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

Review of Off-Site Support to Embassy Baghdad and Constituent Units

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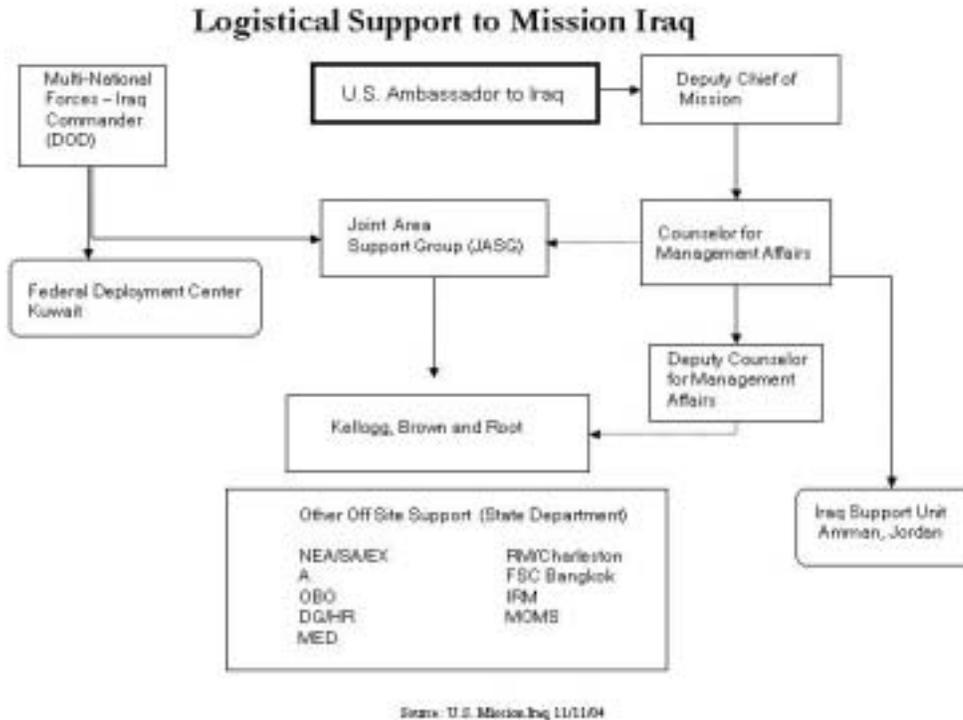
KEY JUDGMENTS

- The U.S. mission in Iraq is one of the largest and most complex U.S. diplomatic missions in the world, with several thousand employees and contractors. Its operations are defined by an especially close relationship with the Department of Defense (Defense) and multinational forces stationed in Iraq. Reliance on a military contractor to provide nearly all essential services makes the mission in Iraq unique.
- The direct and immediate threat to Iraqi nationals associated with U.S. government operations in Iraq stymies efforts to recruit, train, and retain a cadre of experienced Foreign Service nationals (FSNs). As a result, the mission is - and will remain for the foreseeable future - highly dependent on off-site administrative assistance and support.
- Interaction between Embassy Baghdad¹ and its off-site support units is not well coordinated. Standard operating procedures and memoranda of understanding are needed.
- The Iraq Support Unit (ISU) in Amman has made considerable progress in establishing a support platform, but newly hired FSNs need additional training and experience to be effective. In addition, Embassy Baghdad should establish regular, systematic procedures for interacting with ISU Amman staff.
- There are no accurate and up-to-date lists of personnel authorized to use ISU Amman travel services. The Department of State (Department) should provide this information to ISU Amman.

¹The U.S. diplomatic presence in Iraq encompasses Embassy Baghdad, four regional embassy offices located in Basra, al-Hillah, Mosul and Kirkuk, and six state embedded teams. The latter are collocated with military commands throughout the country, and specific locations shift from time to time. References in this report to Embassy Baghdad generally refer to the constituent units as well.

- Although there has been discussion of moving some functions currently performed at ISU Amman to Frankfurt, Germany, or other locations, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) recommends that ISU Amman offices remain intact and collocated within the Embassy Amman chancery compound.
- The usual models for support of overseas missions do not apply to Embassy Baghdad. The Department must be judicious in adherence to bureaucratic norms and apply maximum flexibility in developing new, unprecedented ways to support operations at the mission in Iraq.
- The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between September 15 and October 1, 2004; in Amman, Jordan, between October 24 and November 15, 2004; in Kuwait City, Kuwait, October 16 and 17, 2004; and in Baghdad, Iraq, between November 4 and 10, 2004. Ambassador David E. Zweifel (team leader), Assistant Inspector General Robert Peterson, Ambassador Robert Barbour, Anita G. Schroeder, and Arne B. Baker conducted the inspection.

CONTEXT



OIG found during its review that decisions on where to provide off-site support were made in a piece-meal fashion and that the Department has not developed a fully coherent regional support program appropriate for Embassy Baghdad. The Model for Overseas Management Support (MOMS) office and other Washington based bureaus support Embassy Baghdad operations. The Department has also established ISUs in Amman, Jordan; Kuwait City, Kuwait; and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) to support Embassy Baghdad's logistics and travel requirements. These units have experienced the usual start-up problems common to new organizations. However, difficulties have been compounded by inexperienced FSNs, imperfect communications, unclear guidance from the Department, and a rapidly evolving security situation in Iraq that demands maximum flexibility as operational requirements change on a continuing basis.

The U.S. mission in Iraq is one of the largest and most complex U.S. missions in the world. Authorized U.S. government personnel under Chief of Mission (COM) authority, including locally employed staff, total over 1,500 employees.

Department direct-hire personnel include 127 full-time employees assigned to Baghdad. Another 42 employees are assigned to regional embassy offices (REOs) and state embedded teams (SETs) throughout Iraq. Approximately 150 persons have been hired through the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO) under 5 USC § 3161.²

Embassy Baghdad's operations are defined by an especially close relationship with the commander of the Multinational Forces/Iraq and other elements of Defense. A Defense contractor, Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR), provides essential life support for most critical aspects of embassy operations - food, lodging, laundry, transportation, maintenance, procurement, and construction services. This model is in marked contrast to the traditional embassy structure in which most of these services are delivered by a direct-hire general services section.

The number and complexity of the hiring mechanisms in use for the mission in Iraq also affect the provision of off-site support. Because employees were hired under different employment mechanisms, the types of benefits that they receive differ based on employment category. Units providing off-site support, such as travel services, have not been able to obtain full information on the individuals being served, including benefits to which each is entitled. Also, lists of employees, when they exist, are quickly outdated as persons arrive and depart. At any point in time, approximately 20 percent of the mission's American employees are outside Iraq on rest breaks or consultations. Providing services for this ever-changing, highly mobile population is a daunting challenge.

Department costs under Task Order 100 of the U.S. Army Central Command's contract with KBR are budgeted at \$440 million for FY 2005. Security-related contract costs are expected to total an additional \$336 million during the same period. In the medium term, the Department's Bureau of Administration, Office of Logistics Management (A/LM), anticipates preparing competitive tenders for a number of contracts to permit more direct control and oversight over these resources. The embassy will manage a substantially greater portion of its own resources when these contracts become operational. The Department now manages a number of high-value security contracts at the embassy.

² This section of the U.S. Code allows the U.S. government to establish temporary organizations and hire persons under appointments not to exceed three years (although employment can be extended under some circumstances). Another 1,500 persons employed under Section 3161 were hired by and report to the Iraq Project and Contracting Office (PCO). Both IRMO and PCO are under COM authority.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Locally Employed Staff

FSNs at the mission in Iraq have received death threats because of their association with the U.S. government. Personal threats - and violent action - against these employees are so real and pervasive that even those who are on the rolls seek to conceal their employment. The embassy estimates that one out of four selected applicants cannot qualify for a security clearance to begin work. Once hired, some 28 percent fail to show up for work or leave during the first month. The number of FSNs dropped by eight employees during a two-week period in the conduct of OIG's review. Recently instituted polygraph requirements have resulted in the dismissal of about 50 percent of the regional security officer's local investigators. There is no prospect of recruiting, training, and retaining a sufficient cadre of competent FSNs at this time.

As a result, the Department and the mission must reconcile and rationalize expectations regarding the range of services to be performed in country. In the absence of sufficient numbers of qualified FSNs, contractors or employees outside Iraq must assume mission-critical responsibilities that would normally be performed by FSNs in Iraq. To date, Embassy Baghdad has relied on the services of FSNs from other embassies around the world on a temporary duty (TDY) basis to meet some staffing requirements. For both the short- and mid-term, the mission in Iraq will be dependent on off-site administrative support. The Department must address the venues, efficiency, and definition of such support. These issues are discussed in the following sections of this report.

Communications and Expectations

All units dedicated to off-site support for the mission in Iraq are working hard to provide efficient and responsive services. However, OIG found that there are frequent misunderstandings about the respective operating responsibilities, especially between ISU Amman and Embassy Baghdad. The most common complaints aired by personnel in Embassy Baghdad related to travel, pay, and benefits.

Recommendation 2: The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, should develop uniform procedures for issuance and use of personal protective equipment and institute these procedures at each venue of last departure before entering Iraq. (Action: DS, in coordination with NEA)

Recommendation 3: The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Baghdad and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should negotiate an agreement with Kellogg, Brown and Root to account for personal protective equipment without necessitating return of such items to the point of issuance. (Action: NEA, in coordination with Embassy Baghdad and DS)

Financial Issues

Embassy Baghdad is preparing to introduce the International Cooperative Administrative Services System for the mission in the next year. The Department plans to institute a per capita charging system unique to the mission in Iraq. Operating expenses currently for some contracts are divided according to an interagency agreement in which the Department pays 60 percent and Defense 40 percent of costs provided. The Department expects to replace this arrangement with per capita charges to individual agencies based on a count of employees physically residing at the embassy in the International Zone. The accounting complexities of this system, as yet unknown, may affect the mix of off-site support required for the mission.

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THE VIEW FROM BAGHDAD

Three members of OIG spent time at Embassy Baghdad. The broad objectives were to assess the mission in Iraq satisfaction with off-site support and to explore the possibility of other functions, presently performed in-country, that could or should be performed elsewhere.



Partially destroyed information management center at Embassy Baghdad

As noted throughout this report, no one at the embassy questioned the rationale or need for the pattern of support that has evolved. In general, embassy personnel are positive in evaluating support from Washington and elsewhere.

At Embassy Baghdad, a premium is placed on “command and control” in regard to off-site support units. The mission wants, even demands, undivided attention to its needs. This focus was summed up succinctly by the deputy chief of mission, “I prefer inefficiency over lower priority attention...[to mission needs].” To date, the pattern of off-site support dovetails with this management philosophy. Each of the elements reviewed by OIG in conjunction with this report devotes exclusive attention to the mission. The most symbiotic relationship is that with ISU Amman, which reports directly to Embassy Baghdad. The implicit remote supervision performance presents challenges. To make the formula work well, personal interaction between the Embassy Baghdad management counselor and ISU staff will be necessary. If feasible, exchange visits by mission personnel and ISU staff would further enhance coordination and effectiveness.

In evaluating the quality, timeliness, and responsiveness of services provided from outside Iraq, reactions among Baghdad interviewees were highly individualistic. Most framed responses in terms of travel. This is a complex issue engaging

IRAQ SUPPORT UNIT AMMAN

Structure and Staffing

ISU Amman consists of three direct-hire American personnel and a staff of 22 newly hired FSNs. The fledgling unit has made considerable progress in setting up a support platform to service the requirements of Embassy Baghdad. In its first three months of operation, ISU managed initial allotments totaling approximately \$13 million. ISU Amman also established a travel unit, assumed responsibility for handling passengers and aircraft for twice-weekly milair flights to Baghdad, and hired FSNs to staff general services, human resources (HR), and financial management offices.

ISU Amman is staffed by FSNs who, with one exception, have no prior U.S. government training or experience. Although OIG found the local staff to be articulate, hard working, and eager to help the mission in Iraq, they are not always able to perform the required tasks. ISU Amman employees need additional training and experience, particularly in HR, financial management, and procurement. Closer coordination with Embassy Amman FSNs, recommended elsewhere in this report, would be of value, as would TDY visits on a regular basis from experienced FSNs at other posts.

Recommendation 4: The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs should establish and implement a training plan for Iraq Support Unit Amman employees, to include onsite training on a rotating basis by senior Foreign Service nationals from neighboring missions. (Action: NEA)

Coordination and Communication Between Embassy Baghdad and Iraq Support Unit Amman

Coordination and communication between Embassy Baghdad and ISU Amman should be strengthened. OIG found that tasking of ISU Amman staff by Embassy Baghdad personnel is informal and ad hoc. Formal tracking procedures to ensure that requests are completed in a timely manner are in place for some functions, such as travel vouchers, but have not yet been developed for many others.

Embassy Baghdad is determined to maintain command and control over ISU Amman. If this management approach is to be effective, the mission needs a more precise understanding of the services ISU Amman reasonably can provide and the limitations that ISU Amman faces. For example, ISU Amman and Embassy Baghdad are trying to formulate standard operating procedures, but neither seems to know which entity should take the lead. Embassy Baghdad prepared the FSN handbook and standard operating procedures for the financial management office; both offices were working on travel procedures at the time of OIG's review.

Embassy Baghdad staff recognize that good interpersonal relations are the key to success in working with ISU Amman, but ISU Amman staff told OIG that Embassy Baghdad employees do not seem to know who they are and do not always provide needed information on a timely basis. The corollary is that ISU Amman employees have no direct experience of the difficult and dangerous conditions under which the mission in Iraq operates. For understandable reasons, several of the FSNs at ISU Amman expressed an unwillingness to go to Iraq, and willingness to do so is not integral to their terms of employment. However, insofar as practicable, personnel exchange between the mission and the ISU is highly desirable.

Embassy Baghdad and ISU Amman need to establish formal procedures for the assignment of tasks and determination whether the work should be performed in Baghdad or off-site. Such procedures might take the form of more regular meetings between Embassy Baghdad officers and ISU Amman staff, whether in Baghdad or Amman, and more telephone conversations. Some Embassy Baghdad administrative staff have spent time at ISU Amman when transiting Amman on their way to or from Baghdad. More sustained interaction is desirable, including review and correction of position descriptions of ISU Amman staff, discussions with each section in ISU Amman, and regular meetings with the ISU Amman director.

Recommendation 5: Embassy Baghdad should establish regular, systematic procedures for interacting with Amman Iraq Support Unit staff. (Action: Embassy Baghdad)

Facilities, Space, and Other Operational Issues



Iraq Support Unit, Amman, Jordan

ISU Amman employees, except for the travel services section, occupy temporary office buildings on the Marka airbase in Amman. The travel office is located in the Embassy Amman chancery. The ISU Amman director is considering ways to collocate the entire operation, including moving the travel section to Marka. OIG does not believe that any additional staff should be placed at Marka, even for the short term.

The space occupied by ISU Amman at Marka includes five small, prefabricated “chalets” that serve as hospitality rooms for a number of international aeronautics firms during a biennial exhibition. The next exhibition is scheduled for April 2006, and the lease for the ISU Amman space expires in February 2006.

The Marka facility suffers from many disadvantages. The chalets are located on the Gulf Ramp of the airport, which is used by as many as 85 incoming and outgoing flights per month. There is no barrier between the aircraft parking and taxiing area and the chalets. Thus, fumes and high velocity exhaust from the aircraft vent directly into the buildings. The noise level is high. FSNs suffer from a number of complaints, including itchy throats, headaches, and coughs. ISU Amman travel office staff who work in the Embassy Amman chancery expressed concern that they might be moved to Marka. The geographic separation of the two sections of ISU Amman has led to difficulties in communication and supervision, although the operation at the time of OIG’s review was only about three months old. The nurse who works at ISU Amman and the regional medical officer at Embassy Amman

expressed concerns to OIG about the noise pollution and presence of fumes. Article 79, part c, of the Jordanian Labor Law notes that establishments are required “to ensure all forms of pollution free environment, protection against noise, vibration and everything prejudicial to the worker’s health within the approved international standards, as well as determine the methods of testing and examination for controlling such standards.”

The Marka facility was not designed for long-term occupancy. There are no dining facilities anywhere at the airport, which is located about a 25-minute drive from the Embassy Amman chancery. Because of concerns about vehicles on the tarmac, there have been indications that airport authorities might close the King Talal gate now used to enter airport grounds. That would force employees and others to use an alternate gate, located just behind the chalets occupied by ISU Amman, but which is another ten minutes in driving time from the chancery. In sum, Marka is not a viable long-term location for ISU Amman even if an extension of the lease could be negotiated.

The Future of the Iraq Support Unit Amman

Because of the lease expiration date, and the need for continuity in the provision of support for the mission in Iraq, the Department must make decisions about the location of ISU Amman in the very near future.

Staff from the Model for Overseas Management Support (MOMS), an office that reports directly to the Under Secretary for Management, visited ISU Amman in September 2004 to evaluate its work and determine the feasibility of providing support to the mission in Iraq from the Regional Support Center (RSC) at Frankfurt, Germany. In an October 22, 2004, memo to the Under Secretary for Management from the Office of Rightsizing the U.S. Government Overseas Presence (M/R), MOMS officials discussed functions that are clearly Amman-specific and cannot be conducted elsewhere easily. These included medical support and direct travel services. M/R also noted that although preparing travel orders and making reservations could be done at other locations, providing these services in a unified fashion from Amman is prudent at present, given Embassy Baghdad’s unique requirements.

The M/R memo said that other functions now performed by ISU Amman were non-location-specific, including HR training and position classification, financial management activities such as accounting and processing travel vouchers, non-local procurement and related back office functions. M/R suggested that given the security situation in Jordan and the temporary nature of ISU facilities at Marka

airport, these functions should be transferred to other locations as soon as practical, perhaps in conjunction with the expiration of the Marka lease in early 2006, if not before.

Commenting on the M/R memo, NEA did not agree that these functions should be transferred to other locations and argued that the effectiveness of services now being provided from Amman, as well as Embassy Baghdad's satisfaction with them, should also be considered.

RSC Frankfurt is not currently organized to provide high level, exclusively dedicated service to Embassy Baghdad. Preparation to assume responsibilities currently handled by ISU Amman would take many months. For the foreseeable future, the mission in Iraq will require dedicated support, perhaps on a 24-hour basis. At the minimum, round-the-clock emergency service would be needed. Any support unit located at RSC Frankfurt would have to be created with this consideration in mind. There are other deterrents, including the different workweeks in Germany and Iraq as well as time zone and language differences. Finally, there are services provided directly by Embassy Amman, such as diplomatic pouch services, public affairs support, and commissary privileges for Iraq-related contractors, that cannot be replicated elsewhere. If the Department determines that conditions in Jordan are such that it is inadvisable to provide off-site services through ISU Amman, a decision should be made immediately so that necessary steps can be taken to prepare for relocation of some services to Frankfurt or elsewhere.

In the meantime, decisions must be made about the effectiveness of continuing to operate ISU Amman in its current configuration. In a recent inspection of Embassy Amman, OIG recommended that the embassy realign and reallocate office space in light of dramatic increases in staffing related to Iraq. OIG noted that while some sections of Embassy Amman are seriously overcrowded, other agencies are generously housed. Embassy Amman can take several steps to maximize use of office space on the Amman chancery compound, including the possible construction of a small office area on the ground floor of the south chancery building, the erection of temporary modular units on the chancery compound, or the remodeling of existing office configurations.

Embassy Baghdad, in consultation with NEA, has concluded that collocation of at least some elements of ISU Amman with Embassy Amman counterparts is desirable. OIG concurs. The need for continuity in support, the continuing evolution in defining future needs, the inexperience of the FSNs at ISU Amman, and the inefficiencies in supervising operations from two different locations all weigh in favor of consolidation of the unit within the Amman chancery. Likewise,

the strong preference of Embassy Baghdad officials for dedicated support provided from a nearby location, and the need to move ISU Amman staff away from the harmful working conditions at Marka airport, reinforce such a determination. OIG believes limited storage and office facilities directly related to airport operations should still be retained at Marka even after collocation of most functions. This presence should be minimal, however.

Recommendation 6: The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and Embassy Amman, should identify space on the Embassy Amman compound for the offices of the Iraq Support Unit. (Action: NEA, in coordination with OBO and Embassy Amman)

Travel Services

The ISU Amman travel section is headed by a local hire American who supervises three FSNs. Staff members from the ISU Amman HR office sometimes provide additional help. Even with supplementary staff the section is busy, and the staff must work long hours to keep up with the duties. The small office makes travel arrangements for around 500 persons per month who transit Amman on their way into or out of Iraq. These activities include preparing travel orders and amendments, making air reservations, issuing and delivering tickets, answering questions via telephone and e-mail, reconciling various hotel and other bills, obtaining visas, making hotel reservations, arranging transportation between airports in Amman, and issuing Jordanian country clearances for official travelers coming from or going to Iraq. When these various duties are identified, itemized, and counted the total is from 3000 to 4000 separate activities per week. The office also provides limited support to some of the approximately 70 congressional delegations that visited Amman this year.

Only the ISU travel office is located in the Embassy Amman chancery. Currently, the office must send travel orders and amendments to Marka for signatures. Travelers arriving or departing Amman on military aircraft use the Marka airport, but those on commercial flights generally use the Queen Alia International Airport. Passengers may transfer between airports, stay overnight in hotels, or otherwise require assistance from the travel unit. Many of those booked for onward travel must pick up tickets and pay for personal travel arrangements. There is no e-ticketing available in Jordan.

Because of the complexity of duties the travel office performs, combined with a seemingly endless desire on the part of travelers for personalized service, the travel office employees work long hours. Even though the exceptionally dedicated employee who heads the unit works seven days a week, Embassy Baghdad travelers at times feel underserved. On the other hand, the ISU Amman travel section often is frustrated by incomplete information received from Embassy Baghdad. Frequently, additional data must be requested and returned before orders can be prepared. Travelers often do not allow enough time between the date of the request and the date of travel for the systematic preparation of arrangements. The uncertain schedules of flights to and from Baghdad, both commercial and military, and the consequent disruption in travel plans, places an additional load on the staff. As a result, ISU Amman travel staff are stressed and overworked. They receive calls at home in the evenings and on weekends, and complain that Embassy Baghdad personnel do not understand that ISU Amman tries to arrange a normal workweek for its staff.

Another major problem faced by the ISU Amman travel office is the lack of information regarding the employment status of the traveler. ISU Amman does not always have copies of original travel orders for mission personnel. It thus does not know where employees are authorized to travel or their benefits. ISU Amman provides services to a large number of employees working under COM authority in Iraq. In addition, ISU Amman's clientele includes Iraqi citizens whose travel is funded by the U.S. government, U.S. congressional delegations, an abundance of temporary duty personnel, and companies with U.S. government contracts. With this unusually broad range of customers, the travel office staff do not have time to search for basic information on which official travelers qualify for which benefits, such as R & R travel, regional rest breaks, and consultation travel. OIG believes that it is the responsibility of the Department to supply to ISU Amman up-to-date lists of personnel serving in Iraq who are authorized to use ISU Amman's travel services. These lists should specify the employment mechanism of the traveler, the fiscal data to be used in funding travel, benefits that the traveler is authorized to receive, the home duty station of the traveler, and other details required in the preparation of travel orders and arrangements.

Recommendation 7: The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, in coordination with the Model for Overseas Management Support, should provide the Iraq Support Unit in Amman with accurate and up-to-date lists of personnel serving in Iraq who are authorized to use travel services, to include information required to prepare travel orders and make travel arrangements. (Action: NEA, in coordination with M/R)

ISU Amman and Embassy Baghdad are in the process of concluding a memorandum setting forth travel policies and procedures. A senior traffic management specialist from A/LM is assisting them in this task and was working temporarily in Amman during OIG's visit to Amman. OIG believes that the establishment of additional, more detailed written procedures will aid both Embassy Baghdad and ISU Amman in easing the burden of their workloads.

ISU Amman uses the Embassy Amman travel contractor to make various travel arrangements. ISU Amman's travel requests now comprise more than half the workload for that contractor. Because ISU Amman's additional requirements place a heavy load on the contractor, ISU Amman wants to prepare a separate contract. OIG concurs in this decision, as it would give ISU Amman greater control over dealings with the travel agency.

The travel office is understaffed for the volume of work that it performs. OIG believes that a reasonable size for the office would be two American officers and six FSNs. OIG made an informal recommendation that ISU Amman assign two employees from its underworked HR office to travel duties. Continuity in staffing the unit is also needed in the medium term. The incumbent American local hire head of the travel office will resign from the position on May 31, 2005. The Department plans to reassign an American general services office position from Embassy Baghdad to ISU Amman, and ISU Amman intends to assign that individual to the travel office. OIG believes that this is prudent, if not essential, to ensure continuity of operations in this critical service area.

Financial Management

The financial management unit consists of one American financial management officer and six newly hired FSNs. At the time of OIG's visit, the unit had been operational less than 90 days. During that time, the unit made substantial progress in setting up a vouchering operation and eliminating a two-month backlog of travel vouchers. OIG believes that the current mix of employees, evenly split between accountants and voucher examiners, is appropriate for Embassy Baghdad's requirements. New employees have been helped by short-term TDY assistance from senior FSNs at other posts but still need time to learn their job responsibilities and establish operating procedures. The financial management officer's directive style has introduced interpersonal frictions in the new operation, complicating the challenge of setting up a functioning office.

Embassy Baghdad's draft financial management procedures delineate Baghdad's operational elements clearly, but describe ISU Amman's operations in only skeletal terms. Accounting procedures such as travel advance tracking, airline ticket reimbursement, deobligation procedures, and management of payroll obligations, to cite several responsibilities that reside with ISU Amman, are not yet clearly detailed in the draft standard operating procedures. OIG left an informal recommendation that ISU Amman in coordination with Embassy Baghdad conclude the standard operating procedures with a fuller description of its activities.

The Class B cashier at ISU Amman is underemployed. That employee could be used to support congressional delegations and other high-level visits.

Logistics and Transportation

Before the war, Jordan served as Iraq's primary commercial connection to the outside world, with as many as 1,000 trucks a day crossing the border. In May 2004, A/LM established a tender of service with a commercial freight forwarding company in Amman, with the intention of using Amman as a support hub into Baghdad. The experiment did not go well. A truck transporting an ambulance was attacked and its driver killed; a separate shipment of eight armored vehicles was hijacked en route to Baghdad. Subsequently, the Department decided to curtail surface shipments to Baghdad. All logistics support provided by the Department is now by air, with most commercial flights transiting Sharjah or Dubai and continuing on to Baghdad. Commercial truck companies are reluctant to accept military escorts because of concerns that their cargo might be targeted. The Department retains the option to resume overland transportation shipments from Amman if the security situation permits.

Procurement and Contracting

ISU Amman's new procurement unit was not yet fully operational at the time of OIG's visit. The unit is expected to become more active as Embassy Baghdad transfers responsibilities for procuring some items to that unit. Over time, ISU Amman could also assume responsibility for liaison with Department bureaus that support the embassy's contracting requirements. The unit's two FSNs need training in procurement and contracting regulations, as they lack any prior U.S. government purchasing experience. ISU Amman intends to set up standard operating procedures for procurement and contracting, including a purchase order log, in the near future.

Human Resources

ISU Amman has hired a senior FSN HR assistant, a junior HR assistant, and two HR clerks. The four FSNs may eventually report to an American HR officer, but the position is presently unencumbered. The three lower graded positions theoretically report to the senior FSN, but at the current time all report directly to the ISU Amman director.

Although Embassy Baghdad originally planned to hire a large number of Department FSNs, at present there are fewer than 70 working there. In other embassies around the world, one or two FSNs in an HR office could manage personnel procedures for that number of FSNs. OIG believes that the volume and complexity of work that the ISU Amman HR office performs for Embassy Baghdad does not require more than two HR staff. Because of the lack of work in its HR office, ISU Amman temporarily assigned one FSN to the ISU travel office for two weeks. When that period is over, ISU Amman will assign a second FSN to help the travel staff for another two-week period. OIG made an informal recommendation that ISU assign both of these persons to the travel section on a medium-term basis. It is not clear what the long-term needs of the HR office will be, and until conditions in Iraq are more settled, the retention of two staff in HR, and short-term reassignment of two FSNs to the travel office is a conservative, judicious use of personnel resources.

When the position descriptions were prepared for the ISU Amman HR staff, they were based on traditional HR duties, including hiring of staff, counseling, management of official residence staff, and other activities. The position descriptions have not been updated and still reflect these arbitrary, artificial duties. OIG left an informal recommendation that ISU Amman and Embassy Baghdad update position descriptions for HR staff.

ISU Amman HR staff received some informal, on-the-job training at Embassy Amman. ISU employees sometimes ask questions of the very experienced Embassy Amman HR personnel, but on the whole, the ISU Amman HR office performs services for Embassy Baghdad without input from Embassy Amman. For the most part, newly hired ISU Amman HR staff received training from TDY personnel outside of Amman, including an FSN from Embassy Abu Dhabi.

EMBASSY AMMAN PROGRAM SUPPORT

Embassy Amman Consular Support

Embassy Amman provides a range of consular services for Iraq. It processes nonimmigrant (NIV) and immigrant visas (IV), and assists in the repatriation of American citizens held hostage in Iraq. In addition, Embassy Amman supplies U.S. passports to Americans visiting Iraq. In FY 2004, almost eight percent of Embassy Amman's NIV applicants and approximately 50 percent of IV applicants were Iraqi citizens. Embassy Baghdad has recently begun issuing NIVs in all categories for referral cases only. These are mostly Iraqis traveling to the United States on government-sponsored trips, such as exchange visitors, diplomats, and trainees. Other NIV applicants must still apply abroad, usually in Amman. Embassy Baghdad does not expect to provide full service visa operations in the near future.

Providing consular support for Iraq creates a unique set of processing and planning problems for Embassy Amman's consular section. Given the current situation in Iraq, most Iraqi applicants who are not government sponsored do not qualify for NIVs because they cannot establish their intent to return home after visiting the United States. One interlocutor from Embassy Baghdad noted that nearly all Iraqi applicants would be ineligible for visas under criteria for issuing visas. Embassy Amman must nonetheless process these cases objectively, according to regulations, usually denying them. This is not only a processing burden but also a morale challenge - dealing every day with desperate people who cannot be given what they want most. Processing both IV and NIV applications for Iraqis is also complicated by the inability to confirm civil documents issued in Iraq. Iraq support responsibilities also complicate planning for future workload demands and estimating future resource needs at Embassy Amman.

Embassy Amman Public Diplomacy Activities

The Embassy Amman public diplomacy (PD) office performs several services in support of activities at the mission in Iraq. The PD office expedites visas for about 200 Iraqi grantees traveling from Iraq to various countries and helps process these persons through Amman. After finding out that staff were spending large amounts of time handling U.S. government-funded travelers from Iraq, PD Amman

hired two Iraqi nationals to perform the function, paid for by Embassy Baghdad funds. The office also held a training session in Amman for Iraqi journalists and has provided training for the staff of the mission in Iraq.

The PD office in Amman provides the PD office in Baghdad with complete shipments of materials for the American Corners program. This program promotes mutual understanding through the establishment of libraries stocked with books and information materials on life in the United States. Embassy Amman has leased a small warehouse at an annual cost of \$25,000 to support distribution of American Corners materials. Embassy Baghdad expects this undertaking to continue until the situation in Iraq stabilizes. There are now three American Corners functioning in Iraq, and the ultimate plan is to establish 16 throughout the country.

Embassy Amman Iraq Policy Coordinator

Embassy Amman requested, and NEA approved, an Iraq policy coordinator position whose purpose is to work on policy issues relating to Iraq. The incumbent maintains contacts with senior Jordanian economic policy officials, as well as with Iraq-oriented U.S., Jordanian and Iraqi business personnel. He also works with nongovernmental and international organization leadership, Amman-based Iraq experts, and Iraqi émigrés.

One of the primary functions of the position is to serve as a “one-stop shop” for Embassy Amman and Embassy Baghdad on Iraq-related developments that occur in Jordan and to be a bureaucratic link between the two embassies. The incumbent should provide both embassies with timely information relating to all aspects of the evolving Iraqi-Jordanian relationship. In addition, and not of minor value to Embassy Amman, the individual is charged with acting as control officer for visiting congressional and other delegations focused on Iraq.

OIG could not determine how well the newly established position will serve the purposes for which it was created. The position was placed in the Embassy Amman economic section, reporting to the economic counselor. There is some difference of opinion between Embassy Baghdad and Embassy Amman on how closely the employee should coordinate with Embassy Baghdad, whether meetings need to be discussed or cleared in advance, and whether reporting on Iraqi issues from Embassy Amman should be cleared by Embassy Baghdad. Although the incumbent considers himself a “branch office” for Embassy Baghdad, he is still in the process of determining how to establish daily operating procedures that serve the needs of both embassies. However, OIG believes that both Embassy Amman and Embassy Baghdad stand to benefit from the officer’s work in Amman and that

these attendant issues can be resolved in the near future. Face-to-face interaction at the front office level between Embassy Baghdad and Embassy Amman would be helpful in this process.

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IRAQ SUPPORT UNIT KUWAIT

ISU Kuwait is much smaller in its scope than its counterpart in Amman. Support to Baghdad is delivered by two separate and distinct entities: a small ISU under Embassy Kuwait COM authority, and a larger Federal Deployment Center (FDC) that reports to Defense. The FDC provides staging, accommodation, and transportation services for U.S. government travelers headed to Iraq. The FDC is managed under Task Order 63 of the Defense contract with KBR, at an annual cost to the U.S. government of \$10.4 million but no cost to the Department. The FDC operation provides hotel accommodation, issues PPE and gas masks, and conducts security briefings for personnel headed to Iraq. ISU Kuwait primarily supports high-level official visits but also assists in small-scale procurements, logistics, and travel requirements as needed.

The decision to shift most off-site mission services to Amman from Kuwait reflects the Department's judgment that Kuwait's high expense, visa restrictions, and slow-moving bureaucracy make it a less desirable logistics base.

Staff at Embassy Baghdad generally rated travel services from ISU Amman as being better and more responsive than those provided from Kuwait. The anticipated shift to Amman as the transit venue for personnel under COM authority likely will have implications for Defense's operations in Kuwait. These operational questions will have to be addressed. Reconsideration of security procedures, Washington-based in-processing, and issuance of PPE at ISU Amman must also occur when this transition is put into effect. There will also be significant cost implications for the Department when it assumes responsibility for contract costs now paid by Defense.

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MODEL FOR OVERSEAS MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

MOMS manages a pilot project to provide Washington-based administrative support to Baghdad. MOMS handles much of the in-processing for new American personnel assigned to Baghdad. The office coordinates issuance of Department and Defense identity badges, assigns computer log-ins, manages Embassy Baghdad's internal web site, conducts personnel in-processing for new embassy employees, and coordinates the security, medical, and country clearance processes for newly assigned staff. As its activities expand beyond the pilot phase, MOMS expects to enlarge its scope of operations by opening an office in Frankfurt. The precise nature of services that MOMS in Frankfurt may offer to Embassy Baghdad had not been delineated at the time of the inspection.

The MOMS policy is to provide as much administrative support as possible, as remotely as possible. However, MOMS advocates a centralized structure that would support multiple embassies from regional operating platforms. Embassy Baghdad employees interviewed by OIG believe that support specific to Baghdad's situation and under its control is required. OIG found that MOMS services were generally satisfactory at this very early stage in the office's operations. Remote assignment of e-mail accounts is still subject to some confusion. Passwords and accounts assigned in Washington frequently do not work upon arrival in Baghdad, for example. The division of labor between MOMS and NEA - MOMS supports permanently assigned employees, NEA supports TDY personnel - leads to some awkwardness in the travel and in-processing procedures that travelers follow en route to Baghdad. Procedures vary again depending on whether the traveler transits Kuwait or Amman. On the positive side, embassy personnel had praise for MOMS and NEA's successful processing of allowance applications.

An important service provided by MOMS is coordination of the issuance of common access cards (CAC) to employees assigned to the mission in Iraq. This includes arranging transportation to and from Fort Belvoir, where the CACs are issued. Contrarily, TDY personnel have to maneuver through the CAC process without such assistance. The CAC is essential for accessing KBR services once in Iraq.

During OIG's work on this project, it was ever more apparent that travel from Iraq is one of the highest issues of concern. Already overstressed by their experiences under constant danger in Iraq, travelers have a very low tolerance for snags that otherwise would be taken in stride. One of these, for those transiting Amman, is the requirement for a Jordanian visa. Holders of diplomatic passports can obtain the visa at airports in Amman free of charge. Travelers holding other American passports must pay a fee. This can present something of a "catch-22" situation because currency exchange facilities are located beyond the immigration booths. Even though Jordanian officials are courteous and accommodating, this is the sort of issue that can trigger even more angst for the traveler. With the prospect of most travelers under COM authority transiting Amman in the proximate future, OIG believes obtaining multiple-entry Jordanian visas in advance for travelers using other than diplomatic passports is highly desirable and should be part of the standard check-in process.

Recommendation 8: The Model for Overseas Management Support, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, should advise both those personnel assigned to Embassy Baghdad and temporary duty visitors of the desirability of obtaining multiple-entry Jordanian visas before departing for Iraq. (Action: M/R, in coordination with NEA)

BUREAU OF NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS - IRAQ SUPPORT UNIT

NEA set up an ISU within its Office of the Executive Director to serve Embassy Baghdad's administrative support requirements. Integral to NEA's functions are the critical areas of budget and personnel support.

NEA administers an electronic country clearance process that streamlines what would otherwise be a staggering workload for Embassy Baghdad, approximately 500 country clearance requests a month. Under current procedures, NEA receives electronic country clearance requests from individuals intending to travel to Embassy Baghdad. According to NEA personnel, as many as 80 percent of country clearance requests lack information necessary for Embassy Baghdad to determine whether to grant country clearance. NEA vets requests internally, obtains additional information as needed, and forwards requests to Embassy Baghdad for final approval, saving management time in Baghdad. In general, Embassy Baghdad personnel expressed satisfaction with the system, although some interlocutors suggested broader internal distribution of the country clearance requests by e-mail or other means would be of benefit. The e-country clearance process could also be the nucleus of a future unified list of all U.S. government personnel in country. As noted elsewhere in this report, the lack of such a list complicates embassy travel, vouchering, and HR operations.

OTHER WASHINGTON BASED SUPPORT

Embassy Baghdad necessarily draws upon the expertise of most of the Department's 24 bureaus, many of which have displayed commendable ingenuity and initiative in solving the mission's problems. Full discussion of the contributions of these bureaus is beyond the scope of this report. However, Baghdad interlocutors singled out the Bureau of Human Resources' Office of Career Development and Assignments and A/LM as particularly effective and responsive. For example, A/LM delivered a shipment of 3,000 cots in less than ten days, an effort much appreciated by Embassy Baghdad personnel.

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Baghdad and the Model for Overseas Management Support, should coordinate and devise standard operating procedures specifying the off-site support to be provided to the mission in Iraq by each relevant unit. (Action: NEA, in coordination with Embassy Baghdad and M/R)

Recommendation 2: The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, should develop uniform procedures for issuance and use of personal protective equipment and institute these procedures at each venue of last departure before entering Iraq. (Action: DS, in coordination with NEA)

Recommendation 3: The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Baghdad and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should negotiate an agreement with Kellogg, Brown and Root to account for personal protective equipment without necessitating return of such items to the point of issuance. (Action: NEA, in coordination with Embassy Baghdad and DS)

Recommendation 4: The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs should establish and implement a training plan for Iraq Support Unit Amman employees, to include onsite training on a rotating basis by senior Foreign Service nationals from neighboring missions. (Action: NEA)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Baghdad should establish regular, systematic procedures for interacting with Amman Iraq Support Unit staff. (Action: Embassy Baghdad)

Recommendation 6: The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and Embassy Amman, should identify space on the Embassy Amman compound for the offices of the Iraq Support Unit. (Action: NEA, in coordination with OBO and Embassy Amman)

Recommendation 7: The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, in coordination with the Model for Overseas Management Support, should provide the Iraq Support Unit in Amman with accurate and up-to-date lists of personnel serving in Iraq

who are authorized to use travel services, to include information required to prepare travel orders and make travel arrangements. (Action: NEA, in coordination with M/R)

Recommendation 8: The Model for Overseas Management Support, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, should advise both those personnel assigned to Embassy Baghdad and temporary duty visitors of the desirability of obtaining multiple-entry Jordanian visas before departing for Iraq. (Action: M/R, in coordination with NEA)

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

ISU Amman travel section employees receive telephone calls at night and on weekends. Establishment of an ISU Amman travel section duty schedule, with the incorporation of a duty telephone that is given to each person, is needed to distribute the burden of responding to telephone contacts outside of regular working hours more equitably.

Informal Recommendation 1: Iraq Support Unit in Amman should establish a duty schedule for the travel section.

The ISU Amman HR office is under worked, and the ISU Amman travel section is overworked.

Informal Recommendation 2: Iraq Support Unit Amman should temporarily reassign two of the four human resources staff to the travel unit.

Position descriptions for ISU Amman human resources staff are based on traditional HR duties, and are not accurate descriptions of the duties actually performed.

Informal Recommendation 3: Iraq Support Unit Amman and Embassy Baghdad should update the position descriptions for the human resources staff.

Communications between Baghdad and ISU Amman administrative personnel tend to be episodic, irregular, and based on e-mails.

Informal Recommendation 4: Iraq Support Unit Amman and Embassy Baghdad should speak by telephone conference call on a regularly scheduled basis, ideally once a week.

Embassy Baghdad's internal web page is out of date and does not contain regularly refreshed information of value to mission users.

Informal Recommendation 5: The Model for Overseas Management Support office should initiate mechanisms to reinvigorate Embassy Baghdad's internal web site.

ABBREVIATIONS

A/LM	Bureau of Administration, Office of Logistics Management
BIAP	Baghdad International Airport
CAC	Common access card
COM	Chief of Mission
Defense	Department of Defense
Department	Department of State
FDC	Federal Deployment Center
HR	Human resources
ISU	Iraq Support Unit
IV	Immigrant Visa
FSN	Foreign Service national
FSC	Financial Services Center
IRMO	Iraq Reconstruction Management Office
KBR	Kellogg, Brown and Root
Milair	Military aircraft
MOMS	Model for Overseas Management Support
M/R	Office of Rightsizing the U.S. Government Overseas Presence
NEA	Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
NIV	Nonimmigrant Visa
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PD	Public diplomacy
PPE	Personal protective equipment

R & R	Rest and recuperation
RSC	Regional Service Center
TDY	Temporary duty

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