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

OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS

Inspection of Embassy Valletta, Malta

Report Number ISP-I-11-16A, February 2011

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PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections, as issued by the 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 instances of fraud, waste, or abuse exist; and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

Methodology

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



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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

Harold W. Geisel
Deputy Inspector General

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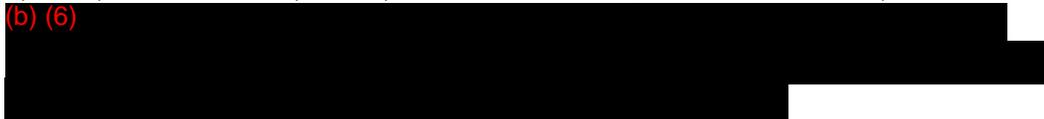
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KEY JUDGMENTS

- The embassy's greatest management challenge will be to see the new embassy compound to completion, transfer operations there without disruption, and address significant new staff and budget requirements effectively. The deputy chief of mission should be assigned day-to-day responsibility for these efforts, with frequent updates provided to the Ambassador.
- Although the Mission Strategic and Resource Plan requested an additional political officer, the OIG team found that the political/economic/commercial, public affairs, and consular sections function well and do not require additional staff.
- The Ambassador's outside activities have detracted from his attention to core mission goals. The Ambassador should focus on embassy priorities and refrain from outside activities, including writing and speaking engagements that do not pertain directly to strengthening maritime security, promoting U.S. trade and investment, and other mission goals.
- The front office should focus on fostering staff professional development, dispersing more speaking opportunities, implementing a representation plan, and arranging for additional staff training.
- The rest and recuperation benefit for Embassy Valletta is not justified and should be discontinued.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between September 13 and October 1, 2010; and in Valletta, Malta, between October 29 and November 12, 2010.

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CONTEXT

Malta is a small island country located in the south-central Mediterranean, astride some of the world's busiest shipping lanes. It joined the European Union in 2004, the Schengen visa system in 2007, and the Eurozone in 2008. With a population of 412,000, it is the smallest country in the European Union.

Malta's constitution prohibits membership in military alliances, so it is not a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), although it participates in the Partnership for Peace. The constitution also mandates a policy of nonalignment, which recent governments have interpreted as allowing cooperative military operations supporting peacekeeping and antipiracy.

The country is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, with a Christian culture that reaches back to the beginnings of the church. Reflecting the church's continuing influence, abortion and divorce remain illegal. There is a small Muslim population of about 10,000, almost half of whom are migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. Maltese and English are the official languages; English is widely spoken, a legacy of 150 years of British colonial rule between 1814 and independence in 1964.

More than 90 percent of the population resides in urban areas. The economy is based on services, primarily shipping, banking, and tourism. Light manufacturing of electronics, medical devices, and pharmaceuticals is also significant. Microsoft, Baxter, Methode, and Oracle are among the U.S. companies with facilities here. A bilateral tax treaty between the United States and Malta is scheduled to come into force in January 2011.

Given Malta's size, the United States has a relatively large diplomatic presence, with 31 U.S. direct-hire employees, including a Marine security guard detachment. The Department of State (Department) and the Department of Defense are the two largest agencies represented at the mission. Principal issues include maritime security and the enforcement of nonproliferation sanctions against Iran and other countries that use Malta's shipping facilities, trafficking in persons, and commercial promotion. Malta has participated in the visa waiver program since 2008, significantly reducing the volume of consular work.

At the time of the inspection, the mission was planning to move into a spacious new chancery in 2011, despite continuing construction delays.



Map of Malta

Source: U.S. Government

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Embassy Valletta is a mid-sized post facing significant challenges surrounding the upcoming transition to a new embassy compound (NEC). The NEC dominates the agendas of the front office and management section, but the mission is capably conducting political, economic/commercial, public diplomacy, military, and other programs in support of U.S. interests. This report's most significant recommendations concern the front office's approach to the NEC, both during the current planning stage and in the immediate period surrounding the move.

The Ambassador had been at post more than a year at the time of the inspection, and had achieved some policy successes. He is respected by Maltese officials and most mission staff, but his unconventional approach to his role as ambassador has created friction with principal officials in Washington, especially over his reluctance to accept their guidance and instructions. Based on a belief that he was given a special mandate to promote President Obama's interfaith initiatives, he has devoted considerable time to writing articles for publication in the United States as well as in Malta, and to presenting his views on subjects outside the bilateral portfolio. He has been inconsistent in observance of clearance procedures required for publication. He also looks well beyond the bilateral relationship when considering possible events for the mission to host in Malta. His approach has required Department principals, as well as some embassy staff, to spend an inordinate amount of time reviewing his writings, speeches, and other initiatives. His official schedule has been uncharacteristically light for an ambassador at a post of this size, and on average he spends several hours of each work day in the residence, much of which appears to be devoted to his non-official writings.

At the same time, he has not focused sufficiently on key management issues within the embassy, including the NEC. The Ambassador pursues an active public diplomacy program and while he is popular with the Maltese Government and public, he meets infrequently with senior government officials, business executives, and diplomatic colleagues outside social events.

The Ambassador advised the inspection team that he intended to discontinue his outside writings and focus on matters that directly pertain to the embassy and priorities outlined in the Mission Strategic and Resource Plan (MSRP). Within weeks of the team's departure, however, he resumed drafting public essays that addressed subjects outside his purview as Ambassador to Malta and detracted from his core responsibilities. These activities also detracted from the core responsibilities

of embassy staff members who devoted time and effort to reviewing and editing the ambassador's drafts and seeking approvals occasionally after the writings had been submitted for publication from Department officials.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should require the Ambassador to report on his efforts to refocus attention on mission priorities and eliminate his use of embassy and Department resources on nonofficial writings. (Action: EUR)

The deputy chief of mission (DCM) had been at post only 8 weeks when the OIG inspection team arrived but already had earned the confidence of the Ambassador and the respect of U.S. and local staff. The DCM meets regularly with all elements of the mission, and maintains a busy outside schedule to develop and maintain contacts with the Maltese Government, the diplomatic community, and civil society. The Ambassador and DCM work well together as a team. For sound mission management, it is imperative that the DCM be given increasingly important responsibilities.

The country team meets once a week. The Ambassador also holds a "policy group" meeting weekly. The participation is largely duplicative, and the issues can be covered by the country team.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Valletta should discontinue the weekly policy group meeting and cover policy issues in country team meetings.

The front office is staffed by two U.S. direct-hire office management specialists; the inspection team concluded that one was sufficient. The team also examined overtime records and found that one of the office management specialists was allowed to accrue 385 hours of overtime in 2010 handling tasks for the Ambassador. Her overtime represented more than 90 percent of all American overtime at the embassy. The inspection team concluded that this overtime should have been better managed.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Embassy Valletta should review the work responsibilities of the two office management specialists assigned to the front office and expand them to include providing assistance to other sections of the embassy, including management, political, consular, and public affairs. New responsibilities should be reflected in their work requirements, and overtime should be reduced. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Ambassador has become the sole face of the embassy to the host country. Most others in the mission do not get out of the embassy often enough to build contact networks. There is no apparent representation plan requiring mission members to orchestrate and host events. Most representational funding goes to the front office and to those section chiefs who ask for it. The Ambassador has not delegated speaking opportunities to the greatest extent possible nor given each section a representation budget for which it will be held accountable.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Embassy Valletta should create and implement a representation plan that provides each section with a representation budget to develop and maintain local contacts, and should amend staff work requirements statements to reflect this responsibility. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

MISSION STRATEGIC AND RESOURCE PLAN

The Ambassador established new priorities for the MSRP shortly after his arrival in 2009. They include regional security cooperation, the promotion of environmentally sensitive commercial investment, and the resettlement of irregular migrant populations. Although the Ambassador clearly articulates his priorities in various settings, his staff's understanding of these priorities is significantly less clear. The Ambassador needs to consider methods of forging a more cohesive team around a clearer, shared understanding of MSRP goals.

NEW EMBASSY COMPOUND

Embassy Valetta saw a turnover in 2010 in several staff positions that had key roles in the planning and execution of the NEC transition, including the DCM, management officer, information management officer, and consular section chief. The new team has not given considerable attention to NEC management issues, especially given a locally employed (LE) staff that will expand by 60 percent and a budget that will more than double as a result of higher operating costs at the new embassy. Regularly scheduled meetings will help achieve the needed coordination.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Embassy Valletta should schedule digital video conferences with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations on a regular basis, as well as meetings with management offices and other embassy stakeholders to promote proper coordination and planning for the new embassy compound. These meetings should be chaired by the deputy chief of mission. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

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Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Valletta should hold regularly scheduled meetings with the Foreign Service national employee committee, as well as informal meetings with locally employed staff from a range of embassy sections.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Political reporting focuses on maritime issues, including shipping involving Iran and other countries of concern. The public affairs section (PAS) has done a commendable job reaching out to Malta's migrant population, many of whom are Muslims from Africa. The consular section operates effectively and efficiently. Visa applications have fallen significantly since Malta joined the visa waiver program in 2008.

POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND COMMERCIAL REPORTING

One FS-03 political officer and three LE staff members form the core of the embassy's political and economic reporting team, which also handles commercial promotion. The reporting team works well together and with other sections in the embassy.

Reporting rightly focuses on maritime issues related to Malta's busy sea lanes, including the enforcement of sanctions against Iran and other countries of concern, as well as migration and refugee resettlement. Washington consumers were uniform in their praise for reporting on these high priority issues from the political section and the embassy's large Defense attaché office. In addition to reporting, the section has led efforts to secure Malta's support for more effective sanctions against Iran, despite the financial benefits Malta receives from the large number of Iranian ships flagged in Malta and their use of the country's ports. Given the importance of these issues to Washington, the embassy needs a monthly coordination meeting that includes all officers with responsibilities for these issues.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Valletta should establish a monthly meeting, chaired by the Ambassador or deputy chief of mission, to prioritize reporting on maritime-related issues.

The section also focuses on trafficking in persons, as Malta is the only EU member on the Department's Tier 2 Watch List. The Ambassador and the section have worked with Washington officials and host country authorities to strengthen Malta's ability to detect and deter trafficking. Their goal is to achieve a steady improvement in Malta's ranking in the annual Trafficking-in-Persons report. The goal appears achievable, and the embassy has correctly made it a priority.

A number of Washington consumers said they would welcome additional reporting on economic issues, Malta's positions on key EU issues, and occasional profiles of Malta's political and economic leaders.

Commercial promotion opportunities in Malta are limited, but the embassy has helped U.S. companies win tenders and arranged visits to the United States for Maltese Government authorities to view U.S. technology and systems. The embassy maintains a Web site that provides guidance for U.S. firms and posts pending tenders and other commercial opportunities. They receive support from the Foreign Commercial Service office at Embassy Rome.

The inspection team identified several shortcomings that require attention. The volume of the section's work, which includes preparing numerous mandated reports, tends to keep the section chief at his desk, leaving him insufficient time to develop and maintain contacts outside the embassy. This problem is a significant shortcoming. The embassy is addressing it by shifting responsibility for reporting on human rights, religious freedom, and related issues to a newly arrived consular officer. In addition, the inspection team counseled the section and the front office on ways to deliver routine *démarches* more efficiently. Finally, the section has proposed that the LE staff receive professional training at the Foreign Service Institute to enable them to take greater responsibility for commercial issues, thereby freeing the section chief for other duties. In the meantime, staff should be encouraged to take relevant FSI courses online.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Embassy Valletta should make funds and time available for the commercial assistant and the political assistant to receive training at the Foreign Service Institute. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

Coordination between the Defense attaché office and the political section is good, with responsibilities and information properly shared between them. The two work together particularly well on maritime issues, and the Defense attaché office handles a number of issues that normally would fall to larger political sections, including Leahy vetting and the International Military Education and Training program. Visits by U.S. Navy ships have fallen dramatically as a result of new policies toward countries like Malta that do not have Status of Forces Agreements with the United States. In 2010 Malta had only one ship visit, where previously 25 ship visits a year were common. This change has significantly reduced the time the embassy spends on force protection and related issues although it also has reduced the outreach benefits of more numerous ship visits.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PAS Valetta is a small operation staffed by an FS-03 public affairs officer (PAO), two full-time FSNs, and one half-time FSN from the information management section. It handles a full range of activities in support of MSRP goals, including media reporting, educational and cultural exchanges, speakers programs, and the embassy's Web site. The section also has led an effective outreach campaign that helps Malta integrate an influx of African refugees, some of whom eventually gain admission into the United States.

Virtually all programming is done off-site, since the current information resource center (IRC) is small and the multipurpose room inaccessible. This situation will change when PAS moves into the NEC, which has both a spacious IRC and a well equipped multipurpose room. The section needs to design and implement a plan to use the new space effectively. It also will need to determine how to attract users to a remote location that is not currently serviced by public bus lines, and where standard security requirements will impose obstacles to public access.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Valletta should consult with the Rome-based information resource officer and begin planning public diplomacy and mission events that will attract Maltese attendees to programs at the new embassy compound.

Since shortly after his arrival in June 2009, the administrative-coned PAO has been primarily engaged in meeting the needs of the Ambassador, who enjoys writing and public speaking, often on topics of personal interest. Drafting ambassadorial remarks, editing texts provided by others in the mission, and mostly reviewing editorials written by the Ambassador himself for placement in local and U.S. media has required the PAO to spend an inordinate amount of time negotiating, with both embassy leadership and Washington, to ensure that the Department's policy concerns are addressed. As noted in the executive direction section of this report, the Ambassador intends to discontinue his outside writing, which should free up the PAO's time for other mission activities.

The PAO participates in a weekly country team meeting and a smaller weekly policy meeting. He also meets daily with the Ambassador for a media briefing, for which the PAS staff produces an unclassified media summary. The summary has recently undergone a number of revisions and now consists of little more than headlines from local newspapers. The section also contributes to a longer daily report, the "Valletta Daily Update," which is prepared by the front office with input from the rest of the mission.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Valletta should incorporate the daily media summary into the longer daily report to provide greater value to consumers.

The embassy's Web site migrated to the latest content management system in July 2010; it is under the joint management of one FSN from PAS who provides content and another from the information management (IM) section who handles technical issues. The Web site is updated regularly, posts a privacy policy as required by 5 FAM 772.1, and is compliant with Tiers I-III of Section 508 of The Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d), as amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-220) regarding accessibility for persons with disabilities. The Web site's social media sites are not updated as regularly.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Valletta should focus its social media development efforts on one or two sites only, rather than attempting to keep four sites fully operational and up-to-date.

PAS has an annual speaker's budget of \$6000, allowing for only two to three guest lecturers a year. The embassy has successfully expanded programming by maximizing use of digital videoconferences at the University of Malta and by using public diplomacy grants, the Strategic Speakers Initiative, and target-of-opportunity speakers, including former colleagues of the Ambassador. The OIG Inspectors found that the areas of expertise of the speakers recommended by the Ambassador did not always align with MSRP goals.

The embassy has effectively doubled its two-person allocation for the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) by using the Department's winter incentive, which allows a post to send up to an additional two visitors per year. In addition, the embassy has focused on regional and multiregional projects, which are the most cost effective. In FY 2010, for example, PAS sent a total of 11 international visitors to the United States. Most impressive was its use of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' special minority outreach incentive program. Through this program, PAS sent six Maltese visitors to the United States to learn more about immigration and refugees issues, which are important in Malta since it is being used increasingly as a transit point for immigrants from Africa heading to continental Europe. The six participants represented key sectors in Malta's efforts to address illegal immigration and integrate refugees and asylum seekers into Maltese society. Following their return to Malta, the visitors have met regularly to implement lessons learned on their trip.

PAS Valletta has a small grants program. The PAO is the only warranted grants officer. One of the section's two FSNs acts as the grants officer representative for all grants. Grant files are well maintained, and details of grant programs are regularly entered into the Grants Database Management System. Although there was no evidence of unauthorized commitments in the files examined, the inspectors counseled the grants officer representative on how to improve the files, particularly by conducting early verifications of the cost estimates provided by would-be grantees.

The section has used grants creatively to foster its goal of mutual understanding. For example, PAS has used grant funds to promote target-of-opportunity cultural programs, including the visits of hip-hop artists and the production of plays by American authors. It also has used public diplomacy grants to achieve more specific MSRP goals. For example, the section sponsored a respected foreign news analyst's participation in the USNATO Tour in Brussels. In coordination with the Foreign Press Center in Washington, PAS also promoted a reporting tour by a team from Malta's widely-watched Public Broadcasting System, to examine how immigrants are integrated into U.S. society. The television team will produce a 30-minute documentary, as well as a series of smaller features, highlighting the U.S. refugee resettlement program and how it has helped to mitigate the burden that irregular migration (mostly by Muslims from northern Africa) has placed on Malta.

Along the same line, PAS creatively combined public diplomacy grants with the use of the Fulbright program's English Teaching Assistants (ETA) to assist local educators in teaching English. The OIG team initially questioned whether the ETA program was appropriately targeted at Malta, since English is one of the two national languages. The PAS staff said they too were surprised by the offer of ETAs (who are recent U.S. college graduates spending a year abroad), but since the program came at no cost to the embassy, they sought creative ways to use ETAs to advance mission goals.

The three ETAs currently in Malta work with first-year students in creative writing classes at the University of Malta. More importantly, they also assist teachers in public elementary schools whose population includes poorer students with limited English skills, immigrant youth, and children with special needs. PAS also arranged for the ETAs to work with one local nongovernmental organization (NGO) in providing English lessons to Muslim immigrants living in refugee camps, including some bound for resettlement in the United States. The ETAs also worked with a second NGO that sponsored a summer camp for refugee children, assisted in part by a public diplomacy grant. PAS further enlisted Maltese and foreign students enrolled in the University of Malta's "degree plus program" to assist with other education programs for migrants.

Maltese public education authorities are delighted by the ETA program, as is the University of Malta. PAS Valletta's creativity in using the ETA program and targeted public diplomacy grants has enabled it to simultaneously reach out to Maltese youth and immigrant Muslims, promote civic engagement among university students, help prepare refugees for possible resettlement in the United States, and ease the burden placed on Malta by the influx of irregular migrants.

CONSULAR

The consular section is small and efficient. It is staffed by an FS-03 consul and a vice consul, both of whom have additional duties in political and economic affairs. The section has one full-time FSN, and the embassy is in the process of hiring a half-time FSN to fill a vacant visa clerk/back-up position. The section provides American citizens services and nonimmigrant visas. Malta joined the visa waiver program in 2008. The Consulate General in Naples, Italy issues immigrant visas for Malta.

Current consular space is cramped and does not meet standards for limiting access. The visa section at the NEC will be spacious and will comply with all Department standards, including a cashier booth and line-of-sight supervisory requirements.

The section is open for visa applications one morning a week. There is no appointment system and no waiting time. Visa issuance has averaged 12 visas a week since Malta joined the visa waiver program. Visa issuance is in accordance with regulations, and all controlled items are appropriately stored and accounted for.

At the time of the inspection, the DCM was reviewing all visa cases. This assignment was appropriate prior to the arrival of the new consul, when an officer from another section was serving as interim consul. It is no longer appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Embassy Valletta should require that the consul review visa cases adjudicated by the vice consul. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

The embassy follows the worldwide referral policy and processes all referrals accordingly. Front office support for the section is good, and both travel and representational funds are adequate.

Malta is home to an estimated 2,000 resident American citizens; most are also Maltese citizens. Approximately 500 are currently registered. Maltese figures show an additional 14,000 Americans visit the island yearly as tourists. The majority of Americans reside on the island of Gozo. The consul makes a monthly trip to the island to provide services: passports, notarials, and particularly federal benefits. At the time of the inspection, the consul had been at post less than one month but had already taken significant steps to reach out to local authorities, the consular corps, and American residents.

The consular section is open weekday mornings and Wednesday afternoons without appointments for American citizens services. The consul is moving to scheduling appointments for routine services, which should help the section to run more smoothly, especially since the consul will also be doing political work.

Currently, passport and visa applicants must return to the embassy to pick up issued visas and passports. This practice places an extra burden on the applicants and embassy security staff, and that burden will be even greater after the move to the NEC.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Malta should research local courier services with a view toward making this service available for the delivery of visas and passports.

At the time of the inspection four Americans were incarcerated in Malta. The Maltese judicial system is notoriously slow. One American had been in jail for over 2 years and was still awaiting trial. The Ambassador was actively involved in efforts to resolve this issue and had raised it at the highest levels with the Government of Malta.

Outreach to the American community in Malta was uneven. Embassy Valletta has a functioning warden system with six current wardens. On the other hand, little was done during the 2010 election season to reach out to Americans to encourage registration and voting. The section has a page on the embassy Web site but does not use other media resources, such as Facebook or Twitter.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Valletta should reach out to the American community using all available media.

The senior consular FSN was promoted to that position from the now vacant, part-time visa clerk position. She is unfamiliar with most aspects of American citizens services, particularly with regard to federal benefits. Her work requirements specify that she complete all available online training. However, she has had no opportunities to observe an experienced LE staff member, and the volume of work does not guarantee that she will see a full range of services while she is training.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Valletta should send the senior consular Foreign Service national to Rome for training at the regional federal benefits unit and the American citizens services unit.

Fraud is considered low in Malta. The consul is the designated fraud prevention officer. There is no FSN investigator. The fraud report is up-to-date. Valletta is currently completing an extensive visa validation study, and preliminary results are positive.

Visas Viper

The Visas Viper committee meets monthly and reports as required. The consul recently gave a presentation to the country team to review the purpose of the committee. The committee has submitted several names.

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RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	EFM Staff	LE Staff	Total Staff	Funding FY 2010
State Program	12		6	18	860,278
ICASS	2	4	21	27	1,905,300
Diplomatic Security	1		44	45	841,681
Bureau of Overseas Buildings Ops.	3		26	29	955,462
Public Diplomacy	1		2	3	163,700
Consular MRV					2,500
Representation					23,100
Subtotal State Department	19	4	99	122	4,752,021
Department of the Navy	1			1	28,900
Marines	6			6	318,882
Defense Attaché	5		1	6	502,050
Subtotal Other Agencies	12		1	13	849,832
Total	31	4	100	135	5,601,853

Source: Embassy Valletta

NEW EMBASSY COMPOUND MANAGEMENT

The major challenges facing the embassy are the scheduled May 2011 move to the NEC and the additional staffing it will require. The new \$125.5 million compound consists of eight separate buildings on 10 acres. The new chancery will be approximately twice as large as the current one, and more than twice as expensive to operate. The NEC will require a 60 percent expansion of LE staff, primarily guards. The embassy already has hired 22 new guards, and the facilities maintenance section has hired eight LE staff members. As many as five additional facilities staff members may be needed. In addition, the management section plans to request six additional LE staff positions (driver, receptionist, telephone tech, information support center staffer, financial management assistant, and general services assistant) to support the NEC. The OIG team concurs that these six additional LE staff positions are necessary.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Embassy Valletta should request six additional International Cooperative Administrative Support Services positions to support operations at the new embassy compound. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

The NEC also has budget implications for the embassy and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. The embassy's budget grew from \$3.8 million in FY 2009 to \$5.5 million in FY 2010. The projection for FY 2011 is \$8.5 million, an increase of 125 percent in 2 years. In 2010, utility costs for the current chancery were about \$130,000; utility costs for the NEC could reach \$1.2 million annually, a 10-fold increase. Landscaping and cleaning contract costs also will increase significantly.

Upon completion, the 57,264-gross square feet chancery will provide a secure and functional space for the 62 employees for whom it was designed. The inspection team was surprised by several features, including three unclassified conference rooms, a political-economic section suite that will house just one officer, and a large IRC whose usage will be limited by the NEC location. The building also has air handling equipment within the controlled access area that will require cleared escorts for every maintenance and repair. In addition to the chancery, the compound also will have a 17,760- gross square feet warehouse, a 6,781- gross square feet Marine security guard quarters, and a 1,227- gross square feet recreational center, as well as a 2,142- gross square feet swimming pool. There are also several controlled-access buildings and a utility building. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) informed the OIG team that since the original design of the Malta NEC, space standards have been revised downward; under current guidelines the NEC would have been smaller.

Construction of the NEC is 11 months behind schedule, and planning for the transition remains in the early stage. Since 2009, the contractor's date of completion has slipped twice. Labor shortages, weather conditions, procurement mistakes, and other logistical issues are cited by the contractor as reasons for the delays. The unforeseen need for a permit to install a diesel fuel tank threatened to cause further delays, but OBO subsequently told the team that it has resolved the issue, so no new delays will result.

The multiple delays have been a source of frustration to the front office. Throughout the construction phase, there has been friction between the front office and the OBO project management team, which has been unable to provide the embassy with a firm move-in date. Internal conflicts among the OBO project management team also have been a source of concern.

The contractor has changed its project manager five times. According to the OBO project manager, the Department's contracting officer gave the contractor proper notice to improve its performance. A review of files showed that in 2009 the

contractor submitted a recovery plan to address the delays. Based on that plan, OBO and the Office of Acquisitions Management modified the project completion date to May 4, 2010. However, the contractor did not meet that date and sought an extension until September 6, 2010 – then missed that deadline as well. At the time of the inspection, there was no agreed-upon completion date, although OBO’s target is a May 2011 move.

The executive direction section of this report contains a recommendation addressing planning and communication issues with regard to NEC construction.

MANAGEMENT

The management officer began her assignment only 5 weeks before the inspectors’ arrival. Because the section has very few U.S. direct-hire positions, the management officer also serves as the financial management officer and human resources (HR) officer. She has financial management experience, but no HR training or experience.

Human Resources

Because the management officer is stretched thin, the post relies heavily on visits by the regional human resources (HR) officer from Frankfurt. Regional HR visits take place once a year, which is not adequate; additional visits are needed to assist the embassy with increased staffing, especially since the management officer has no HR background or training. A new LE staff handbook was issued and placed online. The LE human resources assistant provides a mission and security briefing to new staff. The HR office files were in order.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Embassy Valletta should request, and the Regional Support Center in Frankfurt should provide, additional visits by the regional human resources officer to Embassy Valletta. (Action: Embassy Valletta, in coordination with RSC Frankfurt)

Equal Employment Opportunity

Embassy Valletta does not have an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counselor. An attempt to appoint one several months ago was met with resistance by the Office of Civil Rights (S/OCR). The Department’s resistance was because the chosen employee had not taken the 32-hour EEO training course since 2005, and neither the employee nor S/OCR could document the training. The DCM’s office management specialist took the EEO training in September 2008 and is willing to serve as EEO counselor, if she can enroll in a one-day refresher course.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Embassy Valletta should immediately appoint an Equal Employment Opportunity counselor who should then provide appropriate EEO training to both American and locally employed staff. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

(b)(2)(b)(5)

Local Employee Association

In September 2009, Embassy Malta established a seven-member LE staff association, minus the support of the previous management officer and several senior LE staff members. The association is thus comprised of rank-and-file mission staff, a welcome deviation from the pattern seen at many other missions of senior LE staff running the association.

The previous DCM did not meet with association members regularly, but the current DCM has agreed to meet quarterly. There is still some friction among certain senior LE staff members and the association, and the embassy needs to make efforts to bridge the gap between the two groups. The association deserves recognition for raising more than \$2,000 for the Haiti local employee relief fund.

General Services

The general services officer and four LE staff members provide good service to 31 International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) users. The LE staff is experienced and professional. The unit received high scores on both OIG and ICASS surveys.

In May 2010, the regional general services officer based in Frankfurt conducted a site visit. Her report outlined only minor record-keeping deficiencies. The OIG team verified that these deficiencies, such as updating the housing and motor pool polices, have been corrected.

Procurement

Under a pilot program also in use at several others posts, the LE supervisory general services assistant holds a contracting officer's warrant and can approve procurements

up to \$25,000. The general services officer is supposed to review all such procurements on a monthly basis. This is not being done, although quarterly reports are sent to the Office of the Procurement Executive for its review. Overall, the program works well, because it relieves the burden placed on the general services officer in charge of procurement.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Embassy Valletta should review on a monthly basis the procurements approved by the locally employed general services assistant. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

Real Property

The overall condition of the short-term leased chancery is poor, but the facility is scheduled to be replaced by the NEC in 2011. The embassy will receive new office furniture and equipment with the move to the NEC. The government-owned chief of mission residence, built in 1894, is in good condition.

The lease for the DCM residence (acquired before the arrival of the current DCM) costs 8,000 Euros per month. The construction quality is high, and the residence is energy efficient and fully furnished, with spectacular views; nonetheless, the cost appears excessive.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Embassy Valletta should conduct a real estate survey to determine if the cost of the deputy chief of mission residence is excessive; if so, it should discontinue the lease after the current deputy chief of mission completes his tour. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

Living Quarters Allowance

The living quarters allowance (LQA) received mixed reviews. Most employees did not like having to spend up to 30 days in short-term leased apartments or hotels, using realtors to find their own housing, and paying the security deposit up front. Most were satisfied with the housing they ultimately found. With one exception, landlords were rated as responsive to maintenance requests. The OIG team inspected a sampling of the LQA residences and found them to be suitable and well appointed.

The main complaints were that the LQA was not adjusted to reflect the substantial utility rate increases that occurred at the beginning of 2010, which, in one case rose by 71 percent. Because the embassy did not respond to the announcement of

the increase and because utility bills are not sent to customers in a timely manner, employees learned about the increase only when bills started arriving. The management officer stated that updating the LQA is one of her priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 12: Embassy Valletta should update its living quarters allowance form to reflect the increase in utility rates and submit this form immediately to the Office of Allowances. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

Short-Term Leased Residences

Other agencies lease five short-term rental properties that are in fair to good condition. One landlord has been problematic and not responsive to maintenance requests; his house will be dropped from the residence pool. In 2011, the lease for the Marine house will be terminated. The Marines will be relocated to the NEC in government-owned quarters.

Personal Property Management

The personal property management clerk does a good job managing mission property, valued at more than \$1.9 million. Nonexpendable supply shortages are low, at 0.12 percent. The personal property management clerk also serves as the receiving clerk. The inspection team recommended that the embassy designate a second LE staff member to serve as receiving clerk. Until then, the personal property management clerk should continue to require procurement requestors to confirm in writing that they received their orders. The general services officer also signs the receiving report indicating that goods were delivered.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Embassy Valletta should assign another LE staff member to serve as receiving clerk. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

Motor Pool

The motor vehicle inventory of 10 vehicles is up-to-date. All vehicles were accounted for. With the NEC move, one ICASS driver will be insufficient to meet customer demand, as the NEC is located in the center of Malta and is a 30-minute drive from many government ministries. The management section anticipates that at least one additional ICASS driver will be needed. The OIG team concurs with this assessment.

Embassy Valletta has one designated driver for the Ambassador. On average, he works 16 to 20 hours of overtime per week, which sometimes exceeds the 10-hour

day permitted by Department regulations. The current ICASS driver fills in on alternate weekends. As noted in the New Embassy Compound Management section of this report, the OIG team recommended that the embassy request an additional driver position.

Financial Management

The three-person financial management staff (one financial specialist, one voucher examiner, and one cashier) will not be sufficient to handle the additional workload generated by the NEC. Embassy Valletta's budget is expected to soar from \$3.8 million in FY 2009 to an estimated \$8.5 million in FY 2011, an increase of over 125 percent. The workload increase in payroll, funds control, voucher examination, and cashing will necessitate an additional position. The OIG team concurs that an additional position is needed.

CASHIERING

The new cashier has not taken the appropriate cashier training course. Twice a week, the retired cashier provides on-the-job training. In December 2010, the cashier monitor is scheduled to visit to provide additional training. The cash advance (b)(2)(b)(5) is appropriate. The Class B subcashier reconciliation revealed no anomalies.

The embassy recently started paying LE staff via electronic funds transfer. There are other opportunities to increase the use of electronic funds transfers, particularly to pay outside vendors.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Embassy Valetta should increase the use of electronic funds transfer. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The IM section is a small but efficient team that adheres to Department guidelines. It effectively supports 122 users but will require additional staff once operations shift to the NEC in 2011. The IM staff has been cross-trained to share duties; this has worked well but should be re-examined with the move to the NEC, where the staff will face major challenges as the customer base increases.

The IM staff is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and security of the Department's unclassified OpenNet and a small classified network, as well as seven

dedicated Internet networks (DIN) and unclassified and classified pouch, telephone, radio, and mailroom operations. There is an IM officer, an IM specialist, and four LE staff members: two systems-support employees, one receptionist/management assistant, and one driver/pouch employee.

Aligning Networks in the New Embassy Compound

The newly arrived IM officer is off to a strong start: he has visited the NEC numerous times and is rightly focused on the IM section of the embassy's *Move-In Handbook*. The embassy will request move-in support from the Regional Information Management Center in Frankfurt for OpenNet and the Bureau of Information Resource Management Office of Information Technology Infrastructure for classified local access network (CLAN) installations at the NEC. While the IM team is planning the move, there is an opportunity to reduce the DINs infrastructure. Currently, there are seven DINs in the mission that were set up before OpenNet plus (Internet) was installed. The DINs require service and support. A single DIN can now meet customer needs, so the embassy should reduce the number of DINs from seven to one.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Embassy Valletta should reduce its seven dedicated Internet networks to one. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

New Embassy Compound Staff Constraints

The IM section will face challenges in keeping up with an increased customer base and will need to recruit additional staff to provide necessary support. Currently, one of the two systems employees who maintain the unclassified network also spends an estimated 50 percent of his time supporting PAS on Web design and media projects. Performing these additional duties impacts the IM section when the other systems person is on leave. Given the increased workload associated with the NEC, the inspection team recommended (see formal Recommendation 7, above) that the embassy seek three additional local staff members for the IM section.

The IM staff share duties. The LE pouch/mailroom clerk is also the general services driver; he reports to both the IM officer and the general services officer. The receptionist covers for the pouch/mailroom clerk and also handles travel vouchers, another unusual combination of responsibilities resulting in her reporting to two different supervisors.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Valletta should direct the information management officer and management officer to review the mailroom clerk–driver and receptionist-travel voucher position descriptions and align supervisory responsibilities as appropriate.

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QUALITY OF LIFE

American staff morale at Embassy Valletta is good. With generally pleasant weather, easy access to mainland Europe, modern health care, and good schooling, employee complaints about living conditions in Malta are few. The most frequent complaint is the isolation of living on a small island in the middle of the Mediterranean. Most employees look forward to moving to the NEC, which will have a cafeteria and a gym, two facilities that do not exist at the current chancery.

REST AND RECUPERATION TRAVEL

Employees at Embassy Valletta have been receiving rest and recuperation (R&R) travel benefits since at least 1991, the year the last R&R recertification could be located in embassy files. U.S. direct-hire staff on 3-year assignments receive two R&Rs, and entry-level officers on 2-year assignments receive one R&R. According to 3 FAH-1 H-3721.4, all posts that receive R&R are required to submit documentation every 2 years to the appropriate regional bureau executive to justify continued eligibility. Embassy Valletta has not done so.

The inspection team found no evidence to justify continuing R&R. The post's own report of conditions cites excellent weather, adequate medical care, good local transportation, and easy access to Europe. In FY 2010, the Department spent about \$40,000 to fund R&R travel for employees in Valletta—an unnecessary expense.

RECOMMENDATION 16: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should discontinue the rest and recuperation benefit for Embassy Valletta. (Action: EUR)

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

After 2 years of gaps, the community liaison office (CLO) is now staffed with two part-time employees, one of whom recently returned from training. Because of the absence of a full-time CLO coordinator in the past, the office has no historical records and is being recreated from scratch. Nevertheless, the CLO received high marks for its attempts to create more of a community environment, both with the American community and between the American and LE staff. It produces

an embassy newsletter once a month, and eligible family member employment is substantial. There are five spouses employed inside the mission and four others employed outside. Currently, every eligible family member who wants a job has one.

AMERICAN EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

When the embassy finally moves to its new location, it will have to decide whether to contract cafeteria services through the general services office or through an association. There is currently no American employee association in Valletta. Since other opportunities will be available at the new site (swimming pool, gym, sale of merchandise), the embassy should consider establishing an association. The Office of Commissary and Recreation Affairs has an excellent Web site on the subject, which contains a section on how to start an American employee association.

RECOMMENDATION 17: Embassy Valletta should establish a committee to decide whether an American embassy employee association is appropriate for the mission. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

MEDICAL UNIT

The medical unit is staffed by one LE staff nurse, supported by a post medical advisor who is a local general practitioner. There is no receptionist or administrative assistant. The section is well appointed and adequately equipped. The new facility in the NEC will be even better.

The regional medical officer was visiting Valletta during the inspection as was the regional psychiatrist. Both gave the unit high marks. The unit currently stocks a number of controlled substances, all of which are stored according to regulation. However, the medications are of no use since the nurse cannot dispense them, and when they are needed they are available by prescription in local pharmacies.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Valletta should require that the nurse cooperate with the regional medical office to dispose of the current supply of controlled substances, which should not be replaced.

The nurse currently works 30 hours per week. These work hours are inadequate, in view of the nurse's increasing workload and the lack of a receptionist or administrative assistant, which requires her to do all scheduling and coordination of medical evacuations or treatment, in addition to providing patient care.

RECOMMENDATION 18: Embassy Valletta should request, and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should fund, an increase in Malta's budget to allow the nurse to work 40 hours per week. (Action: Embassy Valletta, in coordination with EUR)

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MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The Chief of Mission exercises responsibility for certifying management controls on all U.S. mission operations. In July 2010, the embassy's annual chief of mission management controls statement (Statement of Assurance) noted that, taken as a whole, the system of management controls was effective and provided reasonable assurance that management control objectives were achieved.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should require the Ambassador to report on his efforts to refocus attention on mission priorities and eliminate his use of embassy and Department resources on nonofficial writings. (Action: EUR)

RECOMMENDATION 2: Embassy Valletta should review the work responsibilities of the two office management specialists assigned to the front office and expand them to include providing assistance to other sections of the embassy, including management, political, consular, and public affairs. New responsibilities should be reflected in their work requirements, and overtime should be reduced. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

RECOMMENDATION 3: Embassy Valletta should create and implement a representation plan that provides each section with a representation budget to develop and maintain local contacts, and should amend staff work requirements statements to reflect this responsibility. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

RECOMMENDATION 4: Embassy Valletta should schedule digital video conferences with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations on a regular basis, as well as meetings with management offices and other embassy stakeholders to promote proper coordination and planning for the new embassy compound. These meetings should be chaired by the deputy chief of mission. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

RECOMMENDATION 5: Embassy Valletta should make funds and time available for the commercial assistant and the political assistant to receive training at the Foreign Service Institute. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

RECOMMENDATION 6: Embassy Valletta should require that the consul review visa cases adjudicated by the vice consul. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

RECOMMENDATION 7: Embassy Valletta should request six additional International Cooperative Administrative Support Services positions to support operations at the new embassy compound. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

RECOMMENDATION 8: Embassy Valletta should request, and the Regional Support Center in Frankfurt should provide, additional visits by the regional human resources officer to Embassy Valletta. (Action: Embassy Valletta, in coordination with RSC Frankfurt)

RECOMMENDATION 9: Embassy Valletta should immediately appoint an Equal Employment Opportunity counselor who should then provide appropriate EEO training to both American and locally employed staff. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

RECOMMENDATION 10: Embassy Valletta should review on a monthly basis the procurements approved by the locally employed general services assistant. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

RECOMMENDATION 11: Embassy Valletta should conduct a real estate survey to determine if the cost of the deputy chief of mission residence is excessive; if so, it should discontinue the lease after the current deputy chief of mission completes his tour. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

RECOMMENDATION 12: Embassy Valletta should update its living quarters allowance form to reflect the increase in utility rates and submit this form immediately to the Office of Allowances. (Action: Embassy Valletta)

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INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Valletta should discontinue the weekly policy group meeting and cover policy issues in country team meetings.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Valletta should hold regularly scheduled meetings with the Foreign Service national employee committee, as well as informal meetings with locally employed staff from a range of embassy sections.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Valletta should establish a monthly meeting, chaired by the Ambassador or deputy chief of mission, to prioritize reporting on maritime-related issues.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Valletta should consult with the Rome-based information resource officer and begin planning public diplomacy and mission events that will attract Maltese attendees to programs at the new embassy compound.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Valletta should incorporate the daily media summary into the longer daily report to provide greater value to consumers.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Valletta should focus its social media development efforts on one or two sites only, rather than attempting to keep four sites fully operational and up-to-date.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Malta should research local courier services with a view toward making this service available for the delivery of visas and passports.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Valletta should reach out to the American community using all available media.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Valletta should send the senior consular Foreign Service national to Rome for training at the regional federal benefits unit and the American citizens services unit.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Valletta should direct the information management officer and management officer to review the mailroom clerk–driver and receptionist-travel voucher position descriptions and align supervisory responsibilities as appropriate.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Valletta should require that the nurse cooperate with the regional medical office to dispose of the current supply of controlled substances, which should not be replaced.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Douglas W. Kmiec	9/2009
Deputy Chief of Mission	Richard M. Mills, Jr.	8/2010
<i>Chiefs of Sections:</i>		
Consul	Tracy Brown	8/2010
Management Officer	Laura Danylin	8/2010
Political/Economic Officer	Thomas Yeager	8/2009
Public Affairs Officer	Elijah Waterman	7/2009
Regional Security Officer	Jose "Bert" Hernandez	7/2008
Regional Security Officer	Adedayo Aderinto	6/2008
<i>Other Agencies:</i>		
Department of Defense	Cmdr. Jane Moraski	7/2008
Naval Criminal Investigative Service	Mathew Cummins	4/2006

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ABBREVIATIONS

CLO	Community liaison office
Department	Department of State
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
DIN	Dedicated Internet network
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFM	Eligible family member
ETA	English teaching assistant
FAH	<i>Foreign Affairs Handbook</i>
FAM	<i>Foreign Affairs Manual</i>
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
FSN	Foreign Service national
HR	Human resources
IM	Information management
IRC	Information Resource Center
IVLP	International Visitor Leadership Program
LE	Locally employed
LQA	Living quarters allowance
MSRP	Mission Strategic and Resource Plan
NEC	New embassy compound
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
PAO	Public affairs officer
PAS	Public affairs section
R&R	Rest & recuperation

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