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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 Bangkok and Consulate General Chiang Mai, Thailand

Report Number ISP-I-11-03A, November 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.

Political and social unrest during the inspection team's visit necessitated modifying the inspection's scope from its planned full scope to a limited scope review. Although the team interviewed over 90 percent of all Department of State U.S. direct-hire employees and over 70 percent all other agency heads (as is normal practice), it was unable to interview some key locally employed staff members or to review some files

located in annexes that were inaccessible. Consequently, the team was not able to inspect the Regional Information Management Center in Bangkok, the Broadcasting Board of Governors entities in Thailand, or the facilities management office. In addition, it was not able to fully assess the extent and quality of interagency cooperation among two clusters of program activities in Thailand – foreign assistance and cooperative health activities. The team also was not able to inspect some management operations, including most general services office functions, cashiering, accounts receivable, allowances, time and attendance, utility payments, certified vouchers, the NSDD-38 process, and the embassy's progress toward consolidation of support services, as well as radio, telephone, mail, print shop, and unclassified pouch operations.

The Ambassador has requested that the report reflect the fact that mission personnel were unable to give the OIG team the time and attention it deserved, as the Embassy was in crisis mode during their visit, as it dealt with the worst political violence in recent Thai history and concentrated on evacuating mission personnel from dangerous parts of the city, implementing authorized departure, and urging all parties to the conflict to find common ground.

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- Embassy Bangkok has met its key goals and objectives; Washington end users have praised the embassy's reporting on internal political dynamics during the months-long political and security crisis that gripped Thailand in spring 2010.
- The Ambassador brought to his position great strength in reporting and analysis,
- The reporting sections focus well on high priority U.S. policy concerns. A greater emphasis on forward-looking analysis would help Washington consumers better prepare for dramatic changes occurring in Thailand.
- The Department and a large number of U.S. Government agencies have located regional operations in Bangkok to take advantage of the capital's large, productive, and low-cost labor force, convenient air hub, large hotel capacity, and history of political stability. However, regional operations differ from those in bilateral missions. Planning is essential to avoid duplication of effort and inefficiencies in service delivery.
- The trend toward regionalization in Bangkok may have reached its limit, as its advantage as a politically stable location for regional operations is diminishing with Thailand's rapidly evolving political situation.
- The Bangkok consular section provides generally good service to its large and diverse American citizen clientele and to a moderate-sized visa applicant pool, but the section could be more efficient, exert closer management controls, and perhaps operate with a leaner staff with more proactive leadership.
- Although the management section is generally well run, it needs to pay closer attention to supporting documentation, particularly in vouchering. It also needs to update key management policies, such as the locally employed (LE) staff handbook, and the motor vehicle and travel policies.

- The information management staff is diligent and shows great enthusiasm to provide optimal customer service, but it needs to place more emphasis on information systems security and information technology emergency preparedness.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between April 8 and May 4, 2010; in Bangkok, Thailand, between May 6 and 30, 2010; and in Chiang Mai, Thailand, between May 21 and 27, 2010.

CONTEXT

Thailand is one of fourteen major, non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies of the United States, and one of six in Asia. Diplomatic relations date from 1833, when the United States signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with

Thailand (then Siam), its first treaty with an Asian country. Thailand fought with the Allies in World War I, and relations with the United States became even closer after World War II, with Thailand playing a key role in the Pacific security architecture. It has been an active partner in the struggle against terrorism, terrorist financing, illicit drugs, and HIV/AIDS.



Map of Bangkok, Thailand and its surrounding region.

Source: U.S. Government

is heavily dependent on trade and tourism. At \$19 billion (2009), the United States is Thailand's largest export market, while at about \$10 billion, the United States is Thailand's third largest supplier (after China and Japan).

Thailand, a predominantly Buddhist (95 percent) country, is approximately the size of France and has a slightly larger population. With a gross domestic product of over \$600 billion, Thailand has the second largest economy in Southeast Asia (after Indonesia). Once a model of Asian development, it enjoyed growth rates of nearly 10 percent annually through the 1990s. However, Thailand's currency devaluation sparked the Asian financial crisis and ushered in an era of more restrained growth for Thailand, of approximately 4 to 5 percent in recent years. Most of the labor force is engaged in agriculture, although it contributes only about 8.4 percent to Thailand's gross domestic product; the economy

Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country to have escaped colonization. A constitutional monarchy was established in 1932; since that time, a military and bureaucratic elite has largely dominated Thai politics, with changes in government frequently effected by a series of bloodless coups. A September 2006 military coup set the stage for protracted social conflict that reached a climax in March, April, and May 2010, when a coalition opposing the government occupied Bangkok's business district. The government operation to clear the coalition out led to a number of deaths, property destruction, and a prolonged closure of the embassy. Thailand faces these deep social divisions in the context of the failing health of its King, uncertainty over the institutional arrangements after his demise, and a violent insurgency by the Malay Muslim population in the South.

The U.S. embassy is large and rapidly growing, having doubled in size in the last 10 years. This is largely a result of a trend to concentrate regional services in Bangkok. The embassy estimates that regional services-related work occupies 51 percent of its personnel. This trend may reverse, however, as Thailand's social upheavals may reduce Bangkok's attractiveness for regional operations in the future.

As noted, the inspection of Mission Thailand occurred in the midst of a two-month long political protest that paralyzed the capital. The most serious events in May 2010 led to the closure of the embassy, putting many aspects of its operations beyond the reach of the inspection team. This report thus reflects only those aspects to which the inspection team could devote sufficient attention to justify its findings.

a lack of interest in their morale. Both American and locally employed (LE) staff members noticed a marked change during the Ambassador's third year in Bangkok; they appreciate the time he spends attending community events, interacting with the LE staff, and holding town hall meetings (which are particularly appreciated). The Ambassador and the DCM provide their full support to the embassy's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program.

Preparation of Embassy Bangkok's most recent MSRP was preceded by a discussion with agencies represented on the country team. The inspectors concurred with the key goals identified in the MSRP but the performance measurement indicators were not well developed. Also, the chief of mission statement focused on events taking place in 2010 and did not articulate the changes and refinements needed to get the embassy where it will need to be in 2012 to 2013. The inspectors discerned through interviews with embassy staff members and with senior management that the MSRP does not play an active role in day-to-day decisions on resource allocations. For example, the allocation of representation funds for events the Ambassador hosts showed little connection to the MSRP key goals and objectives. The Ambassador noted that the embassy intends to institute an annual, mid-year review of the MSRP, and the inspectors support that action.

The Ambassador and DCM are both active in public diplomacy activities. Both speak Thai when giving speeches, making media appearances, and providing embassy support to U.S. commercial promotion activities. The Ambassador has put a heavy emphasis on U.S. cultural activities and has made the CMR available for a series of events showcasing American musical and theatrical events.

The country team at Embassy Bangkok is composed of representatives from 40 U.S. Government executive branch agencies and departments, plus one legislative branch agency. In addition to those members of the country team who perform bilateral work with the Government of Thailand, approximately half of the mission employees are engaged in work relating to regional platforms. Relations among the entities represented on the country team are generally positive and productive. Senior staff, country team, and emergency action committee meetings are lively, with the Ambassador providing general guidance. He defers meeting control to the DCM or acting DCM during discussions of issues other than the Thai political situation.

The heads of agencies have access to the Ambassador whenever they need to discuss emergent issues, but they view the DCM as being in charge of day-to-day operations. They appreciate the DCM's operational effectiveness, strong communication skills, and knowledge of the wide array of U.S.-Thai cooperative operations the embassy supports.

Entry-level officers (ELO) reported that they have seen an improvement in the entry-level program in terms of engagement by both the DCM and the Ambassador. They particularly value the mentoring and career advice that both officers provide. ELOs are offered opportunities to serve as control officers for Washington visitors and also have opportunities to act as control officers for the Ambassador's in-country travel. The formal program of activities designed to enrich the experience of ELOs serving in Bangkok is still under development. As will be discussed in more detail in the consular section of this report, for the past two years, several ELOs in the visa section have received the rating statements for their annual performance evaluations so late that they have not had time to discuss or respond to the rater's input before the due date. In fact, both the reviewer and the rated employee prepared their statements before they ever saw their rating statements.

The Ambassador and the DCM take a strong interest in and provide full support to the regional security program. The Ambassador made clear that his overriding concern during the political and security crisis in spring 2010 was the safety and security of U.S. Government staff and resources in Thailand. The classified annex to this report discusses the regional security program in greater detail.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

REPORTING, ANALYSIS, AND ADVOCACY

Embassy Bangkok's performance prior to and during the crisis period of early 2010 illustrated that the COM and his team are operationally effective, with quality access to official and unofficial Thais across the social spectrum. The volume of cable traffic increased significantly during the period that the Red Shirt opposition coalition occupied central Bangkok demanding elections and a change of government. Consulate General Chiang Mai, which is responsible for the region where many Red Shirt leaders and supporters are based, also contributed insightful reports. The Department commended the mission's spot reporting and quick analyses, which included details on the advocacy for a peaceful resolution that the COM and others conducted with Thai officials and opposition elements.

For several years, Embassy Bangkok had not been submitting biographic background or assessments of the motivations and influence of important Thai individuals, both in and out of government. The mission's valuable reports during the 2010 crisis underscored how important it is for Embassy Bangkok to more fully communicate its expertise and knowledge to interested consumers throughout the U.S. Government.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Bangkok should establish a schedule to post, on the Intellipedia system and in cables, regular biographic submissions on official and unofficial Thai individuals in the political and economic fields. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 3: Embassy Bangkok should submit periodic leadership analyses on notable individuals throughout Thailand, elaborating on their motivations, alliances, and scope of influence in the changing domestic environment. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Political and economic officers are strong advocates of U.S. policy objectives. They conduct public outreach throughout Thailand and speak to diverse audiences. Subject to a regional security officer (RSO) security review and COM approval, the officers also visit Malay Muslim insurgent areas of southern Thailand to oversee U.S. development projects and grant funding for civil society entities involved in reconciliation efforts.

The OIG team reviewed how Embassy Bangkok sends information to a distribution list of U.S. officials via Sensitive but Unclassified (SBU) BlackBerry devices and public email accounts. Many of these largely factual reports of current events helped members of the embassy community determine how to safely move about the capital city. The OIG team observed that certain messages sent to a more restricted group of U.S. officials contained sensitive content and assessments. According to 12 FAM 541 a., information that warrants control and protection from general public disclosure should be labeled Sensitive but Unclassified. According to Executive Order 12958 and 12 FAM 513.3, information that requires protection against unauthorized disclosure in the interest of national security shall be classified with appropriate designations and be transmitted through Department information systems. An example of damage to national security includes release of information that might cause a foreign contact to hesitate in confiding in the United States.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Bangkok should direct employees not to transmit sensitive information on public email accounts. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Bangkok should designate appropriately the classification of highly sensitive information that is transmitted on the OpenNet or the classified networks. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

One shortcoming of BlackBerry devices is that the group lists of recipients cannot encompass the full range of interested U.S. official consumers. Cables are the official record of Department policies, program activities, and operations. While email is more convenient, cables are disseminated widely and interested users can access cable information from many official locations.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Bangkok should reinforce emails and informal messages with cables that report developments, analyze trends, and offer scenarios and suggestions for U.S. policymakers. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Records Management

Neither Embassy Bangkok nor Consulate General Chiang Mai is implementing Departmental procedures on records management and annual retirement of files, as required by 5 FAM 414.5 and 5 FAH-4 H-113. Email messages that meet the definition of records in 5 FAM 443.2 a. are not preserved.

Mission personnel retain documents primarily in personal email folders. Reliance on individual folders causes inefficiency in terms of time spent searching for information and the loss of retrievable material for the Department and historians. Exceptionally, the economic section's office management specialist completed the retirement of 2002 through 2008 files and has begun to compile correspondence and organize other records.

Based on the inspector's review of electronic materials, it is feasible for Embassy Bangkok to reconstitute official records for the years 2008, 2009, and 2010.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Bangkok should issue an administrative notice explaining that all Department employees are required to establish, maintain, and annually retire official records, including email messages that meet the definition of records as specified in Department guidance. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Bangkok should assemble 2008, 2009, and 2010 files, including relevant emails, and require staff to maintain files and retire them annually in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

The political section appears to have adequate staff to manage its bilateral and regional reporting and analysis duties and to support official visitors. Political officers are comfortable in expressing dissenting views, both within the section and with the Ambassador and DCM, with regard to their assessments of developments in Thailand. The political counselor noted that the section coordinated well with U.S. military entities on a wide range of political–military joint activities with the government of Thailand. However, the OIG team was unable to explore this coordination during the inspection, due to the political unrest.

The political section has produced valuable reporting on developments in southern Thailand – where the Royal Thai Government faces an ethno-nationalist, Malay Muslim separatist insurgency – and related implications for Thailand’s stability. Since August 2009, the section has correctly redirected resources to expand coverage of the dramatic political shifts occurring throughout the country, in particular in the Northeast where Red Shirt opposition forces have the strongest popular support.

Leahy Human Rights Vetting

A political officer serves as the embassy’s point of contact for implementation of the Leahy law, as amended. The political section annually provides embassy offices and other agencies with informal guidance on Leahy requirements. The section processes more than 2,000 vetting cases yearly, but there are shortcomings in compliance. For instance, some personnel did not understand that Thai candidates cannot be trained without a nonderogatory report from Washington agencies. The mission was not retaining records at post for Thai beneficiaries of U.S.-funded training for the required three years. The OIG team was informed that the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group was retaining files for the requisite 10 years for Department of Defense-funded training. The OIG team expects that the Department’s imminent introduction of the international vetting security tracking system will ease the processing of Leahy cases.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Bangkok should retain Leahy vetting files at post for 3 years for Department-funded training, and 10 years for Defense Department-funded training. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Four out of five requests for Leahy vetting of trainees come from law enforcement agencies. The political section sends email notifications of Leahy vetting requirements only to those agencies that have submitted requests in the past year. This relatively informal channel is insufficiently authoritative to motivate compliance from other agencies. A number of law enforcement agencies did not submit requests in the previous year and thus do not receive the political section’s annual email notification of Leahy vetting requirements. Moreover, some agencies whose Thai counterparts underwent training with Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs-sourced funds did not directly request vetting for their trainees; other law enforcement entities (including the International Law Enforcement Academy) had made these vetting requests on those agencies’ behalf.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Bangkok should issue an administrative announcement setting forth the requirements of section 620J of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and of section 8061 of the 2010 Department of Defense Appropriations Act, as they relate to vetting trainees for programs funded by those statutes. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 11: Embassy Bangkok should have the political officers responsible for Leahy vetting brief the law enforcement working group on vetting requirements and procedures to ensure that there is no confusion regarding sponsoring agencies' responsibilities to vet training candidates. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Refugees, Customs, and Immigration Service, Overseas Processing Entity

The political section's refugee unit does an excellent job managing one of the largest U.S. resettlement programs. Thailand hosts 150,000 people in nine refugee camps. Since 2005, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has resettled more than 50,000 refugees, primarily Burmese, in the United States. The unit has regional responsibilities, and officers at neighboring U.S. embassies praised the unit's staff for its timely guidance and effective trouble shooting. Its Foreign Service national (FSN) was recognized as EAP's FSN of the Year in 2010 for working on efforts to protect Burmese refugees, supporting the visits of senior Department and congressional staff, and negotiating the provisions of desperately needed U.S. humanitarian assistance to refugees.

Partners of the refugee unit include the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the local office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, and various nongovernmental organizations (including the International Rescue Committee's Overseas Processing Entity, which the OIG team was unable to evaluate due to the political unrest). The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also provide resources to refugees. The refugee unit convenes periodic meetings of all partners to exchange information and strategize on improving services. Participants conduct these meetings efficiently, with open discussion of problems and clear direction for next steps.

Thailand is a recipient of many asylum seekers and refugees of multiple nationalities. With decades of experience, the Thai government has developed well established structures for hosting refugees and facilitating third-country resettlement. Once the United States and other countries of refuge approve refugee or asylum status, the Thai government must process exit visas before travelers can leave Thailand. For internal reasons, Thai authorities can and do delay exit permits for years.

As a prerequisite for processing the exit visas, Thai authorities require travelers' personally identifiable information, which can jeopardize their security and that of the families they have left behind in their countries of origin. Embassy Bangkok has raised U.S. concerns about these privacy violations at the highest levels, and has sought improvements in Thai bureaucratic procedures. These interventions have not always been successful. The OIG team commends the measures the Ambassador and embassy officers have undertaken to advocate on refugee policy and refugee cases and encourages them to continue to do so.

Counterterrorism

The United States and Thailand cooperate productively on counterterrorism. Several embassy elements participate on a number of counterterrorism issues, including transnational financial controls. In addition, the Department's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism supports Thai efforts to establish and develop a Personal Identification and Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES), a terrorist interdiction program in which Thai immigration officials screen travelers against terrorist watch lists. (See the consular section of this report and the classified annex for additional discussion of PISCES.)

Export Control and Border Security

The Export Control and Related Border Security Assistance program handles technology transfer and consults closely with Thai authorities on transnational shipments. Due to the embassy's week-long closure during a period of political turmoil, the OIG team was unable to evaluate the personnel and the implementation of this program.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

The economic section manages a full portfolio of finance, trade, investment, terrorist financing and money laundering, transportation, labor, and human trafficking issues. The DCM chairs a monthly economic cluster meeting of all sections and agencies involved in economic-related activities. The OIG team heard concerns that the meeting's infrequency leads sections and agencies to use it more to share information rather than to engage in deeper discussion of joint strategies and tactics. The OIG team informally recommended holding biweekly economic cluster meetings to improve integration of economic work, reinforce efforts, and minimize duplication.

In 2008, the section lost a position dedicated to macroeconomic reporting. The section now handles financial work with greater reliance on the U.S. Treasury representative based in Singapore. This includes weekly email coordination. The Treasury representative visits Thailand quarterly to meet public and private sector financial experts. Collaboration with the Treasury representative works well.

Embassy Bangkok has an integrated approach to promoting U.S. trade policies. A major area of emphasis is intellectual property rights protection. There is considerable smuggling of counterfeit products in both directions at Thailand's borders. Thai performance in strengthening intellectual property rights protection has been uneven, characterized by delays in passing legislation and by problems allocating resources for training and retaining effective Thai customs officers. The Ambassador, economic officers, the Foreign Commercial Service, an intellectual property rights regional attaché, and the public affairs section are well focused on lobbying their Thai counterparts for improved Thai intellectual property rights measures. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that, when suggesting U.S. trade policy responses in its reports to U.S. trade offices, the embassy more carefully distinguish the Thai Government's intentions from its actions regarding intellectual property rights protection.

Environment Science Technology and Health

Most U.S. development assistance to Thailand, a middle income country, has been phased out. Experts from U.S. and Thai government technical agencies collaborate in carrying out the bilateral Environment, Science and Technology and Health (ESTH) program. The embassy's ESTH unit serves as a regional hub, with responsibility for fifteen South and East Asian countries. The unit's hub officer, with support from an eligible family member (EFM) and an LE staff member, manages extensive programs in neighboring countries, entailing regular travel outside Thailand. The unit's workload is considerable, and the embassy appropriately requested a new, mid-level position to

conduct the bilateral ESTH activities. An officer is slated for formal ESTH training before arrival in summer 2010.

U.S.-Thai collaboration in ESTH is a model for other countries. Thailand has reached levels of expertise, which it now shares with third countries. Thailand itself is a technical assistance provider for HIV/AIDS programs to countries in Africa and South America. The U.S. Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences is based in Bangkok and conducts research with Royal Thai Army scientists on emerging tropical diseases and disease vectors, with emphasis on field testing new drugs for eventual Thai or U.S. Food and Drug Administration licensing approval. The ESTH unit maintains liaison with, and supports regional efforts of, USAID and CDC, which, along with the research institute, have programs on HIV vaccination. The OIG team was unable to include an evaluation of the range of health activities conducted by U.S. agencies based in Bangkok.

Grants Management

The ESTH hub officer is a grants officer representative (GOR). Both he and an EFM in the hub unit have undergone grants training. The public affairs officer currently is the grants officer for various ESTH grants, and the public affairs section's LE grant-writing expert puts grants in final form. The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs grants officer, consulting with EAP staff, reviews grant applications and processes larger grants, while the ESTH hub receives applications and manages a growing volume of small grants. There were three such grants in 2008, five in 2009, and five in 2010.

Although disbursements were handled correctly for these locally managed small grants, record-keeping errors had occurred because the public affairs staff was not familiar with the content of the ESTH grants. It would improve the accountability of grants to have an officer with a grants warrant located in the ESTH subsection, rather than having to rely on public affairs personnel. A grants officer working from the economic section's ESTH subunit would be well placed to advise political and economic officers who also oversee small refugee and antitrafficking grants that Department bureaus execute.

Recommendation 12: Embassy Bangkok should assign the incoming bilateral Environment, Science and Technology, and Health officer to complete grants training. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 13: Embassy Bangkok should acquire a grants warrant for either the regional Environment, Science and Technology, and Health hub officer or the bilateral Environment, Science and Technology, and Health officer. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Commercial Advocacy and Promotion

The Ambassador is active on commercial advocacy and promotion. The economic section, public affairs section, Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, regional intellectual property rights attaché, and Consulate General Chiang Mai work jointly to encourage policy changes by the government of Thailand and to support the efforts of U.S. firms. The embassy frequently consults with and supports the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Franchising is a growth area of the Thai economy in which the embassy has helped boost opportunities for the United States. At 65 percent, the United States now dominates the international franchising market. The embassy also urges Thai officials to improve conditions for investors in the information technology (IT) sector, which would stimulate greater interest from U.S. and other firms.

Consulate General Chiang Mai

Embassy Bangkok and Consulate General Chiang Mai enjoy positive and productive relations, with close communication across all agencies. An ELO in the consulate general works half-time on consular work and half-time on economic work. Consular section scheduling requirements, however, preclude the ELO from participating by digital videoconference (DVC) in Bangkok's economic cluster meetings and traveling to Bangkok for mission-wide sessions on specific economic activities. As a result, the ELO is not able to keep current on aspects of the economic portfolio. In addition, the ELO has not had guidance on preparing cables, understanding the interests of economic Federal agencies, and using MSRP objectives.

Recommendation 14: Embassy Bangkok should assign an experienced embassy economic officer to serve as a functional mentor to the Consulate General Chiang Mai entry-level officer, to include providing consultation with the embassy economic section when the entry-level officer travels to Bangkok for consular consultations. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Assistance

Due to the political unrest during the inspection period, the OIG team was unable to evaluate the mission-wide coordination and strategic planning, implementation, and public information management of assistance activities.

LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATION

Embassy Bangkok supports a wide array of law enforcement entities. In addition to the regional security office and the embassy's transnational crime affairs section, which supports capacity building in the Thai criminal justice system and coordinates an extensive range of training, the embassy's law enforcement community includes: the Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection, the Transportation Security Administration, and the U.S. Secret Service; as well as the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group and the Defense attaché office.

Bangkok is also home to the International Law Enforcement Academy-Bangkok, a jointly funded and managed Thai-U.S. training facility dedicated to developing effective law enforcement cooperation among Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries and strengthening each country's criminal justice institutions. The academy plays a substantial role both in providing a platform for criminal justice system assistance and in developing a curriculum for criminal justice system training.

The transnational crime affairs section has primary responsibility for the MSRP's goal to support "an effective and trustworthy criminal justice system," and it has assumed a central role in coordinating criminal justice system capacity building efforts across the board. It has developed a strategic plan to build capacity in the police force, among prosecutors, and in the judiciary, primarily through extensive outreach and training. The section chief developed, proposed, and gained funding for a mobile regional training program that will bring a common police training curriculum to Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Malaysia. In addition to the section chief, the staff of the transnational crime affairs section includes personnel seconded from Department of Justice's International Crime Investigative Training Assistance program and its Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training program.

A law enforcement working group coordinates the activities of all embassy law enforcement entities. The DCM has organized its monthly meeting into two phases, both of which he chairs. The initial phase brings together all law enforcement entities at post, including the transnational crime affairs section chief as vice-chair, Department of Justice personnel seconded to the transnational crime affairs section, and the U.S. Pacific Command's Joint Interagency Task Force West. Participants use the law enforcement working group to ensure coherence in training and to overcome any inconsistencies or redundancies in trainee coverage. The second phase, with the RSO as vice-chair, is limited to law enforcement agencies with operations in the field. It focuses on operations these agencies are conducting and serves to provide mutual support and avoid overlap and interference. This is a particularly appropriate structure, as it serves as a mechanism to balance support for the Thai criminal justice system and collaboration with it.

Informal consultation among participating law enforcement agencies is a strength. The agencies' collaborative approach and the DCM's close oversight, coordination, and enforcement of the requirement that all operations gain front office approval have made this effort a success. Notable accomplishments include pursuit and prosecution of pedophile sex tourists and the arrest of a high-profile arms and drugs merchant, as well as an effective working environment with Thai authorities across the board.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Overview

The public affairs section (PAS) works well and does an outstanding job over a broad range of strategically targeted mission activities, notably the MSRP goal that "the Thai public broadly supports U.S. interests." Department research indicates that about 85 percent of the Thai public does just that. Nevertheless, to keep the level of public support for U.S. interests high, even as evidence of decline in this support has appeared, the embassy pursues an active agenda of engagement with youth and the predominantly Muslim southern Thailand. The section has pursued this strategy effectively with the considerable resources available to it, which included an FY 2010 budget of \$1.4 million. Additional resources, particularly in staffing, are called for to maintain and expand this activity to support mission goals.

Personnel

PAS is regularly staffed by five American officers who focus on the U.S.-Thai bilateral relationship; an ELO temporarily supplements this core staff, while another two officers have a regional focus. The section also has a regional English language officer (RELO) and a regional information resource officer, an American professional associate, two EFMs, and twenty-five LE staff members, several of whom hold advanced degrees in related fields from U.S. or foreign universities. In addition to the public affairs officer (PAO), the bilateral public diplomacy staff includes an information officer or press attaché, deputy press attaché, cultural affairs officer (CAO), and an assistant CAO.

Coordination

PAS works well with most of the 40 U.S. Federal agencies in Thailand. There is a particularly close relationship involving activities with the Foreign Commercial Service and also the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. There is a similarly good relationship with the agricultural attaché involving promotional events. Health issues are a large element of mission activity, and PAS has good relations with the CDC and the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences. USAID has its own PAO. Since the OIG team did not have an opportunity to examine the relationship between the USAID PAO and the embassy PAO, it was unable to determine the degree to which there is a mission-wide branding policy regarding announcements of U.S. foreign assistance efforts.

PAS coordinates well with the Defense attaché office and the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group; the information officer also works closely with these two entities on ship visits and outreach events. The section is also aware of and part of the military information support team's clearance process for public service announcements and advertisements with a counter-radicalization agenda by Military Information Support Teams in Thailand. PAS relations with the law enforcement agencies are good.

The section's coordination with Department elements has been generally good; improved coordination with the consular section would be desirable and is slowly coming about. PAS has suggested following Embassy London's best practice of putting a visa process video online. This idea has not been met with much enthusiasm, but the section continues to press forward with some consular cooperation. In the meantime, PAS works with the consul general to get as much consular information as possible onto the Internet. It would be mutually beneficial for these two sections to forge a closer working relationship. For example, PAS introduced a Facebook page during the inspection and promptly found that the public wants to dialogue about visas, which in

turn requires the expertise of the consular section. PAS also has sought the consular section's attention to changes in the content of the embassy Website regarding the new nonimmigrant visa form.

Cultural and Educational Affairs

Cultural and educational affairs are key vehicles for contact and engagement with the Thai public. The CAO manages a broad range of programs and is the primary grants officer, together with the PAO. Working with the CAO are two temporary staff members, a professional associate, and an assistant CAO who is an ELO serving for six months in the section, by special arrangement. With these two temporary staff members, the PAS has been able to provide a high level of performance, but once they are gone, it will revert to its former (and lower) level of cultural and educational affairs activity and effectiveness. The loss of the section's stopgap staff will diminish the range, quality, and effectiveness of activities and programs that the PAS carries out in professional exchange, outreach, and in educational programs, with a concomitant reduction in desired outcomes.

Good management requires a balance between human resources and the program's planned or envisioned activities. Accordingly, the FY 2012 MSRP requested that two mid-level assistant CAOs be added to the cultural and educational affairs office. One of these would focus on professional exchange and outreach, while the other would handle educational programs exclusively. The MSRP considers these requested positions crucial to the challenge of keeping Thais oriented favorably toward the United States, as a new generation that is less instinctively oriented toward the United States is assuming its role as leaders of the nation. The OIG team concurs with the addition of at least one of the two additional assistant cultural affairs officer positions that Embassy Bangkok has requested in its 2012 MSRP.

Exchanges

Embassy Bangkok has a large and successful exchange program. The PAO and CAO sit on the Fulbright Commission board. The embassy sent forty visitors to the United States last year under its annual International Visitor and Leadership program allocation, the Lower Mekong initiative, and special programs for the President's Cairo initiative. At the Department's direction, the embassy focuses its exchange program on youth, women, and minority groups (primarily Muslims, but highlanders from the North as well). The embassy operates several citizens and education exchange programs focusing on these groups. Participants come from all regions of Thailand. The embassy also reaches out to the underprivileged through the exchange program.

Returning visitors are debriefed and frequently participate in the embassy speaker program.

Youth Outreach

Much of the PAS outreach is youth-oriented, intended to engage the successor generation. This outreach is broad and involves numerous programs and initiatives, some of which are detailed in other parts of this report. To help guide its strategy in outreach to Thai youth, PAS established a youth advisory council, comprised of two young Foreign Service officers, four of the younger generation LE staff, four university age Thai interns working at the embassy, and four young exchange alumni.

Muslim Outreach

Thailand's Muslim communities are concentrated in its three southernmost provinces. Because of violence and security concerns, the RSO has restricted embassy staff from visiting those provinces without RSO and DCM approval and enhanced security measures. PAS frequently goes south into the high risk zone for mission critical trips, but it obtains the required approval and travelers keep a low public profile and observe special safety precautions and procedures.

PAS staff members often go to the southern provincial capitals of Pattani and Yala, each of which has an American Corner situated at a government university. These trips are good for developing contacts for the International Visitor and Leadership program and other exchange programs, as well as for monitoring small grant programs. Every year the embassy conducts a special Muslim outreach program with an imam from the United States who talks about Islam in the United States.

English Language Program

The RELO is an experienced, dedicated officer with an LE staff assistant. His region covers Thailand, Vietnam, Burma, Cambodia, Taiwan, and Laos. However, as the office's administrative workload has increased, the RELO and his Bangkok assistant find themselves more involved in administrative requirements than in regional English language programs.

In general, programs cannot be accomplished without the human resources necessary to implement them. Moreover, past experience has shown that if the oversight of grants is relaxed (for example, to focus instead on programs), grant objectives

could suffer. More importantly, increasingly time-consuming administrative requirements are keeping the RELO and his assistant from running as well as desired the programs that are at the core of RELO work. For example, because the RELO travels 50 percent of the time, when an English language specialist makes a two- to three-week visit to Thailand, the RELO must choose to either leave the Bangkok office unstaffed or reschedule his own activities to remain in Bangkok while his assistant performs outreach with the visiting English language specialist.

A PAS-funded camp for English Access Microscholarship students in Bangkok in FY 2010 had to be postponed because of the lack of staff to help plan it. The E-Teacher program, which uses online courses to improve the English skills of teachers, also is not developing to its potential, because there are not enough staff to organize an alumni network to help recruit teachers throughout Thailand. Such a network would be most valuable in southern Thailand, where the abovementioned security challenges prevent much travel by embassy staff.

Recommendation 15: The Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, should provide additional administrative support to the regional English language officer based at Embassy Bangkok by adding to the locally employed staff. (Action: ECA, in coordination with EAP)

Grants Management

The OIG team carefully reviewed grants, which totaled \$875,002 from 2009 to mid-year 2010. It found grant folders more than two years old that were wanting for a number of reasons, including deficient close-outs and a lack of essential documentation. In contrast, more recent grants were in very good condition. The current practice is for LE staff, as well as officers, to have their GOR designation included in every grant. Formerly, the PAO was the grants officer and the CAO was the GOR, with an LE staff member providing administrative support.

Because the PAO and the CAO have grants warrants and current training in grants and foreign assistance, they serve as the grants officers for a range of grants, not just strictly public diplomacy grants.

For instance, the PAS grants officers manage the Ambassador's fund for cultural preservation, as well as two grant programs in the South: one is democracy-oriented, and the other is funded with an appropriation designed to mitigate problems from conflict. Almost all of the folders for these grants incorrectly indicate that their grant

authority is the Fulbright-Hays Act (P.L. 87-256), rather than the correct authority, which is either the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-195), part II, Chapter 4, section 531 for Economic Support Funds, or the Freedom Support Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-511). The funds have not come from the wrong appropriation, which would create an antideficiency issue, but some grants files contain inaccurate information. Those grant folders also incorrectly indicate the MSRP goal as “public diplomacy” (goal # 6 of FY 2011 Mission Strategic Plan), when that is not the grant’s goal or is not its primary goal.

The OIG team found that several GORs, both American and LE staff, have not received FSI grant training. The CAO has developed his own PowerPoint presentation on the grants process, which he believes is superior to the FSI materials. However, GORs work best when they have the training that the Department recommends (PY 220 Introduction to Grants and Cooperative Agreements), especially if the GOR requiring such training serves as GOR on multiple grants.

Recommendation 16: Embassy Bangkok should require its officers and locally employed staff serving as grant officer representatives to complete online or classroom grants training offered by, or in coordination with, the Foreign Service Institute in addition to any supplemental grants officer representative training provided by the embassy. (Action: Embassy Bangkok, in coordination with FSI)

Media Unit

The information officer manages the PAS media unit, which has fourteen LE staff members who handle conventional and online media, audiovisual support, and the Information Resource Center (IRC), which includes the embassy’s webmaster. The regional information resource officer is not in the media unit and does not supervise media unit staff, but she does advise the IRC and works with the IRC in programming around Thailand. The deputy press attaché is the actual manager of the IRC.

The embassy has a good relationship with Thai media and is able to place many opinion pieces in the editorial pages of Thailand’s major newspapers. The media unit often takes groups of Thai journalists to Hawaii to visit the U.S. Pacific Command headquarters as part of the strategy to get media attention and to keep the media sensitive to the importance of the U.S.-Thai alliance. About a quarter of the mission is in the health and science area. The media unit works to show Thais that the bilat-

eral relationship is broader than the military security relationship, and that the relationship is not one-sided. The Secretary received heavy media coverage when she visited Thailand, but lower-level dignitaries have a harder time attracting media interest.

Thai journalists sometimes exasperate the embassy with reporting that is the result of low-level investigative skills and standards. In January 2010, for example, the Bangkok Post carried a guest editorial that was critical of the United States, regarding Hmong refugees from Laos. The piece was full of errors. The media unit worked with the refugee unit to publish an opinion piece under the Ambassador's name to rebut the erroneous reporting.

Internal Communication Miscues

Both the information officer and the PAO attend country team meetings; the information officer attends the senior staff meetings as well. However, this has not been sufficient to keep them adequately informed so that the embassy can present itself and the U.S. Government in the best light to the media. There have been instances in which neither the PAO nor the information officer was aware of a recent or impending event that was of interest to the media. The OIG team observed this lack of communication in connection with two visits by the EAP Assistant Secretary. Likewise, when Thai forces seized an aircraft carrying North Korean weapons in December 2009, those who were privy to the information did not share it with the PAO or information officer in a timely manner. The officers' ignorance of the incident resulted in a missed opportunity to praise the Thais the following day in response to media queries; it also generated unwelcome negative media coverage.

Knowledge about the subject at issue is a prerequisite to any successful media briefing or response to media queries. To effectively operate as the spokespersons for the mission, the information officer and PAO need to be involved, from the beginning, in preparations for VIP visits (which they seldom are) and included in the inner circle of the embassy's most well-informed staff. If they are not, media mistakes can occur that embarrass the U.S. Government; the Thai media might misinterpret situations and disseminate misinformation that requires much effort to undo; the confidence between the information officer and his or her media contacts may be damaged; and the immediate opportunity to put the best face on an event may be lost.

Recommendation 17: Embassy Bangkok should develop and implement procedures to keep the public affairs officer and the information officer promptly apprised of emergent, potential public affairs problems. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

to young people. Two of these Info Camps have been held in southern Thailand to reach Muslim youth and reach out to underserved communities. The embassy gave a grant to a high school to organize and host an overnight camp. The grant provided for catering, housing, and teachers. Through this synergy among the information resource officer, RELO, and IRC officer, young students and their teachers have been able to use the English language and come into contact with the U.S. embassy. Once PAS moves to its new building in summer 2010, the IRC will become even busier. The embassy plans to make the IRC more accessible to the public.

Use of Social Media and the Web Site

PAS hired an online media specialist in a newly created position a month prior to the OIG inspection. With her arrival, the webmaster can focus on the technical side of the embassy's Web site, while the online media specialist handles the content.

In the brief time the online media specialist has been at the embassy, she launched the embassy's Facebook page, which garnered 760 "friends" in less than 2 weeks and continues to grow at a brisk pace. However, to develop this and other social media outreach fully, other sections of the embassy will have to participate, and the PAS is working to foster that cooperation. In addition to Facebook, the online media specialist maintains the embassy's other social media outreach, including Twitter and YouTube. The next media project will be doing a video on the consular visa process and informing the public about the new nonimmigrant visa form.

The embassy Web presence is bilingual, with the English and Thai sites cross linked. The two translators in the media unit support the Web presence, in addition to their primary work reviewing Thai language media and providing summaries or full translations to embassy officers.

Mission-Wide Audiovisual Support Services

The two technicians in PAS' audiovisual unit provide unreimbursed, mission-wide audiovisual support services to other sections and agencies. LE staff in the audiovisual unit maintain that as much as 60 percent of the unit's work is devoted to providing audiovisual support services to other sections and agencies. The OIG team verified that a substantial amount of the unit's workload involves providing non-public diplomacy related audiovisual support services because all of the embassy's technical expertise and equipment are in PAS. At such a large mission, the audiovisual support ought to be an International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) function. In effect, PAS is subsidizing the support services for other sections and agencies.

Recommendation 19: Embassy Bangkok should create an additional International Cooperative Administrative Support Services cost center to capture the expenses associated with the public affairs section providing mission-wide audiovisual support services. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

American Corners

The CAO manages the five American Corners in Thailand: one in the South, two in the far South, one in the Northeast, and one in Chiang Mai. All are located on the campuses of major provincial educational institutions. The embassy makes good use of the American Corners to program embassy and U.S. speakers, poster shows, and DVCs. Both the regional information resource officer and the RELO use them for programs; other PAS officers visit them as well.

In addition to bringing the American Corners directors to Bangkok once a year, the embassy uses DVCs as a management tool to work with the directors remotely. American Corners DVCs also are used to interview candidates for exchange programs and to program speakers in the high-risk zone.

The OIG team visited the Chiang Mai American Corner and found that programming slowed between terms at the host university. The OIG team believes that DVCs using speakers within the region would reverse this trend. These DVCs would also help to increase return on the embassy's investment in the equipment and preclude problems that arise when working with speakers in the United States, where there is an 11-hour time difference. The OIG team made informal recommendations on this subject.

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Overview

The Bangkok consular section provides generally good service to its large and diverse American citizens services (ACS) clientele and to a moderate-sized visa applicant pool. A 2008 consular management assistance team (CMAT) that reviewed Bangkok's operations two months after the current consular management team's arrival credited the consular section's solid performance in large part to a strong cadre of ELOs and LE staff. This characterization remains accurate eighteen months later. The visa chief does not fulfill many of the position's required supervisory duties. The consul general encourages the ELOs and the ACS unit chief, and he delegates career

enhancing tasks to them, but he has not been able to fill the management gap left by the visa chief's hands-off style. ELOs on their first consular tours, albeit talented and hard working, are not always able to identify and implement operational efficiencies without the systematic guidance that experienced supervisors can and should provide. Furthermore, since half of the consular ELO contingent spends only one year in the consular section before rotating to another section, seamless operations require constant training and careful coordination.

The considerably smaller consular operation in Chiang Mai is well run, and the section chief is focused on cross training, streamlining, and electronic file maintenance, among other management tools. Bangkok's consul general has oversight for consular operations in Chiang Mai, and he has been supportive of the Chiang Mai section chief's initiatives to improve workflow and increase efficiency.

Consular Management: Space, Staff ng, and Leadership

Space

Embassy Bangkok's overall workspace is adequate, although not ideally configured. The ACS and visa staff work areas do not connect internally, although all consular clients share a common waiting area. The interview window configuration is outdated and inadequate for the workload, particularly the heavy ACS workload. The sole privacy booth, located in the ACS unit, resembles a broom closet. Consequently, for sensitive interviews that cannot be conducted in earshot of the waiting public, both the fraud prevention manager (FPM) and the assistant regional security officer for investigations (ARSO-I) bring clients through hardline doors into the work area. Three direct-hire LE staff work in a makeshift booth in the waiting area, with no method of retreat behind the hardline in case of emergency. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) plans to use security funds for a hardline upgrade to resolve these deficiencies when money becomes available. The approved design includes the upgrade of two restrooms in the consular waiting area and a second set of restrooms in the exterior waiting area; neither restroom project can be funded with security money. The OIG team believes that identifying funding for that desirable, but optional portion of the project should not delay the essential hardline upgrade.

Recommendation 20: The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations should give high priority to funding and implementing the security upgrades to the Embassy Bangkok consular section in FY 2010. (Action: OBO)

The Chiang Mai consular section operates out of one room. The half-time ELO does not have desk space in the consular section; the consular section chief works in a small cubicle that abuts the sole toilet; the LE supervisor has no private space in which to counsel his subordinates;

The OIG team did not make a formal recommendation on consular space, because the entire consulate compound is constructed around an old home and the attendant outbuildings and does not lend itself to modern consular operations. If workload and staff increase, the consular work area will need to be expanded into the adjacent patio area.

Staffing

There are unresolved or unaddressed staffing anomalies in both Bangkok and Chiang Mai. The Bangkok staffing pattern shows two ELO positions in the ACS unit and five and a half ELO positions in the nonimmigrant visa (NIV) unit. Although the NIV unit has “loaned” one of its line officers to ACS, the long-term workloads of those two units require a permanent shift of one NIV officer to ACS and the designation of an additional NIV officer to serve as a half-time NIV and half-time ACS officer. This staffing pattern will increase the ACS officer component to three and a half ELOs, plus the unit chief. The official staffing pattern also designates the immigrant visa (IV) officer as half-time IV and half-time NIV, but this position is currently full-time IV. However, a half-time officer could probably carry out the modest IV workload if consular management decided to reconsider simple refusals, without the applicant’s personal appearance. The OIG team made an informal recommendation on this topic in the visa section below.

Recommendation 21: Embassy Bangkok should transfer one of the five nonimmigrant visa line officer positions to the American citizens services unit and provide for one additional nonimmigrant visa position to serve half time in the American citizens services unit. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Embassy Bangkok has five consular associate positions and two other EFM positions listed on its staffing pattern. Much of the pressure on the ACS unit stems from the fact that the three ACS consular associate positions are vacant. Because consular associates can process notarials and passports, the lack of associates puts greater stress on the ACS officers, whose time would be better spent on complex emergency cases. Because a consular associate needs to complete the full consular training course, it is vital to identify EFMs who might want to compete for those positions before they travel to post. Because many officers spend several months in

Thai language training before taking up their assignment, it is feasible to make them aware of employment possibilities for their spouses in sufficient time to enroll them in consular training. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that Embassy Bangkok conduct active outreach to the students studying the Thai language at FSI about the consular associate positions available to their spouses.

The staffing pattern also identifies an EFM position as the consul general's secretary-receptionist. That EFM position has been left vacant for some time. The current consul general maintains that the position does not require a full-time office management specialist, and the OIG team concurs. The LE correspondence assistant serves as the part-time receptionist-scheduler for the consul general, but she has a full-time job with correspondence, Web site translation, and referral liaison responsibilities. Meanwhile, workflow in the NIV unit would benefit from at least a half-time EFM to capture biometrics, saving the interviewing officers valuable time that they currently spend verifying the fingerprints that the LE staff collects. Even non-Thai speakers could learn the basic phrases required for fingerprint capture. Consulate General Chiang Mai plays a video in its waiting area explaining to visa applicants the fingerprint process, which might be useful for Embassy Bangkok as well. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the mission reprogram the vacant EFM secretary-receptionist position as a half-time NIV biometrics clerk and half-time receptionist.

With the advent of the paperless visa application process, the position descriptions of the NIV unit's nonsupervisory LE staff are now outdated. The anticipated introduction of the global visa system in early FY 2011 will change the NIV assistant work components even more. The OIG team noted that the NIV visa assistant grade levels are one grade lower than similar positions at many other posts. The position descriptions also focus on the routine components of the job rather than on more complex tasks, such as noting anomalies or fraud indicators when preparing visa cases for officer scrutiny. This juncture is the appropriate time to update all NIV and IV LE staff position descriptions, including those of supervisors, after researching staffing levels and grades at several consular sections with similar workloads and client bases to ensure uniformity and fairness. Moreover, since the NIV and IV units are probably overstaffed with LE staff while the ACS unit has insufficient LE staff, this exercise will facilitate internal reprogramming.

Recommendation 22: Embassy Bangkok should update the position descriptions for the locally employed staff in both visa units and review staffing levels, reprogramming excess positions to the American citizens services unit. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

For years, one mid-level officer position in Chiang Mai served as both the consular officer and the political-economic/public diplomacy officer. The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) funded that position. A few years ago, CA established and funded a second position for a full-time consular section chief. The first CA-funded position, however, continued to work half time in the consular section to address the growing workload, creating a one and a half officer consular section. In FY 2010, the Department established a new, full-time ELO economic position in Chiang Mai. The incumbent of that position will report to the incumbent of the existing, half-time political-economic/public diplomacy position. This arrangement will create an illogical management structure, wherein a full-time economic ELO reports to a part-time political-economic/public diplomacy section chief, who will be unavailable for half of the day while he or she is interviewing consular clients. The incumbent of the existing political-economic/public diplomacy position will transfer out of Chiang Mai in summer 2010, and the new economic ELO will arrive in winter 2010, making this the ideal time to rationalize the staffing situation by downgrading one of the mid-level positions in the consular section and realigning lines of supervision in establishing full-time, mid-level section chief positions for the consular and political-economic/public diplomacy sections.

Recommendation 23: The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and the Bureau of Human Resources, should realign Consulate General Chiang Mai position numbers 30482026 and 10474018 so that there is a full-time, mid-level political-economic/public diplomacy section chief and an entry-level officer who works half time in the consular section and half time in the political-economic/public diplomacy section. (Action: CA. in coordination with EAP and DGHR)

Chiang Mai's consular section has one consular assistant position. It has not been difficult to recruit candidates for that position, but the incumbent cannot perform some of the routine ACS tasks that would provide the most benefit, especially given the competing demands for the half-time officer's time. A consular associate position would be more useful than a consular assistant position in such a small post, but management has never requested authorization for an associate position. The incoming consular assistant has taken consular training and could easily step into a consular associate position if one existed.

Recommendation 24: Embassy Bangkok should request that the Bureau of Consular Affairs replace the existing consular assistant position at Consulate General Chiang Mai with a consular associate position as soon as possible. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Consulate General Chiang Mai's LE staffing is the bare minimum for the NIV and ACS workload. The section chief has to manage leave carefully, and staff sickness or unanticipated travel to handle emergency cases can put considerable stress on the limited personnel resources. The OIG team made two informal recommendations on the use of the incoming EFM and monitoring staffing levels and workload growth to mitigate pressure on the LE staff.

Leadership

Chapter 7 of the *Foreign Affairs Handbook* discusses the qualities of a great consular section. The management and leadership behaviors recommended in 7 FAH-1-H-240 include: working the NIV line and completing other basic consular tasks in addition to oversight duties; conducting regular and focused staff meetings; establishing formal training plans; and ensuring strong management controls. In Bangkok, the consul general and the visa chief are committed to the section's performance goals. However, if they were regular participants in line work they would be more aware of the pressures on some units and the inefficiencies of others that resulted in some of this report's recommendations. The consul general talks with officers in the section and asks about how work is progressing, but the visa chief rarely does. During the work and travel NIV workload surge in the summer, neither interviewed visa applicants on the line even though all of those interviews are conducted in English. The experienced supervisors do not demonstrate interviewing techniques and observe and critique performance for newly arrived ELOs; rather, other ELOs fill the trainer role.

The consul general meets with all officers weekly, but the visa chief does not meet regularly with visa officers or LE staff, either individually or as a group. He is, however, available in his office for questions at any time. None of the ELOs had received formal counseling sessions or the obligatory written counseling statement during their tenure at Embassy Bangkok.

The 2008 CMAT report detailed steps that the visa chief needed to take in order to meet the requirements of his position, and recommended a corrective action plan. The CMAT report stressed a lack of communications and feedback, the failure to conduct regular adjudication reviews, and tardiness in finalizing work requirements

and performance evaluations. None of the CMAT recommendations has been implemented consistently. The OIG team observed first-hand the stress that ELOs experienced when their performance evaluations were prepared at the last minute and included areas for improvement on which they had not been counseled. The visa chief had not conducted the statutory review of NIV adjudications for several months until the week before the OIG team's arrival in Bangkok, and therefore was unable to provide constructive and timely feedback to the interviewing officers. (See management controls for another recommendation on this issue.)

Recommendation 25: Embassy Bangkok should carry out all normal supervisory responsibilities in the visa units, monitor performance, and document steps taken to implement and monitor supervisory effectiveness in the appropriate performance evaluations. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

In Bangkok, four of the eight ELO positions spend only one year in the consular section and spend a second year in another functional area. CA tries to limit the number of these rotational ELOs to no more than 50 percent of the line officer complement in order to promote efficiency and continuity. Normally in other consular sections, those officers who spend only one year in the consular section work in a single unit for the entire year, with perhaps a very brief excursion into another consular area for some familiarization and a different perspective. The Bangkok consular rotation program results in several officers spending only three to four months in some units. The result is a loss of continuity and an increased training burden for the unit chiefs. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the consul general take charge of the section's rotation program to balance operational efficiency with the opportunities for a varied consular experience.

Visas

With the contraction in the global economy, Bangkok's FY 2009 NIV workload declined by over 20,000 cases from its FY 2008 high. The IV workload also declined from a FY 2006 high of approximately 8,500 to fewer than 3,000 cases in FY 2009. The declining visa workload has allowed management to shift officer resources to the steadily growing ACS workload – although, as mentioned earlier, an analysis of workflow and LE staff time may free up even more resources for ACS. The OIG team was unable to examine LE staff processes thoroughly, but a careful review of LE processing in light of the change to the DS-160 online NIV application is in order. This will almost certainly result in streamlining and possibly internal staff reprogramming. The OIG team made three informal recommendations aimed at achieving increased efficiency in the near term. These include: the consistent application of

DS-160 procedures countrywide; the use of courier or mail pass back for IVs; and the reduction of a second personal appearance by certain applicants who have been documentarily refused at their initial IV interviews.

Visa referral numbers are modest. They are mostly class A referrals for travel for LE staff training programs. The consul general processes all applications as required, although very few require interviews.

For a discussion of Visas Viper, see the fraud prevention section.

American Citizens Services

Thailand has a steadily growing ACS workload. Many U.S. military veterans who served in the region during the Vietnam War retired to Thailand. It is also attractive to other retirees for its beaches, low cost of living, and affordable healthcare. The number of death cases that Bangkok handles each week would swamp many other ACS units. The Federal benefits workload is growing, and the LE staff member working on Federal benefits has received almost no training. Because Thailand lacks the legislation necessary to implement the Hague Abduction Convention, many abducting parents find Thailand a hospitable refuge, even if they are not Thai citizens. The consular section spends considerable time monitoring its child custody cases. Finally, Thailand has long been attractive to low budget and adventure tourists, and the country is particularly tolerant of persons with mental or emotional problems. Thailand's sex tourism industry also attracts foreigners, including Americans, who may have criminal records in the United States. The attendant problems for the ACS unit can be time consuming and stressful. See the staffing section of the report for a recommendation about reprogramming LE staff positions from NIV and IV to ACS.

The OIG team was in Bangkok during the height of Thailand's political unrest, and was able to witness the ACS unit's response when the embassy was forced to close for nearly a week. The ACS unit chief quickly recommended the creation of an offsite facility to handle both emergency and routine ACS services. With the general services officer's cooperation, the ACS unit fielded two sites—one to handle walk-in and appointment cases, and the second to process passport requests and respond to phone inquiries. This model was effective for a short-term operation, but some LE staff had trouble responding to the request to be at one of the work sites, given the disruptions to transportation. Consulate General Chiang Mai provided an alternative site for some of the ACS clients and for some time sensitive NIV cases, and Embassy Bangkok's detailing of an officer and an LE staff member to Chiang Mai during the embassy's closure was a useful step.

Both the Bangkok and the Chiang Mai consular sections do a good job of providing service in emergency and routine ACS cases. Chiang Mai relies heavily on an appointment system for all of its routine ACS cases; Bangkok, on the other hand, offers but does not require appointments for its routine case load other than the time-consuming consular reports of birth abroad. Given Bangkok's cramped ACS waiting area and the insufficient number of service windows, the OIG team made an informal recommendation that Bangkok amend its Web site and its recorded messages to require appointments for routine ACS services, while preserving the flexibility to provide routine services for citizens on an ad hoc basis. This is also important for consistency countrywide.

Bangkok's ACS unit is beleaguered by telephone calls throughout the day. The staff takes turns answering calls as they come through to the sole ACS phone number. Some of these calls are visa calls that should be handled by the contract call center; others are case-specific visa calls that need the attention of a visa employee. Many are routine ACS inquiries that could be addressed by a phone tree response. Consulate General Chiang Mai has reduce its phone call burden by redirecting these calls automatically through a system of telephone prompts, reserving only emergency calls for immediate response. Embassy Bangkok could do the same, and the OIG team has made an informal recommendation to that effect.

In 2008, the CMAT team recommended that Embassy Bangkok consider requesting the establishment of a consular agency in Phuket, which accounts for 15 percent of Bangkok's ACS workload and is approximately ten hours by road from the capital. Consular management believes that a consular agency in Pattaya, less than two hours away from Bangkok but the origin of many of its most sensitive ACS cases, is more urgent. In light of its large tourist and retiree populations, Thailand could well support two consular agencies. The embassy has not taken initial steps to request a consular agency for either site. At present, representatives from Bangkok's ACS unit travel to these two resorts two or three times a year to perform routine consular services. However, many citizens cannot wait for those road trips and travel to Bangkok's already congested ACS unit for service. Consular agencies could be a potential boon for both the embassy and Thailand's American population, and the OIG team supports the CMAT recommendation.

Recommendation 26: Embassy Bangkok should undertake the necessary analyses for consular agencies in Phuket and Pattaya and follow the instructions on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Web site for requesting establishment for one or both consular agencies. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Fraud Prevention Unit

OIG's 2005 Embassy Bangkok inspection report recommended that the FPM take on a regional role for Consulate General Chiang Mai and the embassies in Burma, Cambodia, and Laos. By all accounts, the FPM provides excellent service to those posts. He travels regularly to review their programs and to conduct training for the consular section staff as well as airport and immigration personnel. In 2009, the FPM and his staff trained more than 500 immigration officers, airline employees, and consular staff members on detecting imposters and recognizing U.S. passport and visa security features. His small but productive Bangkok staff of fraud investigators conducts the validation studies for all five posts and helps the smaller consular sections with the preparation of visa or petition revocation requests when needed.

Bangkok also has a very active ARSO-I program. The program focuses on ACS issues, notably criminal cases involving American citizens residing in Thailand. Although the ARSO-I is not assigned regionally, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security plans to make increased use of his productive collocation with the regional FPM in the coming year. The Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Office of Overseas Criminal Investigations intends to make funds available for the ARSO-I to accompany the FPM during his regional visits, to see what types of criminal fraud are being perpetrated elsewhere in the region and make recommendations to the RSOs on how best to investigate and pursue judicial proceedings.

The ARSO-I used to occupy space adjacent to the FPM's office, and that proximity facilitated communication and cooperation. For space and privacy reasons, the ARSO-I moved to a more private office in an outside corridor. The OIG team made an informal recommendation about maintaining productive communications between the FPM and the ARSO-I.

Bangkok's FPM also participates in a pilot program on visa information sharing and fraud issues (especially related to alien smugglers) with the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, known as the Five Country Conference. This multilateral effort, plus the FPM's role as PISCES coordinator for Thailand, supports the continued regional role of the Bangkok FPM, even though at least two embassies in the region have much higher fraud rates than Thailand itself and could benefit from a more senior FPM. (See the classified annex for further discussion of the PISCES program.)

The FPM also serves as the Visas Viper coordinator. Bangkok's Visas Viper program is quite active, with the consular section itself furnishing many of the contributions, thanks in large part to the FPM's sustained, beneficial relationships with immigration and law enforcement officials in the course of his antifraud and training duties. The consular section follows all Visas Viper procedures.

Regional Consular Officer

Bangkok is the site of CA's newest regional consular officer (RCO) position. The RCO covers all of the countries served by the FPM, plus several others. He travels to most of his posts twice a year, although when a consular section is particularly well run, he graduates them to once-a-year visits to maximize resources. When in Bangkok, he consults with the consular sections under his oversight regularly. Although the RCO is not in the consular chain of command at Embassy Bangkok, the consul general approves his requests for travel and travel vouchers. The relationship with the rest of the consular staff is very collegial even if infrequent.

OIG will be conducting a separate review of the RCO program in the near future, and that report will comment on the effectiveness of the entire program. Some of the neighboring embassies commented favorably on the RCO Bangkok's role and the service he provides to their operations.

REGIONALIZATION

A large number of U.S. Government agencies have chosen to locate regional offices in Bangkok to take advantage of the capital's large, productive, and low-cost labor force, convenient transport linkages, large hotel capacity, and, until now, political stability. In fact, most agencies represented in the embassy hold responsibility for programs in other countries or otherwise use Bangkok as an operational base. The largest regional platforms deal with administrative support (finance, payroll, human resources, etc.), but other activities, including courier services, engineering services, ESTH, and law enforcement training, to name only a few, are fundamentally regional in nature.

Regional operations are different from those in bilateral missions, and their growth places different demands on management structures. In the absence of a strategic plan for the implementation and expansion of such operations, their enlargement can lead to imbalances and governance gaps and overlaps.

As noted above, Thailand may be entering a period of substantial political uncertainty that could diminish its attractiveness as a regional hub. This makes it all the more important that the embassy approach its responsibilities for regional operations with a clear view to the limitations inherent in regionalizing.

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

Increased Management Support Services

Embassy Bangkok provides a number of regional management support services to many EAP posts, and increasingly to posts within South and Central Asia. Mission Thailand's goal, as stated in the latest MSRP, is to become a model 21st century management platform that facilitates key U.S. diplomacy efforts in Asia and elsewhere. Embassy Bangkok has proposed increasing the regional services available to other posts, including additional regional training, position classification, procurement, property and supply services, and warehousing. The embassy's concept paper outlining the plan is entitled, "Bangkok Support Platform - A Model for the 21st Century."

It is an ambitious undertaking, but Embassy Bangkok has not yet performed the rigid analysis required for successful planning. Without proper planning, the embassy may encounter unanticipated problems and issues that may lead to the failure of the project.

The Department provides a complete guide for planning and managing Department projects in 5 FAH-5 H-210, including a project planning checklist in 5 FAH-5 H-217, Exhibit H-217. Good management practice requires setting priorities, and Department regulations are replete with references to the importance of setting priorities. The text of 6 FAH-5 H-212.2 is particularly germane as it deals with how ICASS councils and service providers set mission-wide priorities and how ICASS funds will be used to pay the increased regional management support proposed by the embassy. The applicable language of 6 FAH-5 H-212.2 states that, “since not every post will have the resources necessary to provide an unlimited range of service options, Councils and service provider(s) should achieve a mutual understanding of mission-wide priorities; these priorities will then be reflected in the level of services offered. Defined priorities permit focused use of resources.”

Recommendation 27: Embassy Bangkok should apply the planning guidelines contained in 5 FAH-5 H-210 to its plans for expanding regional management support. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 28: Embassy Bangkok should prioritize its plans for expanding regional management support and develop a schedule to roll out these expanded services. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

REGIONAL TRAINING

Regional Employment Development Center

Several entities at Embassy Bangkok provide robust training programs, primarily for employees in EAP and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. The embassy’s training arm, called the regional employment development center, reports to the human resources officer. The center offers soft skills courses, such as customer service and supervisory skills, often provided on-site at the post requesting training. Embassy Bangkok is working with FSI to embed an FSI coordinator/trainer in the center to oversee the embassy’s regional training program. Part of the coordinator’s responsibility will be to evaluate trainers’ subject matter knowledge and training

skills, and to grant FSI adjunct faculty status to trainers who meet FSI's standards. The Embassy Bangkok-FSI partnership will result in FSI registering and accrediting Embassy Bangkok's course offerings, and employees who complete these courses will receive FSI credit in the FSI student training management system database.

Embassy Bangkok proposed a training partnership with USAID and received funding approval from the Department. While the OIG team agrees that the new training space will increase the regional employment development center's ability to provide quality training, the OIG team is concerned about the Department's share of the partnership cost, which includes an annual rent of \$137,000 and an initial set-up cost of \$765,000.

While the OIG team applauds the embassy's initiative to look for ways to expand training and its partnership with USAID, Embassy Bangkok should follow up on a training partnership with Global Financial Services Bangkok (GFS Bangkok), a fellow Department entity that performs a great deal of training in Bangkok (see below), to determine whether there are economies of scale available in a Department-Department partnership. At present, the regional employment development center and GFS Bangkok perform a number of the same functions separately, including setting up classes and negotiating with hotels for accommodation.

Recommendation 29: Embassy Bangkok should coordinate with Global Financial Services Bangkok on their training programs, to determine where there are economies of scale. (Action: Embassy Bangkok, in coordination with GFS Bangkok)

Global Financial Services Bangkok

GFS Bangkok offers a large number of classes each year (27 in 2010) to Department employees but, since the students who complete these courses are not receiving FSI credit for them, their work is not being recorded in FSI's student training management system database. Nor is FSI able to show that Department employees have completed these courses when it reports such information to Congress and other interested parties.

The Bureau of Resource Management and FSI have not worked out an arrangement with GFS Bangkok under which these courses would be accredited through FSI. The relevant language of 13 FAM 011 b. states that "the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) has the responsibility for developing training policies and facilitating, to the extent that resources permit, necessary training for all personnel of the Department

of State and other foreign affairs agencies.” The text of 13 FAM 022.1 (7) notes that, “with the exception of security training covered under Title 22 U.S.C. 4802(a)(2) (F), FSI is responsible for: [. . .] (7) keeping records of all enrollments and expenses incurred.”

Recommendation 30: Global Financial Services Bangkok, in coordination with the Bureau of Resource Management, should work with the Foreign Service Institute to develop a plan to credit courses offered by Global Financial Services Bangkok in the Foreign Service Institute’s student training management system database. (Action: GFS Bangkok, in coordination with RM and FSI)

GLOBAL FINANCIAL SERVICES BANGKOK

Overview

GFS Bangkok is part of the Bureau of Resource Management’s Global Financial Services, an integrated global financial management platform providing accounting, compensation, disbursing, and other corporate financial services to support Department and other customer agencies worldwide. It is headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina with an integrated financial center in Bangkok and offices and operations in Washington, DC, and Paris. It provides approximately 67 U.S. embassies with six categories of services:

- disbursing and cashier monitoring;
- accounting;
- LE staff payroll;
- customer support and training;
- post support unit; and
- financial system development and implementation.

The GFS Bangkok program has grown from an operating budget of \$4.2 million in FY 2004 to a budget of \$4.8 million in FY 2010. The staff has grown from 124 in 2004 to 200 today. Much of GFS Bangkok’s personnel growth has come from increase in the post support unit; the salaries of employees in this unit are paid from the Global Financial Services Charleston (GFS Charleston) budget.

GFS Bangkok and GFS Charleston coordinate closely, including on planning for continuity of operations. GFS Charleston is conducting tests to determine its ability to transfer critical GFS Bangkok functions to Charleston in a crisis situation. These tests are particularly timely, given the need to restrict GFS Bangkok to essential operations for a week in May 2010 due to political unrest in Bangkok and the possibility of future instability in Thailand.

The director of GFS Bangkok is an experienced, active officer who has a vision for the organization and has established multiyear goals and business priorities for it. He also has instituted programs such as “green” lighting to reduce energy costs (including at GFS Bangkok itself), and beefed up the English-language program for LE staff. He makes personal efforts to maintain morale and emphasizes English-language skills for LE staff with additional training and an English-only office hour.

Achieving International Standardization Organization 9001 certification is one of GFS Bangkok’s priorities for FY2010. The American assistant disbursing officer and the LE administrative assistant are leading this effort, guiding staff through the process, helping to develop and refine work procedures, and testing them against performance matrices. The LE staff supervisors understand the importance of good business practices and proudly explain how their sections meet the performance matrices.

During the course of the inspection and at the height of the political crisis, GFS Bangkok was forced to reduce to emergency staff. GFS Bangkok showed some confusion as to which employees it deemed emergency staff, as there was no clear direction from embassy management. There was also evidence of a lack of coordination among functional areas of the organization. GFS Bangkok management has acknowledged the importance of the organization’s ability to operate continuously under variable circumstances. It plans a thorough review of the lessons learned from the May 2010 crisis and will update its continuity of operations plan and contingency planning for all applications it supports.

Recommendation 31: Global Financial Services Bangkok should update its continuity of operations and contingency plans, taking into account the lessons learned during the May 2010 political crisis and in coordination with Embassy Bangkok’s emergency action plan. (Action: GFS Bangkok)

for the post being visited and the accounting division employee performing the site visit. Site visits are limited to a handful a year because of resource constraints.

Payroll Division

The payroll division provides payroll services to approximately 21,000 LE staff members within GFS Bangkok's overall responsibility. An American supervisor (a former GFS Bangkok director) leads the division, which includes four supervisory LE staff members. Each of the division's LE payroll specialists is responsible for providing payroll support to one or more posts within the division's portfolio. Responsibilities within the division are assigned based upon the complexity of the requirements of each post's local compensation plan, as well as on the level of experience of the employee—more experienced employees are responsible for servicing a higher number of posts and those that have more complex payroll requirements.

Post Support Unit

The post support unit originally was established as the distressed post support unit, but GFS Charleston subsequently expanded the unit's mission to include supporting any post requesting its services. The post support unit could well be called the voucher support unit, as the vast majority of its work is processing travel vouchers: it presently handles some or all of the vouchers for 55 posts, the most active being Baghdad, Pretoria, Ottawa, and New Delhi. It also provides backup certification for Dili, a post with only one certifying officer.

There are 35 employees in the post support unit, including a U.S. direct-hire chief, an LE staff supervisor, who is also one of two LE staff certifying officers, and three voucher examiner units: one that processes all E2 and nonpermanent change of station travel vouchers; one that processes all permanent change of station travel vouchers; and one that processes all non-travel vouchers. The unit has grown from 26 employees in 2008 to 35 employees in 2010.

While posts are generally satisfied with the work that the unit performs, there is scope to improve its support of other posts. Although GFS Bangkok generally has set goals and priorities for the coming years, the post support unit does not have a clear vision for its future. Because it has focused on set-up and staffing to support voucher processing, the unit has not taken sufficient time to consider its long-term goals and a strategy for developing into more than a vouchering process unit. Although it deals specifically with the MSRP process, 7 FAH-1 H-433 a. cites a general management rule about planning that is applicable to the post support unit: "plan-

ning is always identified in management texts as one of the key responsibilities of a manager. Strategic planning answers the questions: what should we be accomplishing, and why? Linking performance measures to strategic planning answers the further questions: Are we accomplishing what we should be, and how do we know if we are?” Without a long range strategy, the post support unit may be missing some opportunities to provide additional financial services support to missions worldwide and to effectuate cost savings for the Department through economies of scale.

Recommendation 32: Global Financial Services Bangkok, in coordination with the Bureau of Resource Management, should develop a business case for expanding services offered by its post support unit beyond voucher processing, to determine whether there are cost benefits to offering additional services. (Action: GFS Bangkok, in coordination with RM)

The biggest management control issue for the post support unit is that of double payments. Because it deals with scanned documents, including invoices, the possibility always exists that a vendor could be paid twice, either by the unit itself, or once by the unit and once by the mission from which the voucher originated. In fact, such a double payment occurred recently, requiring a great deal of corrective work by GFS Bangkok.

There is presently no Department-wide system that allows for tracking of invoices to assure that they are not paid more than once. When vouchers were processed at one location, (for instance, at an embassy), there was less chance of double payments, as posts could develop their own invoice tracking system. With a larger number of vouchers processed at remote locations, such as the post support unit in Bangkok, the Department needs to develop a system that allows for tracking an invoice regardless of where the voucher is processed.

According to 2 FAM 021.1 b., all Department managers must establish cost-effective systems of management controls so that U.S. Government activities are managed effectively, efficiently, economically, and with integrity. Department managers are required to design management control programs to provide reasonable assurance regarding the prevention or prompt detection of errors, irregularities, and mismanagement. According to 2 FAM 022.7 (1), bureau and office heads (that is, assistant secretaries or equivalent) are responsible for developing and maintaining appropriate systems of management controls for their organizations.

An invoice tracking system would increase management controls in an area where there is now a vulnerability. It should include such features as the ability to handle inbound documents from multiple locations, with read-only access to view the status of each invoice; the assignment of voucher numbers automatically; the ability to generate notices to the claimant when the invoice is received; an automatic time and date stamp for each step in the payment process; and the ability to link to other applications, such as E2 Solutions.

Recommendation 33: The Bureau of Resource Management should perform a risk assessment to determine the costs versus benefits of developing a Department-wide invoice tracking system. (Action: RM)

Customer Support and Training

The customer support and training unit is the smallest unit within GFS Bangkok. The unit's four customer support analysts provide post support to users of 12 Bureau of Resource Management-supported IT applications. The unit uses a universal trouble ticket tracking system to record all requests. Seventy-five percent of present-day trouble tickets are for problems with E2 Solutions. The customer support unit resolved 7,437 requests over the past year. This unit uses one key metric for measuring its work: how quickly it can open and close a trouble ticket. The standard is 8 days, whereas the unit's average time to complete a trouble ticket is 0.6 days.

The training division is staffed by an LE staff training coordinator, who is responsible for the logistics of training classes hosted by GFS Bangkok. GFS Bangkok has scheduled 27 courses for 2010, some of which were cancelled or postponed because of the May 2010 violence in Bangkok. As noted above, the courses offered by GFS Bangkok are not accredited through FSI. This issue is discussed in greater detail in the training section of this report.

Despite being responsible for managing and coordinating this extensive training program in Bangkok and the region, the American division chief for training and customer service is underutilized. Both the position's workload and responsibility are likely to grow, however, as GFS Bangkok's support desk operations and staff will continue to expand. GSF Bangkok is creating a new LE staff position to supervise the four customer support analysts. Logically, GFS Bangkok could move this function into the post support unit, as this is essentially a support function for other posts.

devices, to demonstrate transparency and accountability to the users. The lack of an established policy leaves room for ambiguity and creates potential for discontent among staff. The OIG team made an informal recommendation on this subject.

TRAVEL ISSUES

E2 Solutions and Courier Travel

In October 2009, the Bangkok regional diplomatic courier division transitioned to the new E2 Solutions travel program; it has been a difficult transition. Business class travel is a requirement for couriers, and the division must route all approvals, including for premium travel, through Washington. The approval normally takes 3 days, severely hampering the courier division's ability to respond to short-fuse requirements to deliver urgent classified pouches. Same day responses are often not possible. In effect, E2 can undercut the courier division's critical mission function.

The Bangkok regional diplomatic courier division often is called upon to support the Secretary during overseas travel. Because of the 2- to 3-day approval process for travel, the courier division could have serious difficulty supporting last-minute changes in the Secretary's schedule, a frequent occurrence.

The courier division has several routes by which it travels "out and back" to service a post in 1 day. A courier can travel this way to four or even five posts in one week, returning to Bangkok each night. Returning to post each night, when possible, saves on hotel and per diem costs. In the days before E2, a courier would submit one travel voucher for all four or five "out-and-back" trips, which, if shorter than 12 hours, would not qualify for per diem. However, E2 lacks this flexibility. Instead, the courier division pays per diem, and must file separate E2 authorization and processing requests, pay \$13.50 to process them through E2, and pay a \$60 ticket processing fee to the travel office for each of these day trips. Thus, not only the time but also the expenses of courier travel have increased because of the costs and inflexibility associated with E2.

Additionally, the maintenance of the E2 program has forced the courier division to establish a new position dedicated solely to E2, due to the nature of courier travel and the constant changes in personnel assigned to trips.

In short, E2 Solutions is time consuming and costly. It is a system designed for occasional domestic travel, not for the daily overseas travel performed by a courier. As noted, it is not flexible enough to respond to last-minute requests to deliver pouches. The Department's need to have urgent pouches delivered in a timely manner is being severely hampered by this software.

E2 Solutions is primarily a management control system, set up to provide reasonable assurance that Department employees perform official travel according to Department regulations. As defined by 7 FAH-1 H-622, management controls are "an integral component of an organization's management that provides reasonable assurance that [certain] objectives are being achieved, [including the] [e]ffectiveness and efficiency of operations." This section goes on to state that "the concept of reasonable assurance expressed in the definition means that while no measures can achieve an absolute lack of risk, effective controls should provide a reasonable assurance of minimal risk. This concept recognizes that the cost of management controls should be in proportion to their results and not exceed the benefits derived according to *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, Government Accountability Office, 1999. The OIG team does not believe that E2 Solutions meets the management control goal of proportionality of results with regard to the Bangkok diplomatic courier division.

Recommendation 35: The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, in coordination with Embassy Bangkok, should adjust its approval of premium travel to give the Bangkok diplomatic courier division sufficient flexibility to make last-minute changes to mission critical premium courier travel. (Action: DS, in coordination with Embassy Bangkok)

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The unrest in Thailand that occurred during the OIG team's visit resulted in the embassy's closure for more than a week, relocation of embassy personnel from residences close to the protest zone, issuance of a travel warning, and granting of authorized departure for family members. Embassy leadership, management, and security responded admirably to these unexpected developments, and embassy staff maintained effectiveness in their core functions. The embassy received high marks from end users of their reports, which closely monitored and rapidly reported fast-moving events, and many in the local American community expressed gratitude for the support the embassy provided in unsettling times.

The events also constituted a stress test for the embassy's emergency action plan, and for its emergency response. The specific features of that response – whether appropriate or otherwise – may be instructive for missions located in countries where the probability for civil violence is low.

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RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2010**
Department – ICASS	20	29	334	383	14,662,000
Department – D&CP	206	30	79	315	10,962,500
Department – Public Diplomacy	7	3	29	39	1,672,400
State – DS	23	7	3	33	2,134,000
Department – Representation	-	-	-	0	84,600
State – OBO *	-	-	-	0	9,145,000
Department – Transnational Crime Affairs Section	1	-	10	11	5,588,000
U.S. Agency for International Development	32	-	65	97	4,724,000
International Broadcasting Bureau	3	-	67	70	4,269,000
Centers for Disease Control	17	1	182	200	15,000,000
Department of Commerce	3	-	18	21	963,200
Department of Agriculture	2	-	9	11	460,400
Department of Defense	145	-	174	319	1,627,000
Department of Homeland Security	22	1	23	46	1,409,000
Department of Justice	47	4	26	77	N/A
Department of Energy	-	-	1	1	N/A
Other Agencies	24	59	201	284	N/A
Total	552	134	1,221	1907	72,701,100

Note: Foreign Assistance funds total \$17,524,000.

* Note: OBO employees are included in the ICASS counts.

** Figures do not include salaries of U.S. direct-hire staff.

MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The management section of Embassy Bangkok is generally well run. A management counselor heads the section, which contains 25 U.S. direct-hire employees, 25 EFMs, and 329 LE staff. The embassy believes that it needs a permanent FS-02 management officer position to assist the management counselor; currently, one of the assistant general services officers is acting in that capacity. The embassy hopes that the Department will provide this position under the Diplomacy 3.0 program. If not, it will request that one of the assistant general services officer positions be reprogrammed.

The management section actively looks at ways of reducing operating costs. Over the past year, the embassy reviewed the short-term leased housing inventory and terminated approximately 40 percent of residential leases, often resulting in lower rents and energy savings. The embassy also is conducting an environmental impact study to determine ways to reduce electricity and water consumption at embassy buildings.

As noted in the regional training section of this report, the embassy provides training to U.S. Government employees in the East and South Asia region. The management section takes training of its employees seriously. The embassy is developing a training module on cultural sensitivity for all employees at the embassy and plans a similar training course on change management.

The embassy has adopted the Department's Collaborative Management Initiative worldwide ICASS service standards. The original ICASS charter was never signed, but it is in the process of being ratified by all ICASS entities at post.

Due to the political crisis of May 2010, the OIG inspection team was not able to look at the NSDD-38 process or to evaluate the management section's input to the front office on the financial impact of NSDD-38 requests.

The OIG team also reviewed the management section at Consulate General Chiang Mai. The management officer had updated standard operating procedures, designation of duties, management software, and various post reports. He oversaw the increase in staff from three U.S. direct-hires and one EFM to six U.S. direct-hires and four EFMs. The new American positions provided greater oversight and review of LE staff work and decisionmaking. They also reduced the amount of support needed from Bangkok, including leasing and some contracting.

HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE

The human resources (HR) office is led by an experienced supervisory HR officer, who also oversees the regional education and development center. There are also two ELO human HR officers, who supervise an experienced staff of 30 LE staff members and two EFMs. The HR office supports 550 U.S. direct-hires; 1,114 LE staff members; and 54 EFMs. The HR office also provides regional HR support to Embassies Vientiane, Dili, and Rangoon, and regional employee classification support to several posts in EAP. There is sufficient staffing to provide oversight of operations, and regional posts rated the services as excellent, professional, and timely.

American Employee Evaluations

The HR office recently hired two EFMs to help track the American employee evaluation reports (EER) submitted this year. Due to the political unrest and embassy closure, those employees who had waited until the last moment to submit their EERs were unable to meet the Department's deadline. The HR office requested and received a 1-week extension from Washington. In spite of this extension, some employees still did not submit EERs in time to meet the second deadline.

Tardy EERs at Embassy Bangkok were not limited to this year, however. A number were late last year, as well, although only one was annotated by the review panel, as required by 3 FAH-1 H-2817.1 e. (3). The OIG team noted that the rating officer for the majority of ELOs was several months late in preparing one evaluation and tardy in completing several others. The management counselor and the DCM were unaware of this situation for several months, and the EER review panel did not take note. The rating officer in question was also delinquent in getting ratings to employees in time for them to conduct the 10-day review, as required by 3 FAH-1 H-2819.1-1 b.

The OIG team also noted that supervisors of the officers who were delinquent in submitting their ratings did not appear to note the rating officers' tardiness in their EERs. Embassy Bangkok has not enforced procedures for tracking and following-up on delinquent American employee evaluations so that appropriate steps can be taken in time to prevent rated employees from being disadvantaged; doing so will enable review panels to annotate the evaluations, to identify why the rating officers were late.

Recommendation 37: Embassy Bangkok should implement procedures for notifying the executive office whenever a rating officer fails to submit an employee evaluation report on time. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Eligible Family Member Employment

A number of American employees raised concerns about employment of family members. An interview with the Family Liaison Office indicated that Bangkok is below the worldwide average for EFM employment. There is no bilateral work agreement for EFMs, but the embassy is working on a de facto arrangement with the host country and is optimistic that this will be in place by late summer 2010.

The embassy has an employment committee with representatives from various agencies. It advertises all vacancies within the mission via the CLO newsletter and mission intranet site, and also in newspapers and on the Internet Web site. EFMs are given priority when interviewing for vacancies, provided they are qualified for the position. There are a number of vacant EFM positions.

A number of factors affect the EFM employment numbers. Some EFMs are not interested in working. Others may have trouble meeting a position's language requirements (either English or Thai.) In some cases, the positions may have a low salary or require special training requirements such as consular training. The OIG team made an informal recommendation to hold a workshop for EFMs who are interested in working to make them aware of the application process and the availability of jobs within the mission and on the local economy, once the de facto bilateral work agreement is in place.

Locally Employed Staff

In Thailand the prevailing retirement age is 60, and the embassy follows this practice. However, the OIG team noted a number of retired LE staff members who continued to work for several years under different hiring mechanisms. The Office of Overseas Employment does not authorize a separation-for-age plan that allows a staff member's employment to be extended more than once for a one-year period. Embassy Bangkok's current separation-for-age plan is outdated, with old FAM references.

Recommendation 38: Embassy Bangkok should update its policy on separation-for-age of locally employed staff to reflect the Office of Overseas Employment's policy of extending employment only once for a one-year period after retirement. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Official Residence Staff

The OIG team reviewed the official residence expense (ORE) employment agreements and conducted interviews of all ORE staff at the residences of the Ambassador, DCM, and consul general in Chiang Mai. The team gave special emphasis to language and questions relating to the treatment of domestic staff, as outlined in State 30259 and 3 FAM 8612. In March 2010, Embassy Bangkok issued a management instruction on the treatment of domestic staff who are employed by U.S. Government personnel overseas.

Most of the ORE employment agreements need to be updated to meet the following 3 FAM 8612.2 requirements, as conveyed in State 44369:

All USG personnel should clearly communicate to domestic staff in writing, whether host or third country nationals, the terms of employment, including the duties of the position and the regular working hours, and they should provide overtime pay for service beyond those hours.... Additionally, USG employees overseas under Chief of Mission authority who sponsor non-host country national domestic workers must state in their contracts that: the domestic worker's passport and visa will be in the sole possession of the domestic worker; a copy of the contract and other personal property of the domestic worker will not be withheld by USG personnel for any reason; and mission members who sponsor third country nationals for work permits and immigration benefits may not use their sponsorship as leverage to compel service.

Recommendation 39: Embassy Bangkok should update the employment agreements for all official residence expense staff to reflect Department guidelines. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OFFICE

The financial management officer, who has been alone since the senior financial management officer departed Thailand in March 2010, has managed to lead this large section of 28 LE staff members competently. The financial management office staff is proficient and motivated, and they work well as a team. The financial management office provides regional support to Embassy Dili, which has only one dedicated financial management LE staff employee.

International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

The ICASS council includes representatives of the Departments of State, Agriculture, Defense, Homeland Security, Commerce, Energy, and USAID, CDC, Peace Corps, U.S. Trade and Development, the International Board of Broadcasters, and the Library of Congress, as well as smaller agencies, totaling 57 subscribers. The ICASS council meets as needed. Voting is by consensus, with no significant disagreements among members. The process is transparent, and the information coming from the financial management section, according to a council member, is detailed and plentiful.

Most council members, some of whom were council chairs at previous posts, have a broad understanding of ICASS. The embassy would like to receive post-specific ICASS training and will submit its justification to the ICASS service center in response to its annual training call. The OIG team supports this initiative and believes that training for educational purposes would benefit a post with such a large customer base of agencies, staff, and family members.

Visitor Support Policy

Embassy Bangkok has not included its visitor support policy on the Department's eCountry clearance Web site, as required by 6 FAH-5 H-361. The policy does not include details for typical direct costs or information on charges for indirect ICASS service costs should the embassy elect to use the optional ICASS temporary duty (TDY) module to recover some of the indirect costs. The information maintained in the system allows visitors to predict the approximate cost of support that Embassy Bangkok would provide.

Recommendation 40: Embassy Bangkok should list its direct charge costs for temporary duty visitors and publish the policy on the Department's eCountry clearance Web site. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Official visitors, primarily attending conferences and training sessions, filled 43,000 hotel rooms in Bangkok last year. The general services visitor support office assisted with hotel reservations and transportation needs, and the financial management staff direct-charged the visitors for costs that were easily separable and identifiable and not otherwise included in the mission's ICASS budget. The high number of visitors, however, may affect the level and quality of services provided to resident

ICASS customer agencies. The OIG team informally recommended that Embassy Bangkok consider the feasibility of charging TDY visitors for the indirect costs of ICASS services.

Cashier Operations

Forty to 50 LE staff retirees use the class B cashier as a personal bank to cash their monthly U.S. dollar annuity checks for Thai baht, instead of using the services of Citibank, which is located directly across the hall from the class B cashier. All mission employees are required to use Citibank for their personal accommodation exchange. The class B cashier processes official transactions. The retirees prefer to use the class B cashier because there is a slightly more favorable exchange rate than that used by Citibank, as well as a three Thai baht transaction fee (about 10 U.S. cents). Post management allows the retirees to use the embassy cashier as a good will gesture.

One problem with using Citibank is that the embassy would have to provide an escort each time a retiree wanted to cash a check, as entry through the hardline to the interior of the chancery is required. The class B cashier provides accommodation exchange service through a bank teller window that is accessible from the lobby area.

The transactions that the class B cashier performs can be handled through an individual's private bank or through a banking service located at the embassy. The ICASS cost is \$16.46 per transaction, whereas Citibank offers its services free of charge to the U.S. government. The class B cashier's authorized advance of is insufficient to cover the needs of the retirees. Because of retiree check cashing, the class B cashier has had to request an increase to her authorized advance by This increase conflicts with recent guidance from RM (State cable 38055, dated April 15, 2010), which directs all posts to reevaluate their cashier operations to include examining its business processes and controls and moving, to the extent possible, towards more electronic payments. The embassy deposits salary payments for the embassy LE staff employees electronically to their personal bank accounts and could request the same arrangement for the LE staff retirees. Accommodation exchange is the riskiest of all cashier transactions, and cash must be the payment medium of last resort.

Recommendation 41: Embassy Bangkok should discontinue the practice of using the Class B cashier as a bank to cash locally employed staff retiree U.S. dollar annuity checks and instruct Global Financial Services Bangkok to make electronic payments to these retirees. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Bulk Funding

Bulk funding micro-purchases under blanket purchase agreements and purchase cards can streamline the procurement process and maximize efficiency of the embassy's ICASS operations. According to 06 State 86265, it is the preferred way to handle such transactions. This instruction cable allows the financial management section to provide bulk funding on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. The embassy's financial management section provides bulk funding for blanket purchase agreements but not purchase cards. Instead, the general services staff must obtain separate funding for each purchase, regardless of the cost. Doing so leads to inefficiency in ordering even small items.

Recommendation 42: Embassy Bangkok should write and implement procedures for bulk funding blanket purchase agreement and purchase card purchases. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Representation Allowance Policies and Procedures

Embassy Bangkok has not strictly enforced its mission-wide representation allowance policies and procedures. The embassy's policy is that exceptions to the limit of 50 percent executive branch employee participation should be rare. However, on more than rare occasions, employees hosting representational events exceeded the 50 percent limit. The embassy policy is also that employees hosting the event should request an exception when an event exceeds the 50 percent limitation. According to the voucher records the OIG team reviewed, in many instances employees failed to request an exception.

The embassy policy goes on to list the allowable expenses, based on the Department of State Standardized Regulations section 320 and takes a conservative approach to the use of representation funding that the embassy will reimburse. The purpose of the policy is to preserve limited representation funds. In several instances, the files contain vouchers where employees have hosted events that appear to have more of a personal interest than an official one; if so, such events are counter to post policy. Embassy Bangkok should strictly enforce its mission-wide representation allowance policies and procedures (Management Instruction No. A2009-025).

Recommendation 43: Embassy Bangkok should seek reimbursement for the representational claims that do not meet the Department of State Standardized Regulations for allowable expenses. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

The embassy is exempt from paying on official embassy purchases the 7 percent value added tax that the Thai government levies, and the mission has established a policy to address the funding of events by personal payments or purchase order. The employee will personally pay for the value added tax and then make a claim after the fact. Employees hosting events that are estimated to cost over \$500 should arrange in advance, by purchase order, for payment directly to the payee. This is the only approved method by which the embassy pays the vendor directly. The embassy policy further notes that, if an employee fails to arrange this in advance and instructs a vendor to send the bill directly to the embassy for payment, rather than to the employee, it is considered an unauthorized commitment and is a violation of the Department of State Standard Acquisition Regulations 601.602 and of 14 FAM 215 a. The OIG team identified several vouchers where the embassy did not strictly enforce its policy, leading to employees making unauthorized commitments. There were other occasions when the employee paid the invoice directly instead of requesting a purchase order and thereby incurred the 7 percent value added tax.

Recommendation 44: Embassy Bangkok should ratify the two unauthorized commitments made in connection with representation events in 2008. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Employees frequently submitted reimbursement claims for expenses of \$10 or less per voucher and submitted multiple vouchers for reimbursement of expenses incurred for the same event. Employees could have combined the vouchers. This practice would save the time and expense of preparing and processing separate vouchers. It also would strengthen controls and facilitate determination of whether the event exceeded established mission-wide spending limits for representation expenses. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the embassy formulate and disseminate a policy setting a minimum threshold on claims for reimbursement for vouchers, except at the end of the fiscal year.

Chiang Mai Utility Bills

The representative of a non-Department agency that has several tenants assigned to the Tarndong compound informed the OIG team that it did not receive copies of the utility bills for these residences until several months after the bills were paid. As a result, the agencies could not identify possible excessive usage or errors in the bills in a timely fashion. While Embassy Bangkok is authorized to pay the bills without prior agency approval each month, it is good customer service to provide customers with copies of bills in a timely manner, to keep them well informed. Supplying the bills to

the customer also provides an extra check to determine whether bills are proper and not excessive. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the embassy provide copies of utility bills in a timely manner and issue a policy or management notice regarding the process of paying utility bills.

Maintenance and Repair of the Chief of Mission Residence

Over the course of FY 2007 and FY 2008, the embassy spent almost \$74,000 in program funds to maintain and improve the CMR. Because OBO treats this residence as a long-term lease property, OBO is responsible for approving and funding any changes to the CMR. The OIG Office of Audits alerted OBO and the OIG inspection team to this problem, and asked the OIG team to address it. The OIG team was unable to determine whether the embassy involved OBO as required in 15 FAM 642 a., which states: “the single real property manager must clear all proposed special maintenance and improvement projects... [and] obtain approval and funding from OBO. Posts are also prohibited from making alterations solely to meet the personal desires of the occupant(s).” Moreover, according to 15 FAM 651 a., OBO funds must be used for the routine maintenance and repair of government-owned and long-term leased properties. Under 15 FAM 633 b., posts may not use program funds to augment the OBO allotment.

The embassy did not use proper oversight of its funds control, as defined in 4 FAH-3 H-200. In addition, guidance in 4 FAM 032.1 states that embassies should use funds only for authorized purposes.

Recommendation 45: The Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Resource Management and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should determine whether the embassy improperly funded repairs and improvements to the chief of mission residence. (Action: EAP, in coordination with RM and OBO)

Recommendation 46: Embassy Bangkok, in coordination with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should make necessary adjustments to correct the funding of any repairs and improvements to the chief of mission residence that were improperly charged. (Action: Embassy Bangkok, in coordination with EAP and OBO)

Recommendation 47: Embassy Bangkok should cease using program funds for work done on the chief of mission residence and should instruct the single real property manager to review the requirements and coordinate the funding of routine and special maintenance and repair projects with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations. (Action: Embassy Bangkok, in coordination with OBO)

GENERAL SERVICES OFFICE

The general services office is located on the Rajdamri compound, which was closed for the majority of the inspection period due to the political unrest in Thailand. The inspection team, therefore, was unable to make a complete assessment of the office's operations. Nonetheless, it was clear that the current senior general services officer and assistant general services officer are proactive in improving operations, drafting standard operating procedures, and developing creative methods to increase efficiency. OBO and Embassy Bangkok have a \$690 million master plan to provide the embassy with upgraded facilities to support the mission and its employees. Much of the construction will take place on the existing Rajdamri and existing office building compounds. The expected completion date is 2023, but OBO is considering advancing the start dates for some of the projects.

The OIG inspection team was unable to assess the travel, shipping, procurement, and real property units of the general services office, nor was it able to consider the embassy's progress toward consolidation of support services. The team does, however, have some brief observations on property management, official vehicle usage, and official residence functions of the office, based on work done before the Rajdamri compound was closed and the limited inspection conducted during the emergency period. The team also conducted a brief inspection of management operations in Consulate General Chiang Mai.

Property Management

Embassy Bangkok is operating with an extreme shortage of warehouse space. The general services office is using outdoor tents and cages for overflow space, because the unit is unable to fit any more material indoors. Many of the property management policies are helpful in keeping the inventory to a minimum, including the use of landlord-provided furniture in most residential housing. Unfortunately, the issue of warehouse space is unlikely to be resolved until OBO replaces the warehouse as part of the larger mission building plan.

The management controls section of the report also contains an informal recommendation on inventory controls.

Official Vehicles

The COM has authority over a large number of government-owned vehicles in Thailand. The embassy has an ICASS motor pool at the mission's disposal, but aside from the Department, only six ICASS entities subscribe to the motor pool, and none of them is very large. While the OIG team did not learn exactly how many U.S. Government-owned vehicles are in Thailand, it noted that more than half of the mission's hired chauffeurs work for non-Department agencies. Because the vehicles are distributed over so many different agencies, it is difficult for the embassy to exercise oversight, and it must rely on the cooperation of the agency heads.

According to 14 FAM 432.5, the Ambassador has jurisdiction over all official vehicles in country and is charged with prescribing "countrywide policies for business and other authorized use of vehicles that provide for uniform, fair, and equitable treatment among post personnel." These policies extend the Department's motor vehicle safety management program standards to all mission agencies. In the brief time the OIG team had to inspect motor vehicle operations, it noted that the mission vehicle policy is unclear and contradictory on issues such as COM authority to set rules for official vehicles of other agencies, versus the guidance of home agency rules. The policy is also unclear on the use of the motor pool by non-Department ICASS subscribers, instead referring only to Department employees and non-Department agency use in special circumstances. Furthermore, the mission policy lacks information on applicable provisions of the motor vehicle safety management program, such as the requirement for operator evaluation and orientations for all drivers of U.S. Government-owned vehicles. It does not require agencies to notify drivers of their personal liability for accidents when driving a vehicle for nonofficial purposes.

Recommendation 48: Embassy Bangkok should revise the mission-wide motor vehicle policy to clarify the chief of mission's authority and responsibilities for all U.S. Government-owned vehicles in Thailand. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Official Residences

The CMR is frequently used for the mission's representational and community events. Unfortunately, the buildings show signs of structural deterioration, such as bowed support beams, that are beyond the capability of the mission facilities shop to repair. OBO's master building plan for Embassy Bangkok includes the potential for a new CMR on the new office building compound; this may prove to be a necessary component of the overall project.

Both the CMR and the DCM's residence have swimming pools on the property. The Department requires in 15 FAM 957.4 that embassies with pools under Department of State control implement the appropriate design or operational safety requirements found in the Safety, Occupational Health and Environmental Management Resource Guide. The OIG team noted a number of missing requirements at the pools for the CMR and DCM residence, including the lack of pool depth markers or "No diving" signs, and the gates were not locked.

Recommendation 49: Embassy Bangkok should establish and implement a corrective action plan for all U.S. Government-controlled residential pools, using Department of State guidelines for pool safety. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Housing – Chiang Mai

The biggest management issue at the consulate general is the housing compound (Tarndong Village), which is in a suburb about 30 minutes from the consulate general site. It is comprised of 8 four-bedroom and 10 three-bedroom, American-style houses, as well as a pool, tennis court, clubhouse, gym, and shared green area. The consulate general leases each house individually and successfully negotiated a reduction of rents to achieve considerable savings. Because the consulate general currently leases all the houses on the compound, it controls access to the compound using contract guards. Consequently, the compound serves as the alternate command center for the consulate general.

Some American staff complained that the compound is like living in a "fishbowl," does not provide diversity (only Americans can live there), and is too far from downtown Bangkok, especially for singles or couples who might prefer being closer to the city or for spouses who may not have access to a car. Also, since all the houses are large, the consulate general needs waivers when assigning singles or small families to the compound.

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs – Bureau of Information Resources Management Rover Support Program

The rover support program provides temporary, intermittent relief for short-term staffing gaps at EAP posts. Embassy Bangkok's information programs officer manages this program, and six information programs center staff members share the rover duties. The program has policies and procedures for scheduling and prioritizing support schedules. Due to budget limitations, the program gives priority to emergency and VIP support requests. Those who receive priority attention include missions where the IM officer/information programs officer is absent from a one-person post for periods in excess of one full week, and the absence of one person from a two-person information programs center. The rover program is focused only on providing TDY staffing support, while the separate Regional Information Management Center in Bangkok handles infrastructure maintenance and outage support for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs and EAP regions.

The information programs officer does a good job planning and managing travel schedules to minimize the time the staff stays on the road. However, the roving support duties affect the operations that the staff manages, as well as the ongoing information programs center projects. Furthermore, the current rover model is affecting staff development, in that the rovers' frequent absences to provide TDY support complicate their ability to manage information programs center responsibilities such as mail, radio, and telephones. The information programs officer is in the process of changing the model to limit travel to just two of the IM specialists in the information programs center. The center has approval for six U.S. direct-hire positions, two of which are slated for the roving program. Right before the inspection, the embassy received approval for an additional IM position, as part of the Diplomacy 3.0 initiative.

Consulate General Chiang Mai

Embassy Bangkok provides remote and onsite IM support to Consulate General Chiang Mai. The operations run adequately, with the embassy's guidance. The consulate employs one EFM as an IM assistant to support 14 classified computer users and 70 OpenNet users. The IM assistant also oversees the dedicated Internet network that hosts two workstations. During the inspection, the OIG team noted that the IM assistant is not conversant with all aspects of the Department's radio program. The OIG team counseled the IM assistant to obtain as much training as possible when visiting Bangkok, or when the information systems officer performs quarterly visits to the consulate general.

Recommendation 52: Embassy Bangkok should formulate and institute the information technology development project lifecycle in accordance with Department guidelines. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Embassy Bangkok has established a local IT change control board, as required by 5 FAM 862 a. and 5 FAM 864. However, the board is not involved in reviewing and approving the local application development efforts. It currently is focused only on hardware and commercial, off-the-shelf software approval and review, but the purpose of a local IT change control board is to provide the framework for the identification, control, and accounting of all IT assets operated on the local network.

Recommendation 53: Embassy Bangkok should establish procedures for the local information technology change control board to review and locally approve software application development implementation. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

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QUALITY OF LIFE

HEALTH UNIT

The health unit appeared to be well organized and well run, despite the vacancies in the regional medical officer (RMO) and regional medical manager positions. The Office of Medical Services provided a rover RMO, who was at post during the inspection. The new RMO is due to arrive in July, and the regional medical manager in late August.

The health unit is concerned about staffing to meet future needs, as there will be 20 third-country nationals who will now have access to the medical unit because of changed operating guidelines from the Department. In addition, there are 50 new USAID positions and their family members who will also be eligible for medical services. Because the RMO travels approximately 60 percent of the time, the medical unit has requested ICASS approval to hire two half-time EFM nurse positions to support the expected additional workload.

The medical unit keeps all controlled substances in a safe and maintains a log of them. A random sample of the counts agreed with the counts in the log book. It stores all noncontrolled prescription medications in a locked cabinet. Expired medications are disposed of properly. The health unit maintains an inventory of expendable medical supplies in WebPass. The general services office maintains the inventory on nonexpendable furnishings and equipment. The nurse practitioner visits Consulate General Chiang Mai regularly and oversees the controlled and noncontrolled prescription medication inventory.

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

The CLO coordinator position had been vacant for most of the year prior to the inspection, but two CLO assistant coordinators fulfilled all CLO coordinator responsibilities until the end of May. The embassy hired a new coordinator during the course of the inspection; unfortunately, both of the CLO assistants are leaving in summer

2010, and the staffing difficulties will continue until the embassy hires their replacements. The CLO appears to have maintained a high level of activity, with an average of two community activities each month, plus a number of smaller events for special occasions. The sponsor program supports a large number of incoming families each summer, the office provides support with a well-managed library of reference materials, and the assistant coordinators maintain a relationship with the regional psychiatrist that allows them to refer members of the community to the medical office for assistance.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The EEO program at Embassy Bangkok is robust with all three EEO counselors taking their roles seriously. They maintain an all-encompassing EEO page on the embassy Web site, including the counselor's role in the complaint process and information on procedures available to embassy employees should they believe they are victims of discrimination. The EEO counselors also submit frequent information for publication in the embassy newsletter, including such things as the Secretary's statement on discrimination in the workplace. They also maintain and update bulletin boards in each building where embassy employees work. In a recent town hall meeting, the Ambassador introduced each of the EEO counselors and described the importance of the work they do. The management counselor discussed the importance of EEO at a recent country team meeting. There are three LE staff liaison officers, but they have not received training from the Office of Civil Rights to perform their functions.

The EEO counselors would like to become more active in educating embassy employees. They do not presently participate in newcomer orientations, which occur about three times a year, nor is any EEO information provided in the weekly HR orientations for new employees. The OIG team made informal recommendations that Embassy Bangkok include a session on EEO in its large newcomer orientations and include materials prepared by the post's EEO counselors in its weekly orientation sessions. The counselors have not provided EEO and harassment training for LE staff but plan to do so in the near future. The OIG team left an informal recommendation to this effect.

The embassy has appointed a Federal Women's Program coordinator, whose name has been disseminated to the embassy community and to the Office of Civil Rights.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Embassy Bangkok has done a good job of implementing proper management controls. Its annual FY 2009 chief of mission certification identified a potential material weakness in its warehousing and inventory operations, which the mission resolved by hiring additional staff and creating a new, secured receiving area in the warehouse. The management counselor is designated as the mission's management controls coordinator. Individual officers within the management section who are designated as accountable for specific functional areas and programs take their responsibilities seriously. There is sufficient staffing to provide oversight of operations.

The OIG team, however, uncovered some areas in which the embassy could improve controls and oversight, including updating the LE staff handbook, paying closer attention to ORE expenses, and resolving some travel related issues.

The OIG team also identified a weakness in the consular section and confirmed that neither the visa chief nor the DCM had conducted the requisite adjudication reviews of nonimmigrant visa issuances and refusals.

Locally Employed Staff

Embassy Bangkok enjoys excellent communications between the management section and the LE staff. An active Foreign Service national committee meets regularly with the management staff to discuss issues of concern to the LE staff community. The HR section created a local compensation advisory committee that includes Foreign Service national representatives, to assist with the LE staff salary survey. These FSNs provide input and explain results to the Foreign Service national committee, whose members in turn explain results to the LE staff population at large.

The OIG team noted that the last bound copy of the LE staff handbook was dated July 2004, although the embassy had updated the handbook in March 2009. The embassy explained that it had over 200 copies of the old handbook and did not want to print a new one until these had been issued. However, even the updated version is now over one year old. Since the LE staff handbook states the official terms/conditions of employment, it is in the best interests of the embassy and its staff to

keep it current. Given the size of the LE staff at Embassy Bangkok, it is important to review the handbook annually, update the contents as necessary, and issue it to all employees.

Recommendation 60: Embassy Bangkok should annually review, update, and reissue its local employee handbook. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Official Residence Expenses

The ORE allowance assists principal officers by partially reimbursing them for the extra or “unusual” housekeeping expenses attributable to their positions. The mission’s principal officers contribute the full 3.5 percent of their annual salary, and the financial management office accounts for the ORE expenses. The total cost to operate the residences, however, is not reflected on the receiving report and voucher report (DS-2076), as is required by 4 FAH-3 H-446. As a result, it is impossible to provide a complete annual accounting of official residence expenses, as required by 3 FAM 3257. This annual report serves as part of the official accounting record.

The ORE staff salaries and overtime listed in the monthly DS-2076 reports amount to more than the principal officer’s 3.5 percent contribution. The embassy pays directly the ORE staff health insurance premiums, as well as the cost of supplies and items related to household operations which were issued from the embassy warehouse or procured through purchase orders or petty cash. These items are not accounted for on the embassy’s DS-2076 forms, nor are the forms reviewed to determine if costs are reasonable.

Recommendation 61: Embassy Bangkok should develop and publish guidelines for official residence expense vouchers so that all costs are included in the monthly voucher, allowing the embassy to determine the true cost of maintaining official residences. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Acceptance of Gifts

Neither the Ambassador’s assistants nor the protocol section at Embassy Bangkok were able to provide the inspectors with documentation pertaining to acceptance of gifts by senior embassy officers. The Ambassador’s office management specialist, who is the embassy’s designated protocol officer, asserted that all gifts the Ambassador has accepted were of less than \$250 in value, but she was not aware of the

Recommendation 65: Embassy Bangkok should develop and enforce procedures to get advance approval of official travel from the appropriate entity and to fully document it in the travel voucher files. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Time and Attendance

The PAS timekeeper prepares her own time and attendance log, along with doing so for the rest of the staff contrary to 4 FAH-3 H-525.3-4 a., which states that timekeepers shall not post their own time and attendance data, and that arrangements should be made for a backup or alternate timekeeper within the office to maintain the timekeeper's time and attendance data on the time and attendance system. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the embassy issue an administrative notice explaining timekeeping procedures and regulations.

Property Management

The OIG team was unable to conduct an inventory count or a thorough review of the property management files. However, the annual property report noted a significant expenditures inventory overage, due to problems tracking expendable material that was issued for mission visits but was returned unused. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the embassy create a system to manage this process and improve management controls.

Adjudication Reviews

According to 9 FAM 41.113 PN17.1 a.-b. and 9 FAM 41.121 PN1.2-7, 8 b and d., supervisors in the NIV adjudication chain of command are required to regularly review established percentages of visa issuances and refusals in the approved electronic NIV review system. These sections emphasize adjudication reviews for inexperienced officers and recommend that a greater percentage of their cases be reviewed during those adjudicating officers' initial months. If the consul general adjudicates referral cases, the DCM, as the immediate supervisor, must conduct the reviews for those cases. When the visa chief is unavailable, the consul general normally would review NIV adjudications. The OIG team confirmed that the visa chief, the consul general, and the DCM had failed to conduct any adjudication reviews between June 2009 and April 1, 2010. In fact, only the visa chief had an active logon and password for the electronic review system at the time of the inspection. The visa chief began reviewing some back cases the week prior to the OIG team's arrival and continued to review adjudications during the OIG team's visit.

Recommendation 66: Embassy Bangkok should carry out daily adjudication reviews of nonimmigrant visa issuances and refusals, and should document any deficiencies in this procedure in the annual certification of consular management controls cable and in the appropriate officers' performance evaluations. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs should require a career Foreign Service officer assigned to a large embassy (Overseas Staffing Model category 4 and above) as a Chief of Mission for the first time but who has never served as a deputy chief of mission to take the deputy chief of mission training at the Foreign Service Institute. (Action: EAP)
- Recommendation 2:** Embassy Bangkok should establish a schedule to post, on the Intellipedia system and in cables, regular biographic submissions on official and unofficial Thai individuals in the political and economic fields. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 3:** Embassy Bangkok should submit periodic leadership analyses on notable individuals throughout Thailand, elaborating on their motivations, alliances, and scope of influence in the changing domestic environment. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 4:** Embassy Bangkok should direct employees not to transmit sensitive information on public email accounts. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 5:** Embassy Bangkok should designate appropriately the classification of highly sensitive information that is transmitted on the OpenNet or the classified networks. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 6:** Embassy Bangkok should reinforce emails and informal messages with cables that report developments, analyze trends, and offer scenarios and suggestions for U.S. policymakers. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 7:** Embassy Bangkok should issue an administrative notice explaining that all Department employees are required to establish, maintain, and annually retire official records, including email messages that meet the definition of records as specified in Department guidance. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 8:** Embassy Bangkok should assemble 2008, 2009, and 2010 files, including relevant emails, and require staff to maintain files and retire them annually in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 9: Embassy Bangkok should retain Leahy vetting files at post for 3 years for Department-funded training, and 10 years for Defense Department-funded training. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 10: Embassy Bangkok should issue an administrative announcement setting forth the requirements of section 620J of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and of section 8061 of the 2010 Department of Defense Appropriations Act, as they relate to vetting trainees for programs funded by those statutes. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 11: Embassy Bangkok should have the political officers responsible for Leahy vetting brief the law enforcement working group on vetting requirements and procedures to ensure that there is no confusion regarding sponsoring agencies' responsibilities to vet training candidates. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 12: Embassy Bangkok should assign the incoming bilateral Environment, Science and Technology, and Health officer to complete grants training. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 13: Embassy Bangkok should acquire a grants warrant for either the regional Environment, Science and Technology, and Health hub officer or the bilateral Environment, Science and Technology, and Health officer. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 14: Embassy Bangkok should assign an experienced embassy economic officer to serve as a functional mentor to the Consulate General Chiang Mai entry-level officer, to include providing consultation with the embassy economic section when the entry-level officer travels to Bangkok for consular consultations. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 15: The Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, should provide additional administrative support to the regional English language officer based at Embassy Bangkok by adding to the locally employed staff. (Action: ECA, in coordination with EAP)

Recommendation 16: Embassy Bangkok should require its officers and locally employed staff serving as grant officer representatives to complete online or classroom grants training offered by, or in coordination with, the Foreign Service Institute in addition to any supplemental grants officer representative training provided by the embassy. (Action: Embassy Bangkok, in coordination with FSI)

- Recommendation 17:** Embassy Bangkok should develop and implement procedures to keep the public affairs officer and the information officer promptly apprised of emergent, potential public affairs problems. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 18:** Embassy Bangkok should review its activities related to capturing, translating, and archiving media accounts of the activities of embassy staff and family members, and should cease using U.S. Government resources to find, translate, and archive media coverage of personal, social activities. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 19:** Embassy Bangkok should create an additional International Cooperative Administrative Support Services cost center to capture the expenses associated with the public affairs section providing mission-wide audiovisual support services. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 20:** The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations should give high priority to funding and implementing the security upgrades to the Embassy Bangkok consular section in FY 2010. (Action: OBO)
- Recommendation 21:** Embassy Bangkok should transfer one of the five nonimmigrant visa line officer positions to the American citizens services unit and provide for one additional nonimmigrant visa position to serve half time in the American citizens services unit. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 22:** Embassy Bangkok should update the position descriptions for the locally employed staff in both visa units and review staffing levels, reprogramming excess positions to the American citizens services unit. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)
- Recommendation 23:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and the Bureau of Human Resources, should realign Consulate General Chiang Mai position numbers 30482026 and 10474018 so that there is a full-time, mid-level political-economic/public diplomacy section chief and an entry-level officer who works half time in the consular section and half time in the political-economic/public diplomacy section. (Action: CA, in coordination with EAP and DGHR)
- Recommendation 24:** Embassy Bangkok should request that the Bureau of Consular Affairs replace the existing consular assistant position at Consulate General Chiang Mai with a consular associate position as soon as possible. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 25: Embassy Bangkok should carry out all normal supervisory responsibilities in the visa units, monitor performance, and document steps taken to implement and monitor supervisory effectiveness in the appropriate performance evaluations. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 26: Embassy Bangkok should undertake the necessary analyses for consular agencies in Phuket and Pattaya and follow the instructions on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Web site for requesting establishment for one or both consular agencies. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 27: Embassy Bangkok should apply the planning guidelines contained in 5 FAH-5 H-210 to its plans for expanding regional management support. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 28: Embassy Bangkok should prioritize its plans for expanding regional management support and develop a schedule to roll out these expanded services. (Action: Embassy Bangkok)

Recommendation 29: Embassy Bangkok should coordinate with Global Financial Services Bangkok on their training programs, to determine where there are economies of scale. (Action: Embassy Bangkok, in coordination with GFS Bangkok)

Recommendation 30: Global Financial Services Bangkok, in coordination with the Bureau of Resource Management, should work with the Foreign Service Institute to develop a plan to credit courses offered by Global Financial Services Bangkok in the Foreign Service Institute's student training management system database. (Action: GFS Bangkok, in coordination with RM and FSI)

Recommendation 31: Global Financial Services Bangkok should update its continuity of operations and contingency plans, taking into account the lessons learned during the May 2010 political crisis and in coordination with Embassy Bangkok's emergency action plan. (Action: GFS Bangkok)

Recommendation 32: Global Financial Services Bangkok, in coordination with the Bureau of Resource Management, should develop a business case for expanding services offered by its post support unit beyond voucher processing, to determine whether there are cost benefits to offering additional services. (Action: GFS Bangkok, in coordination with RM)

Recommendation 33: The Bureau of Resource Management should perform a risk assessment to determine the costs versus benefits of developing a Department-wide invoice tracking system. (Action: RM)

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.

Political/Economic Section

The economic cluster meets too infrequently to engage in in-depth discussion of joint strategies and tactics.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Bangkok should convene the economic cluster meeting every 2 weeks, rather than monthly, to improve coordination of economic activities.

Thai government performance in strengthening intellectual property rights protection has been uneven. Complex events surrounding delays in passing legislation and problems allocating resources for training and retaining effective Thai customs officers could lead to confusion among trade agency end users.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Bangkok, in reports to U.S. trade offices, should distinguish more carefully Thai government intentions from its actions on intellectual property rights protection when suggesting U.S. trade policy responses.

Public Diplomacy

The OIG team found that programming at the Chiang Mai American Corner slowed down during recess between terms at the host university. Likewise, there were opportunities for digital video conferences using speakers within the region, which would improve the U.S. Government's return on its investment in the equipment. It also would prevent some of the problems that arise in working with speakers in the United States, where one must contend with an 11-hour time difference.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Bangkok should have the public affairs section work with the American Corners to encourage continued programming during those periods when the host universities are on recess and should not limit the audiences to the students and staff of the host institutions.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Bangkok should have the public affairs section work with the American Corners to pursue opportunities for digital video-conferences on approved themes with speakers who are available in the region in a similar time zone.

Consular Affairs

Embassy Bangkok's consular section has five consular associate positions, but it is difficult to fill all of them with EFMs who have taken the required consular training before arrival. At any given time, there are several officers in Thai language training whose spouses might be interested in employment and have the time to enroll in consular training.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Bangkok, in addition to using traditional methods to publicize job opportunities for eligible family members, should conduct outreach to the officers in Thai language classes on consular associate employment opportunities.

Embassy Bangkok's NIV line officers need to validate the fingerprints that the LE staff capture. This slows down the interview process. Officers do not have to validate fingerprints collected by EFMs. The consular section has an unfilled EFM position, designated as the consul general's secretary-receptionist.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Bangkok should reprogram the consul general's eligible family member office management specialist position to be half-time biometrics clerk and half-time secretary-receptionist, and fill the position.

Chiang Mai's consular section LE staffing is the bare minimum for their workload. If one LE staff member is on leave and a second LE staff member is handling an emergency case outside the office, it is difficult to support the appointment schedule and any other consular emergencies. A vacant EFM position will be filled in summer 2010, which could alleviate some of the pressure on the four LE staff members.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Bangkok should include critical locally employed staff responsibilities in the Chiang Mai consular eligible family member position description and ensure that the eligible family member carries out those responsibilities regularly.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Bangkok should monitor consular staffing levels and workload growth in Chiang Mai and use the Consular Package to request an additional locally employed staff position when the demand for nonimmigrant visas shows a sustained increase.

The ACS chief maintains the Bangkok consular section's rotational schedule. Although it has increased attention to ACS personnel needs, the schedule has not always focused on section-wide operational efficiency.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Bangkok should assign the design and maintenance of the consular rotational program to the consul general.

Bangkok and Chiang Mai have not coordinated their approach to the new DS-160 visa application form and their strategies on handling applicants who have not completed all elements of the form.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Bangkok should coordinate with Consulate General Chiang Mai to establish policies and procedures for handling applicants who have not completed all the fields on the new, electronic nonimmigrant visa application, to ensure consistency and good public relations.

Bangkok does not use mail or courier passback for issued IVs. The IV unit requires all applicants who have been refused, pending additional documentation, to return in person to the consular section.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Bangkok should return issued immigrant visas by courier or mail, so that applicants do not have to visit the consular section a second time.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Bangkok should require immigrant visa applicants to present updated or supplementary documentation in person only when an additional interview is essential in order to determine visa eligibility.

Bangkok's ACS unit does not require appointments for routine services. The wording on the embassy's Web site and in its other public messages is not strict about the need to make appointments even though it makes them available. Consequently, it is difficult to manage the daily work flow in the busy ACS unit.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy Bangkok should amend its Web site and other outreach to require appointments for routine passport and notarial services.

Bangkok's ACS unit receives non-stop telephone calls throughout the day, and staff members take turns picking up calls in between serving the public at the counter and handling emergency cases. Many of these calls are visa calls, and others are routine inquiries that could be handled by an automatic response.

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy Bangkok should adapt its existing consular telephone system or procure an alternate system, to redirect routine American citizens services queries to automated response scripts and to refer visa phone calls to the call center or to a case-specific public inquiry number.

The FPM and the ARSO-I had a very productive working relationship. When the ARSO-I office was relocated to a larger office outside the consular section, this relationship grew distant, and information sharing suffered.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy Bangkok should set up a regular meeting schedule for the fraud prevention manager and the assistant regional security officer for investigations, over and above the weekly general staff meeting, and they should take advantage of Bureau of Diplomatic Security funding to travel in tandem as frequently as feasible.

Global Financial Services Bangkok

No-longer valid cashier codes that remain on 365 reports and an "NR" designation give a false impression of overdue verifications and make it difficult for the cashier monitors to identify any late submissions for the class B cashiers who are performing cashiering operations.

Informal Recommendation 16: Embassy Bangkok should request that Global Financial Services Bangkok modify the "365 Reports Submitted for Calendar Year" to reflect the class B cashier codes that have been closed.

GFS Bangkok follows guidance from GFS Charleston regarding the issuance of BlackBerrys and other portable electronic devices, but it does not have its own formalized policy in place.

Informal Recommendation 17: Global Financial Services Bangkok management should establish a policy regarding the issuance of BlackBerrys and other portable electronic devices

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Eligible Family Member Employment

An interview with the Family Liaison Office in Washington indicated that Bangkok is below the worldwide average for EFM employment. There is no bilateral work agreement for EFMs, but the embassy is working on a de facto arrangement with the Thai Government and is optimistic that this will be in place by late summer 2010.

Informal Recommendation 21: Embassy Bangkok should conduct a workshop for eligible family members who are interested in working, to make them aware of the application process and the availability of jobs both within the mission and on the local economy, once the de facto bilateral work agreement is in place.

Temporary Duty Visitors

Embassy Bangkok has not adopted the ICASS TDY module to assist the embassy in capturing indirect costs incurred by temporary visitors.

Informal Recommendation 22: Embassy Bangkok should do a cost/benefit analysis of charging temporary duty visitors for the indirect cost of delivering International Cooperative Administrative Support Services.

Representation Allowance Policies and Procedures

Embassy Bangkok employees have submitted claims for reimbursement of expenses in the amount of \$10 or less per voucher; they also have been submitting multiple vouchers for reimbursement for the same event, instead of combining the vouchers.

Informal Recommendation 23: Embassy Bangkok should formulate and disseminate a policy setting a minimum threshold for claims for reimbursement for vouchers, except at the end of the fiscal year.

Chiang Mai Utility Bills

The embassy is not providing copies of utility bills to non-Department agencies in Chiang Mai in a timely manner. Agencies may not understand the process of paying utility bills.

Informal Recommendation 24: Embassy Bangkok should develop procedures to send copies of utility bills to tenant agencies based in Chiang Mai in a timely manner and on a regular basis after receipt of the bills. In addition, Embassy Bangkok should issue a policy or management notice explaining the process of paying utility bills, and how often agencies can expect to receive copies.

Information Management

There was excess computer equipment stored in the OpenNet and classified server rooms. Excess equipment is unnecessary and competes for limited storage space.

Informal Recommendation 25: Embassy Bangkok should dispose of excess information management equipment in the OpenNet and the classified server rooms.

Embassy Bangkok's systems documentation is not current, and various versions of the documents exist in multiple locations.

Informal Recommendation 26: Embassy Bangkok should update systems documentation and keep the documents centralized and current.

Equal Employment Opportunity Education and Training

The EEO counselors did not participate in newcomer orientations, which occur about three times a year.

Informal Recommendation 27: Embassy Bangkok should add an Equal Employment Opportunity segment to its newcomer orientations.

The embassy holds weekly orientation sessions for new employees, but does not include any EEO materials.

Informal Recommendation 28: Embassy Bangkok should include Equal Employment Opportunity materials in its weekly orientation sessions for new employees.

The equal employment opportunity counselors have not provided LE staff with training on equality employment opportunity or on harassment.

Informal Recommendation 29: Embassy Bangkok should provide equal employment opportunity and harassment training to its locally employed staff.

Management Controls

PAS has required employees to contribute to a fund used for morale purposes, such as gifts for employee birthdays. This contravenes ethical standards for employees of the executive branch of the U.S. Government.

Informal Recommendation 30: Embassy Bangkok should issue an administrative notice explaining the limitations on contributions to fund or replenish informal office benevolence or celebratory arrangements, and clarifying that all donations are voluntary.

The timekeeper in the public affairs section prepares her own time and attendance contrary to 4 FAH-3 H-525.3-4.

Informal Recommendation 31: Embassy Bangkok should issue an administrative notice explaining timekeeping procedures and regulations.

The annual property report noted a significant expenditures inventory overage, due to problems tracking expendable material that was issued for mission visits, regional trainings, and other events. Unused items often were returned to the storeroom at the end of an event, but were not entered back into the inventory.

Informal Recommendation 32: Embassy Bangkok should develop a system for managing the expendable property issued to, and then returned by, the mission visits office.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Eric G. John	12/2007
Deputy Chief of Mission	James F. Entwistle	7/2007
<i>Chiefs of Sections:</i>		
Management	Gregory S. Stanford	7/2009
Consular	Ronald S. Robinson	9/2008
Political Affairs	George P. Kent	8/2008
Economic Affairs	Robert D. Griffiths	9/2007
Public Affairs	Kenneth L. Foster	6/2009
Regional Security	Randall D. Bennett	9/2008
Transnational Crime Affairs Section	Scott L. Rolston	7/2008
Bangkok Regional Diplomatic Courier Division	Michael J. Gilmore	10/2008
Global Financial Services Bangkok	Ismail G. H. Asmal	8/2008
Bangkok Regional Director Security Engineering	Stephen J. Klein	8/2009
Regional Information Management Center Bangkok	James L. Cleveland	8/2008
<i>Other Agencies:</i>		
Broadcasting Board of Governors	Dennis G. Brewer	7/2005
Centers for Disease Control	Michael D. Malison	10/2006
Department of Agriculture Foreign Agricultural Service	Gary W. Meyer	8/2006
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services	Robert T. Tanaka	12/2008

Department of Defense		
Joint States Military Advisory Group	Col. Edward A. Swanda	6/2008
Defense Attaché	Colonel Joseph P. Corso	7/2007
Defense Attaché Technical Liaison	Richard D. Gibson	10/2008
Defense Attaché System Support	Jay L. Phipps	12/2003
Armed Forces Research Institute of Medial Science	Col. James W. Boles	9/2007
Force Protection Detachment	Gregory Scott Miller	8/2009
Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command	Maj. Marc E. Galler	1/2009
Department of Homeland Security		
Citizen and Immigration Services U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Robert V. Looney	7/2005
Transportation Security Administration	Barry Tang	4/2009
U.S. Secret Service	Anjum K. Agarwala	11/2008
	Michael J. Carbone	9/2006
Department of Justice		
Office of International Affairs	Christopher P. Sonderby	1/2006
Drug Enforcement Agency	Thomas P. Pasquarello	8/2007
Legal Attaché	Daniel P. Kelly	1/2006
Open Source Center	Carl Scheider	7/2007
U.S. Agency for International Development	Olivier Carduner	2/2007
U.S. Commercial Service	Cynthia Griffin	8/2008
U.S. Peace Corps	John L. Williams	12/2002

ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	American citizens services
ARSO-I	Assistant regional security officer for investigations
CA	Bureau of Consular Affairs
CAO	Cultural affairs officer
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CLO	Community liaison office
CMAT	Consular management assistance team
COM	Chief of Mission
CMR	Chief of mission residence
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
DVC	Digital videoconference
EAP	Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs
ECA	Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EER	Employee evaluation report
EFM	Eligible family member
ELO	Entry-level officer
EMS	Evacuation management system
ESTH	Environment, Science, Technology, and Health
FAH	Foreign Affairs Handbook
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
FPM	Fraud prevention manager
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
FSN	Foreign Service national
GFS	Global Financial Services

GOR	Grants officer representative
HR	Human resources
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IM	Information management
IPR	Intellectual property rights
IRC	Information Resource Center
IRM	Information resources management
ISSO	Information systems security officer
IT	Information technology
IV	Immigrant visa
LE	Locally employed
MSRP	Mission Strategic and Resource Plan
NIV	Nonimmigrant visa
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
ORE	Official residence expense
PAO	Public affairs officer
PAS	Public affairs section
PISCES	Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System
RCO	Regional consular officer
R&R	Rest and recuperation
RELO	Regional English language officer
RMO	Regional medical officer
RSO	Regional security officer
SBU	Sensitive But Unclassified
TDY	Temporary duty
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USDO	United States disbursing officer

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and resources hurts everyone.

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