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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

**Implementation of  
Computer Aided Job Evaluation at Selected Overseas Posts**

**Memorandum Report ISP-I-06-17, January 2006**

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## **Introduction**

As an area of emphasis for FY 2005, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed implementation of the Computer Aided Job Evaluation (CAJE) system at 25 missions overseas. OIG evaluated the effectiveness of CAJE as the new method of job evaluation that replaced the narrative position classification standards and as a tool for management officers or human resources officers and locally employed human resources specialists to use in determining the grade of locally employed staff positions. A summary our OIG's findings and recommendations are below.

## **Methodology**

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) based its review on the primary objectives of the computer aided job evaluation (CAJE) system to standardize the locally employed staff (LES) position classification process used by overseas posts, provide a rational and more objective basis for making position classifications and increase the consistency of grade determinations worldwide, and reduce the time required to classify positions. OIG developed a questionnaire for the inspection teams to use as a guide in their on-site review of CAJE implementation at the inspected missions. This memorandum summarizes the results of the OIG area of emphasis review of CAJE implementation and focuses on the process of implementation, outcomes of CAJE evaluations, and perceptions of CAJE at overseas posts.

Inspector Linda Erskine prepared this report.

## **Findings**

### **Process of Implementation**

Of the 25 overseas missions inspected in FY 2005, 13 had implemented CAJE and 12 had requested extensions from the Office of Overseas Employment (HR/OE) at the time of the inspection. Some posts felt that the September 30, 2004, deadline was too rushed. All of the HR officers and local-hire HR specialists received CAJE training and certification. Very few management officers were trained or certified in CAJE. This created problems especially at the smaller posts that did not have an HR officer and had to rely on regional HR officers for support with CAJE implementation. Most HR officers and specialists said CAJE reduced the time to evaluate positions; however, the workload to implement CAJE was tremendous. Executive management at a few posts was not committed to implementation of CAJE, a hard sell when support for a new initiative does not come down from the top.

Several posts spent intensive months briefing and training managers, supervisors, and local employees on the CAJE process. Others did not put in the same effort into CAJE implementation, and the process had a negative effect on the work force. One or two posts requested an extension from HR/OE and used that time to hold meetings and consult with

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supervisors and local staff to smooth the transition. This was, from OIG's viewpoint, good human relations practice.

A few posts experiencing difficulties with CAJE implementation brought in outside evaluators to complete the CAJE evaluations for controversial positions or contentious sections. OIG found that adverse reactions to CAJE and implementation were more problematic in some sections than in others. On one inspection, OIG noted irregularities in the consular and public affairs sections, which held up CAJE implementation. The consular section had a convoluted organizational chart that was the basis for revised position descriptions written for higher grades, and the public affairs section did not update the position descriptions as required before CAJE implementation. On another inspection, there were misunderstandings between the HR evaluator and the maintenance section over job complexity and the value of equipment. Again, implementing CAJE in the consular section at another post was the most difficult with unresolved issues on work requirements.

There were CAJE implementation issues at some of the consulates. OIG was told the HR evaluator would visit the consulate, promote the benefits of CAJE, explain the process, do the evaluations, and then leave. The consulate staff often found themselves adrift with no one to turn to for questions or explanations. The principal officer and/or management officer was not trained in CAJE, and, what they knew about CAJE, their local staff knew from the same source. Employees were often not consulted, information on the results was not forthcoming from the HR evaluator or the supervisor, and they were presented with a final grade determination as a fait accompli.

Determining the qualifications required to perform the job was another area that was sometimes very contentious; some supervisors linked the incumbent's qualifications to the position and not to actual job requirements. Others set the qualifications higher than what was actually needed in an attempt to get the position a higher grade. HR evaluators found themselves in the middle explaining to supervisors and jobholders that the qualifications should be the minimum level required to do the work, not those of the incumbent or set higher in expectation of a higher grade.

### **Outcome of Computer Aided Job Evaluation Implementation**

Overall the results of CAJE implementation were more position upgrades than downgrades; the percentage of upgrades on average was between 10 and 30 percent in contrast to the average percentage of downgrades between 1 and 5 percent. At one small post, implementation of CAJE was pending review and approval by HR/OE as the results were a grade increase for 55 percent of the positions. OIG found local hire positions in small posts inherently have broad and often multiple duties. It is not surprising that small posts would have significant upgrades given the quantifiable emphasis on flexibility and responsibility in CAJE, the value of which was not recognized in mixed positions under the previous narrative position classification standards. At smaller posts the duties and responsibilities of the LES are interchanged and any one change affects other positions down the chain. This seems to be especially true under CAJE.

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The majority of the posts stated that additional funding would be needed to cover the cost of CAJE implementation in next fiscal year's budget. The Department did include new funding requirements in the FY 2005 financial plan to cover CAJE compensation costs, but continued funding into FY 2006 is uncertain.

Most HR evaluators, supervisors, and LES agree CAJE increased objectivity and focuses more on the job and not the employee. Supervisors are now required to pay more attention, provide more input into the job requirements and qualifications needed to get the work done, and interact more with the jobholder to complete the job discussion help sheet. OIG observed with some supervisors CAJE was seen as one more mandate to increase their workload. Supervisors did not always have job discussions with the local employee before submitting the position description and job discussion help sheet to the HR office for evaluation.

At several posts, supervisors manipulated the position description, qualifications, and job discussion help sheet to get the desired grade result. This created problems later when the HR evaluator conducted the job analysis interview and could not verify the job requirements or qualifications. Despite town hall meetings and management notices that provided the correct information on CAJE, at a few posts supervisors erroneously told employees that CAJE would result in position grade increases, setting expectations very high. In one post, the supervisor decided every position in the section should be the same grade and job duties were "adjusted" until the results came out to that individual's liking. OIG's consensus is that the CAJE system can be manipulated and is not always objective, similar to the old methodology of narrative classification standards. However, there is a risk of manipulation in any system where something of value is at play.

There was a lot of anxiety during CAJE implementation waiting for the results. Anxieties over the end results were a large factor in the adverse attitude to CAJE exhibited by some supervisors and local staff. The majority of posts set a mission-wide effective date for CAJE implementation, and sections evaluated first had to wait to find out the results until all other sections were completed. When CAJE results were released or "leaked" sooner, it opened up an opportunity for the supervisors and local employees to reject the grade determinations and demand reevaluation, slowing down CAJE implementation for the rest of the post. Subsequently, when the HR evaluator began work in the next section, they met animosity and attempts to inflate the position descriptions artificially to receive upgrades. The result was distrust and dissatisfaction spread through the mission and a very negative view of CAJE.

Almost every local-hire employee expected or hoped for a position upgrade with CAJE implementation. When expectations exceeded reality, CAJE received negative assessments and local staff faulted CAJE with demands for reevaluations or filed formal appeals. OIG found the HR office and one or two sections battling over position grades at some posts. Attempts to leverage an advantage to achieve the desired result created friction between the HR evaluator and the section. Most posts tried to keep the CAJE implementation process balanced to alleviate friction. OIG advised posts that the CAJE process is not a one-time final determination and position evaluations will continue to be monitored and reviewed. Most posts have set a moratorium on reevaluating jobs after final CAJE implementation. At a few posts where the

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U.S. Agency for International Development implemented CAJE, they were getting much higher-grade results, or implementation was not completed at the same time as the embassy.

### **Perceptions of Computer Aided Job Evaluation**

Trust in CAJE is still lacking. It is a new system, implemented worldwide after beta testing at seven overseas missions. Uncertainty and lack of trust is not surprising as most people have an aversion to change. The majority of HR evaluators, supervisors, and LES believe CAJE to be superior to the old narrative position classification standards and much faster to complete job evaluations. One interesting note mentioned to OIG - the jobholder tended to base satisfaction with the CAJE process on the interpersonal style and attitude of the HR evaluator at post or regional HR officer. A few supervisors and LES complained that the HR evaluator did not listen to them and blamed the evaluator if they did not get the expected results. A more open and friendly evaluator generated a less anxious jobholder. The human element made the results suspect, especially at those posts where embassy management should have become more involved. Sometimes the distrust can be attributed to cultural mores or simply to a lack of communication between post management and local staff.

Opinions of CAJE ranged from more objective and transparent to unfair and beyond their control, a “fait accompli.” Even at posts where CAJE implementation was conducted openly and in accordance with HR/OE instructions, there remains deep suspicion of the process. Many LES are confused about the details or mechanics of the CAJE system. Some HR evaluators found it difficult to explain the CAJE results to the supervisors and local staff. Difficulties stemmed from the simple fact that CAJE is equally new to the HR evaluators, and they did not fully understand the job evaluation factors and nuances between levels to explain the process or justify the results to supervisors and jobholders. These issues should diminish as the HR evaluators become more proficient using CAJE.

Another complaint raised with OIG was that the HR evaluators did not understand the complexity of the work, the level of responsibility, or value of the job to the embassy. The HR evaluators found the complexity of the job determined the length of time to conduct the job analysis interview; however, this created internal problems when local staff equated the interview time with the grade result, i.e., longer interview, higher grade. Employees, however, did recognize that some jobs are more easily identified and evaluated than others – a driver is a driver, but a commercial assistant is more complex and not as easily quantified. Many posts found the CAJE reference jobs developed by HR/OE to be helpful and would welcome additional reference jobs particularly in financial management.

The majority of posts advised supervisors and local staff of the dispute resolution process, and appeals filed by supervisors or the employee were either resolved locally or submitted to HR/OE. At several posts, CAJE job reports were given a cursory review and signed by the supervisor and employee. Disputes arose when the HR evaluator notified the supervisor and jobholder of the final position grade evaluation. Then disagreements with the evaluation, factor ratings, and final grade job surfaced. Positions were reevaluated under CAJE more than once at the request of the supervisor to get the “right” grade. Timelines to review the job report or file a formal appeal were not strictly followed in some instances. Several employees

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expressed to OIG their dissatisfaction with the CAJE process, including the manner in which their skills were described by supervisors, and lack of uniformity in how jobs were portrayed. This gave the jobholder a reason to appeal the CAJE evaluations. Under CAJE, supervisors and employees play a much larger role in job evaluation. Under the previous narrative standards, once the supervisor wrote the position description, the HR classifier made the grade determination, often with little or no input from the employee.

## **Conclusions**

OIG found generally that CAJE is more objective, equitable and less time consuming for the HR evaluators. Supervisors and employees have more interaction to determine job requirements and more involvement in the job evaluation process. The effect is better management of the sections but with an increase in workload. However, OIG identified problems with implementation at small posts or consulates; contentious sections within the mission; management officers not trained in CAJE; employee distrust and confusion; and need for continued training for HR evaluators. The following informal recommendations are provided to assist HR/OE in its efforts to improve CAJE and maintain an effective management tool for job evaluation.

## **Informal Recommendations**

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

**Informal Recommendation 1:** The Office of Overseas Employment should closely monitor overseas missions that experienced difficulties with the Computer Aided Job Evaluation implementation and provide assistance to ensure supervisors and locally employed staff understand the process, their roles, how jobs are evaluated, how grades are determined, and the appropriate recourse for appeals.

**Informal Recommendation 2:** The Office of Overseas Employment should counsel human resources evaluators on how to manage difficult supervisors and employees who try to manipulate the Computer Aided Job Evaluation system and on how to deal with a contentious group of employees in one section.

**Informal Recommendation 3:** The Office of Overseas Employment should give human resources evaluators continuing or periodic refresher training in the Computer Aided Job Evaluation system to make certain they fully comprehend the job evaluation factors and nuances between levels to explain the process or justify the results to supervisors and jobholders.

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**Informal Recommendation 4:** The Office of Overseas Employment should train and certify management officers on the Computer Aided Job Evaluation system at small posts or consulates that do not have an assigned American human resources officer.

**Informal Recommendation 5:** The Office of Overseas Employment should survey posts for recommendations on particular Computer Aided Job Evaluation reference jobs that should be developed and included in the reference library to further streamline the job evaluation process.

OIG hopes that this opportunity to share our findings on Computer Aided Job Evaluation implementation at selected overseas posts will highlight lessons learned and provide suggestions to build on an already good program. Please see the attached appendix for a summary by post of the OIG review of Computer Aided Job Evaluation implementation.

## **APPENDIX A**

# **Computer Aided Job Evaluation Implementation FY 2005 Summary Review by Inspected Post**

## **Inspections Conducted in Fall 2004**

### **Amman**

The Computer Aided Job Evaluation (CAJE) implementation at Embassy Amman was filled with missteps. Supervisors told employees that CAJE would result in position grade increases, management decided to implement and announce CAJE results sequentially, and one supervisor decided every employee should have the same grade and juggled job duties to get that result. Expectations were set high, and, when position grades did not increase, the human resources (HR) evaluator met animosity and attempts to inflate job descriptions to receive upgrades. The Office of Overseas Employment (HR/OE) did send a CAJE assistance team to post; however, distrust and dissatisfaction with the process had spread throughout the mission.

The Foreign Service national committee met with OIG to point out that CAJE lacked transparency and the human element made the results suspect. The committee also stated that not enough information had been provided, although the HR office did fully brief supervisors and employees on CAJE. OIG believed that embassy management should have become more involved to calm the situation. Adverse reactions to the CAJE process were more apparent in some sections than others, in particular, in the maintenance section. There were misunderstandings concerning the complexity of the work on both the HR and maintenance sides of the issue.

The new HR officer is certified in CAJE and took charge of the CAJE process by reviewing all the results. The embassy received a waiver for implementation and planned to have all positions evaluated by the end of 2004. At the time, 136 positions (63 percent) were completed with 30 position upgrades and one downgrade. OIG believed that reasonable measures were being taken to resolve the problems and discussed ways to settle the situation.

### **Bucharest**

Embassy Bucharest completed CAJE implementation, which resulted in 21 position upgrades that affected 37 employees on identical positions. The embassy had delayed implementation pending full funding for FY 2005. There were no complaints on the CAJE process.

### **Cairo**

Embassy Cairo was seriously behind schedule in completing CAJE implementation. Personnel turbulence, staffing shortage, and HR office workload all contributed to the delays. At the time

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of the inspection, more than 1,200 positions had not been CAJE evaluated, and 400 positions were completed. The embassy hoped to have CAJE fully implemented by June 2005.

### **Chisinau**

Embassy Chisinau had not implemented CAJE because the results generated a 55 percent position grade increase. The results were sent to HR/OE for review and approval. The management officer emphasized that it is not unexpected to see small posts with more position upgrades, given the quantifiable rating on flexibility and responsibility under CAJE, not always recognized under the old narrative system. Supervisors and employees are eagerly awaiting the results of CAJE implementation. Implementation has not been uneventful; there is distrust of a new system, and attempts to leverage an advantage to get desired results created friction between the HR office and some sections. The embassy did receive strong regional support that helped keep the process balanced and alleviated some problems. There was general agreement that CAJE was more objective and transparent than the previous system.

### **Paris**

Embassy Paris missed the September 2004 deadline for CAJE implementation. The HR office blamed this on reductions in force that delayed work on CAJE. The embassy received an extension and hoped to complete CAJE implementation by December 2004. At the time, CAJE evaluations were 76 percent complete with 18 percent position upgrades and 5 percent position downgrades. The HR office did not keep supervisors and employees updated on the CAJE process. Supervisors and employees pointed out that some positions were evaluated under CAJE more than once with no explanation.

### **Sofia**

Embassy Sofia completed CAJE implementation resulting in 20 percent of the positions upgraded and 10 positions downgraded. Four classification appeals were sent to HR/OE for resolution. Although most supervisors and employees agreed CAJE was superior to the narrative classification standards and CAJE implementation was conducted openly, there still remained deep suspicion of the process. OIG noted Bulgarians are inherently suspicious of anything new and anything imposed by a government. There was a problem with communication that stemmed from the fact that CAJE was also new to the HR evaluator, who could not always fully explain the factor level ratings.

## **Inspections Conducted in Winter 2005**

### **Bandar Seri Begawan**

Embassy Bandar Seri Begawan completed CAJE implementation, which resulted in two position upgrades. The local employees found the process mystifying but accepted it as better than the previous narrative standards method. Since the initial CAJE evaluation, significant changes were made to two positions that were being reevaluated. OIG found at a very small post the CAJE process is more complicated as a change in one position creates changes in other positions.

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The American Institute in Taiwan did not meet the September 2004 deadline for CAJE implementation. The HR officer blamed the SARS crisis in spring 2003 for the delay. OIG did not find this rationale convincing when the post received repeated extensions from HR/OE. Final implementation was expected no later than September 2005. Supervisors and employees were fully briefed on the CAJE process, although OIG found implementation details and initial CAJE results were too widely available before officially released. This leaking of CAJE results gave certain section managers an opportunity to rewrite position descriptions, which further delayed implementation. Although there were complaints about CAJE implementation particularly from the consular section employees, OIG did not find CAJE to be a significant morale issue. The HR office scored low on customer service on the OIG questionnaire because the HR officer was unable to work productively with a few sections.

### **Tel Aviv**

Embassy Tel Aviv completed CAJE implementation and submitted the results for 200 positions to HR/OE for review and approval. Although most of the CAJE-recommended classifications were approved, the embassy had to provide additional justifications on a few positions.

## **Inspections Conducted in Spring 2005**

### **Dili**

CAJE implementation in Embassy Dili was completed with regional HR support from Embassy Bangkok. No problems were identified by OIG.

### **Gaborone**

Embassy Gaborone completed CAJE implementation before the September 2004 deadline but felt it was too rushed. However, USAID had not implemented CAJE. The results were five percent positions upgraded and three percent downgraded. Although managers and supervisors were fully briefed on CAJE, it seems not all of them understood the process. A number of supervisors did not hold job discussions with their employees or complete the help sheet.

Local employees did not perceive the CAJE implementation process as fair, objective, or easy to understand. The embassy experienced difficulties persuading local employees that their jobs were correctly described. There were several appeals because employees did not understand how the position grade determinations were made. The embassy reissued the management notice on appeals, and several more employees plan appeals. The HR office did not think CAJE reduced the time to evaluate jobs and increased the supervisor's workload. The HR office also commented that it is more important for the HR evaluator to have a thorough understanding of the CAJE factors than more reference jobs.

### **Hanoi**

OIG cited problems with the inadequate implementation of CAJE at Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City. CAJE implementation for the embassy and the consulate general was completed and

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on support from the regional HR officer and fell behind. HR/OE was notified, but there was no provision to provide TDY support to posts unable to complete CAJE implementation. The management officer had not received CAJE training. The embassy felt the Department should have provided TDY teams to assist with CAJE implementation. Implementation was further delayed when HR/OE found discrepancies and inconsistencies with some of the evaluations that were later resolved. At the time of the inspection, approximately 12 percent of the positions were upgraded and two percent downgraded. When the CAJE results were released, the local employees voiced numerous complaints with requests to have their positions reevaluated. OIG noted many employees did not actually read the CAJE Job Report but checked the box "agreed." Employees were notified there would be no position reviews until after September 2005.

### **Santo Domingo**

Embassy Santo Domingo implemented CAJE in January 2005 with HR/OE approval. The HR evaluators found CAJE to be more objective and faster than the old narrative standards. The embassy spent an intensive 18 months briefing and training managers, supervisors, and local employees on the CAJE process. To ensure complete objectivity, outside HR evaluators from a neighboring post were brought in to do the CAJE evaluation for positions in the financial management office and Foreign Agriculture Service. The results of CAJE implementation were 27 percent of positions upgraded and six percent downgraded. Several appeals were filed to HR/OE for resolution. The most contentious section to implement CAJE was the consular immigrant visa unit. The regional HR officer and senior HR evaluator at post continue to work with the unit to complete the CAJE evaluations. OIG met with the unit employees and advised sending the positions to HR/OE for review and final CAJE evaluation.

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