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

Report of Inspection

Inspection of
Embassy Colombo,
Sri Lanka

Report Number ISP-I-11-02A, October 2010

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and the Broadcasting Board of Governors**

Office of Inspector General

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

Harold W. Geisel
Deputy Inspector General

PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

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

PURPOSE

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

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

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CONTEXT

Transition is the watchword for both Sri Lanka and Embassy Colombo. Under British rule until shortly after the end of World War II, this island country became the Dominion of Ceylon and achieved independence from Britain in 1948. In 1972, the country's leaders announced creation of the sovereign Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. After only a few years of calm, the newly named country found itself mired in nearly continuous secessionist conflict from 1983 until the defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in May 2009.



Map of Sri Lanka and surrounding areas.
Source: U.S. Department of State

A year later, Sri Lanka is still finding its rhythm. President Majinda Rajapaksa won re-election in January 2010, and after parliamentary elections in April 2010, is six votes short of a super majority that would allow him to amend the Sri Lankan constitution. What that might mean for the country, and for U.S. interests, is still to be determined. The conflict created several legacy issues, including the return of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons to their homes in areas still filled with land mines and devastated by the conflict. Much-needed ethnic reconciliation has not yet

materialized. U.S. concerns about the military's alleged human rights abuses during the last days of the insurgency have led to frictions in the bilateral relationship and complicate military-to-military training and engagement.

Transition also defines the U.S. embassy in Sri Lanka. A large turnover of senior leadership occurred in summer 2009, just months after the country shifted from civil war to a somewhat uneasy peace. The mission has adjusted its focus from conflict to post-conflict issues and supporting democratic institutions that might give the country little-known domestic peace. Policy priorities include promoting reconciliation between the Sinhala-Buddhist majority and Tamil, Hindu, and Muslim minorities,

resettlement of internally displaced persons, ending and prosecuting human rights abuses, promotion of democracy, and provision of humanitarian and military assistance with a special focus on demining activities.

An experienced Ambassador ably leads those efforts. Embassy staffing is relatively stable, with only minimal growth planned during the next few years. Sizeable and robust Department of Defense and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs keep the focus on humanitarian issues, development, and military engagement. There is also a large U. S. Government shortwave transmitting facility operated by the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) located about 2 hours north of Colombo. The embassy has sufficient operating funds and a foreign assistance budget of approximately \$49 million — a miniscule amount compared to the funds pouring in from China, Japan, and India. Future plans include the much-needed consolidation of all embassy operations into a new facility, with a proposed start date in 2013, subject to the location and purchase of a site.

The Ambassador to Sri Lanka is also accredited to Maldives. Once a relatively quiet group of islands, known primarily for tourism, Maldives has attracted increased U.S. engagement over the past couple of years. Democratic elections in Maldives in October 2008 ousted a long-time autocratic ruler in favor of the young and energetic President Mohamed “Anni” Nasheed, a former political prisoner and democracy activist, who is seeking to balance relations with regional powers India and China by expanding ties with the United States and the international community. Embassy Colombo is working with this moderate Muslim regime on climate change (80 percent of the islands’ land masses are one meter above sea level), military cooperation, and development. There are no American personnel posted in Maldives, but the embassy is hiring a Maldivian public diplomacy employee who can also translate media from the local language and staff the American corner in Male, the capital. The embassy is also exploring ways to establish a full-time official American presence there.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Embassy Colombo is responsible for conducting U.S. relations with the Governments of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and the Republic of Maldives. The Ambassador is actively engaged with Sri Lankan Government officials and many others outside government to promote U.S. policies and objectives in a country with a low profile in Washington except on democracy and human rights issues. The Ambassador travels to Maldives to engage with government and private citizens who appreciate such attention, and who reciprocate with cooperation on a number of high-profile U.S. policy objectives.

Country team members believe access to the Ambassador is adequate. The Ambassador engages with members of the country team through a weekly country team meeting, two other senior staff meetings, and regularly scheduled special issue and other ad hoc gatherings. In addition to scheduled meetings, the Ambassador invites mission staff to join in appointments when appropriate, and she responds readily to requests to meet. Along with traditional Department embassy sections, the country team in Colombo includes resident agency heads from USAID, IBB, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Homeland Security (Container Security Initiative). Many mission staff told the OIG inspectors that they would like more opportunities for informal discussions with the Ambassador, and the inspectors talked with the Ambassador about ways to respond to this interest.

After serving in Baghdad, the Ambassador has found heading a mission with a lower profile in Washington and much less experienced managers to be a challenge. In Colombo, all heads of sections and agencies, save two, are FS-02 officers serving initial tours in those positions. The DCM told the inspectors that Embassy Colombo is “blessed” with particularly good officers, even though none have served previously in South Asia, and all but one, including the DCM, are in their particular leadership positions for the first time. Colombo’s experience deficit puts a special responsibility on senior mission leaders to develop this next generation of Foreign Service leaders. One response has been to rotate opportunities to serve as acting DCM among section heads, thereby giving them a chance to expand their awareness of mission activities.

Embassy Colombo experienced a large turnover in embassy leaders when the Ambassador, DCM, and consular, economic, political, and regional affairs section chiefs all arrived in August and September 2009. In addition, some new section

chiefs and the DCM had not attended appropriate first-time leadership training prior to taking their positions. Inspections worldwide have shown that not taking advantage of these opportunities increases the likelihood that mission leaders will find it difficult to identify, head off, and resolve problems as they arise. Especially where section chiefs are mid-career officers in their first positions of leadership and may only have a decade of experience, such training is an essential prerequisite (the DCM will attend the appropriate course this July). The inspection team made an informal recommendation in this regard.

The Ambassador prefers information to flow to her through decision and briefing memoranda, which reflects a change in leadership style from her predecessor. On her arrival, with a 100-day plan for introductory calls and familiarization events, the pressure to produce paper led to an increase in stress among staff and a sense that the work-life ratio that some expected in Colombo was out of balance. Staff has now fully adapted to the change in style.

The Ambassador and DCM came to Colombo from dangerous, high-threat assignments (Baghdad and Kabul, respectively). Their commitment to the safety and security of all mission staff is unquestioned. Since arrival, they have given great attention to security and emergency preparedness programs. They encouraged the regional security office to increase the number and frequency of drills, to regularize radio checks, and to test the emergency notification cascade. They also supported the consular section chief's initiative to reinvigorate the mission's resident American citizen notification or warden system. The OIG team concluded that the Ambassador's and DCM's risk assessment and emphasis on security and emergency preparedness are appropriate.

In comparison to many other hardship assignments, service in Colombo is relatively desirable. The work is interesting and challenging. Living and working conditions are reasonable. The terrorism threat has abated. Considering these positive elements, mission staff is less cohesive than might be expected. The physical separation between the chancery and the American Center, where USAID and PAS are located, is one of the factors affecting cohesiveness that mission management has tried to address by scheduling mission-wide events and meetings at that site. Even within the chancery, however, officers should communicate better and work to resolve issues at the lowest level possible. The inspection team met with section chiefs to discuss this issue and encourage more active, positive, and professional communication.

Mission management also has a role to play in improved communication and problem resolution. Among the possibilities are a leadership offsite, team building or leadership workshops facilitated by the Foreign Service Institute, or email-free weeks where communication must be face-to-face. Mission leadership can determine what will work best, but it does need to improve this embassy team. Leadership styles and practices developed now will carry forward with officers as they advance in the Foreign Service. The inspectors made an informal recommendation in this regard.

Embassy Colombo has a small cadre of entry-level personnel. The DCM is aware of her responsibility to mentor and develop these staff and has, since her arrival, organized three events focused on professional development issues, including bidding and evaluations. The most recent event brought together the Ambassador and other embassy staff who have served in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, to discuss their experiences in these unaccompanied, dangerous, and important policy-interest missions. As a result of this meeting, several entry-level personnel expressed interest in assignments at these high-profile missions. The Ambassador also hosted an event for entry-level personnel with their counterparts from the Ministry of External Affairs.

In a meeting with the inspection team, entry-level personnel expressed interest in an even more robust program. The OIG inspectors suggested that they reach out, for ideas and best practices, to entry-level personnel at similar-sized missions that have successful programs for first- and second-tour personnel.

The Ambassador and DCM are committed to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) objectives. However, there is room for improvement. A new EEO counselor took up the duties after a 6-month period without a formally designated counselor. That person has pursued these new responsibilities with energy. While on display at the chancery site, EEO materials have not been adequately posted at the American Center or at the IBB transmitting station site. The embassy has a sole local employee serving as the EEO liaison and needs additional liaison staff to reflect the gender and ethnic diversity of the mission.

The mission engaged in an inclusive, wide-ranging effort to prepare two Mission Strategic Resource Plan (MSRP) submissions, one for Sri Lanka and another for Maldives. All members of the country team played active roles in drafting the two documents. A preliminary, working-level review at the Department determined that the two MSRP drafts were generally well-prepared. Department officials commented that, like many others, this mission did not follow instructions to limit budget growth projections and therefore, it may have unrealistic expectations.

With permission from the Department to expand the number of goal papers, the consular section sought and received authorization to draft a new goal paper. This permitted the mission to project, with greater precision, the budget implications of growing consular workloads in American citizens services, immigrant visas, and in Maldives.

PAS engaged fully in the preparation of the FY 2012 MSRPs for Sri Lanka and Maldives. Each MSRP appropriately incorporated public diplomacy in the goal papers. The Ambassador is an active participant in public diplomacy activities, including public speaking and other cultural and outreach activities. The DCM, a public diplomacy officer, is also active in public diplomacy and supportive of the mission's dynamic PAS.

Preparation of separate MSRPs is not the worldwide norm at missions with responsibility to conduct relations with two countries. When the mission asked if it could prepare a single plan for Sri Lanka and Maldives, the regional affairs office of the Bureau of South and Central Asia Affairs (SCA) reportedly said that the bureau wanted separate plans. While the two plans prepared in Colombo help to distinguish between foreign and military assistance budgets and programs, there is in fact, a single mission in Colombo where human and financial resources must support programs and activities in both Sri Lanka and Maldives. Mission staff readily cites the burden of preparing two versions of other required annual reports, such as the annual report on human rights practices or the investment climate statement. They say that writing two required reports each time adds to their workload and drives requests to increase the staffing in the political and economic sections. Since these are "country" reports, there is no alternative to drafting two separate reports. However, preparing separate MSRPs for Sri Lanka and Maldives is an unnecessary additional burden for mission staff.

Recommendation 1: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Bureau of Resource Management and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, should prepare a single FY 2013 Mission Strategic Resource Plan for Sri Lanka and Maldives. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with RM and SCA)

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

REPORTING

Embassy Colombo, particularly the political section, shoulders a double burden of the required reporting that affects missions worldwide since separate submissions are required for Sri Lanka and Maldives. The embassy finds it especially challenging to respond to the newfound policy interest in Maldives, a thousand miles away and without a permanent American presence. The Department expressed overall satisfaction with Embassy Colombo's reporting. However, several Washington agencies told inspectors that reporting was of good quality but could be more analytical and more frequent. The political and economic sections have comprehensive reporting plans, which serve as a good framework for organizing work and setting priorities, but the plans have been overly ambitious in the face of staffing shortages and other demands.

Communication between Embassy Colombo and the Department is robust, with daily "official-informal" emails in both directions containing operational points and spot reporting. A review of these emails and the embassy's formal reporting revealed several issues. The embassy's emails lack the analysis and broad external distribution of Department cables. These emails, sent solely to Department addressees, are often used to inform them of meetings with government officials and politicians and other significant events. The content often does not migrate to front-channel (and more analytical) reporting. As a result, the broader audience is deprived of the facts and the embassy's analytical judgment. The OIG team discussed this with the front office, which prompted a shift to more formal reporting.

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

The political section has an energetic yet inexperienced and largely untrained staff. The section gets its work done satisfactorily and on time, but with room for improvement. The section chief is in his role for the first time while the second officer is in his first political tour. The remaining two reporting positions are filled with professional associates who have never done similar work or received training. The

office management specialist is also on his first tour. Each of the two local employees has more than 10 years experience and extensive contacts throughout Sri Lanka. A new entry-level position, to be filled in summer 2010, will provide needed staff resources and stability to fulfill the section's responsibilities. The current section head did not receive training for first-time section chiefs and, as a result, lacks vital perspective on both his management and reporting responsibilities.

A review of FY 2010 in-country travel and representation vouchers suggests that the political section could use these tools far more effectively. The chief of the section had not traveled at all, and the other political officer had not traveled in the three months prior to the inspection. In contrast, the local employees had each traveled at least seven times and the professional associates at least three times. Similarly, the local staff made far more frequent use of representation funds than the officers. The OIG team counseled the section chief on how more effective use of travel and representation resources could improve the section's reporting and outreach.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

The economic section is agile and well-run. Like the political section, its American staff is also relatively inexperienced, but its local employees are seasoned and well-connected. The section's work is well-known to Washington offices and agencies, and the officers produce a steady stream of front channel and informal reporting. The economic section has a strong collaborative relationship with the Foreign Commercial Service and Foreign Agricultural Service in India, and the section has helped the Ambassador to revive the local American Chamber of Commerce.

Economic officers have traveled extensively throughout Sri Lanka and, to a lesser extent, Maldives. The section could better use representation funds to advance reporting and contact work, and the OIG team offered counseling in this area.

POLITICAL-MILITARY AFFAIRS

Political-military affairs are significant in the bilateral relationships between the United States and Sri Lanka and Maldives, although the former is in decline and the latter is ascendant. The Ambassador chairs a weekly political-military meeting, but these issues are viewed largely as being in the purview of the Defense attaché and the chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation. As a result, lines of responsibility are muddled and the political section does not play the central role. A professional

associate has the political-military affairs portfolio in the political section. She has embraced the portfolio with enthusiasm and industry and has the full confidence of both the Ambassador and the DCM. She has not, however, received the necessary training nor sufficient guidance from the political section chief. There is no certainty that the embassy can replace her with another professional associate when she departs in summer 2011. Political-military affairs in Sri Lanka merit the attention of an individual (whether an officer or professional associate) who has been adequately trained and has had the requisite consultations in Washington and with the Pacific Command.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Bureau of Human Resources and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, should require that the individual assigned the political-military affairs portfolio is properly trained and has consultations in Washington and with the Pacific Command in Honolulu before arriving at post. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with HR and SCA)

By law, recipients of security force training and equipment are subject to the Leahy provision.¹ Once the proposed recipients have been vetted within the mission, their names are sent to Washington for a second review. At Embassy Colombo, coordination of Leahy vetting rests with the political section's office management specialist, who has demonstrated great conscientiousness and commitment in exercising this responsibility, but spends too much time returning submissions to originating offices for additional information. Standard operating procedures, based on the Department's long-standing vetting guide, would help to organize and clarify the process.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Colombo should revise and update its internal Leahy vetting standard operating procedures and create a standardized cover sheet or nomination form specifying all information required prior to returning submissions to the coordinator. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

¹ The Leahy provision of the annual Department of State and Department of Defense appropriations bills prohibit the provision of assistance to foreign security force units that have been implicated in gross violations of human rights. The Department of State is responsible for vetting foreign security units and individuals sponsored by any U.S. Government entity for training, travel, or other assistance-related activities.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

PAS is a well-run, busy section with a packed program calendar and active outreach. The addition of a professional associate in February has relieved some of the pressure on the two officers in this section, and the expected arrival of a third officer in the summer should enable PAS to undertake additional initiatives. The public affairs officer has clearly set forth the section's goals in a strategic communications plan for Sri Lanka, drafted in spring 2009 and incorporated into the MSRP. The primary focus is youth; half the population is under 30 and does not remember a time before the lengthy civil conflict left its legacy of deep social divisions and mistrust. The plan establishes the objectives of fostering reconciliation and countering extremism, improving inter-ethnic communication and economic opportunity through English language programs, and getting youth involved in their communities. The plan directs current programming and provides a framework for using the large increase in funding that SCA has requested for Colombo.

Cooperation between PAS and other embassy sections and agencies is generally good. The consular section in particular has provided excellent support to PAS in facilitating grantee travel. The press office produces four useful daily compilations of news items from the Sri Lankan, Maldivian, and foreign press for the entire embassy and disseminates press releases for all sections and agencies. However, the embassy has not distributed a mission-wide press policy in more than a year. The OIG team made an informal recommendation addressing this issue.

American Center

PAS occupies the second floor of a separate American Center facility in the former embassy building less than a mile from the chancery. The center includes an Information Resource Center (IRC) library that is open to the public, a program room, exhibit space, and offices. The library has a three-person staff, all of whom have less than 3 or 4 years' experience in their positions. The library is open Tuesday through Saturday and offers 10 computers with Internet access, which provide the main draw for the 20-30 persons who stop by in an average day. The library collection includes approximately 4,000 books, 40 journals, and 700 digital video disks and videotapes, which patrons can view on two players. Individuals can use the materials free of charge, but they have to become library members at a small fee if they want to use the computers or check out books and materials. The OIG team noted that the 10 FAM 363.6 b. (1) does not allow libraries to charge membership fees for use of the

IRC, but Bureau of International Information Programs rules do allow a processing fee for a membership card (09 State 121086). The OIG team counseled the section on the distinction.

The IRC recycles the \$300 to \$400 a month it receives from library membership fees and other services, such as copying, and uses the funds to pay for databases or subscriptions. However, Department rules for IRC fund recycling (09 State 121086) state that these funds must be used for IRC enhancements and not for regular operating expenses.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Colombo should establish in advance a list of library enhancements to be funded with its recycled funds and should use the funds for these items. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

The IRC does not have a formal budget or long-range plan for developing its book and information materials collections. The library purchased new books last year, but prior to that, it had not purchased new books for several years. The most recent IRC annual plan on file in Washington is from 2006-2007. According to 10 FAM 362.2 b., the regional information resource officer is responsible for writing the plan and clearing it with the public affairs officer. For 2009-2010, the IRC director drafted an annual plan herself, with advice from the New Delhi-based regional information resource officer, and gave it to her supervisor, but the public affairs officer was not involved in the process. Without an annual budget, a strategy for developing and updating its collections, a replacement schedule for old materials, and an annual plan that is closely coordinated with the overall goals set by the public affairs officer, the IRC may spend its funds less effectively and become less relevant to the overall public diplomacy mission. Given the relative newness of the IRC staff, these planning documents would be especially valuable.

Recommendation 5: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi, should develop an annual budget for the Information Resource Center and a long-range collection development plan for its books and other information materials. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi)

Recommendation 6: Embassy New Delhi should write an annual plan for Embassy Colombo's Information Resource Center and clear it with Embassy Colombo. (Action: Embassy New Delhi)

Walk-in traffic to the library in Colombo is lower than that for comparable libraries in the region. Located on a busy street, it suffers from a lack of nearby public parking. To bring more people into the library and to make the center a more active conveyor of information, PAS has instituted two movie showings per week, one for adults and one for children. To attract a younger audience, it has purchased more prize-winning children's books and recently started a monthly reading club called "Readers are Leaders" for children aged 6-14 in which embassy staff members read to children. The program attracts about 40 participants per session. PAS also conducts frequent lectures at the center. Overall, these programs give PAS a good record for attracting visitors through programming.

American Corners

PAS has established three American Corners located in the Sri Lankan provincial cities of Kandy and Oluvil and in the Maldivian capital of Malé. The corners had not been as active as they could be, but through intensive programming activity and attention in the last two years, PAS assisted the American Corners to revitalize themselves. They more than tripled their number of visitors, from 2,500 people in 2008 to 8,825 in 2009. PAS purchased digital video conference equipment for the corners, and audiences there frequently participate in Colombo speaker programs via video conference.

PAS has submitted a \$50,000 proposal to open an American Corner in Jaffna, the largest city in Sri Lanka's Northern Province, where the embassy could not conduct normal public diplomacy programs for a quarter century due to the Tamil insurgency. A Martin Luther King commemorative exhibition that PAS presented in Jaffna in March attracted more than 1,000 students, who filled the auditorium for every workshop session, demonstrating the strong demand for contact and programming. PAS has identified the Conflict Analysis Center (also called the Peace Center), previously the location of an Anglican church, as the proposed partner organization. SCA has agreed to fund the proposal, which will provide a much-needed American presence in the north.

The American Corners could be made more effective if officers from other sections regularly undertook public diplomacy programs at the corners when they visit the cities where they are located, especially Malé (and Jaffna when it opens); the OIG team made an informal recommendation to this effect. The OIG team also informally recommended that PAS sponsor a regular opportunity for the American Corner directors to get together among themselves and exchange ideas.

Outreach

PAS has recently taken some strong steps to improve its outreach efforts and keep in closer contact with its program alumni. It created the new local staff position of outreach coordinator, who has developed numerous programs and public diplomacy activities and works closely with the American Corners. With a grant from the Department's alumni affairs office, PAS hired an alumni coordinator on a 2-year contract in 2009. The coordinator has personally called or written to more than 200 program alumni to update their contact information and gauge their interests. PAS is in the process of setting up an alumni organization; it established a steering committee and is planning an inaugural event with the Ambassador. Outreach activities in Maldives should take a big step forward when PAS hires a local staff member to work out of the American Corner in Malé. At the time of the inspection, PAS had created the position, identified candidates, and was planning to interview them.

Outreach is hampered, however, by the lack of a section-wide and mission-wide contact database. Within PAS, each office has its own contact lists on Microsoft Outlook; staff members address invitations by hand. To conduct electronic outreach, the IRC uses a Microsoft Word document with 2,000 email addresses that a staff person must manually copy into an email address field. PAS purchased the commercial Goldmine contact management software but has had difficulties getting it up and running. Primarily because of computer server issues, it took more than a year for the information management office to obtain and install the software, a process that was just finished in March. At the time of the inspection, PAS staff members were drafting an implementation plan. The local computer systems staff has no expertise on Goldmine, so PAS is planning to request training by digital video conference from Embassy Ottawa, which is among the embassies that uses the program.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Colombo should develop and carry out a Goldmine contact management database implementation plan for the public affairs section that clearly specifies who has primary responsibility for the database, the method of determining the software fields, staff training requirements, and data input procedures. The planning process and training sessions should include local computer systems staff. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

A contact management system is most useful and effective if it encompasses the entire mission. The various sections of Embassy Colombo have their own separate contact lists on Outlook. PAS is operating under the understanding that the section is pioneering the use of Goldmine, which will be extended to the rest of the embassy if successful.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Colombo should develop a plan to move towards an embassy-wide, integrated contact database. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

An embassy speakers program in which embassy employees, family members, and other members of the American community are programmed to speak at schools and organizations on a variety of topics can be a useful outreach tool. PAS tried to start an embassy speakers program a year ago but received few takers. At the time of the inspection, the section had put forth another proposal to initiate the program, and the Ambassador approved it in principle. The OIG team made an informal recommendation to move forward with this plan.

Web site and New Media

PAS has a vibrant Facebook page with more than 8,000 fans that serves as a key method of engaging with its high-priority youth audience. It has succeeded in attracting such a large fan base by running Facebook ads, updating the page three or four times a day, and running quiz competitions with prizes, such as free memberships in the American Center library and tickets to cultural events. In contrast, the embassy's blog site shows little activity, and the OIG team made an informal recommendation to revitalize it or drop it.

The embassy's public Web site is a standard Content Management System Web site, with regional news at the top, followed by news from the embassy, and more news from Washington. The embassy news section in mid-May led with a speech by the Ambassador but lacked coverage of the embassy's recent programs and public diplomacy activities. Two of the three photos at the top left of the home page were more than three weeks old. There was no link to the Web site for the Virtual Presence Post for the Maldives, which an eligible family member in the political section runs. The OIG team made an informal recommendation regarding these issues.

Except for human rights reports that Congress requires to be posted in the local languages, the embassy Web site contains very little information in the Sri Lankan local languages of Sinhala and Tamil, and nothing in the Maldivian language of Dhivehi. One difficulty is that older versions of Microsoft Word cannot handle the Sinhala script, so postings may need to be in another file format. Consular information is the prime draw for the embassy's public Web site, but visa information is in English except for information on the diversity visa program. The lack of key visa information in local languages may cause Sri Lankans and Maldivians to misunderstand visa procedures and regulations, causing them to waste their own and consular officers'

time and creating ill will towards the United States. Additionally, the lack of local versions of press releases and other documents means a lost opportunity to reach local people with our message in a language they can easily understand.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Colombo should translate key visa information into Sinhala, Tamil, and Dhivehi and post it on the embassy Web site, with a link from the home page in the local language, and post on the Web site any other documents, such as press releases or program reports that have already been translated into the local languages. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Education and Exchange Programs

The embassy has an excellent relationship with the binational United States-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission, which runs the Fulbright program (15 scholars traveling in each direction) and educational advising. Currently, the United States provides virtually all the funding for the Fulbright program; the Government of Sri Lanka makes a modest in-kind contribution through duty-free concessions and the waiver of visa fees. The Sri Lankan Government contributed to the program in the past, and now that the civil war has ended, the Fulbright board is considering whether to approach the government about a contribution. A Fulbright alumni association meets at least every two months for a lecture or discussion. The Fulbright Commission also includes a busy Education USA center with two education advisers who also travel to provincial cities.

PAS runs a strong Access Microscholarship program to improve the English-language skills of non-elite Sri Lankan students. Particularly noteworthy is PAS' practice of using the Access program to feed into other programs, such as a youth film camp last summer, to promote ties across ethnic and religious boundaries.

In recent years, the Department has given Embassy Colombo an increasing number of International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) slots. The base allocation for Sri Lanka grew from 18 in FY 2009 to 26 in FY 2010. The embassy was able to capitalize on a Department offer of additional slots in FY 2010 to embassies that could find appropriate candidates, and received 11 more IVLP slots.

For 2011, Embassy Colombo has 31 slots for Sri Lanka, plus five for Maldives. The cultural affairs officer sent an email on March 19, 2010, to all embassy sections and agencies requesting IVLP nominations. By the April 30 internal deadline, PAS received just 43 nominations for the 36 slots, a low number for this important professional exchange program. All of the nominations came from just three sec-

tions — the political and economic sections, and PAS. The cable setting forth the IVLP selection process (04 State 265219) notes that it is a tool for the entire mission to address key mission goals and that the nominees should reflect the diversity of the country. Several factors may have contributed to this low result. The cultural affairs officer sent out the original call for nominations rather than the Ambassador or DCM, as is common in many posts, though the DCM did send a supportive email and mentioned the program in staff meetings. The 6-week notice before the deadline may not have been enough time for officers to seek out and consider appropriate nominees.

The email specified that the nominees had to speak fluent English and should be nominated for regional and multiregional IVLP projects, which limited the number and diversity of potential nominees. The IVLP is one of the few exchange programs that can handle non-English speakers. Embassies can nominate groups of non-English speakers for single-country projects that focus on topics of importance to the mission, and Embassy Colombo had done this in the past. The self-imposed requirement that all nominees fit into the pre-established English-language multiregional and regional projects prevented Embassy Colombo from taking a more strategic approach to the IVLP. This approach contrasted with the embassy's otherwise strongly focused public diplomacy efforts.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Colombo should design and implement a schedule to seek International Visitor Leadership Program candidates and to develop single-country projects addressing mission goals that can include non-English speakers. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Because of their busy schedules, nominating officers generally do not participate in predeparture briefings for their grantees or post-program debriefings, as recommended in the IVLP selection process cable. Their participation can enhance the grantee's program in the United States and strengthen the relationship between the officer and the key contact.

Recommendation 11: Embassy Colombo should establish procedures to include the nominating officer in International Visitor Leadership Program pre-departure briefings and post-program debriefings. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

team inspected the embassy, the consular section was just beginning to reconstitute itself with several new local employees and a renewed focus on maintaining tight management controls.

Just as the new employees were developing their skills, the consular section faced a second major challenge. On December 26, 2004, Sri Lanka was among the countries most devastated by the tsunami that swept through the Indian Ocean. It was a massive challenge for this small section to track down missing Americans, arrange medical care for others, and notify and assist next-of-kin in the deaths of eight U.S. citizens. The Department sent in some temporary duty consular employees to assist Embassy Colombo, but the brunt of the work fell on the staff of the consular section. Their outstanding performance was recognized by a Meritorious Honor award in 2005.

Staffing Issues

Consular workload in Colombo has been relatively steady in recent years in comparison with many other consular operations. The number of nonimmigrant visa adjudications was around 14,500 between 2006 and 2008, but that number declined 16.8 percent to 12,643 cases in FY 2009. This decline was most likely due to the worldwide economic downturn and will probably rebound as economic conditions improve. Immigrant visa work, on the other hand, has increased significantly in the past few years. In FY 2004, the section had 505 immigrant visa adjudications, but that number increased by 230 percent to 1,671 immigrant visa adjudications in FY 2009.

Immigrant visa cases require more time and more work for the staff, so the increase in the number of cases has put steady pressure on the resources of the consular section and the fraud prevention unit. In 2009, the consular section added a second local employee position to the fraud prevention unit to handle complicated nonimmigrant visa fraud, especially in applications for work visas and intra-company transfer visas. The incumbent of that new position started in January 2010.

The section is adequately staffed—one exception is discussed below—with the section chief, two entry-level officers, two eligible family members, and seven local employees. Employees are able to perform their duties without incurring too much overtime, except when there are multiple emergencies involving American citizens. In such a scenario, other local employees have been trained to assist the lone local employee who works in the American citizens services unit.

The exception on staffing is that the fraud prevention program needs to be enhanced. Visa fraud is a serious problem in Sri Lanka; it is driven by poverty and a history of Sri Lankans seeking work abroad. Recognizing this, the embassy had asked in 2009 for the second locally employed staff member for the fraud prevention unit discussed above.

In addition, Embassy Colombo requested in April 2010 an assistant regional security officer-investigations position in response to the Department's announcement that that program is being expanded worldwide. This officer would spend the bulk of his/her time in the consular section developing criminal cases against persons committing visa fraud. The OIG team believes the addition of this position to the consular section in Colombo would significantly strengthen its capabilities in this high-fraud environment and be of interest to the U.S. Government.

Recommendation 13: The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should approve the request from Embassy Colombo for an assistant regional security officer-investigations position and fund and establish the position. (Action: CA, in coordination with DS)

Space Issues

As staffing in the consular section has grown, the section has been increasingly squeezed for space. As a result of the huge workload arising from the tsunami in late 2004, the embassy moved the American citizens services unit down a hallway from the main part of the consular section to space formerly occupied by the Foreign Commercial Service. One local employee works in this unit full-time, and one of the entry-level officers works part of the week there while spending the bulk of her time on visa issues in the main part of the consular section. This means that the sole local employee often works without line-of-sight supervision by an American officer. The local employee does not handle any cash and the consular officers maintain tight management controls over accountable items such as passports. In addition, the consular section chief recently added a camera in the American citizens services unit and has a monitor in his office. The OIG team concluded that embassy managers have taken appropriate steps to mitigate the vulnerabilities that arise from having the American citizens services unit in an office separated from the main part of the consular section.

Despite the additional space, the consular offices remain so poorly arranged that two eligible family members have no desks. They spend several hours per day at the visa windows, primarily fingerprinting visa applicants and perform their other work, such as responding to public email inquiries, while sitting at the windows. The space at the window is cramped and inefficient for work that does not involve interviews with the public. There is sufficient space in the consular work area to accommodate desks for the two eligible family members if the space is used more efficiently.

Recommendation 14: Embassy Colombo should create and implement a plan to rearrange the consular work area so that the two eligible family member employees in the consular section will have assigned desks. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

MENTORING ISSUES

By all accounts, mentoring in the consular section is strong. Several local employees volunteered that they have learned more from the current section chief than from any other supervisor. Local employees have been cross-trained so that they can back each other up. Communication among members of the section is excellent. The two entry-level officers are also satisfied with their professional development. Nevertheless, the officers are hampered by the fact that the section is small; they would benefit from learning from nearby consular operations. The most logical such operation would be Consulate General Chennai, India, because of cultural similarities and the fact that many of their fraud challenges — such as for work visas — are similar. In the past, entry-level officers in Colombo and Chennai have engaged in exchanges.

Recommendation 15: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi, should reinstitute a program of exchanges of entry-level consular officers between Embassy Colombo and Consulate General Chennai to further the professional development of the officers. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi)

Regional Consular Officer Program

Embassy Colombo is part of the regional consular officer program. The regional consular officer is based at Embassy Bangkok and visits Colombo twice a year for a few days at a time. The OIG team reviewed the reports of the visits that were made in September 2009 and April 2010. The reports were thorough and informative and provided many excellent ideas for improvements.

Visa Processing Issues

The embassy uses a local contractor for visa appointments and answering general visa inquiries. This contractor also serves other embassies in Colombo and the consular section chief expressed satisfaction with its service. The contract expires in 2011. The Bureau of Consular Affairs has informed consular managers that local contracts will not be renewed when they expire, as the bureau plans to implement a consolidated worldwide system for providing such services.

The consular section does not use a courier service or the postal system for returning passports after visas have been placed in them. A local employee hands the passports back to the applicants at the guard booth on the street. This system seems to work well. The number of passports handed back to the applicants each day is low enough to make the amount of time devoted to this duty minimal.

Shortly before the arrival of the OIG team in Colombo, the consular section started using the new DS-160 nonimmigrant visa application form. As the consular section chief explained, the work flow would be much more efficient with the new form if the section had an additional window. After observing the flow of work among eligible family members and local employees, the inspectors agreed with that assessment by the consular section chief.

The embassy is in the process of requesting an additional visa window. Its proposal would be to convert a door that connects the visa waiting room with the consular work area into a window. The door is not used and converting the door into a window would enhance the physical security of the section. The OIG team supports the embassy's plan.

Recommendation 16: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should remove the door connecting the visa waiting room with the consular work area and install an additional visa window in place of the door. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with CA and OBO)

Warden System

The new consular section chief has revived the warden system in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. During the inspection, the DCM hosted a town hall meeting at her residence among embassy officials, wardens, and American citizens to discuss the warden system, including the best ways of communicating with each other. The OIG team supports this important initiative. With the end of the civil war, the number of American tourists to Sri Lanka likely will increase, making an effective warden system even more important.

Consular Services for Maldives

The embassy has difficulties providing consular services for Maldives. There are approximately 35 American residents there and about 5,000 American tourists each year. Thus, there are limited requests for emergency services for American citizens. However, when emergency services are required, the consular section has to get consular employees to the Maldives on short notice. Fortunately, the Government of Maldives is cooperative and helpful in working with the consular section in assisting American citizens.

The United States had a consular agency in Maldives for many years, but the Department closed the agency in 1995 because the workload did not justify the expense of maintaining such an office.

Providing visa services is also a challenge. Many of the applications require special administrative processing by the embassy, meaning that the approvals for cases often come in shortly before the applicants have to travel. Providing these services can be especially delicate when the applicants have been invited by the U.S. Government for purposes such as training or attending conferences. The consular section does an excellent job of monitoring these cases and trying to ensure that applicants get their visas in time. The Maldivian Government also plays a positive role as it couriers the visa applicants' passports back and forth between Malé and Colombo. It provides this service for private Maldivian citizens as well as government employees.

Visas Viper Program

The embassy has a robust Visas Viper program. (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2) (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2) During the inspection, members of the OIG team observed a regularly scheduled Visas Viper meeting chaired by the DCM. Various elements of the embassy were actively engaged in the discussion

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	U.S. Direct-hire Staff	U.S. Local-hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2010
State – Diplomatic and Consular Programs	21	0	27	48	\$1,425,719
State - ICASS	5	1	147	153	\$3,678,700
State - Public Diplomacy	3	0	16	19	\$314,565
State – Diplomatic Security and MSG	12	0	173	18	\$1,582,700
State – Office of Overseas Buildings Operations	1	0	0	1	\$921,300
State – Representation	0	0	0	0	\$25,100
Defense Attaché Office (includes ODC)	5	0	3	8	\$405,200
Library of Congress (LOC)	0	0	2	2	0
Broadcasting Board of Governors (IBB)	4	0	54	58	\$2,701,680
Dept of Homeland Security - CBP	3	0	1	4	\$160,760
USAID	17	0	40	57	\$38,350,000
Dept of Justice – LEGATT	0	0	0	0	0
Dept of Treasury	0	0	0	0	0
NADR-EXBS	0	0	0	0	\$450,000
FMF	0	0	0	0	\$1,000,000
IMET	0	0	0	0	\$800,000
TOTALS	71	1	463	535	\$51,815,724

MANAGEMENT SECTION

Embassy Colombo has an adequately staffed management section that provides good support to embassy programs and agencies but needs to improve customer service. The management counselor is leading a section for the first time but has served several tours working in the general services offices at high-stress embassies. He has a good sense of how to get the advice and support he needs from Washington or from colleagues in the region. Local employees are accommodating but reluctant to disagree with American personnel and generally lack training regarding appropriate customer feedback. The embassy has implemented eServices but the general perception is that this has actually reduced, rather than enhanced, customer service. The 2010 International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) customer satisfaction scores, which were lower than the worldwide average in many categories, confirmed this perception.

The management officer understands the importance, and the challenge, of providing good customer service. The ICASS council submitted feedback to the DCM in March that noted the low ICASS customer satisfaction scores and identified steps to improve customer service. The management office has yet to implement those recommendations regarding training and customer surveys. The result is a perception, heard from various customers throughout the mission, that management is inattentive to their needs.

Recommendation 17: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Foreign Service Institute, should identify customer service training resources and bring customer service trainers to Colombo to provide training for the entire management staff. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with FSI)

Recommendation 18: Embassy Colombo should survey employees to identify and correct shortcomings in management operations and customer service. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 19: Embassy Colombo should identify and train a customer service point-of-contact to manage requests within the management section. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

The management section has been working with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations on site selection for the construction of a new consolidated facility that will collocate all mission operations. With USAID and PAS now located at an off-site facility, this consolidation will improve security and mission cohesion. The Ambassador has proposed keeping the embassy in its current location near the center of town, and purchasing the neighboring, vacant, former British High Commission site to increase the compound size. The other proposed site is located outside of town near the new Parliament building. The Department has yet to make a decision on the compound's future location. No matter which location is chosen, it could be 5 to 10 years before the embassy is completely moved into its new facility. The proposals regarding the new embassy compound are discussed more fully in the classified annex to this report.

While the current chancery has enough space overall for the staff housed there, some sections complain that the space is no longer divided equitably. They also complain that decisions are made without consultation and without a clear idea as to which employees will be housed in which office space.

Recommendation 20: Embassy Colombo should undertake a comprehensive survey of its space needs with all involved sections participating in the survey and in deliberations regarding the allocation of office space. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

The embassy has been working with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations to plan and fund remodeling of the controlled access area to accommodate a need for more controlled space. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations has provided funding for the project; the embassy is responsible for finalizing the plans.

Recommendation 21: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should finalize plans for the renovation of unused space on the chancery's fourth floor. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with OBO and DS.)

SHARED SERVICES

Embassy Colombo is following the Department's guidelines for consolidating management services with USAID. The embassy has consolidated warehousing, awards, residential and nonresidential maintenance, and leasing operations under ICASS, but it has yet to consolidate other services. USAID is reluctant to consolidate further, despite Department guidance; therefore, consolidation efforts in motor pool, local employee recruitment, and administrative supplies have stalled. The lack of progress may make it difficult to meet the Department's October 1, 2010, deadline for consolidation of Tier 3 embassies, which includes Embassy Colombo. The management section has not reached out to other embassies that have undergone similar consolidation efforts to determine pitfalls and implementation strategies that might help move the process forward. Similarly, the management section has not fully considered the customer service implications of consolidation.

Recommendation 22: Embassy Colombo should develop and implement a plan to consolidate motor pool, local employee recruitment, and administrative supplies with the U.S. Agency for International Development, using lessons learned from embassies that have already gone through similar consolidation processes. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Embassy management should implement a consolidated furniture and appliance pool for all agencies under the interagency housing board. Currently, when a residence is assigned to a new agency, all appliances and furniture have to be removed and new appliances and furniture installed. This is especially difficult with appliances that are integral to the operations of the residences, such as distillers and air conditioners, and removal of these appliances reduces their life span. Removal also creates unnecessary work for the facilities and warehouse staff and wastes valuable warehouse space. More importantly, keeping appliances separate also means that if employees need replacement appliances that their agency does not have in stock, they must either wait for the appliance to be purchased or beg another agency to sell or loan them a replacement leading to a sense of inequity among employees, while also perpetuating a perception of management inattention.

Recommendation 23: Embassy Colombo should establish an interagency appliance and furniture pool to maximize efficiencies and free up warehouse space. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Embassy Colombo's financial management unit provides an acceptable level of service to its ICASS customers. A second-tour American financial management officer (FMO) supervises eight local staff. The unit is responsible for FY 2010 allotments of approximately \$7.95 million. The financial management unit also provides financial services to the Defense attaché office and IBB.

The 2010 ICASS customer satisfaction survey scores were below bureau and worldwide averages for all financial operations except for accounts and records, which were identical to the worldwide figures. The financial specialist, promoted from class B cashier, is a local employee with certifying authority up to \$10,000. He is also a member of the Foreign Service National Executive Corps. He has applied for a special immigrant visa and, if that is approved, will emigrate to the United States in 2011. The FMO told the inspectors that if the section is unable to hire from within, that could have a temporarily adversely affect on the services the office provides.

Although lacking the experience of many class B cashiers, Embassy Colombo's cashier is knowledgeable and well-trained. Cashier operations are conducted in accordance with financial management procedures and requirements. The class B cashier's accountability was decreased (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2) in December 2009. Although the class B cashier was conducting some unannounced verifications of the subcashier's funds, American supervisors were not performing any unannounced verifications. Guidance in 4 FAH-3 H-397.2-3 permits American supervisors to conduct unannounced verifications as deemed necessary, and the OIG team made an informal recommendation regarding this issue.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

The USAID mission director chairs the embassy's ICASS council. Other members include representatives of the Department, IBB, and the Department of Defense. The council held three meetings in 2009. The council's first meeting of 2010 was postponed and in its place the ICASS council chair, USAID executive officer, management officer, and FMO met to discuss the 2010 ICASS customer satisfaction survey results. As noted earlier, those results were lower than the bureau and worldwide averages and lower than Embassy Colombo's 2009 score.

The embassy has established an ICASS budget committee that meets concurrently with the ICASS council. The council has fulfilled its responsibilities to provide input for the management officer's evaluation.

During a meeting with the inspectors, the ICASS council chair stated she felt her role had devolved into a figurehead and that ICASS council meetings were more ad hoc than regularly scheduled. She also stated that Colombo's ICASS service providers lacked a customer service orientation and that, when issues were raised, there was no resolution. She admitted she had not raised some issues with the management officer. Once again, there appears to be a lack of communication between ICASS customers and service providers that, if left unresolved, will continue to fester.

HUMAN RESOURCES

A first-tour officer leads the human resources (HR) office, filling a newly created position. The officer is off to an impressive start and has already earned the respect of his HR team. Local employees in the section appreciate the teamwork ethic and clearly feel empowered by the HR officer's inclusive management style. Human resources was one of only two areas in management (motor pool was the other) that achieved ICASS scores both higher than the worldwide average and higher than the average for the bureau. The HR team identifies its greatest challenge as finding time to provide a "human touch" given its work load. In an effort to remedy the problem, the office is undertaking a commendable effort to hold "meet and greet" sessions between the HR employees and local employees in other areas, beginning with the employees in facilities maintenance.

Nepotism issues and ethnic differences make recruitment a challenge in the Sri Lankan environment. Past efforts to promote individual employees have resulted in what appear to be anomalous grade level decisions. While many employees in the HR office are certified to conduct job evaluations and administer the computer aided job evaluation program, they could find it difficult to recommend changing the grades of their colleagues. With the arrival of the American HR officer, it is time for the embassy to re-evaluate job grades, particularly those at the higher levels, to ensure they are properly graded.

Recommendation 24: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, should identify an employee outside of Embassy Colombo who is certified to perform job classifications. That classifier should review the grade levels of positions grade 9 and above to determine whether jobs are accurately classified. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with SCA)

Employees receive a transportation allowance that is based on their annual salary. However, employees leaving work after 7 p.m. can also submit reimbursement claims for office-to-home transportation via taxi. The maintenance staff was rarely compensated under this provision, even when called in on emergencies. It appears that this policy is a vestige of the civil war, which ended in spring 2009, when public transportation was not as frequent as it is now. Public buses are now available until at least 10 p.m. in most, if not all, parts of the city. The inspectors raised this issue with embassy management. The embassy issued a management notice which changed the hours for which employees could be reimbursed for taxis and the procedures to be followed.

The embassy working hours for office staff are 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, with 30 minutes for lunch, and 8 a.m. to noon on Fridays, for a total of 40 hours. This schedule has mixed support among the American staff. Some believe that employees are working a full 40 hours, while others see Friday as a “social” day, with very little work being done. Still others like the schedule because they use Friday afternoons to catch up on work. The inspectors see no issue per se with this modified work schedule and understand that changing it could hurt morale. However, management has not been monitoring the schedule to ensure that employees are working productively on Friday. In addition, embassy management has not reviewed the effect of holidays on the work schedule. The OIG team left an informal recommendation addressing this issue.

HR’s documents are up-to-date. A comprehensive local employee handbook is printed for each employee and is also available online in English. The embassy has also translated the handbook into Tamil, with a Sinhala version in the works. There are a few overdue local employee evaluation reports, despite HR tracking and reminders sent to supervisors. The OIG team counseled American employees responsible for the late evaluations.

Locally Employed Staff Committee

The OIG team met with the locally employed staff committee, a group that represents all embassy local staff. The committee comprises 18 members and includes representatives of the Department, IBB, Library of Congress, Department of Defense, and USAID. Elections for a new committee will be held in July 2010.

The committee met with the DCM in May 2010. She told the committee she plans to meet with them quarterly. The Ambassador and DCM held town hall meetings after their arrival, and Department principals meet with staff when they visit Colombo.

Morale among the local staff appears to be high, especially after they received an average salary increase of 14 percent in April 2010. The increase should have been effective in December 2009, but discussions between Embassy Colombo and the Office of Overseas Employment on revising the health benefits package delayed implementation.

The only major issue raised by the committee was an escalation in the cost of hospitalization and a large gap between insurance coverage and actual costs. Embassy Colombo's management section is continuing to work with the Office of Overseas Employment on this issue, and it has set aside funds for the anticipated increase in medical insurance costs.

The committee highlighted the fact that a thrift and credit society has been in operation for more than 15 years and that almost all local staff are members. Members can borrow up to 75 percent of their deposit at an interest rate of between 7 and 12.5 percent. Local banks charge between 24 and 26 percent. A year-end bonus based on earnings is paid on deposits.

International Broadcasting Bureau Awards

IBB has local staff employed under two distinct employment categories: Foreign Service national (FSN) and personal services agreement (PSA). Until April 15, 2010, both IBB's FSN and PSA employees were eligible for the same awards as embassy staff, including the meritorious honor, Franklin, and extra mile awards. With the April 15, 2010, reissuance of the management circular outlining the mission's incentive awards program, IBB's FSN employees lost their eligibility for these awards and instead were eligible only for safe driving and cash awards. This change created a disparity between IBB's FSNs and its PSA employees, the latter of whom continue

to be eligible for all awards. When IBB raised this issue with Embassy Colombo's HR office, the embassy temporarily rescinded the change in the mission incentive awards program, allowing both IBB's FSN and PSA employees to be eligible for awards in the upcoming mission awards ceremony.

The awards anomaly originated with State cable 286576, dated October 17, 2003, in which PSA employees of non-Department agencies were made eligible for incentive awards under the Department's Awards Program but those agencies' FSN employees were not eligible. The Department updated the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) provisions covering safe driving awards and cash awards (3 FAM 4845 and 4846, respectively) in November 2004 to include the BBG's FSN employees and all locally employed staff. The Office of Overseas Employment is aware of the anomaly and is in the process of updating the FAM. The office has also developed a new Mission Awards Program for all locally employed staff that creates a parallel awards program to the Department's 3 FAM 4800 awards for other agencies overseas. According to the Office of Performance Evaluation's Department awards coordinator, embassies must follow the FAM until the Department publishes the updates.

Recommendation 25: The Bureau of Human Resources should publish its new Mission Awards Program and update 3 FAM 4800. (Action: HR)

GENERAL SERVICES OVERVIEW

Embassy Colombo's new general services officer (GSO) arrived approximately 1 month prior to this inspection, following a 6-month gap in which the facilities manager was acting GSO. The new GSO — a third-tour officer in his first GSO position — has tightened management controls, updated and reissued more than 30 management circulars, cleaned up the warehouse, and begun working more closely with other embassy sections. However, there is still much to be done.

The general services office provides poor customer service in several areas, especially procurement and travel. This is reflected in the ICASS customer satisfaction survey, in which the general services office scored below the bureau average in all areas except motor pool operations. Both American and local staff raised this problem during interviews with the inspectors. The staff desperately needs training to understand what constitutes good customer service and how to provide it. This issue is addressed by Recommendation 17.

Procurement

The procurement unit scored the lowest of any unit in the general services office in the February 2010 ICASS customer satisfaction survey; scores were well below both the bureau and worldwide averages. The inspectors also received frequent complaints in the OIG questionnaires and in interviews with embassy staff about the unit's lack of customer service, lack of information, and the speed with which procurements are made. Records show that some procurements are completed fairly quickly. In many cases, they appear to take an inordinate amount of time to process — in a few cases, up to 6 months. This problem is compounded by the often lengthy wait at the consolidated receiving point in the United States, where shipments are held waiting for a container to minimize shipping costs.

Recommendation 26: Embassy Colombo should develop and implement procedures to better track procurement requests and ensure faster processing and better customer feedback. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Most purchase order, purchase card, and blanket purchase agreement folders are in reasonable shape, with the proper vendor information provided. The unit has approximately 25 blanket purchase agreements, with multiple agreements for the most-used items. However, it appears that other items, such as rental cars, could also be handled through blanket purchase agreements rather than purchase orders. Most Department purchases appear to have been competed as required, and even those under the \$3,000 threshold show competition. However, the OIG team encourages the procurement unit to continue to expand the number of contractors with which it works.

Purchase order folders are not closed out properly. There is a lack of information on when invoices were sent to the FMO or when the vendors were paid. This makes it more difficult to ensure that all vendors are properly paid, that duplicate payments do not occur, and that unused funds are promptly deobligated. The OIG team made an informal recommendation regarding this issue. Upon the OIG team's arrival, the GSO, as the contracting officer, was not signing the folders to show that they had been completed correctly, which he corrected immediately.

Formal contracts are kept in the proper folders, but are disorganized and appear to be missing information; however, the signed contracts are available. These folders need to be organized in accordance with the Overseas Contracting and Simplified Acquisition Guidebook. The OIG team made an informal recommendation was regarding this issue.

The general services office provides procurement services for Department of Defense offices, some of which submitted the majority of their requests as emergency procurements. Other procurement requests involved items that were outside of the scope of Department procurement regulations. This practice has played havoc with the procurement unit's ability to properly prioritize its requests and slowed service to all customers. Both the front office and management office are now aware of this issue. The GSO has provided these Department of Defense offices with information on what items the general services office can procure. All offices appear to be working together to improve this situation.

Motor Pool Operations

The motor pool unit has 20 employees, including the supervisor, dispatcher, two mechanics, fuel attendant, and 15 ICASS drivers. The ICASS drivers work 48-hour weeks, with a normal schedule of no more than 10-hour days, in accordance with 14 FAM 432.4 c. (3). All paperwork was complete and properly filed. The drivers are rigorous about ensuring that all passengers fasten seatbelts before they will move their vehicles. The mechanics' area was clean and well organized. The mechanics handle minor repairs and servicing of government-owned vehicles. All repairs sent to commercial shops are monitored by the motor pool staff. The replaced parts are returned to motor pool for inspection.

The Ambassador has two drivers, while the DCM has a full-time driver and another who splits his time between the DCM and ICASS. The Ambassador's two drivers are scheduled to work 10 hours each weekday, with weekend duties being charged to overtime. As each driver also works at least part of one weekend day, they essentially are working a 6-day week. These weekend hours helped contribute to the 229 hours of overtime paid to the drivers during the first nine pay periods of 2010. The drivers' schedules also include a 7-hour overlap each weekday, during which only one driver is needed for the Ambassador and neither regularly assists in the ICASS motor pool. After the inspectors raised this issue, the embassy moved the Ambassador's drivers to the motor pool and modified the schedules to reduce overtime and downtime and eliminate the 7-day workweek.

Housing

The embassy has approximately 40 apartments and single-family houses, eight of which are government owned, in three security office-approved neighborhoods in Colombo. Both the chief of mission and DCM residences are well-maintained. The

in place the morning after this deficiency was noted. The warehouse supervisor conducts unannounced inventory spot-checks monthly. The GSO performs this duty quarterly. Due to the history of problems within the unit and as an added protection for the staff, the OIG team counseled the GSO to consider increasing the number of random checks he performs. The staff follows written procedures for receiving and issuing property. However, receiving duties are handled in open areas of the loading dock or the warehouse, making control of incoming property extremely difficult.

Recommendation 27: Embassy Colombo should construct a separate, locked receiving area and use it to receive and store all items until they are entered into the warehouse inventory. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

The warehouse is not air conditioned, but there are fans throughout. The staff has taken old draperies from embassy housing and had them made into slip covers to protect the upholstered furniture. The wooden furniture is unprotected, but the staff plans to make slip covers for this furniture as well, as soon as the next transfer season is complete. There appears to be an excess of some appliances in the warehouse, which will be resolved when the embassy moves to a shared appliance pool, per Recommendation 23. The warehouse staff should review the minimum and maximum inventory levels and the lead time needed for the purchase of furniture and appliances to ensure the proper inventory. The OIG team made an informal recommendation regarding this issue.

Expendable supplies are kept in a separate, locked room. Items considered to be easily stolen are kept in a separate, locked cage. The expendable storage area is clean and organized, although crowded. All flammable items are kept in special cabinets in the facilities areas.

Shipping, Customs and Travel

The shipping and customs office is well-organized. Its files are complete and easily accessible. Sri Lankan customs generally only take a few days to clear a shipment. The embassy recently began using the international through government bill of lading and the Department's transportation "lite" program, both of which appear to be working successfully. The embassy also recently signed a new packing and shipping contract. Service appears to have improved.

Travel documents are in order and well-maintained. The Ambassador and DCM as well as all drivers have blanket travel orders. The travel clerk maintains evacuation orders for all employees. The travel office has a clear procedure for notifying both the HR and financial management units when American employees are traveling on rest and recreation or to the United States. This policy helps to ensure that post allowances are stopped and restarted appropriately. However, inspectors received numerous complaints regarding the contract travel office's lack of customer service and the need for customers to return several times before arrangements are properly made. The GSO acknowledged that he is focusing on this issue.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

With high humidity, high temperatures, salty air, and regular flooding, facilities management in Sri Lanka is a difficult proposition. The facilities manager, who arrived in August 2009, supervises a staff of 63 to manage the chancery, the American Center compound, and recreational compounds, eight government-owned houses, and approximately 35 short-term leased residences. Within 6 weeks of his arrival, he also took over as acting GSO, following the curtailment of the previous GSO; he held this position for 6 months.

When the current facilities manager arrived, the staff was not properly using eServices and the work order program. Work orders were not shown as completed in the system, and the time and materials used were not listed. This issue has now been corrected. In addition, the stock of expendable maintenance supplies was low and used infrequently, forcing staff to spend more time than necessary making petty-cash purchases. There was no complete written list of the appliances or plumbing, electrical, or other equipment located in each embassy residence, making it difficult for the staff to take the correct equipment and supplies when responding to work orders. The facilities manager is working to correct these issues.

Both residential and nonresidential maintenance operations scored below bureau and worldwide averages on the 2010 ICASS customer satisfaction survey. The inspectors also received complaints about customer service, the time it takes to complete repairs, and the lack of information regarding the completion of repairs. Employees at both the chancery and American Center expressed frustration over the unit no longer performing tasks that it had previously handled. Embassy employees appear to be unclear as to what falls under facilities maintenance and what they

should handle themselves. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the section coordinate with embassy management to publicize clear guidance as to what incidental duties the maintenance office normally handles.

The facilities staff no longer leaves information at the residences after completing a work order explaining what work was completed or remains outstanding. This information is also not provided in the automated eServices email that is sent when a work order is listed as completed. Providing this information on a regular basis — either at the residence, via email, or both— would help to improve customer service while at the same time giving the customers an opportunity to comment on the service provided. The OIG team made an informal recommendation regarding this issue.

The preventive maintenance team, consisting of six technicians and a supervisor, spend a full day at each house every other month, servicing all of the appliances. This includes checking air conditioners, distillers, dehumidifiers, washing machines, fans, and even light bulbs. While preventive maintenance is essential, the number of employees and the amount of time they spend at each residence appears to be excessive. While the facilities manager acknowledges this is an issue, he has yet to decide how it should be addressed.

Recommendation 28: Embassy Colombo should re-evaluate its preventive maintenance procedures and schedules to bring them in line with actual requirements. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations last conducted a fire inspection in January 2008. A Safety, Health and Environmental Management inspection was completed in June 2007. Records show that most of the recommendations in the 2007 report were completed. However, there is nothing on file to show that any of the 2008 fire inspection recommendations were completed.

Recommendation 29: Embassy Colombo should comply with the 2008 fire inspection and report the results to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Embassy Colombo operates an adequate information management program, which includes computer networks and radio and telephone programs as well as mail and pouch services. The American information programs center staff consists of two U.S. direct-hires and one information management assistant. When the OIG team arrived, the assistant did not have the necessary clearance to work within the communications center. This issue was resolved during the inspectors' visit.

The information management (IM) local staff consists of four computer personnel, two technicians in charge of radios and telephones, six mailroom staff, and four telephone operators. The IM team provides service for five U.S. Government agencies, made up of approximately 70 U.S. direct-hires and 200 local employees at the chancery and the American Center located just down the road. The information management officer (IMO) is also the information systems security officer, with the information management specialist as the alternate. These responsibilities are included in their work requirements.

Upon the OIG team's arrival, Embassy Colombo had approximately 30 employees whose annual cyber security awareness training was outdated. The IM section is actively correcting this deficiency. Effective immediately, they will use access control procedures, which will show all users when this training is due.

The IMO should be commended for taking the initiative in researching the feasibility and pricing of providing more bandwidth for Colombo operations. Due to the IMO's efforts, the mission's circuit speed will soon double.

During the OIG team's visit, Embassy Colombo completed and sent to the Department its lengthy contingency plan for its automated information systems as required by 12 FAM 622.3.2 and 12 FAM 632.3.2. Other smaller items, such as local staff position description updates and work requirement revisions, were being cleared during the OIG team's visit. The office will revisit its organizational chart to show correct supervision of staff. One recommendation regarding Colombo's alternate communications center is located in the security annex of this report.

BlackBerry Management

The IM section manages the mission's new BlackBerry program well. Units are bar coded, signed for, and controlled. According to the IMO, Embassy Colombo hosts its own BlackBerry server and will continue to do so as it is more cost effective than using the Department to host BlackBerry services from Washington. The IM

section helps other agencies purchase BlackBerry phones for their staff. The mission also has 16 users on the OpenNet Everywhere program, which allows them to log in to the embassy system from their home computers.

Cell Phone Inventory

The Colombo cell phone inventory shows dozens of cell phones issued to offices rather than being assigned to specific employees. The IMO is to be commended for recently volunteering to assume responsibility for the cell phone program from the general services office. The IM section has not, as yet, had the opportunity to reconcile the existing inventory. As mentioned in the embassy's cell phone policy memo, "employees must sign for receipt of the phone instrument." If no signature is on record, there is a question as to who is responsible for the safekeeping of the phone. The OIG team made an informal recommendation regarding this issue.

Regional Information Management Center Support

The OIG team confirmed that support from the regional information management center in Bangkok is needed to fix a high-frequency radio that has been inoperable for 6 months. Despite Embassy Colombo's requests for support, the timing of these visits continues to slip. In case of emergencies, Embassy Colombo needs high-frequency capabilities.

Recommendation 30: The Regional Information Management Center Bangkok should fix Embassy Colombo's inoperable high-frequency radio. (Action: RIMC Bangkok)

QUALITY OF LIFE

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY/FEDERAL WOMEN'S PROGRAM

The new EEO counselor took over the program approximately 2 months before this inspection, following 6 months where the embassy worked to find a qualified counselor. She received training in March 2010 and has already organized a program on preventing sexual harassment. No employees have sought EEO counseling since she assumed her duties. EEO materials are posted in the chancery, but little information is posted at the American Center, which houses PAS and USAID, or at the IBB transmitting station. The OIG team made an informal recommendation regarding this issue. In addition, the OIG team counseled the EEO counselor to visit the IBB transmitting station once a year, at a minimum.

The embassy has one local employee EEO liaison, who works in HR. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the embassy appoint local employee liaisons at the chancery who work outside the HR office, as well as at the IBB transmitting station. The OIG team also recommended that embassy management consider appointing male and female, as well as Sinhalese and Tamil, counselors.

The Federal Women's Program coordinator, appointed in March 2010, said she has not received any requests for assistance.

EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATION

The American Embassy Recreation Association of Colombo (AERAC) provides its members a range of services, including commissary and stamp sales, cable TV, dry cleaning, and school bus monitors. It meets its financial reporting obligations to the Department and has maintained its profitability, increasing its net profit from 3.9 percent in 2008 to 6.1 percent in 2009. Its latest financial audit by an independent firm indicated no material weaknesses.

In addition to regular membership available to American employees, the association offers associate membership to others, including third-country diplomats. AERAC employs four Sri Lankan citizens and one American family member as an advisor.

In its management letter to AERAC's board, the independent audit firm highlighted several issues, including outstanding accounts receivable and delays in making deposits to AERAC's bank. The issue of accounts receivable was also discussed in the AERAC board's May 2010 meeting. The auditor's report barely scratched the surface of the problem, whereas the board focused on all delinquent accounts and AERAC's "sales on credit" policy.

AERAC's written policy with respect to sales on credit is that a member's purchases cannot exceed the \$200 credit limit at any one time. Over time the \$200 credit limit has informally morphed into employees paying off their balances, some much higher than \$200, at the end of each month. The Office of Commissary and Recreation Affairs recommended that employee associations do not use credit, but if they choose to do so that they keep the credit limit to an amount no greater than the employee's deposit, in this case \$200.

In its review of the AERAC's 2009 financial statements as submitted to the Department's Office of Commissary and Recreation Affairs and AERAC's year-to-date customer balance summaries, the OIG team concluded that credit sales are out of control. AERAC is not following its policy on credit sales. Of the 49 regular members, 41 had outstanding balances on December 31, 2009, which ranged from a low of \$46 to a high of \$2,426, with a total accounts receivable of \$21,400. Associate members fared better. Of the 48 associate members, 21 had outstanding balances which ranged from a low of \$2 to a high of \$614 with a total accounts receivable of \$2,618.

From December 2009 until the time of the inspection, there have been eight mission employees with credit balances greater than \$1,000. Three were one-time only occurrences, four were multiple occurrences, and the eighth employee had consecutive occurrences. The eighth employee's credit balance has increased from \$2,426 on December 31, 2009 to \$3,806 on May 14, 2010.

The AERAC board chair and treasurer told the OIG team that on several occasions an undetermined number of embassy employees asked the AERAC general manager to cover up purchases in excess of the individual member credit limit.

There is a risk that employees will over-extend and find themselves in financial difficulty. In that case, AERAC is vulnerable to the risk of non-payment or lengthy and expensive collection actions. The OIG team reported the matter to embassy management.

Recommendation 31: Embassy Colombo should require that the recreation association, effective immediately, accept only cash or credit card payments for sales to individual members. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 32: Embassy Colombo should require that the recreation association immediately recover all outstanding credit balances from its individual members. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

AERAC sets aside \$250 per month for use by the embassy's community liaison office coordinator, which is reduced as the office submits invoices for payment to AERAC. At year-end, any unused funds revert to AERAC.

HEALTH UNIT

Some members of the embassy community are unhappy with the health unit's services, resulting in scores on the OIG's questionnaires of just above 3.8 on a 5-point scale. The 2010 ICASS customer satisfaction survey indicates a similar degree of unhappiness with the mission's health unit services, with scores averaging well below both bureau and worldwide averages.

The unit, located in the chancery, provides primary medical care to embassy staff and dependents, as well as emergency care to local staff members who suffer illness or injury while on the job. The unit's space includes a reception area with medical record storage cabinets, private offices, an examination room, and a separate room serving as both a laboratory and storage of medical supplies.

A first-tour Foreign Service health practitioner and two local employees, a nurse, and an administrative assistant/laboratory technician staff the health unit. The health practitioner arrived in August 2009. A regional medical officer and regional medical officer/psychiatrist, both from Embassy New Delhi, support the embassy.

Modern medical facilities and Western-trained medical personnel are unavailable in Sri Lanka for conditions requiring treatment at a hospital or clinic. Singapore is the medical evacuation point for patients requiring both secondary treatment and for those 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 properly kept. A month before controlled drugs expire, the health unit donates them to a local medical facility, e.g., morphine to a local cancer hospital.

Joining the Foreign Service from primarily an emergency room environment did not prepare the nurse practitioner for the personalized attention and care that American employees and their families' demand of an embassy health unit. The nurse practitioner is aware that these issues affected the health unit's reputation in the community, which she working to overcome.

She organized the mission's first ever blood drive, with 43 embassy employees donating blood, and held a hugely successful health fair.

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

Two energetic family members, each working half time, share Embassy Colombo's community liaison office coordinator position. This well-run operation receives high marks for customer service. The community liaison office itself is well organized and welcoming, providing a calm place where employees and family members feel welcome to drop in during the day. The coordinators have complementary backgrounds and interests, and both have worked hard to develop a cohesive team and to maximize the use of each others' strengths.

As noted above, the community liaison office receives \$250 per month from the embassy's commissary association to fund activities and programs. That level of funding is sufficient to support frequent, low-cost events. The coordinators manage the embassy's sponsor program, and they have just revised it to make the office sponsorship requirements more robust. Embassy family members have served as ready volunteers to help with event logistics. Both coordinators are aware of the importance of inclusion, and they actively reach out to their colleagues who work at the American Center to ensure that they are included in events. As a result of their outreach, the office gets good participation from mission members, employees, and family members alike.

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(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6) The regional education officer visited Colombo 3 weeks before the inspection team and concluded that the school's curriculum continues to be "inadequate" (b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6) Embassy parents are generally pleased with the academic quality of the school, although many were concerned about the Middle Years Program and its focus on 6-week projects with the emphasis on process rather than content. Many were concerned about the mathematics program, which is taught as an integrated subject with science. This program can create problems for students returning to the U.S. system since they cannot demonstrate sequential completion of specific math and science subjects.

The consular cashier takes payments for the visa application fees as there is no reliable local bank in Sri Lanka that is interested in collecting these fees for the embassy. The embassy has reduced its vulnerability in providing these services by requiring applicants to pay the fees with a guaranteed bank draft. There have been no discrepancies in consular cash accounting in well over a year.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation 1:** Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Bureau of Resource Management and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, should prepare a single FY 2013 Mission Strategic Resource Plan for Sri Lanka and Maldives. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with RM and SCA)
- Recommendation 2:** Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Bureau of Human Resources and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, should require that the individual assigned the political-military affairs portfolio is properly trained and has consultations in Washington and with the Pacific Command in Honolulu before arriving at post. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with HR and SCA)
- Recommendation 3:** Embassy Colombo should revise and update its internal Leahy vetting standard operating procedures and create a standardized cover sheet or nomination form specifying all information required prior to returning submissions to the coordinator. (Action: Embassy Colombo)
- Recommendation 4:** Embassy Colombo should establish in advance a list of library enhancements to be funded with its recycled funds and should use the funds for these items. (Action: Embassy Colombo)
- Recommendation 5:** Embassy Colombo, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi, should develop an annual budget for the Information Resource Center and a long-range collection development plan for its books and other information materials. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi)
- Recommendation 6:** Embassy New Delhi should write an annual plan for Embassy Colombo's Information Resource Center and clear it with Embassy Colombo. (Action: Embassy New Delhi)
- Recommendation 7:** Embassy Colombo should develop and carry out a Goldmine contact management database implementation plan for the public affairs section that clearly specifies who has primary responsibility for the database, the method of determining the software fields, staff training requirements, and data input procedures. The planning process and training sessions should include local computer systems staff. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Colombo should develop a plan to move towards an embassy-wide, integrated contact database. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 9: Embassy Colombo should translate key visa information into Sinhala, Tamil, and Dhivehi and post it on the embassy Web site, with a link from the home page in the local language, and post on the Web site any other documents, such as press releases or program reports that have already been translated into the local languages. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 10: Embassy Colombo should design and implement a schedule to seek International Visitor Leadership Program candidates and to develop single-country projects addressing mission goals that can include non-English speakers. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 11: Embassy Colombo should establish procedures to include the nominating officer in International Visitor Leadership Program pre-departure briefings and post-program debriefings. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 12: Embassy Colombo should establish and implement procedures to write grants officer representative memos as required by Department policy, list the Mission Strategic Resource Plan goals on the DS-4012 form, and include in the grant budget more details about how the grantee should spend the funds. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 13: The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should approve the request from Embassy Colombo for an assistant regional security officer-investigations position and fund and establish the position. (Action: CA, in coordination with DS)

Recommendation 14: Embassy Colombo should create and implement a plan to rearrange the consular work area so that the two eligible family member employees in the consular section will have assigned desks. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 15: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi, should reinstitute a program of exchanges of entry-level consular officers between Embassy Colombo and Consulate General Chennai to further the professional development of the officers. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with Embassy New Delhi)

Recommendation 16: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should remove the door connecting the visa waiting room with the consular work area and install an additional visa window in place of the door. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with CA and OBO)

Recommendation 17: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Foreign Service Institute, should identify customer service training resources and bring customer service trainers to Colombo to provide training for the entire management staff. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with FSI)

Recommendation 18: Embassy Colombo should survey employees to identify and correct shortcomings in management operations and customer service. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 19: Embassy Colombo should identify and train a customer service point-of-contact to manage requests within the management section. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 20: Embassy Colombo should undertake a comprehensive survey of its space needs with all involved sections participating in the survey and in deliberations regarding the allocation of office space. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 21: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should finalize plans for the renovation of unused space on the chancery's fourth floor. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with OBO and DS.)

Recommendation 22: Embassy Colombo should develop and implement a plan to consolidate motor pool, local employee recruitment, and administrative supplies with the U.S. Agency for International Development, using lessons learned from embassies that have already gone through similar consolidation processes. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 23: Embassy Colombo should establish an interagency appliance and furniture pool to maximize efficiencies and free up warehouse space. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

Recommendation 24: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, should identify an employee outside of Embassy Colombo who is certified to perform job classifications. That classifier should review the grade levels of positions grade 9 and above to determine whether jobs are accurately classified. (Action: Embassy Colombo, in coordination with SCA)

- Recommendation 25:** The Bureau of Human Resources should publish its new Mission Awards Program and update 3 FAM 4800. (Action: HR)
- Recommendation 26:** Embassy Colombo should develop and implement procedures to better track procurement requests and ensure faster processing and better customer feedback. (Action: Embassy Colombo)
- Recommendation 27:** Embassy Colombo should construct a separate, locked receiving area and use it to receive and store all items until they are entered into the warehouse inventory. (Action: Embassy Colombo)
- Recommendation 28:** Embassy Colombo should re-evaluate its preventive maintenance procedures and schedules to bring them in line with actual requirements. (Action: Embassy Colombo)
- Recommendation 29:** Embassy Colombo should comply with the 2008 fire inspection and report the results to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations. (Action: Embassy Colombo)
- Recommendation 30:** The Regional Information Management Center Bangkok should fix Embassy Colombo's inoperable high-frequency radio. (Action: RIMC Bangkok)
- Recommendation 31:** Embassy Colombo should require that the recreation association, effective immediately, accept only cash or credit card payments for sales to individual members. (Action: Embassy Colombo)
- Recommendation 32:** Embassy Colombo should require that the recreation association immediately recover all outstanding credit balances from its individual members. (Action: Embassy Colombo)

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Executive Direction

Some new section chiefs and the DCM did not attend appropriate first-time leadership training prior to arrival at Embassy Colombo, even though such training can help mission leaders to identify, head off, or resolve problems. Leadership training should be a prerequisite for first-time section chiefs, especially for mid-career officers with limited professional experience in their initial leadership positions.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Colombo should require that all new section chiefs participate in appropriate leadership training prior to taking up their duties in the mission.

Mission staff is less cohesive than might be expected considering the quality-of-life and work experiences available in Colombo. At the middle-management level, officers do not communicate well to resolve problems at the lowest level possible. A relatively good American staff could be even better.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Colombo should determine an effective approach that will help to overcome inadequate communication and problem solving at the lowest possible level and organize activities as soon as possible.

Public Affairs Section

It is standard practice for missions to distribute a press policy to all staff, setting forth procedures for dealing with the news media. Because of summer turnover, it is useful to send out this policy annually, especially if there is a new ambassador. Embassy Colombo has not sent out a press policy since October, 2008.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Colombo should disseminate a press policy to all mission staff.

American Corners in Kandy, Oluvil, and Malé provide excellent public diplomacy programming platforms. The Ambassador and PAS officers have visited and conducted programs, but the corners get fewer visits from the rest of the embassy. Malé is more isolated than the others American Corners, so it would especially benefit if visiting embassy officers stopped by to give presentations, conduct discussions, and interact with corner visitors. When the Jaffna corner opens, regular visits by embassy staff for programs would help it establish its presence.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Colombo should schedule officers who are traveling to cities with American Corners to visit the corners and conduct public diplomacy programs there.

American Corner directors could benefit from a regular forum to exchange experiences and programming ideas with each other.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Colombo should sponsor a regular in-country conference for American Corner directors in Sri Lanka and Malé.

Embassy Colombo does not currently have an embassy speakers program. Outreach efforts would benefit from the initiation of a program to arrange speaking opportunities for embassy staff, family members, and other American community members at schools, community groups, and other venues. PAS has proposed such a program and received initial approval from the Ambassador.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Colombo should move forward with plans to create an embassy speakers program in which every U.S. direct-hire should participate at least once per year.

The embassy blog site is not regularly updated. It has only 42 followers, and the items largely mirror the public Web site and do not regularly receive any comments. In its current form, it does not appear to be worth keeping, and efforts might be better spent on the Facebook page and embassy Web site.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Colombo should either revitalize the blog site by appointing someone to oversee it and provide original content, or the embassy should drop it.

The embassy Web site and Virtual Presence Post Web site are not being effectively used to highlight the many programs and activities sponsored by Embassy Colombo.

Some of the photos at the top of the embassy home page are old, and the embassy news section fails to list recent programs. The home page also lacks a link to the Web site for the Virtual Presence Post for Maldives.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Colombo should include more news of embassy public diplomacy and outreach activities on its public Web site and Virtual Presence Post Web site, should update its photos more often, and should include a link to the Virtual Presence Post Web site for Maldives on the embassy site home page.

PAS does not have a representation budget plan.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Colombo should develop a representation budget plan for the allocation of its public diplomacy representation funds.

Management Section

American supervisors are not conducting unannounced subcashier verifications.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Colombo should require that an American supervisor perform monthly or quarterly unannounced verifications of their subcashiers.

Post management has not monitored employee productivity nor reviewed the effect of holidays on the work schedule.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Colombo should review the effect of the work schedule on staff productivity.

Procurement folders lack information on vendor payments.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Colombo should ensure that the procurement unit receives and documents information on payments to vendors.

Formal contract files are poorly organized and may be missing required information as outlined in the Overseas Contracting and Simplified Acquisition Guidebook.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy Colombo should maintain its formal contract files in accordance with Department guidance.

The Inter-Agency Housing Board does not regularly visit residences before they are leased or assigned.

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy Colombo should require members of the Inter-Agency Housing Board visit residences before they are leased or assigned.

There appears to be an excess inventory of some appliances at the embassy warehouse.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy Colombo should conduct a thorough review of the minimum and maximum inventory amounts and the lead time needed for purchasing in order to ensure the proper inventory is on hand.

Embassy employees are confused about who is responsible for some maintenance-related service requests.

Informal Recommendation 16: Embassy Colombo should delineate and publicize the maintenance sections regular incidental duties.

Customers are unclear as to what work has been done at their residences.

Informal Recommendation 17: Embassy Colombo should institute and follow procedures to inform residents about any work done at their houses, provide the status of any remaining work, and encourage feedback.

Information Management

Not all employees have signed for receipt of their cell phones.

Informal Recommendation 18: Embassy Colombo should obtain employees' signatures for all cell phones and reconcile its cell phone inventory.

Quality of Life

Complete information regarding Equal Employment Opportunity regulations has yet to be posted at either the American Center or the IBB transmitting station.

Informal Recommendation 19: Embassy Colombo should post information regarding Equal Employment Opportunity at the American Center and the International Broadcasting Bureau's transmitting station.

Only one locally employee EEO liaison, who works in HR, has been appointed. The embassy has not appointed local employees who work outside the HR office or at the IBB transmitting station.

Informal Recommendation 20: Embassy Colombo should appoint Foreign Service nationals not working in the human resources office as Equal Employment Opportunity liaisons. The embassy should consider appointing both men and women, as well as Tamil and Sinhalese employees, to these positions, and should choose liaisons from the International Broadcasting Bureau's transmitting station as well as from the embassy.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Patricia Butenis	09/09
Deputy Chief of Mission	Valerie Fowler	09/09

Chiefs of Sections:

Management	Kevin Weishar	08/08
Consular	William Dowers	08/09
Political	Paul Carter	08/09
Economic	Edward Heartney	08/09
Public Affairs	Jeffrey Anderson	08/08
Regional Security	Michael Perkins	10/07

Other Agencies:

Broadcasting Board of Governors		
International Broadcasting Bureau	William Martin	12/07
Department of Defense		
Defense Attaché	LTC Lawrence Smith	06/08
Office of Defense Cooperation	Major Jose Orozco	10/07
U.S. Agency for International		
Development	Rebecca Cohn	08/06

ABBREVIATIONS

AERAC	American Employees Recreation Association of Colombo
BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
FMO	Financial management officer
FSN	Foreign Service national
GSO	General services officer
HR	Human resources
IBB	International Broadcasting Bureau
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IM	Information management
IMO	Information management officer
IRC	Information Resource Center
IVLP	International Visitor Leadership Program
MSRP	Mission Strategic Resource Plan
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PAS	Public affairs section
PSA	Personal services agreement
SCA	Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

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