled an increasingly strong team of subordinates in many areas of embassy operations. Interactions and deliberations are marked by a spirit of lively give-and-take — producing outcomes that are attuned to executive office priorities, but show a willingness to reflect other views, as well.

Kuwait's support for U.S. military forces and international broadcasting, its generally pro-American policies, and its vast petroleum reserves make it a crucial regional partner. At any given time, some 25,000 U.S. military personnel are present in Kuwait, under the authority of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), in transit to and from Iraq or supporting other operations in the region. OMC-K, commanded by a U.S. Air Force Brigadier General, is located in the chancery and falls under the authority of the chief of mission. OMC-K and other military elements comprise more than half of the mission's 248 U.S. direct-hire personnel.

The Ambassador and her team manage this complex set of political-military relationships closely, drawing on an intimate knowledge of local concerns and realities. She maintains a collegial working relationship with the CENTCOM commander in Tampa, Florida, who describes her as his strategic partner in Kuwait. She regularly visits the desert facilities where U.S. troops are based, conferring and coordinating with the commanders on the ground. She works closely with the OMC-K commander to ensure that mission lines of authority are clear and no contradictions arise. The OMC-K commander describes the embassy staff members' cooperation as "above and beyond," and calls the Ambassador and her DCM "informed, understanding and supportive." The Ambassador also coordinates regularly with the Kuwaiti authorities, and enjoys strong relationships of trust and confidence with the ruling Amir and other, senior Kuwaiti officials.

Kuwaitis over the age of 30 generally view the United States favorably as their liberator, but a new generation with other priorities and perceptions lacks the same bond. The Ambassador and her deputy, both fluent Arabic speakers, have under-

taken a series of dynamic public diplomacy initiatives designed to reach out directly to Kuwait's young people, tribal communities, and the Shi'a minority. Between March and September 2009, the Ambassador participated in 20 major public initiatives in Kuwait, including personal appearances, public dialogues, television and radio appearances, and press commentaries. She is a strong supporter of the American Corners now operating at three of Kuwait's largest universities. She works closely with the public affairs counselor and her staff to get the U.S. message out to the widest possible local audience.

The Embassy has active associations with the President's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and with American Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. (AMIDEAST), a nongovernmental organization that promotes cooperation between the United States and the region through education, information, and development programs. Four bilateral MEPI projects were launched in 2009, three of them targeting youth and the fourth to assist newspaper managers. The Ambassador and embassy MEPI coordinator share a desire to use MEPI programs to reach beyond the urban elite and involve more conservative elements of Kuwait's fundamentally conservative society. Embassy support for AMIDEAST programs focuses on youth, particularly from conservative backgrounds.

The Ambassador has become personally involved in issues well beyond Kuwaiti political affairs and regional security. Her commitment to U.S. initiatives to counter global trafficking in persons (G/TIP) has been exemplary, and she has delivered numerous firm G/TIP-related demarches at senior levels. G/TIP reporting from the political section is extensive, and the Embassy devotes an appropriate share of resources to the effort. The Ambassador also has vigorously pressed Kuwaiti officials on the importance of improving the country's efforts to control terrorist financing.

Principals in NEA praised the quality of the Embassy's reporting, analysis, and contributions to policy. Officials in a wide variety of other bureaus and agencies were also enthusiastic. They frequently commended the Ambassador's and DCM's leadership and responsiveness to their priorities and concerns. In several instances, the desire was expressed for more reporting on the ruling al-Sabah family, but this was tempered by an understanding of the competing priorities and demands on a thinly-spread mission staff.

U.S. business investment in Kuwait is modest and heavily restricted, but the Ambassador, the U.S. Commercial Service staff, and the economic section advocate for U.S. commercial interests. The Ambassador was heavily involved in an effort to save a Kuwaiti joint venture involving a major U.S. chemical company, from which

the Kuwaiti partners eventually backed away at the last moment; the Embassy subsequently sent a detailed lessons-learned cable to Washington for future negotiations. More recently, the Embassy successfully advocated on behalf of another U.S. firm's bid on a large power plant project.

Embassy personnel are enthusiastic about the Ambassador's and DCM's substantive expertise and easy accessibility. The OIG team was impressed by the collegiality and positive atmosphere of the weekly country team meetings and other regularly scheduled meetings. Mission morale is very strong among American staff members,

Entry-level officers welcomed the formal and informal mentoring they receive from the Ambassador, DCM, and their immediate supervisors. Three first-tour officers in the political and economic sections praised their respective rating officers for their patience and dedication in helping them learn best practices. They also commended the DCM for his mentoring efforts, which include some creative initiatives, such as enabling the entry-level officers to meet with their counterparts from other friendly embassies.

Security for both the official and nonofficial communities in Kuwait remains a top priority for the Ambassador. Her focus is reflected in the mission's attention to a range of security considerations that affect both the readiness of the official community and an awareness of the security posture of the nonofficial community. Through its professional security assets and resources, the Embassy operates a well-crafted and realistic program to enable it to function effectively in situations that may require rapid response, in order to protect the well-being of official staff. The emergency preparedness strategy addresses an array of potential scenarios, is well constructed, and provides the capability to identify and mitigate known or potential threats to the mission and its personnel. The Embassy regularly conducts emergency exercises to maintain its crisis management capabilities, and continually refines security procedures in response to the changing landscape of potential threats in the region.

The FY 2011 MSP, which reflects the Ambassador's and DCM's attention to the Kuwaiti internal scene, regional issues, strategic analysis, and mission operations, has received positive feedback from the Department. However, the MSP omitted any reference to the International Broadcasting Bureau Kuwait Transmitting Station. The team informally recommended that the Embassy correct this omission.



## POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

### POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

#### Political and Economic Overview

Political, political-military, and economic reporting from Embassy Kuwait City receives high marks from both Washington consumers and U.S. military officers at CENTCOM in Tampa. The Embassy's political and economic sections are responsible for the bulk of this reporting, along with the Ambassador and DCM. Both sections have done excellent work using new information platforms. They also support a heavy schedule of high-level visits to Kuwait and onward to Iraq. However, public outreach efforts have not been as vigorous as they could be. Both sections are hampered by the staff's inadequate training in both the Arabic language and in substantive issues. This is particularly the case among first-tour officers, who comprise half of the two sections.

The political and economic sections at Embassy Kuwait City remain in separate offices, despite a widespread trend to combine such sections. The Embassy has reviewed the issue, and for now there is consensus to maintain the separate offices due to the limited overlap between the issues each section covers and the advisability of having two counselors, each of whom can serve as acting DCM. The OIG team sees no compelling reason to combine the sections at this time.

The political section includes a counselor, a mid-level officer who covers a range of domestic and foreign policy issues, and a first-tour officer who covers human rights and maintains the Embassy's superb Intellipedia Web site. This Web site provides updates on current developments, with easy access to background information on Kuwaiti politics and society and other relevant topics. An experienced and talented office management specialist completes the political team. The political counselor does not have prior Middle East experience, but the section has contributed to solid embassy reporting and has adeptly managed a number of contentious issues (for example, trafficking in persons). The DCM and political counselor have effectively mentored the section's first-tour officer. The section is due to receive a fourth officer in 2010, and possibly a fifth, although the current staffing of four officers appears to be adequate.

**Best Practice:** Creative Use of Intellipedia

**Issue:** Intellipedia is a classified, Web-based platform that makes key information available to Washington analysts and action officers, in an easily accessible form. Maximizing Intellipedia requires a strong commitment from officers in the field, who must work to keep it updated.

**Response:** Embassy Kuwait City's political counselor assigned responsibility for the Intellipedia site to a first-tour officer, and included the Web site in the officer's work requirements. The officer updates the site several times a week, uploading fresh information and biographies, which are drawn primarily from cable reporting. The economic section also has created and recently launched an unclassified platform, which allows officers throughout the Gulf to share information and comment on current issues.

**Result:** Washington analysts use the Intellipedia site regularly. A Department official who manages the program worldwide termed its leadership profiles "unmatched."

Embassy Kuwait City's economic section has three officers who are supported by an excellent first-tour office management specialist; the section also has a mid-level deputy who is serving in Iraq. The counselor has extensive experience in the Gulf region and an outstanding grasp of economic and social issues. The other two officers are first-tour. The section's skewed staffing profile, with no mid-level officers, results largely from the current worldwide dearth of mid-level officers combined with a surge of entry-level officers. The counselor thus has a large mentoring responsibility, which he has ably taken on: both first-tour officers are developing contacts and filing well-written cables as a result of their mentoring.

Language ability is an issue for both sections. Three of the six officers in the two sections have received formal Arabic training from the Department, to the S-3 R-3 level; however, all three report that the training was inadequate for conducting professional conversations in Kuwait. Three officers have not received any formal training, although two of these have had rudimentary training outside the Department. Officers in both sections are unable to conduct most business in Arabic, and each must bring an LE staff member to virtually all meetings in which Arabic is spoken. Inadequate language skills also reduce the mission's opportunities for effective outreach, beyond Kuwait's English-speaking, urban elite.

The Embassy has sought to address this shortcoming by creating its own language program; four of the six reporting officers in the sections participate in this program, as does one office management specialist. In addition, two officers who are scheduled to assume their embassy positions in 2010 have opted to take a year of language study in Kuwait rather than at the Tunis Regional Language School. This program, now in its first year and the first of its kind in Kuwait, was set back when Kuwaiti training partners pulled out at the last moment. The two officers now work with private tutors. The OIG team informally recommended that Embassy Kuwait City conduct an end-of-training survey, and submit a report to the NEA and Director General on the efficacy of such in-country training in improving language skills among embassy staff.

## Reporting and Advocacy

The economic and political sections produce much of Embassy Kuwait City's reporting, although the Ambassador personally reports on some sensitive issues, and the front office often heavily shapes and edits political reporting. Relations with other agencies at the Embassy — including the large Department of Defense contingent — were described by all parties as excellent. Nearly all substantive reports include commentary, a fact that was positively noted by consumers in several Washington agencies. Both sections devote considerable time to high-level visits.

With input from the front office and other sections, the political section produces widely respected background pieces on major elements of Kuwaiti society, including the ruling family, the growing influence of tribes, the merchant elite, and the country's stateless "bidoons." Political officers also drafted a series of timely reports on the 2009 election, which saw female candidates win for the first time ever. These reports contained extensive biographical information but, like much of the section's spot reporting, relied heavily on press accounts.

The section's reporting on trafficking in persons received particular recognition from Washington consumers. Reporting was extensive (11 G/TIP-related cables in 2009), including accounts of the Ambassador's strong demarches to two ministers. Several Washington consumers said they would appreciate additional reporting on other human rights issues in Kuwait.

Some of the most incisive reporting is contained in memoranda of conversations with leading journalists and academics, drafted by the political counselor. The OIG team encouraged the political counselor to distribute these analyses within the Department and to other agencies. The largest percentage of reporting is conducted by the section's mid-level deputy, whose broad portfolio includes domestic politics,

political-military affairs (including discussions with the Kuwaiti Government on the status of a number of Kuwaitis held at Guantanamo), and relations with Iraq and Iran. The OIG team informally recommended that reporting responsibilities be more equitably balanced within the section.

The economic section produces reporting on a range of topics, from developments in the country's all-important energy sector, to terrorist financing, to the state of the growing banking sector and U.S. companies' efforts to enter the Kuwaiti market. The section wisely does not devote its scarce resources to covering macro-economic trends that are accurately reported in public sources.

The section is multitalented and advocates for U.S. interests in a variety of fields, often in conjunction with the front office. In the last year, for example, the section advocated strongly on behalf of two U.S. companies that are world leaders in the chemical and manufacturing sectors. It also helped prevent a series of H1N1 cases among U.S. troops from mushrooming into a confrontation that could have restricted U.S. military movements in the region. The issue was handled largely by the section's first-tour science officer in a manner embassy leadership and CENTCOM described as exceptionally skillful.

None of the three first-tour officers assigned to the economic and political sections has received adequate training. For instance, they have been assigned to cover such complex issues as terrorist financing, trade barriers, H1N1, and trafficking in persons, but none of these officers has received specific training in any of these areas. In one case, an officer was hurried to Kuwait to fill an existing gap. In other cases, courses at the Foreign Service Institute were not available at times that matched predeparture or leave schedules. LE staff members in the two sections also have received limited training in these areas, and several have expressed the need for additional training opportunities. Training is particularly important, given that first-tour officers have been assigned duties that are beyond their levels of experience, and mentoring them creates additional responsibilities for the two counselors.

**Recommendation 1:** Embassy Kuwait City should task its section heads to prepare and implement for each officer, office management specialist, and locally employed staff member under their supervision, annual professional training plans that include courses at the Foreign Service Institute and distance learning, which should be submitted to the deputy chief of mission for review and approval. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

## Outreach

Neither the economic nor the political section uses representation funds or opportunities for public diplomacy as well as it should. In FY 2009, for example, the political section hosted three representation events, and the economic section hosted six. Other than attending diwaniyyas (social gatherings where much government business is conducted in Kuwait), during the 6 months prior to the inspection, the economic section participated in four public outreach events; the political section did not participate in any. Both counselors' work requirements include representation and outreach, but these responsibilities are not in the work requirements statements for their respective staffs. The MSP accords high importance to outreach to youth, women, and conservative elements of society; however, neither section devotes adequate time or resources to reaching these sectors of the community.

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy Kuwait City should task the political and economic sections to coordinate with the public affairs section, to develop and submit to the deputy chief of mission a representation and public diplomacy plan to promote U.S. interests through events that reach a wide swath of Kuwaiti society. Outreach responsibilities should be reflected in the work requirements for all relevant staff members in the political and economic sections. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

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**Recommendation 3:**

## Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)

The MEPI program is intended to promote political, economic, and educational reform, as well as women's empowerment. Embassy Kuwait City supported four bilateral MEPI projects in 2009, and assisted with a number of regional programs. Three bilateral projects were directed toward youth. The fourth was designed to improve management skills at Kuwaiti newspapers. The cost of the four projects was approximately \$225,000.

While the projects reached crucial audiences of young people and women, no metrics are available to measure how well these projects reached conservative elements of Kuwaiti society, the third key group noted in the MSP. The project manager told inspectors he would like to introduce MEPI programs to conservative areas outside Kuwait, once security protocols permit.

Embassy Kuwait City rigorously vets proposals before forwarding them to MEPI's regional office in Abu Dhabi for consideration. A committee (which includes representatives from the political, public affairs, and economic sections, as well as the Foreign Commercial Service) meets monthly to review whether proposals meet both MEPI and MSP priorities. The committee rejected or sent back for revision more than half the proposals it reviewed in 2009.

Embassy Kuwait City's MEPI program is managed within the public affairs section by a Civil Service employee on an excursion tour, with administrative support from an LE assistant. Previously, responsibility for the program was dispersed; the current arrangement, of having a single, accountable officer enhances program continuity and oversight. Both the program manager and the assistant have training in grants management, and they work closely with the Embassy's financial management office to ensure that grant funds are properly controlled. A grants management specialist from the Department's Office of the Procurement Executive (A/OPE) recently visited Embassy Kuwait City to offer further guidance for managing MEPI and other grants, and concluded that the Embassy is adequately exercising its fiduciary responsibilities.

## Management of Contacts

The political and economic sections maintain separate contact bases. Both participated in an effort to establish an embassy-wide contact base using GoldMine software, but that effort lost momentum since when the officer in charge of the initiative left, and his duties were not immediately reassigned.<sup>2</sup> Given the steady turnover resulting from 2-year tours and the need to systematize outreach efforts, it would be useful to revive the GoldMine initiative. The new public affairs officer is taking steps to do so, but requires the full and timely cooperation of other embassy elements—an ingredient that has been missing.

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Kuwait City should formally assign an officer to oversee the consolidated contacts list database project, with a view toward having full embassy participation in a common database and having the database fully populated and functional within 6 months of the project's initiation. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

## PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The public affairs section (PAS) is small, but active. It enjoys a close, collaborative relationship with the public affairs staff of the large CENTCOM military presence in Kuwait. The media environment in Kuwait is open, and the Embassy works hard and effectively to develop and maintain media contacts. The mission's public diplomacy outreach benefits from the input, energy, and active support of the Ambassador. The MSP goal that the PAS take the lead on expanding the target audience for cultural exchange programs which are aimed at strengthening bilateral ties, is appropriate. However, since the section is under-resourced, it cannot fully achieve the intended goal and take advantage of potential outreach opportunities.

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<sup>2</sup> GoldMine is a commercially produced software product to manage contacts. Among the things it can do is allow creation of a contact record, create contact groups, create distributions lists, link address book entries to emails, and provide for a wide range of biographic characteristics to be available for subsequent sorting, retrieval, or other manipulation to meet the unique needs of users.

## Public Affairs Staffing

The PAS is currently staffed by a public affairs officer (PAO), an information officer (IO), and seven LE staff members. The cultural affairs officer (CAO) position has been vacant since March 2009. The MEPI officer and his LE staff assistant also have office space in the section, but they both spend approximately 90 percent of their time working on MEPI programs.

As much as possible, the PAO and IO are picking up the CAO's duties until that position is filled. The officer designated to be the new CAO is in-country, but he is taking intensive Arabic classes and is not expected to report for duty until he completes the training in late spring or early summer 2010. The FY 2011 MSP public diplomacy goal (goal paper five) is to "expand the target audience for cultural exchange programs aimed at strengthening bilateral ties." At present, the mission is unable to reach this goal as effectively as it has in the past; for instance, during the period from 2005 to 2007, a CAO with good Arabic language skills conducted successful outreach efforts at the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Sharia Law and was able to influence the Ministry's campaign to promote moderate Islamic ideas. This is an example of effective cultural diplomacy and "soft power;" but making such progress is difficult, in the absence of a CAO.

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, should continue to seek either a short-tour, active-duty or when-actually-employed, retired Foreign Service officer with cultural affairs experience and Arabic language skills, to help implement cultural affairs initiatives, until the designated cultural affairs officer is able to report for duty. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with NEA)

## Information Resource Center and the American Corners

The Embassy does not have an information resource center (IRC) and does not regularly receive researchers or other public users in the PAS. (The IRC was formerly located in its own building on the old embassy compound.) Moreover, because of the reluctance of Kuwaitis to tolerate the security screening required for admission to the current embassy compound, the PAS has preferred to seek programming venues away from the embassy compound, as much as possible. As one successful example of overcoming the limitations of the embassy compound, the American Corners have been an effective venue for reaching out to university students.

The Embassy runs three American Corners at major universities in Kuwait. One is located at the government-run Kuwait University, and two are at private universities — the American University of Kuwait and the Gulf University for Science and Technology. The OIG team visited the Gulf University for Science and Technology during the inspection. The American Corners serve as effective platforms for public diplomacy programming and convenient venues for facilitating research on American topics.

For security reasons, the Embassy has not previously conducted programs in Jahra, Kuwait's second largest city and a conservative bastion. However under the direction of the current Ambassador and in coordination with the regional security office, the Embassy now is planning to expand its outreach to the Jahra area. If the mission were to establish an American Corner in Jahra, it would be staffed by non-U.S. citizens and could function as a resource with limited support from an American officer or LE staff member. It also could serve as a platform for periodic programming outreaches such as speakers, under security arrangements to be worked out between the Embassy and the Kuwait Ministry of the Interior.

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with the Bureau of International Information Programs, should seek an appropriate partner institution in Jahra and establish an American Corner in that city. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with IIP)

## Multi-Media Efforts and Youth Outreach

Kuwait has the most open media in the Arabian Peninsula. It also has relatively high Internet access for a country in the Middle East, and the youth of Kuwait are especially active users of the Internet. The mission's challenge is how to leverage online media to reach Kuwait's youth. The PAS has begun a limited youth outreach program via blogs and the Facebook social networking site. Online outreach is especially valuable, since the Embassy's direct access to key sectors of the population — especially the youth demographic (ages 13 to 23) and women — is restricted by law, administrative hurdles, and cultural norms.

Embassy outreach to Kuwaiti women is limited, and what little there is raises suspicions in conservative quarters. Women in Kuwait are under increasing pressure to segregate themselves from men. Public primary and secondary schools are segregated by gender. Universities, both public and private, are also under pressure to segregate by gender, and are in the process of doing so. With the exception of

the American Corners, the Embassy has limited contact with Kuwait's women and youth, in a society where there is growing pressure from conservatives to discourage such contact. This hampers the Embassy's ability to make inroads with the post-liberation, successor generation. Absent a vigorous outreach program by the Embassy, such youth (based on their limited experience) may see little value in developing close ties with the United States.

The Embassy is missing opportunities for outreach, due to its modest electronic media capability. The audiovisual unit is so basic — in terms of equipment, software applications, and the size and expertise of the staff — that the PAS cannot generate its own content for distribution to Kuwaiti media. The PAS has obtained local television air time on a regular basis, for the Ambassador and other high-level visitors and speakers e.g., on some news, information, and opinion programs. Nonetheless, the public affairs opportunities provided by Kuwait's burgeoning broadcast media are not being fully utilized.

The Embassy has a Web site, but the webmaster is too involved with other IRC responsibilities to give adequate time to Web site needs and opportunities. The PAS does not currently have an Arabic Web site, although it is close to launching one.

A number of U.S. embassies have production studios and staff that produce content and distribute it to media outlets. A production studio would enable the PAS to not only produce content for the Kuwaiti media, but also add podcasts to the embassy Web site, which youth could access easily. It also could produce original material — for example, features on U.S. education or culture, and stories of American diversity and Muslim life in the United States. It also would facilitate recording and disseminating audio clips of activities and meetings, such as the roundtables that currently are held in the PAS' multi-purpose room. A better-resourced PAS with a production studio and adequate staff could leverage some current PAS activities to cover the intended audience even better by getting what happens beyond the walls of the Embassy.

**Recommendation 7:** Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, should develop and implement a strategy for staffing and equipping an audiovisual production studio to achieve greater outreach to Kuwaiti youth, women, and other elements of Kuwaiti society. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with R and NEA)

## Partnering for Youth Outreach

Approximately 63 percent of the Kuwaiti population is made up of people born after the 1991 liberation. Nevertheless, it has been virtually impossible for the Embassy to present public diplomacy programs in secondary schools. The Ministry of Education has issued strict prohibitions against foreign embassies working directly with public schools. Embassies must receive written approval from the Ministry of Education. Embassy Kuwait City continues to seek permission to work with Kuwait's schools, but so far has not received it. Since AMIDEAST offers after-school youth programs at its facilities, the Embassy has partnered with AMIDEAST to reach youth in this way. Although the groups are small, the impact is broadened by effective use of the media to make other youth aware of the enthusiasm of their peers who participated.

## Developing New Programming Venues to Reach Youth and Women

Shopping malls in Kuwait represent a potential opportunity to reach young people and women, where they can be found in numbers. The PAS has sponsored one event in a shopping mall and is seeking permission from authorities in the Ministry of Information for other events in similar enclosed shopping mall or beachfront locations. Hosting events for the general public is difficult in Kuwait, since security concerns must be addressed while not impeding customer access or causing cultural offense.

## Collaboration with U.S. Military Public Affairs

The PAS is working closely with the U.S. military to develop a positive position regarding the Kuwaiti media's portrayal of, and access to, the U.S. military presence in Kuwait. The Embassy's IO works with the U.S. Navy Central Command public affairs officers in Manama, Bahrain. In addition, the IO works closely with the senior PAO for U.S. Army Central Command to ensure the Embassy and the U.S. military speak with one voice. Together, the offices produce coordinated messages, develop joint products, work on joint team-building exercises, keep their respective principals informed, and stay in close and frequent contact.

The Embassy Kuwait City PAS and U.S. Army Central Command's PAO have collaborated on a number of high-profile public affairs issues. For instance, when the H1N1 flu became an issue with the Kuwaiti press (which alleged that the U.S.

military had brought the virus to Kuwait), the two offices jointly determined to bring members of the Kuwaiti press out to see the military's facilities, including the isolation arrangements for troops with H1N1.

Another example involves a case in which a civilian contractor to the U.S. military in Kuwait was apprehended with illicit drugs. The Embassy and Army public affairs offices collaborated effectively to persuade the Kuwaiti press to retract their initial erroneous story, that the suspect was a U.S. soldier. Following the retraction, the two offices arranged to have a Kuwaiti newspaper journalist embedded for a day at Camp Arifjan to produce a newspaper article on "a day in the life of a soldier." During the day-long visit, the journalist attended a naturalization ceremony for foreign nationals serving in the U.S. military. The journalist's subsequent reports resulted in extensive, positive coverage in Kuwaiti newspapers and led to additional opportunities for positive publicity, as more journalists with other media outlets began to make similar requests. The Embassy and U.S. military are together evolving in a positive way their position on Kuwaiti access and exposure to the U.S. military presence in Kuwait.

## Television Programs and Journalist Training

On March 6, 2006, the Kuwaiti parliament unanimously approved a new media law that provided protections for journalists and made it easier for the press to obtain licenses to establish and operate print or broadcast media. The number of Kuwaiti print media outlets subsequently exploded from five newspapers to 17. Privately-owned TV stations came into being. Al-Rai TV, which had gone on the air in 2004, was joined in 2008 by Al-Watan TV, and both outlets featured news components. Since 2007, several Kuwait satellite stations have been licensed. The satellite stations offer cultural and special interest programming and are available on Arabsat and Nilesat for direct-to-home viewing.

At least once a month, the PAS places a speaker on Al-Rai TV's show, Rai Kou Shabab ("Youth's Opinion"), a youth-oriented program targeting viewers between the ages of 13 and 23. The mission also places speakers and guests on a variety of other programs, including a 15-minute slot three or four times per quarter on "Good Morning Kuwait," an hour-long program on the government-owned channel, Kuwait TV (KT-TV). Embassy Kuwait City also has a 15- to 30-minute slot two or three times per quarter on Al-Rai TV's hour-long morning news show. The PAS has a good track record of placing opinion pieces in Kuwaiti newspapers, some of which (such as Al-Watan) also own television stations.

Embassy Kuwait City invests heavily in training journalists in that craft with MEPI funds and public diplomacy funds. Some 90 percent or more of all journalists in Kuwait are non-Kuwaiti. Only the very top managers in print and broadcast media are Kuwaitis. Thus, much of embassy training for journalists is by necessity for non-Kuwaitis, but benefits U.S. interests in Kuwait.

## CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Consular operations in Kuwait feature a demanding American services workload and a facility that is cramped and labyrinthine, with no line-of-sight control over operations. The new section chief and deputy have updated many long-neglected internal controls, and while visa wait times are within Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) guidelines, all consular processes can be made more efficient.

The section is adequately comprised of four officers (one of them a rotational position), one half-time interviewer, three part-time eligible family members (EFM), and nine LE staff members. However, during the latest transfer season, this section experienced 100 percent officer turnover and long gaps in all officer positions, which slashed its expertise and productivity. The section chief, whose predecessor had been curtailed, came on direct transfer. When the inspection began, three of the four officers had arrived within the previous 5 weeks.

## Consular Management

The chief of the consular section has made good progress bringing formerly inadequate internal controls into compliance with Department regulations. Accountability for consular fees is now current and correct, as is the process for collecting fees off-site for machine-readable visas. There is excellent cooperation between the consular cashier and the Class B cashier, with same-day deposits and prompt, accurate validation. The consular shared tables are up-to-date. Controlled-form inventory and accounting are handled correctly.

The section needs to standardize its employee training procedures. Entry-level officers learn by observing rather than through an orderly process. None of the EFMs have consular training or experience. Most LE staff members have been trained in Washington and have taken at least one class online, but they hesitate to assert themselves. This is because they have seen officers make decisions that appear to conflict with those of other officers in similar cases; in addition, the section lacks written procedures that provide definitive guidance in applying consular procedures and regulations uniformly.

As an example of these inconsistencies, while some previous officers accepted I-864 affidavits of support and issued immigrant visas when petitioners were not domiciled in the United States, other officers did not. When applicants who had been turned away heard about other applicants who had received visas, it undermined both the section's reputation and the confidence of the staff. Examples like this exist in all section units, because correct judgments have not been codified and consistently applied through written procedures.

**Recommendation 8:** Embassy Kuwait City should create, maintain, and enforce written standard operating procedures covering all aspects of consular work including consistently applied standards for issuing visas to petitioners. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

The officers in this section wear several hats. The deputy is the American citizen services chief, but also conducts visa interviews. The officer on a 2-year consular tour is both the nonimmigrant visa chief and the training officer. The first-tour rotational officer carries a full nonimmigrant and immigrant visa load, and is also in charge of correspondence, the Web site, and fraud — an intimidating workload for even a mid-level officer. Moreover, CA's Office of Fraud Prevention Programs opposes assigning fraud responsibilities to inexperienced officers. The OIG team informally recommended that the Embassy distribute responsibilities more evenly and appropriately among officers and EFMs, and that it assign the fraud prevention duties to a more experienced officer.

## American Citizens Services

The 21,000 Americans residing in Kuwait have more consular needs than do Americans in many other countries. Most of them work for contracting companies that perform services for the U.S. Department of Defense, and many are not experienced expatriates. In many cases, they are unused to international travel, have trouble adjusting to life outside the United States, and do not understand that as residents in Kuwait, they are subject to local laws. Some U.S. companies are skilled at assisting their employees who are stationed in Kuwait, but other companies are not. As a result, the Embassy's American citizens services (ACS) unit not only is helping the employees of these U.S. contracting companies; it also is teaching their employers how to better support their own staff.

One common problem this section has to address involves Americans who arrive via commercial flights but depart via military transport. In such cases, Kuwaiti records show that the person arrived but did not leave. Months or years later, if that

American attempts to reenter or depart Kuwait commercially, he or she is detained for apparently overstaying his or her visa. The Government of Kuwait does not object to updating its records regarding these people, but the process requires diplomatic notes and time-consuming navigation of the local bureaucracy. Another problem involves Americans who stay in Kuwait after losing their jobs, then lose their Kuwaiti residency and cannot leave the country without paying substantial fines. In still other situations, Americans may be stranded in Kuwait by travel bans, which could be generated by any legal action and might remain in effect indefinitely. In such cases, affected Americans appeal to the Embassy for help.

**Recommendation 9:** Embassy Kuwait City should produce a guide for companies that employ American citizens, explaining the most frequent difficulties in which their employees might become involved, and the processes required to support them. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

**Recommendation 10:** Embassy Kuwait City should regularly send a knowledgeable consular representative to the Overseas Security Advisory Council and American Business Council of Kuwait meetings to discuss the most frequent difficulties in which their employees might become involved and to answer questions regarding embassy responsibilities and limitations. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

Deaths in Kuwait are trying for the next-of-kin and employers alike. Since most Americans in Kuwait are young and healthy, their deaths are usually unexpected. Nearly all remains are repatriated, a process that can take up to 10 days. Embalming is illegal, and the one morgue that is allowed to prepare remains for shipment is primitive. The abruptness of the death, the slow transport, and the state of the remains are all distressing to U.S. families. ACS is skilled at keeping families informed and helping employers thread through the paperwork maze, but it does not warn U.S. funeral homes to warn family members before they open the shipping container. Although this is not required by consular regulations, such warnings are routine, even in countries where embalming is done well, and are particularly called-for in Kuwait.

**Recommendation 11:** Embassy Kuwait City should include in its written standard operating procedures for handling American deaths, a requirement to directly warn the receiving funeral homes in the United States about the condition of remains, and advise the funeral homes to warn family members before they open the shipping container. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

## Visa Services

Embassy Kuwait City's refusal rate for nonimmigrant visa applicants is comparatively high for a country with such a high standard of living; however, the bulk of these refusals rarely involve Kuwaiti citizens. Kuwait has exclusionary citizenship laws, which affect nonimmigrant visa adjudication by creating a class of residents who are well established in the country, but are not Kuwaiti citizens. Many of these people are Iranian, Iraqi, Egyptian, or Palestinian citizens with strong ties in Kuwait. The country also attracts large numbers of temporary workers, especially citizens of India, Pakistan, and the Philippines. Because these individuals are economic migrants, they usually are in Kuwait on tourist visas, which makes it difficult for them to qualify for U.S. visas. This second category of Kuwaiti residents comprises a large portion of the Embassy's visa refusals.

Although most Kuwaitis qualify for nonimmigrant visas, security advisory opinion requirements can delay their travel. The visa section spends a great deal of time responding to queries about pending applications that come in by telephone, email, in person, and through applicants' embassy and local contacts. Some U.S. missions provide pending application status updates on their public Web sites, via privacy-secured access. Embassy Kuwait City's website does not feature this service

**Recommendation 12:** Embassy Kuwait City should provide visa applicants with privacy-secured, online access to daily updates regarding their security advisory opinion results. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

The section has placed new visa referral regulations on the mission's Intranet Web site, but it has not yet organized a process for accepting and handling visa referrals.

Nonimmigrant visa processing is inefficient. For instance, applications are reviewed several times, yet incomplete applications often reach interviewing officers before applicants learn that they must leave the section, obtain the needed item, and go through the process again. As a second example, employees performing data entry return all documents to applicants, who present the documents again to the interviewing officers. This gives officers no time to review a case before the applicant is standing before them. It also does not allow newer officers to select simpler cases, nor does it allow officers to pick out applicants whose languages they know or whose professions or reasons for travel interest them. For a third example, officers

(rather than LE staff members) take approximately half of all full sets of fingerprints, slowing the interview process. Finally, officers routinely ask for documents or information about employment and bank balances — a practice CA discourages as nonproductive.

**Recommendation 13:** Embassy Kuwait City should make its nonimmigrant visa process more efficient, by requiring that the receptionist not accept incomplete applications; simplifying its overall nonimmigrant visa processing system; and eliminating nonessential questions and documents. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

The majority of immigrant visas involve either Kuwaiti immigrants to the United States (usually men who first visited the United States as students) who are petitioning for their Kuwaiti spouses, or American contract workers petitioning for third-country wives and fiancées. The first group is normally clear-cut and easy to adjudicate; the second can be more challenging, due to unfamiliar third-country documents and the occasional bigamous marriage on the part of one or the other spouse.

## Fraud Prevention

The fraud prevention section lacks a structured approach to fraud. Kuwait is not a high-fraud environment, despite its large population of third-country nationals. Consular management attributes this to the facts that most Kuwaiti citizens qualify easily for visas, and that the government readily prosecutes forgery and counterfeiting and deports non-citizens for legal offenses. The immigrant visa unit is alert to fraud in its own cases and is eager to apply its skills more broadly. The section conducted several validation studies in recent years, but the results are not well-known in the section. As mentioned earlier, fraud prevention is being handled by a first-tour rotational officer, despite CA's opposition to assigning fraud responsibilities to inexperienced officers. As noted in the Consular Management section of this report (above), the OIG team informally recommended that a more experienced officer guide the Embassy's fraud prevention effort.

## Visas Viper

Visas Viper meetings do not follow 9 FAM 40.37 N4 regulations. The Visas Viper program coordinator, a vice consul, chairs the meetings rather than the DCM, who is present. Most missions open Visas Viper meetings with a reminder of Visas Viper's narrow focus and the differences between "reasonable suspicion" and "rea-

son to believe,” with the first, lower standard applying to Visas Viper nominations. Embassy Kuwait City’s meetings do not include this reminder. As a result, the committee seems uncertain about Visas Viper reporting standards. Visas Viper meetings include discussion of criminal cases and criteria — data more appropriately handled by the mission’s law enforcement working group.

**Recommendation 14:** Embassy Kuwait City should designate the deputy chief of mission to chair its Visas Viper meetings, and these meetings should include representatives of all appropriate sections and agencies. The Embassy should establish and implement procedures to open each meeting with a reminder of the criteria for nominations, as well as a clear explanation of the reporting standards. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	Locally-Employed Staff	Eligible Family Members	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2009 in U.S. Dollars
Diplomatic and Consular Programs	62	17	7	86	3,013,622
ICASS	6	100	6	112	8,277,200
Public Affairs	4	7	0	11	624,798
Diplomatic Security*	6	167	1	174	3,592,732
Marine Security Guard	8	3	0	11	151,421
Representation	0	0	0		25,700
OBO **	1	35	0	36	3,022,427
U.S. Commercial Service	1	8	0	9	463,200
Defense Attaché Office	4	1	0	5	273,510
Office of Military Cooperation -Kuwait	51	10	0	61	N/A
Iraq Support Unit	1	9	2	12	726,200
U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration	3	0	0	3	N/A
U.S. Customs Administration	2	2	0	4	N/A
International Broadcasting Board of Governors	3	26	0	29	12,878,916
U.S. Navy Naval Criminal Investigative Service	3	0	0	3	N/A
U.S. Department of Defense Contract Management Agency	33	5	0	38	N/A

Table continued on next page.

~~**SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED**~~

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	Locally-Employed Staff	Eligible Family Members	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2009 in U.S. Dollars
U.S. Army Area Support Group	31	5	0	36	N/A
U.S. Navy Naval Air Warfare	1	0	0	1	N/A
Army-Foreign Affairs Officers	1	0	0	1	N/A
U.S. Army Post Office	1	0	2	3	N/A
U.S. Army APACHE Helicopter Technical Assistance Field Team	6	0	0	6	N/A
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	4	4	0	8	N/A
U.S. Army-Aviation and Missile Command	3	4	7	0	N/A
U.S. Army Kamo	1	1	0	2	N/A
U.S. Department of Defense Contract Audit Agency	12	0	0	12	N/A
<b>Total:</b>	248	404	18	6670	not additive

\*A/RSO in program funding, A/RSO in ICASS funding, A/RSO in ISU funding

147 local guards in ICASS funding

\*\*35 OBO staff in ICASS funding

## MANAGEMENT

The management section scores high marks on the ICASS customer satisfaction survey and OIG's work and quality of life questionnaire. A new management officer, who arrived in summer 2009, quickly looked into embassy operations and found ways to resolve persistent problems. For example, she reduced the community liaison office coordinator's responsibilities in regard to parents' school bus-related complaints (a topic addressed later in this report), and she devised a solution to the problem of inadequate message dissemination. The security office will use a group email to provide information to OMC-K and other Department of Defense staff. The large Department of Defense embassy presence of 146 taxes ICASS and has reduced the available space for embassy general services office staff. The plan for a new embassy annex has been delayed until 2023, which means that additional space for administrative staff is unlikely in the near future. OMC-K's needs for information technology program support also keeps the information management section very busy.

LE staff morale is on the rise. Following local practice, the Embassy is providing LE staff members with annual round-trip transportation to employees' homelands on a reimbursable basis; this has improved the local staff's outlook.

## GENERAL SERVICES OFFICE

The general services officer (GSO) is very successful and manages effectively with a small staff. The GSO does not need an American assistant general services officer (A/GSO) position. The A/GSO position was redesignated as human resources; however, the Embassy could employ an LE staff member in an A/GSO position. Inventory controls are applied well, the warehouse is small but well-organized, the motor pool operates without complaint from staff members who need transportation, housing is agreeable, and shipping and customs clearances are timely.

### Motor Pool

The motor pool earns high marks for its services and manages its 12-driver, two-mechanic staff quite well. The Iraq support unit (ISU) funds two drivers and five vehicles. The Embassy has discussed with the Kuwaiti Government an issue regarding delays in obtaining diplomatic license plates from the Kuwaiti authorities, but the problem is not yet resolved. As a result, five vehicles have not been put into service, but this has not impeded motor pool operations because there are a sufficient num-

ber of vehicles in the pool. Some of these are self-drive vehicles, which are available to staff members who have taken and passed the Smith driving course. The motor pool staff works occasional overtime, but not in excess. The drivers use a debit card for fuel purchases and mileage and usage is properly recorded.

The Ambassador's two drivers and the Marine security guard's three drivers are managed appropriately by the regional security office.

## PROCUREMENT

The procurement section has developed an excellent PowerPoint presentation that guides users through the steps of the procurement process and explains in detail how to request products and services. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the Embassy post this presentation on its management Web site.

While the number of procurements has increased from 2,000 in 2005 to 3,733 in 2009, staffing in the procurement section has not increased. The section often receives 40 requests daily, primarily for motor vehicle and maintenance parts. Petty cash is often the only medium available for processing local transactions. Using credit cards is sometimes difficult, because the financial section will approve only single procurements; it does not agree to monthly vouchers. The procurement section has many basic purchase agreements, which the financial management section also treats as individual purchase orders. The OIG team notes that additional transactions may result in a deterioration of service in the absence of additional staff.

## Mobile Telephones

The GSO manages the cell phone program. The OIG team noted that cell phones are provided to American spouses of direct-hire Americans. The spouses do not pay for the telephones, but they are expected to pay for the minutes they use. The Embassy has not established a genuine requirement standard for issuing government-funded cell phones to such spouses, nor has it detailed a process for determining priority in the distribution of the phones.

The GSO has concerns about the financial management section's intervention in cell phone procurements. For instance, after the supervisors had approved the purchase orders for sophisticated, more capable phones, the procurement section agreed to process these requests; however, the financial section questioned the procurement section's decision, and refused to provide funding for the phones. The team pur-

sued this topic and found that there had been sufficient funds for the purchases in question. The financial section informed the OIG team that it follows the Embassy's cell phone policy — i.e., that the management officer must approve purchases for phones costing more than the minimum specified in the management notice; however, the team did not find any reference to minimum costs in the Embassy's policy.

The financial section's denial of a purchase for which there are sufficient funds is irregular. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the management section review the responsibilities for both the general services section and the financial management section, and that the Embassy establish a cell phone policy that responds to users' needs and fiscal requirements. The team also informally recommended that the Embassy review the policy regarding the provision of cell phones to spouses.

## HOUSING

There are 24 on-compound townhouses: two 5-bedroom units; six 2-bedroom units; and sixteen 3-bedroom units. The Ambassador's residence and the Marine security guard house are also on the compound. Presently, the mission leases 71 short-term rental properties, ranging in cost from approximately \$40,000 to \$65,000 per year.

Many of the leases for these properties fall below the \$50,000 Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) waiver guideline; leases above the \$50,000 threshold usually are submitted for waivers. These houses meet size and occupancy standards, according to 15 FAM requirements and they are certified by the post occupational safety officer.

Housing, both on compound and off, is good. The housing questionnaire makes clear that the office will try to locate staff members in their preferred housing, but the final housing assignment will be based, first and foremost, on the availability of housing on the compound.

## U.S. Department of Defense Housing

A letter from the U.S. House of Representatives to the Secretary of the Army, dated August 2, 1994, and signed by the Chair of the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities, states that, since funding for OMC-K housing is provided by the Government of Kuwait, it, is considered a foreign government-paid-lease,

and is not subject to provisions in 10 U.S.C. 2828. Furthermore, the letter states that OMC-K is authorized to execute and renew leases for its own housing requirements, provided the lease does not exceed the dollar threshold of the contracting officer's warrant. Importantly, the letter also specifies that the leases be reviewed by the embassy housing review board, in order to ensure compliance with the minimum and maximum housing acceptability criteria contained in State Airgram 171 (equivalent to the 15 FAM requirements noted above).

The OIG team notes that, with regard to the OMC-K housing, the leases are not made available to the embassy housing board; size standards are not determined by the Department's measurement criteria; housing may be oversized for family size and rank of occupants; and safety, health, and environmental requirements are not certified by the post occupational safety and health officer (POSHO). Maintenance for the 140-plus houses that OMC-K and other military units lease is provided through a contract funded at about \$500,000 annually by the Government of Kuwait. Embassy Kuwait City housing staff told the OIG team that the military leasing representatives often are willing to compete with the Embassy and pay more for a desirable residence.

The OIG team believes that more cooperation between OMC-K and the embassy housing board with the requirements to review leases and to meet safety health and environmental requirements would be beneficial. At the same time, the contractors engaged to assist with leasing and maintenance could begin to use the Department's size, measuring, and safety, health and environmental criteria with regard to all new and renewable leases.

In July 2009, an OBO area manager visited Embassy Kuwait City. The trip report memorandum from the OBO area manager to the OBO director noted that the military units were not in compliance with the 15 FAM Housing Abroad program. It detailed the process whereby OMC-K's contracting officer signs the leases without providing them to the embassy housing board. The RSO inspects the houses, but the POSHO does not. In August 2009, the DCM directed the facilities management officer to provide OMC-K with Department safety, health, and environmental management standards, and tasked OMC-K with developing a plan to implement them, either through the facilities management officer or separately. As of the OIG inspection, OMC-K has not yet responded.

In 2008, OMC-K did not have a contracting officer; during the interim, the Embassy's contracting officer signed leases for 50 OMC-K houses, and the POSHO inspected the properties. While OMC-K and others were happy with this service, they discontinued it when the POSHO recommended against housing that OMC-K wanted to lease.

**Recommendation 15:** Embassy Kuwait City should require that all elements under the chief of mission's authority comply with 15 Foreign Affairs Manual housing abroad criteria and submit leases to the embassy housing board. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

To comply with this recommendation, Embassy Kuwait City may need support from the Under Secretary for Management in dealing with OMC-K's lack of compliance with 15 FAM requirements. To date, OMC-K has not unequivocally acknowledged that it is obligated to follow the directions outlined in the U.S. House of Representatives' August 2, 1994, letter; nor has OMC-K confirmed an understanding that the housing acceptability criteria contained in State Airgram 171 are equivalent to those specified in 15 FAM 253.5.

**Recommendation 16:** Embassy Kuwait City should request that the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation assist in the mission's efforts to require the Office of Military Cooperation-Kuwait to follow 15 FAM requirements and the directions specified in the U.S. House of Representatives' August 2, 1994, letter to the Secretary of the Army. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with M/PRI)

## FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

This small section works very well. Two LE staff members manage requests and provide the information to the facilities management section. They also maintain the chancery, the Ambassador's residence, warehouses, and other on-compound buildings, including the 24 compound houses. The absence of a work order clerk has had a negative effect on the Embassy's responsibility to deduct lease payments when the maintenance section completes repairs which landlords do not perform. The lack of space in the section has been a deterrent to seeking additional staff. Not all fire extinguishers have been checked and tagged. The OIG team left an informal recommendation to correct this deficiency.

## IRAQ SUPPORT UNIT

Embassy Baghdad funds the ISU. Established in 2003, the unit's primary mission has been to support Congressional and VIP travel to Iraq. Through 2008, its workload increased annually and its staffing grew to support other needs. It also is providing support to travelers going to Afghanistan. The ISU chief believes that, when Iraq support requirements diminish, the unit may shift more of its resources to supporting Afghanistan.

The ISU's footprint at Embassy Kuwait City includes a 10-person staff, most of whom work in other embassy sections where they support both the section and the ISU. Consequently, ISU funds may be used by those sections. For example, the two chauffeurs also drive ICASS vehicles; the ISU nurse sees health unit users as she is available; the A/RSOs rotate their duties, although the ISU funds one position directly; and one information staff/ local area technician is also an ISU-funded position.

Given the presence of ISU staff in other sections, the varied use of ISU funds can be justified. However, the accounting for the use of these funds has not been adequately shared with the management officer. The OIG team discussed with the financial management office this lack of insight into ISU accounting, and has informally recommended that budget information be shared with the ISU at least quarterly.

The ISU's office structure includes the management officer, two EFMs, and two LE staff members. The unit also funds a security escort and warehouse employee. The office is not fully staffed now, but the management officer expects to hire a shipping assistant, voucher examiner, and human resources assistant. These positions are justified by the Embassy's increasing workload, not just the ISU's needs. The ISU's management officer has been Embassy Kuwait City's acting management officer on occasion.

While it is too early to disband the ISU in Kuwait, it will become increasingly necessary to analyze its future mission requirements, staffing, and financial resources, as the troop reductions in Iraq proceed.

## HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The human resources (HR) office provides personnel services to approximately 670 LE and American staff. The quality of this support is generally well-regarded by the customers. In the 2009 ICASS customer survey for Embassy Kuwait City, the average score for LE staff services was 4.19 on a five-point scale, which is a high number. The average rating for American personnel services was also favorable, at 3.91. The results of the OIG's questionnaire indicate a relatively high level of satisfaction with overall HR operations. The average score for overall management of human resources was 3.87, and the scores for individual elements of HR operations were similar.

The degree of customer satisfaction with personnel services is especially remarkable, considering that the Embassy has not had a full-time, trained HR officer since the position was forfeited during the global repositioning initiative in FY 2007. Since then, the Embassy has attempted to provide American oversight of HR operations from within, first by assigning the responsibility to the financial management officer, and more recently by shifting the A/GSO to cover the position. However, neither officer had prior experience or training in HR management. The Embassy vigorously sought reinstatement of the HR officer position, and NEA ultimately agreed to reprogram the A/GSO position to an HR position. The designated officer is expected to arrive in November 2009.

The previous success of the HR office is attributable to the effectiveness and efficiency of the local staff. This four-person staff is under the direction of a senior HR assistant, who has been with the Embassy since 1991; among them, they have a total of 52 years experience. All have received training in basic HR management and customer service, and the two ranking employees have extensive training and experience in such technical areas as compensation and computer-assisted job evaluation.

### Employment of Local Staff

As with other embassies in the Gulf region, the local staff workforce of Embassy Kuwait City largely comprises citizens from other nations who are employed under conditional Kuwaiti work permits. Of the 404 LE staff members, only two are Kuwaiti, with the remainder coming from 17 different countries, primarily India and the Philippines. The multinational composition of the workforce presents some unique management challenges, and as noted in the following paragraphs, this has a major bearing on all aspects of personnel operations.

## Local Staff Committee

The LE staff members at Embassy Kuwait City have established a committee (the Foreign Service Nationals Association, or FSNA) whose constitution outlines several organizational objectives, such as providing a forum for members to express their views on workplace issues, and maintaining constructive working relationships among local staff and with American personnel. According to several LE staff members, the organization was effective in pursuing these objectives until this year. Unfortunately, the FSNA is now dysfunctional, and the organization has split along ethnic lines.

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**Recommendation 17:**

## Special Immigrant Visas

Many LE staff members at Embassy Kuwait City are motivated by the opportunity to obtain a special immigrant visa (SIV). The terms and conditions governing the SIV program are contained in 3 FAM 7715, 9 FAM 42.32, and the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act. The Embassy also issued guidance in management instruction 005/08, dated October 19, 2008. Despite the availability of this guidance, the local staff members still do not fully understand the terms and conditions under which the SIV can be obtained.

Their primary misconception is in regard to the service requirement. Many staff members expect to receive an SIV automatically after completing the 15-year minimum service requirement. The reality is that SIVs are not typically granted after 15 years, except in special circumstances — e.g., the employee's personal security is endangered because of his or her association with the U.S. Government or his or her actions have protected American lives or property during conflicts or natural disasters. Barring such exceptional circumstances, the minimum service requirement to qualify for an SIV typically is 20 years or more.

One reason for such misunderstandings may be that the guidance in both the FAM and the Immigration and Nationality Act is lengthy and imprecise. For this reason, embassy management should take additional measures to ensure that local employees understand the regulations and fully grasp the reality of the SIV process. To accomplish this, they might issue a simplified explanation of the regulations, make periodic presentations, or hold discussions with the local third country national LE staff community. The OIG team issued an informal recommendation in this regard.

## Orientation for New Local Staff

The orientation program for new LE staff members at Embassy Kuwait City needs to be more comprehensive. New employees currently check in with the HR office, where they spend less than 2 hours reviewing a checklist of standard informa-

tion about compensation and standards of conduct, after which they report for work in their new offices. Several LE staff members informed the OIG team that they had received no orientation whatsoever regarding the objectives or operations of an American Embassy. Without such fundamental information, LE staff members cannot readily understand their role in the organization, or how that work contributes to overall processes or outcomes. This directly relates to LE staff productivity, job satisfaction, and morale.

New local employees would benefit from an expanded orientation program that includes an explanation of what the Embassy does, how it operates, and the role of their work unit in supporting mission objectives. Such a program need not be lengthy or complex, and could include an interactive computer presentation. The OIG team made an informal recommendation regarding an LE staff orientation program.

## Mentoring Program

As a follow-on to an expanded orientation program, the Embassy ideally would establish a mentoring program for new local personnel, similar to the sponsorship program for newly-arrived American staff where an experienced LE staff member would be assigned to a new employee, to informally coach, assist, and advise the newcomer. The mentor also would monitor how the new employee is adapting to his/her new duties and workplace. This would enable new employees to fully understand the organization and their place in it, which would boost their productivity and morale. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the Embassy launch a mentoring program for new LE staff members.

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perform what LE consider unrelated and servile duties. LE staff members also said

**Recommendation 18:**

### Special Ramadan Leave

Just before the first pay period in 1995, the mission's LE staff members throughout Kuwait were offered an option to convert to a new leave plan, which provided up to 2 hours per day of special leave during the month of Ramadan, for Muslim staff members who observe the month-long day time total fast. At that time, the staff understood that those individuals who did not observe Ramadan should not convert to the new plan. However, all staff joining the embassy community after January 8, 1995, automatically were enrolled in the new plan regardless of whether or not they observed the traditional Ramadan fast. As time went on, all employees under the new plan began to take the special Ramadan leave, without consequence and without a charge to their annual leave balances.

LE staff members who were employed before 1995 but did not opt for the special Ramadan leave plan when it was first offered, are questioning why they cannot qualify for it now, given that it is being made available to all incoming employees even those who do not observe the Muslim religious tradition. The OIG team believes it is time to ask HR/OE to provide Embassy Kuwait City with an equitable Ramadan leave policy, which would be available to all employees including those who did not move to the then-new leave plan in 1995. It is important to note, however, that this new Ramadan policy would be optional, since some 48 employees have asserted that they would prefer to remain on the old Civil Service leave plan.

**Recommendation 19:** Embassy Kuwait City should ask the Bureau of Human Resources to review the requirements for special Ramadan leave, and establish an optional leave plan that allows employees of the mission equal access to special leave during the month of Ramadan. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with DGHR)

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

An experienced financial management officer and a highly professional ten-person local staff manage the financial unit's workload very well. The unit provides support to Department entities and more than 10 other agency components, as well as to a steady stream of temporary duty employees, important visitors, and Congressional delegations. The Embassy's serviced accounts increased from \$6 million in FY 2004, to nearly \$34 million in FY 2009. Financial management services received high scores on both the ICASS customer satisfaction survey and OIG's quality of life questionnaires. The section's staff is responsive to customers, knowledgeable about the regulations, and conscientious about observing required management controls. They perform in a challenging and demanding workplace, with tight budgets in past years and the same outlook for the future.

Since the last OIG inspection, the unit has made great strides in funds management; it is the unit's strong suit. The unit is well past the earlier issues, which were tied to moving its accounts to the regional financial management system. Today, it is very effective in establishing, liquidating, and monitoring obligations. The unit maintains a robust cuff record system, which allows it to provide competent, real-time budget information to its many customers. The leadership of the supervisory local staff specialist has been instrumental in the unit's success. Unfortunately for the mission, this highly regarded supervisor is scheduled to resign soon and will emigrate to the United States on an SIV. The finance section is preparing for his departure, but his contributions will be hard to replace.

Recommendations regarding financial management unit internal controls are presented in the management controls section of the report, below.

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

The ICASS council is the cornerstone of the ICASS system at overseas missions but at Embassy Kuwait City, the ICASS council could best be described as moribund. Meetings have been held only sporadically, with the last one in April 2009. There are no meeting minutes to record important discussions or decisions; the required budget subcommittee has not been created; and the management officer has received no input for her annual performance evaluation.

At a fundamental level, the serviced agencies neither understand the ICASS principles nor accept their own responsibilities. The position of ICASS council chair does not rotate among agency heads; most recently, the position fell by default to an EFM, because no senior representative had agreed to serve. The consensus of the ICASS executive board is that local councils should consist of senior-level agency representatives, even though 6 FAH-5 H-222.3-1 a. states that a designee of an agency's senior representative can be a member.

Despite clear guidance from the ICASS executive board, resident military agencies do not accept the principle of a single council seat representing the Department of Defense. This position is not in conformity with the August 24, 2006, change in policy (06 STATE 139716) from the ICASS executive board. Specifically, this guidance restricts membership on ICASS councils to cabinet-level and independent agency representatives, and calls for senior officers representing entities within the same cabinet-level department to select one ICASS council representative. The Embassy will have an opportunity to correct these deficiencies and reinvigorate the ICASS council, with the arrival of a new DCM, management officer, and senior staff members from other agencies, but this will require the senior mission managers' intervention and ongoing attention. The OIG team concluded it is essential to revive the ICASS council and correct its current deficiencies.

**Recommendation 20:** Embassy Kuwait City should take immediate action to ensure compliance with Department guidance regarding all aspects of the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services Council, including leadership, council composition, creation of a budget subcommittee, preparation of council meeting minutes, and provision of input for the management officer's evaluation. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

The problems associated with ICASS at Embassy Kuwait City also could be mitigated by training from the ICASS service center. The Embassy has requested such training for the upcoming fiscal year, but has not yet received confirmation that training will be provided. Given the present state of inertia and the contentious issues relating to OMC-K facing the ICASS council, a visit by representatives of the ICASS service center to Embassy Kuwait City would be extremely valuable.

**Recommendation 21:** Embassy Kuwait City should request that the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services service center provide onsite training at Embassy Kuwait City regarding International Cooperative Administrative Support Services principles and procedures, and in resolving disputes and misunderstandings regarding International Cooperative Administrative Support Services operations. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

## Rightsizing

The FY 2011 MSP for Embassy Kuwait City includes an ongoing goal of streamlining management support services, in order to "...mitigate the workload or resource imbalance of the past 5 years by both seeking new priorities and completing a comprehensive rightsizing report that will lay the groundwork for outsourcing standardized services." The FY 2011 MSP further establishes a target for FY 2010, to "...identify standardized processes in both the human resources and financial management sections..." that can be shifted to a regional service center. Embassy Kuwait City has made little progress toward the goal of regionalizing or outsourcing management services. In fact, it still has not completed the rightsizing report (due in December 2008) that was to serve as the roadmap for regionalizing or outsourcing.

According to officials in the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing and Innovation (M/PRI), after failing to meet the initial rightsizing report target date, the Embassy established a new objective, to complete the rightsizing review concurrently with the FY 2011 MSP in April 2009. However, embassy files indicate that concerted efforts to complete the rightsizing report did not begin until May 2009. The impetus to complete this task waned with the summer rotation of the DCM, management officer, and other key personnel. The new management officer is aware the rightsizing report is overdue, and she has indicated her intention to submit it within a few months of the end of the inspection.

**Recommendation 22:** Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, should prepare and submit immediately an updated right-sizing review to the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing and Innovation, to determine the appropriate staffing profile to support this mission. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with NEA and M/PRI)

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Embassy Kuwait City operates a comprehensive information management (IM) program that meets essential needs. The section scored high marks on both OIG's workplace and quality of life questionnaire and the ICASS customer satisfaction survey. For the most part, the section complies with Department information technology policy and guidance. However, the OIG team found the threat recording device was not working, which was repaired during the inspection.

The IM section manages the operations, maintenance, and security of the Department's sensitive but unclassified local area network, classified local area network, and dedicated internet network, and also provides OpenNet terminals at the International Broadcasting Bureau Kuwait Transmitting Station. The section also handles telephone/radio operations, both the unclassified and classified pouches, fobs, and a Blackberry program that supports four other embassies.

The IM section is staffed adequately to manage the unclassified systems, but for the past year it has not had sufficient staff to operate the classified systems. Now, there are three full-time American officers: an information management officer (IMO); an information program officer (IPO), who manages the classified systems; and an information systems officer (ISO), who will manage the unclassified systems. LE staff members include four unclassified systems-support employees, one unclassified mail/pouch employee, a telephone/radio technician, two full-time switchboard operators, and a help desk/backup switchboard operator.

For the past year, the IPO has worked an average of 10 hours of overtime weekly, because it takes more than 40 hours per week to support not only the Department's classified system users, but also the Department of Defense classified users. To alleviate the information program center (IPC) staffing shortage, the Embassy recently hired three cleared American IM assistants. Two are sharing a full-time posi-

tion funded by the ISU. The third IM assistant is responsible for the classified pouch and classified mail. One of the IM staff members serving in Iraq is expected to return to Kuwait sometime in summer 2010. Finally, an additional entry-level position remains unfilled. The mission's FY 2011 MSP includes a request for an additional entry-level position on top of the other unfilled position. Until the rightsizing report is completed, the request for additional IM staff is premature.

## Radio Check Program

The Embassy conducts radio and emergency evacuation network checks monthly, not twice monthly, as is required in 5 FAH-2 H-732.4. Testing radio equipment less frequently can reduce both the equipment's operational readiness and user competency in an emergency. A chief of mission waiver is required if radio checks will not be conducted twice monthly.

**Recommendation 23:** Embassy Kuwait City should establish and implement a schedule to conduct radio checks twice monthly. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

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## Afterhours Telephone Calls

During regular business hours, telephone calls come in to the Embassy's switchboard operator, who directs them to the appropriate recipient. However, phone calls coming in after hours are answered by an "embassy closed" message in English and Arabic, and are forwarded automatically to Post One. As a result, Post One must deal with a number of calls that are neither emergencies nor involve issues related to American citizens' emergencies. To reduce this problem, the OIG team informally

recommended the Embassy revise its automated afterhours message, and set up a better system for routing incoming calls to the appropriate extensions, including to the duty officer's desk and, in cases of emergency, to Post One.

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## QUALITY OF LIFE

The quality of life in Kuwait is comfortable, despite the heat. There are vibrant shopping malls, many American chain restaurants, and cinemas, as well as social activities on the compound itself, which many staff members attend. Getaways to nearby countries also are available, and inexpensive flights are readily accessible.

The health unit provides excellent medical care, and the community liaison office gets high marks from its clients. As is described below, the American Embassy Welfare Association is solvent, and it supports not only the cafeteria but also a “tea shop,” where packaged liquor, wine, and beer are sold. The association also sells souvenir items and supports two happy hours per week, both of which are well-attended and quite lucrative. The community liaison office houses a well-stocked library and is staffed by two hard-working coordinators.

### SCHOOLS

Embassy Kuwait City staff members are only moderately satisfied with the quality of education that Kuwaiti schools provide for their dependents. Scores on OIG’s work and life quality survey were mediocre, and among the lower ratings in the evaluation categories.

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is accredited by the U.S. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and its academic program is founded on a general, U.S. college-preparatory curriculum.

The Department does not provide [redacted] with grant funding, because the school will not provide financial reports and other required documentation. The owner commingles school funds with his personal funds. The Department has provided physical security upgrades and limited funds for educational materials and personnel training. The Office of Overseas Schools' regional education officer regularly visits [redacted] as part of its routine oversight, as well as the other schools that Embassy Kuwait City dependents attend. The last visit was in March 2009.

In FY 2009, the Department allocated \$112,000 in funding for upgrades to [redacted] access control. In discussions with inspectors, [redacted] leaders praised the close relationship between the Embassy and [redacted] on security issues. The Embassy also provides customs clearing support and permits [redacted] to use its U.S. Government mail facilities for official school business.

## HEALTH UNIT

The embassy community is satisfied with the health unit's services, giving it scores just above 4 on a 5-point scale. The 2009 ICASS customer survey indicates a similar degree of satisfaction with the mission's health services, with scores averaging well above both NEA and worldwide averages.

The unit, located in the chancery, provides primary medical care to embassy staff and dependents, as well as emergency care to LE staff members who suffer illness or injury while on the job. The unit's space includes a patient waiting room, receptionist area with medical record storage cabinets, private offices, examination rooms, and a separate room for storing medical supplies.

The health unit is staffed by an experienced Foreign Service health practitioner (FSHP), one full-time and two part-time local registered nurses, and a locally employed secretary/receptionist. Embassy Kuwait City also is supported by a regional medical officer (RMO) from Embassy Riyadh and a regional medical officer/psychiatrist from Embassy Amman. The FSHP arrived in summer 2009. His initial assessment of the staffing situation was that the existing staff is sufficient to manage the current patient load.

A new resident RMO position has been established for Embassy Kuwait City. The new RMO, who is expected to arrive in November 2009, also will have regional responsibilities for Embassies Doha and Manama, and will serve as the primary backup for Embassy Baghdad. The Office of Medical Services believes that there will be sufficient demand to justify both the FSHP and RMO positions. However, the OIG team believes the Department should closely monitor actual patient load over the next year to confirm that Embassy Kuwait City and the regionally supported embassies require both medical positions.

**Recommendation 24:** The Office of Medical Services should review the monthly patient caseload statistics over the next year to determine whether Embassy Kuwait City has a continuing need for both a new regional medical officer and a Foreign Service health practitioner and if there is insufficient demand, should reassign one of these positions to another location. (Action: MED)

Kuwait has a relatively benign medical environment, with heat-related problems and traffic accidents representing the greatest health risks to embassy personnel and dependents. Modern medical facilities and Western-trained medical personnel are available in Kuwait for conditions requiring secondary treatment. London is the medical evacuation point for patients with complex medical problems requiring advanced or extended treatment.

The OIG team verified that contingency plans for possible pandemics are in place; controlled substances are controlled and distributed in the prescribed manner; expiration dates are tracked; and logs are properly kept. The health unit provides information and conducts wellness programs for the embassy community on smoking cessation, weight management, first aid, and cardiac pulmonary resuscitation.

## American Employees' Welfare Association (AEWA)

The American Employees' Welfare Association (AEWA) was rechartered in 2006 to provide sale of duty and duty-free goods and food; beverages, including packaged alcohol products and open container drinks at happy hour; and other recreation services for the American and local staff. Association management controls comply with Department regulations for annual audits and semiannual reports. The association has made consistent profits over the years and is financially strong.

The association operates an impressive entertainment program that contributes to positive embassy morale. Sales of alcoholic beverages (a sensitive issue in this conservative Islamic society) are subject to internal controls, to prevent excessive

alcohol purchases by direct-hire American staff. The Embassy also has a written policy concerning alcohol consumption. The Embassy's management notice number 23/09, dated February 22, 2009, updates the hours of AEWA's operations and reiterates the categories of personnel who are authorized to be present in the patio area during AEWA-sponsored events and happy hours. It includes local staff still identified as Foreign Service national employees, and the Ambassador's protective detail. It states that Foreign Service nationals, along with their spouses and children, are entitled to attend these events, during which (as the notice explains) alcohol consumption is not restricted. This is potentially problematic, since 6 FAM 543 states that the utilization of association facilities may be extended to U.S. Government employees of local nationality, provided the practice is consistent with the laws and customs of the host country. In this case, the laws of the host country prohibit the sale and consumption of alcohol. Embassy Kuwait City is fully cognizant of the discrepancy.

The association contracts with a local food service provider for the Embassy's cafeteria, Café Dahlia, and for Dr. Smoothie, the ice cream and coffee products vendor. The embassy community rated food service quality as low. The association board recently approved a contract with an American franchise vendor, in hopes of improving food quality. In the management control section of this report, the team addresses the issue of internal controls over food service-related cash management.

## COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

Two newly arrived coordinators staff the community liaison office (CLO). The full-time coordinator, who has not had training, plans to pursue training in spring 2010. She currently attends meetings of the emergency action, country team meetings, and management committees. The other coordinator, who is part-time, has no plans to pursue training.

The CLO has a lending library and a children's play area. It provides information on local housekeepers, stores, restaurants, and places of interest, and publishes the *Towers Times*, the mission's weekly newsletter. The office also plans programs for embassy staff, including holiday parties, and the twice-yearly "hail and farewell." The American Employees Welfare Association provides \$8,000 annually to support CLO programs. The coordinator would like to organize day trips, but is concerned that the RSO may view trips for a large number of Americans as a security risk.

Although schools in Kuwait offer bus service, the mission provides a separate service for embassy children. The CLO coordinators spend much of the working day responding to parents' phone calls and emails about the school buses.

Recommendation 25:

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# MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The Ambassador's July 23, 2009, memorandum regarding assurance on management controls states that Embassy Kuwait City's systems of management controls, taken as a whole, comply with both the Comptroller General of the United States' standards and the Department's objectives; the memo does not identify any deficiencies in the embassy's inventory controls. It also states that assets are safeguarded against waste, loss, unauthorized use, or misappropriation. A management controls program is in place, and the OIG team found that the various representations concerning real and personal property management and inventory are accurate. As explained below, the team found correctable weaknesses in the American Employees' Welfare Association and the financial management office.

## AMERICAN EMPLOYEES' WELFARE ASSOCIATION

### Controls over Cash Receipts

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During the inspection, the association board voted to fund a point-of-sale revenue system for bar retail sales to be integrated with its general ledger accounting system. This will provide control over bar sales. It will not, however, provide a system to account for cover charge sales, nor will it enable the association to track payments to its vendors.

**Recommendation 27:** Embassy Kuwait City should require the American Employees' Welfare Association to effectively implement the new, point-of-sale revenue system for bar retail sales; a ticketing system for documenting cover charge receipts that compares the number of tickets issued to the amount of cash collected; and a system for documenting cash payments to the association's vendors. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

## Controls over Cash – General Ledger Accounting

The association has three permanent employees, one of whom is the bookkeeper. The small staff reduces the association's ability to achieve proper separation of duties. The bookkeeper records cash transactions, in many cases is a custodian of cash, and reconciles cash, which puts the bookkeeper in a position to be able to conceal errors and omissions. The annual audit serves as an important internal control. The auditor's latest management letter in December 2008 recommended that someone other than the bookkeeper prepare bank reconciliations. This is especially important because of the significant balance in cash accounts, which represents half of the association's value. However, the bookkeeper continues to prepare the bank reconciliations, and the AEWA treasurer reviews them. The OIG team believes the financial management officer is in a good position to perform the association's bank reconciliations under the provisions of 6 FAM 531.1.

**Recommendation 28:** Embassy Kuwait City should task its financial management officer to prepare monthly bank reconciliations for all American Employees' Welfare Association bank accounts. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

### Certifying Reviews

The financial management officer does not conduct periodic, unannounced reviews of the LE staff certifying officer, as is required by 4 FAH 3 H-065.2-2. The standard requires monthly reviews during the first 6 months of assignment, and quarterly reviews after acceptable performance has been established. The handbook requires the reviewer to sample 10 percent of certified vouchers, document the re-

sults, and retain the documentation for 3 years. This is an important internal control technique, but at Embassy Kuwait City, the senior financial specialist has been certifying invoices for 5 years without the review. As a result, the embassy does not have an assurance that this method of funds certification is working.

**Recommendation 29:** Embassy Kuwait City should task the financial management officer to conduct periodic, unannounced reviews of the locally employed staff certifying officer, conduct monthly reviews of the locally employed staff certifying officer for 6 months, with quarterly reviews thereafter; and sample 10 percent of certified vouchers, document the results, and retain this documentation for 3 years. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

## Cashier Controls

Cashier controls should be strengthened in unannounced cash verifications of subcashiers. Monthly and quarterly subcashier cash counts, as required by 4-FAH-3 H-397.2-3 a., are not performed consistently. The OIG team informally recommended that the office implement a control technique to increase the likelihood of compliance.

## Allowances: Post Differential Procedures

According to both a recent OIG inspection and an ongoing, Department-wide survey, post differential and danger pay allowances are not consistently terminated when circumstances warrant. Post differential and danger pay both are terminated and reinstated by the Charleston Financial Service Center. Procedures differ between embassies in alerting Charleston to the need for adjustments.

The timekeeping function at the Embassy is performed in the financial management office. The timekeeper is familiar with allowance termination rules, and the Embassy attempts to terminate allowances when appropriate. An area of emphasis has been added to this cycle of OIG inspections to address the issue. During this inspection, the OIG team tested Embassy Kuwait City's procedures for terminating post differential, to determine compliance with procedures.

The team tested nine vouchers for travel to the United States, which indicated they had met requirements for post differential termination, and found that the financial management unit had correctly determined termination status for all travelers. However, in three cases, the financial management staff had erred by under-

stating the number of days by which to terminate the allowance. As a result, the Department overpaid the post differential allowance to these travelers. During the inspection, the team pointed out the errors, and the Embassy sought reimbursement from the travelers. The team attributed the errors to the timekeeper becoming confused while reviewing travel-related information on the documentation that had accompanied the travel vouchers. Contributing to the confusion was the embassy's lack of written policies and procedures governing timekeeping processes in allowance termination. Therefore, the OIG team informally recommended that the financial management unit issue written policies and procedures, and implement a control technique to reduce the likelihood that timekeepers might misinterpret travel dates when calculating post differential termination periods.



**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with the Bureau of International Information Programs, should seek an appropriate partner institution in Jahra and establish an American Corner in that city. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with IIP)

**Recommendation 7:** Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, should develop and implement a strategy for staffing and equipping an audiovisual production studio to achieve greater outreach to Kuwaiti youth, women, and other elements of Kuwaiti society. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with R and NEA)

**Recommendation 8:** Embassy Kuwait City should create, maintain, and enforce written standard operating procedures covering all aspects of consular work including consistently applied standards for issuing visas to petitioners. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

**Recommendation 9:** Embassy Kuwait City should produce a guide for companies that employ American citizens, explaining the most frequent difficulties in which their employees might become involved, and the processes required to support them. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

**Recommendation 10:** Embassy Kuwait City should regularly send a knowledgeable consular representative to the Overseas Security Advisory Council and American Business Council of Kuwait meetings to discuss the most frequent difficulties in which their employees might become involved and to answer questions regarding embassy responsibilities and limitations. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

**Recommendation 11:** Embassy Kuwait City should include in its written standard operating procedures for handling American deaths, a requirement to directly warn the receiving funeral homes in the United States about the condition of remains, and advise the funeral homes to warn family members before they open the shipping container. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

**Recommendation 12:** Embassy Kuwait City should provide visa applicants with privacy-secured, online access to daily updates regarding their security advisory opinion results. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

**Recommendation 13:** Embassy Kuwait City should make its nonimmigrant visa process more efficient, by requiring that the receptionist not accept incomplete applications; simplifying its overall nonimmigrant visa processing system; and eliminating nonessential questions and documents. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

**Recommendation 14:** Embassy Kuwait City should designate the deputy chief of mission to chair its Visas Viper meetings, and these meetings should include representatives of all appropriate sections and agencies. The Embassy should establish and implement procedures to open each meeting with a reminder of the criteria for nominations, as well as a clear explanation of the reporting standards. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

**Recommendation 15:** Embassy Kuwait City should require that all elements under the chief of mission's authority comply with 15 Foreign Affairs Manual housing abroad criteria and submit leases to the embassy housing board. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

**Recommendation 16:** Embassy Kuwait City should request that the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation assist in the mission's efforts to require the Office of Military Cooperation-Kuwait to follow 15 FAM requirements and the directions specified in the U.S. House of Representatives' August 2, 1994 letter to the Secretary of the Army. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with M/PRI)

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**Recommendation 19:** Embassy Kuwait City should ask the Bureau of Human Resources to review the requirements for special Ramadan leave, and establish an optional leave plan that allows employees of the mission equal access to special leave during the month of Ramadan. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City, in coordination with DGHR)

**Recommendation 20:** Embassy Kuwait City should take immediate action to ensure compliance with Department guidance regarding all aspects of the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services Council, including leadership, council composition, creation of a budget subcommittee, preparation of council meeting minutes, and provision of input for the management officer's evaluation. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)



**Recommendation 28:** Embassy Kuwait City should task its financial management officer to prepare monthly bank reconciliations for all American Employees' Welfare Association bank accounts. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)

**Recommendation 29:** Embassy Kuwait City should task the financial management officer to conduct periodic, unannounced reviews of the locally employed staff certifying officer, conduct monthly reviews of the locally employed staff certifying officer for 6 months, with quarterly reviews thereafter; and sample 10 percent of certified vouchers, document the results, and retain this documentation for 3 years. (Action: Embassy Kuwait City)



## INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The Ambassador and deputy chief of mission undertake a large number of outreach activities but more could be done if other mission personnel participated.

**Informal Recommendation 1:** Embassy Kuwait City should share outreach efforts and responsibilities throughout the mission by means of a mission speakers' bureau.

The Ambassador and deputy chief of mission are concerned about the performance of some mid-level officers, whom they have been mentoring individually.

**Informal Recommendation 2:** Embassy Kuwait City should continue to counsel and advise underperforming officers.

The Mission Strategic Plan does not include references to the International Broadcasting Bureau Kuwait Transmitting Station.

**Informal Recommendation 3:** Embassy Kuwait City should revise the mission strategic plan to include the International Broadcasting Bureau Kuwait Transmitting Station and support for its multiregional mission.

### Political and Economic

Officers in both sections are unable to conduct most business in Arabic. Inadequate language skills also reduce the mission's opportunities for effective outreach. The Embassy has sought to address this shortcoming by creating its own language program.

**Informal Recommendation 4:** Embassy Kuwait City should conduct an end-of-training survey and submit the results in a report to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of Human Resources, evaluating how well the Embassy's in-country Arabic language program is improving language proficiency among embassy staff.

The deputy in the political section has an overly broad portfolio. The portfolios of the other two officers are lighter.

**Informal Recommendation 5:** Embassy Kuwait City should rebalance the portfolios in the political section so that they are more equitable.

## Consular Affairs

The first-tour consular rotational officer carries more responsibilities than is appropriate for an inexperienced officer, including responsibilities for fraud prevention, despite the Bureau of Consular Affairs' opposition to assigning fraud-related work to inexperienced officers.

**Informal Recommendation 6:** Embassy Kuwait City should require that the consular section redistribute responsibilities more evenly and appropriately among officers and eligible family members, and designate a more senior officer to handle the fraud prevention activities.

## General Services Office

The procurement section has created an excellent PowerPoint presentation detailing the steps required to execute a procurement request.

**Informal Recommendation 7:** Embassy Kuwait City should post the procurement presentation on its Web site.

The financial section, on occasion, denies funds for a purchase for which there appear to be sufficient funds.

**Informal Recommendation 8:** Embassy Kuwait City should review the responsibilities for both the general services section and the financial management section to clarify whether the financial section occasionally is being overly restrictive regarding expenditures.

The Embassy provides government-funded cell phones to American spouses of U.S. direct-hire personnel, but it does not have a “genuine requirement” standard for issuing these phones to spouses, nor does it have a process for determining priority in distributing the phones.

**Informal Recommendation 9:** Embassy Kuwait City should establish a cell phone policy that responds to users’ needs and fiscal requirements; in particular, it should review and clarify the policy regarding the provision of cell phones to the spouses of U.S. direct-hire personnel.

### Iraq Support Unit

Given the presence of ISU staff in other sections, the varied use of ISU funds can be justified, but accounting for the use of these funds has not been adequately shared with the ISU management officer.

**Informal Recommendation 11:** Embassy Kuwait City should share pertinent budget information with the Iraq Support Unit management officer.

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Local staff members do not fully understand the terms and conditions of the special immigrant visa program, mistakenly believing that they will automatically receive a visa after completing the minimum of 15 years service with the Embassy.

**Informal Recommendation 13:** Embassy Kuwait City should provide the local staff with clear and understandable guidelines regarding the process and procedures for obtaining a special immigrant visa, including making periodic presentations and holding discussions with the local community.

The orientation for local staff at Embassy Kuwait City is inadequate; e.g., it does not include information regarding the objectives or operations of an American Embassy. Without such fundamental information, employees cannot readily understand their role in the organization or how that work contributes to overall processes or outcomes. This directly relates to local staff productivity, job satisfaction, and morale.

**Informal Recommendation 14:** Embassy Kuwait City should provide new local staff with an expanded orientation program that includes an explanation of what the Embassy does, how it operates, and the role of their work unit in supporting mission objectives.

Since the embassy does not have a follow-on program after orientation for new local employees, these employees have no means of obtaining advice or finding answers to their questions and concerns.

**Informal Recommendation 15:** Embassy Kuwait City should establish a mentorship program for new local personnel that is similar to the sponsorship program for newly arrived American staff.

## Financial Management

The financial management section has precluded funding for cell phone purchase orders without regard to supervisors' signatures and actual funding being available. Procurement and financial sections' disagreements delay procurements and meeting users' needs.

**Informal Recommendation 16:** Embassy Kuwait City should resolve the differences between the financial management and general services sections and clarify each section's authority.

## Information Management

Non-emergency afterhours phone calls currently are forwarded automatically to Post One. Marine security guards answer telephone calls that are not emergencies and that should be routed to the duty officer or another designated telephone.

**Informal Recommendation 18:** Embassy Kuwait City should revise its automated afterhours message and set up a better system for routing incoming calls after hours to the appropriate extensions, including to the duty officer's desk and, in cases of emergency, to Post One.

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## Management Controls

Monthly and quarterly subcashier cash counts are not performed consistently, as required by 4-FAH-3 H-397.2-3a..

**Informal Recommendation 20:** Embassy Kuwait City's financial management office should implement a control technique to increase the likelihood that subcashier cash counts are in compliance with standards outlined in 4-FAH-3 H-397.2-3a.

Post differential and danger pay allowances are not consistently terminated when circumstances warrant; the Department overpaid post differential allowance to three travelers. The errors were attributable to a timekeeper's confusion in reviewing travel related information on documentation accompanying the travel vouchers. Contributing to this is the lack of written policies and procedures governing timekeeping processes in allowance termination.

**Informal Recommendation 21:** Embassy Kuwait City should implement written policies and procedures governing its timekeeping processes in allowance termination.

**Informal Recommendation 22:** Embassy Kuwait City should implement a control technique to reduce the likelihood that timekeepers misinterpret travel dates in calculating post differential termination periods.

## International Broadcasting Bureau Kuwait Transmitting Station

Staff at the International Broadcasting Bureau Kuwait Transmitting Station do not have a representative on Embassy Kuwait City's local staff committee and do not receive regular communication regarding decisions and deliberations.

**Informal Recommendation 23:** Embassy Kuwait City should ensure that the International Broadcasting Bureau Kuwait Transmitting Station's local staff get information regarding local staff committee activities and provide input regarding their concerns.

Embassy Kuwait City has not provided the International Broadcasting Bureau Kuwait Transmitting Station with Equal Employment Opportunity, civil rights, and Federal Women's Program information needed for its bulletin board.

**Informal Recommendation 24:** Embassy Kuwait City should provide Equal Employment Opportunity, civil rights, and Federal Women's Program information and the counselor's and coordinator's names to the International Broadcasting Bureau Kuwait Transmitting Station.

## PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Deborah K. Jones	04/2008
Deputy Chief of Mission	Thomas Williams	07/2009

### Chiefs of Sections:

Consular	Patrick Walsh	06/2009
Economic	Oliver B. John	09/2008
Financial Management	Karen McCarthy	02/2008
Information Management	Blanca Neve	12/2008
Iraq Support Unit Management	Larry Carson	12/2008
Public Affairs	Virginia Keener	08/2009
Political	Katharina Gollner-Sweet	07/2009
Political/Military	Peter A. O'Donohue	07/2008
Regional Security	Mark Andersen	08/2008
	Carol Gallo	08/2009

### Other Agencies:

Department of Defense		
Office of Military Cooperation- Kuwait	Brig. Gen. Gregory Touhill	
	U.S. Air Force	05/2009
Defense Attaché	Lt.Col. Wade Foote	
	U.S. Army	07/2009
Defense Contract Audit Agency	Kim Trainer	07/2009

~~**SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED**~~

Defense Contract Management Agency	Col. Shaun Morris	06/2009
Naval Criminal Investigative Service	Andrew Goodridge	07/2008
Security Detachment	GySgt. Stephen Lutz	
	U.S. Marine Corps	05/2009
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Col. Clinton Pendergast	08/2009
Department of Commerce		
Foreign Commercial Service	Nancy Charles-Parker	07/2007
Broadcasting Board of Governors		
International Broadcasting Bureau	Gaines Johnson	11/2006
Department of Transportation		
Federal Highway Administration	Aladdin Barkaw	01/2007
Department of Homeland Security		
U.S. Customs and Border Protection	John Hoy	10/2009

## ABBREVIATIONS

A/GSO	assistant general services officer
ACS	American citizens' services
AEWA	American Employees' Welfare Association
AMIDEAST	American Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc.
BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
CA	Bureau of Consular Affairs
CAO	cultural affairs officer
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CLO	community liaison office
Department	Department of State
DCM	deputy chief of mission
EFM	eligible family member
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
FSHP	Foreign Service health practitioner
FSNA	Foreign Service nationals association
GSO	general services officer
G/TIP	global trafficking in persons
HR	human resources
HR/OE	Bureau of Human Resources, Office of Overseas Employment
IBB	International Broadcasting Bureau
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IM	information management

IMO	information management officer
IO	information officer
IPC	information program center
IPO	information program officer
IRC	information resource center
ISO	information systems officer
ISSO	Information systems security officer
ISU	Iraq support unit
LE	locally employed
MED	Office of Medical Services
M/PRI	Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing and Innovation
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
MSP	Mission Strategic Plan
NEA	Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
OBO	Office of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OMC-K	Office of Military Cooperation-Kuwait
PAO	public affairs officer
PAS	public affairs section
POSHO	post occupational safety and health officer
RMO	regional medical officer
RSO	regional security office
SIV	special immigrant visa

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