



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

Office of Inspector General

Office of Inspections

**Inspection of
Embassy Algiers, Algeria**

Report Number ISP-I-12-06A, January 2012

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PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2011 by the Council of Inspectors General 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 AND SCOPE

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.



United States Department of State
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". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Harold W. Geisel
Deputy Inspector General

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Key Judgments

- (b) (5) [REDACTED]
- The management section provides inadequate services to its customers. Opaque processes, perceptions of undue influence and preferential treatment in hiring, and poor communication contribute to customer dissatisfaction with management services.
- Management controls are weak due to a lack of standard operating procedures in vulnerable areas and insufficient collaboration among units, particularly in supply chain management.
- Interagency coordination on counterterrorism, economic and trade issues, and foreign assistance is excellent. Although the United States and Algeria cooperate closely on only a narrow range of issues, related primarily to counterterrorism, the embassy uses assistance programs to promote broader common interests.
- The Ambassador recognizes the centrality of public diplomacy (PD) to achieving the embassy's goals and supports PD programs and activities. Embassy Algiers has effectively engaged with young people, a priority target audience, and employs a diverse range of exchange programs and PD platforms.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between September 12 and October 13, 2011, and in Algiers, Algeria, between October 15 and 30, 2011. (b) (6)

[REDACTED]

Context

The Arab Spring that so profoundly changed Algeria's neighborhood in northern Africa this year has shaken but not unseated the authoritarian, bureaucratic, ageing leadership of the continent's largest country. The threat of revolutionary spillover through Algeria's 1200-mile border with Libya and Tunisia has spurred three-term President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to commit to a cautious and incremental program of national reconciliation and political reform. It is still uncertain whether these measures, combined with the government's success in containing public protests, will be sufficient to maintain the political status quo. Algeria's 36 million people struggle with a legacy of state planning, political stagnation, the social and economic toll of the extremely violent civil war of the 1990s, high unemployment (particularly among the country's large population of educated young people), and low-level but persistent terrorist violence. The relationship with the United States, historically limited by Algeria's suspicions of the West, is slowly developing; concerns over regional terrorism have made the Algerians more open to cooperation in the areas of security and law enforcement. Algeria is the seventh-largest exporter of oil to the United States and purchases more than \$2 billion in U.S. goods and services annually. Approximately 2,000 American citizens reside in the country.

Algeria has taken tentative steps to address longstanding sources of popular discontent with the regime. These include lifting the state of emergency that had been in force since 1992; granting wage concessions; capping food prices; and allowing for the possibility of independent news media. Algerian citizens express widespread disaffection and cynicism with the political process, although the likelihood of violent unrest remains low. Algeria continues to cope with terrorism and drug trafficking carried out by an indigenous group, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which poses an active threat in Algeria and the region. The U.S. Government views Algeria as a stable partner and has developed modest foreign assistance programs to support counterterrorism and counternarcotics efforts, nurture Algeria's struggling civil society, promote regional stability, and develop and strengthen economic ties.

The security situation for embassy personnel has improved over the past 5 years, but the operating environment remains unusually taxing. The move to a secure new embassy compound in 2007 and the limited return of family members marked milestones in the post's transition to relative normalcy after many years as one of the most dangerous assignments in the Foreign Service. However, the lack of schooling options for the children of embassy employees, persistent staffing gaps in American positions, continuing risk of terrorism, and relatively poor local infrastructure create a stressful working environment for embassy personnel. Historically, the embassy has struggled to fill staffing gaps for American positions and to provide adequate internal controls oversight. The embassy receives relatively few bids for its key mid-level positions, despite a 25 percent hardship differential and 15 percent danger pay.

Embassy Algiers staffing includes employees from the Department and four other Federal agencies. Total staffing consists of 61 direct-hire Americans and 358 locally employed (LE) staff members. At the time of the inspection, the Department of Treasury and the Foreign Commercial Service were preparing to close their resident offices by the end of 2011. The embassy's operating budgets totaled more than \$18.9 million in FY 2011. In addition, U.S. Government-provided foreign assistance programs totaled approximately \$6.5 million in FY 2010.

Executive Direction

The new Ambassador and deputy chief of mission face policy and management challenges in a difficult environment. Prior to arrival, they defined a clear and appropriate division of responsibilities, forging a bond of common purpose. Their sure assumption of leadership won an enthusiastic welcome from the embassy community.

The Ambassador made his top priorities clear to both American and LE staff members: work with Algeria to combat terrorism, explore and exploit commercial opportunities, and help build a democratic civil society. Employees are confident in their grasp of his vision and expectations, which flow from the Mission Strategic and Resource Plan. The deputy chief of mission, who arrived only a few weeks before the inspection, has brought her management expertise to bear on longstanding issues in that area. Country team and section meetings are held in a collegial, give-and-take atmosphere.

The Ambassador previously served in six Middle East missions, including a tour in Algiers. Section chiefs and agency heads expressed confidence in his grasp of their responsibilities, potential, and resource constraints. They value his emphasis on close interagency coordination and the need to eliminate duplicate efforts, as well as his openness to advice and dissenting views. Mission elements collaborate effectively on developing Algerian counterterrorism capabilities as well as programs in security cooperation, law enforcement, and civil society. Relations with the regional combatant command have been strengthened in recent months. The Ambassador's energetic support for public outreach serves to sensitize the entire mission to PD's role in achieving Mission Strategic and Resource Plan goals.

The security situation, though improved in recent years, still requires strict defensive measures that affect morale at post by reducing mobility and impinging on community activities. Both the Ambassador and deputy chief of mission carefully track security developments and trends that may have implications for the safety of embassy employees. Looking ahead to the possibility of a less restrictive security environment, the Ambassador has challenged the mission to conceptualize what a "normal" embassy in Algiers would look like in 10 years and to draft a roadmap identifying intermediate steps the embassy should take to prepare for that eventuality.

The Algerian Government's emphasis on rank, protocol, and formal communication makes the conduct of official business cumbersome and labor intensive. The Ambassador is working to reduce bottlenecks and hindrances to more expeditious interaction, including those that exist within the mission. During the inspection, embassy clearance procedures were streamlined. The Ambassador used the visit of the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, which also took place during the inspection, to pry open the closed doors of senior government leaders. The extraordinary persistence, flexibility, and patience needed to conduct routine diplomatic business in Algeria were evident to the inspection team.

The Ambassador is making intelligent use of the deputy chief of mission's regional and bureau experience to complement his own skills. He gave the deputy chief of mission a broad mandate to address the embassy's personnel and management challenges and to ameliorate morale problems, including trust issues arising from the widespread perception that internal

decisionmaking processes lack transparency and efficiency. The deputy chief of mission's expertise on issues of procedure, regulation, and practice has had a valuable impact, and her accessibility has improved front office communication with the rest of the mission.

Since the last OIG inspection in 2007, the embassy has added 15 new positions under National Security Decision Directive-38 procedures. Generally, these were to compensate for the reductions during the Algerian civil strife of the previous decade. The embassy has objected to recent decisions by the Treasury Department and the Department of Commerce to close their resident offices.

Recruitment has been a chronic problem for the embassy, which operates with a deficit of mid-level personnel. Many positions, including senior ones, are filled by temporary duty employees, officers on stretch assignments, or Civil Service personnel on excursion tours. The executive team expressed its commitment to a vigorous recruitment effort aimed at getting the right people at the right time into the right positions.

OIG did not find any Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) issues at post.

Locally Employed Staff

The front office is sensitive to the special requirements of LE staff and entry-level officers (ELO). (b) (5)

At the time of the inspection, the embassy lacked an established mechanism for bringing LE staff concerns to the attention of senior management, as the LE staff association had been disbanded some years ago. A so-called "Ambassador's Council," composed of section representatives appointed by the previous Ambassador, lacks staff buy-in. The Ambassador has urged LE staff members to organize themselves and determine how they want to advise and consult with mission leadership.

Recommendation 1: Embassy Algiers should abolish the Ambassador's Council and implement a plan to establish a local employee association. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Entry-Level Officer Mentoring

The embassy does not have a formal mentoring and professional development program for ELOs, as required by Department guidance (2010 State 120467). The large complement of untenured, first- or second-tour officers and specialists—13 employees, representing more than a third of the Department contingent—combined with the paucity of mid-level professionals, puts a heavy burden on the mission's few senior officers. In some sections, adequate supervision, training, and mentoring are also deficient.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Algiers should implement a mentoring and professional development program for entry-level officers and specialists. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Policy and Program Implementation

Political/Economic Section

The embassy's combined political/economic section is stretched thin because of long-term staffing gaps, notably in the section chief position. Headed on an acting basis by an FS-02 economic officer, the section's complement includes five direct-hire positions and four LE staff members. When fully staffed, the section has the manpower to accomplish mission advocacy and reporting goals. The absence of an experienced section head, however, has resulted in a lack of leadership and strategic direction.

Washington consumers cited examples of strong and relevant reporting, particularly on issues such as Algeria's reaction to the Arab Spring, economic entrepreneurship, and Algerian political-social developments. However, reporting often reached consumers too late to be of value. Impediments in the embassy's clearance procedures were largely to blame for the delays. The new front office appreciates the need for timely reporting and has given the section chief increased authority to turn reporting around faster.

The host government strictly controls access to the official and private contacts that normally constitute sources for informed, in-depth political/economic reporting. This restriction is reflected in the limited content of some of the embassy's reporting, which is frequently based on press reports or government statements. Inspectors advised section officers on ways to explore other opportunities to enhance their understanding of issues and developments, including more targeted use of representational funds and joint projects with other embassy sections and agencies.

Local and American staffing vacancies have required LE staff members to perform drafting duties beyond their level of training. In addition, portfolio responsibilities are not clearly distributed among American and LE staff. The inspectors were impressed with the capabilities and contributions of LE staff members and believe their talents could be better used. All staff would benefit from clearer formal divisions of responsibility.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Algiers should define portfolio responsibilities in the political/economic section for each American and locally employed staff member and include these responsibilities in their work requirements statements. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

In reviewing the section's expenses, the inspection team was struck by the number of newspapers and magazine subscriptions it continues to receive, even though many publications are available online.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Algiers should eliminate political/economic section subscriptions that can be replaced with online resources.

Trade Promotion

Algeria imports more than \$2 billion in goods and services from American companies. The Foreign Agricultural Service maintains a resident office to promote commodity exports, chiefly wheat, and seeks to overcome trade barriers to American imports in Algeria's fragmented retail food market. Because of budget retrenchments, the Foreign Commercial Service plans to close its resident office by the end of 2011. The Ambassador has voiced his opposition to this closure and asked the Department of Commerce to review the decision. In view of this expected action, it is possible that the political/economic section will have to assume responsibility for commercial advocacy on behalf of U.S. exporters; however, the section currently lacks the staff to perform this function.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Algiers should document the need for a commercial specialist position in the economic section in its next strategic planning request. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Law Enforcement

The Federal Bureau of Investigation operates a three-person office that supports U.S.-based criminal investigations. In addition, the Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Action Program provides support for police forensics laboratories, police training, and border control activities. At the time of the inspection, the embassy was establishing a formal law enforcement working group to coordinate activities and information sharing among relevant agencies.

Foreign Assistance

Embassy Algiers oversees a modest but growing foreign assistance portfolio that totaled more than \$6.5 million in FY 2010. Foreign assistance programs provide technical assistance to support cooperation on counterterrorism and promote civil society institutions. An economic officer coordinates foreign assistance program oversight in the mission.

The embassy also manages Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) programs. The political/economic section and the public affairs section (PAS) oversee local MEPI programs. PAS also works directly with the MEPI-funded Access program of English instruction. The local grants target civil society organizations. In addition, there were five active local grants with a total value of \$300,000, and several others were under development. The regional MEPI office in Tunis processes local grants and disburses the money. The embassy tracks progress and compliance.

The Tunis regional office also administers a number of multicountry grants that include Algerian organizations. The embassy generally finds the Algerian recipients of MEPI grants responsive to their requests for public recognition of the U.S. Government role.

In 2011, the embassy received \$710,000 in development assistance funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development regional mission in Rabat. The Department of Defense conducts several assistance programs, including Expanded International Military Education and

Training, humanitarian assistance, border and maritime security, and counterterrorism training, at a total cost of approximately \$2 million.

The political/economic section also monitors the activities of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other international organizations that support refugees in the Tindouf refugee settlement. Algeria is on the Trafficking in Persons Tier 3 List but has received a national interests waiver that allows it to continue to receive foreign assistance.

Public Diplomacy

Algeria presents a challenging PD environment. Security constraints limit travel, especially outside the capital, complicating embassy efforts to develop relationships with Mission Strategic and Resource Plan target groups, especially women and young people. The Algerian Government exerts preponderant influence in all the sectors of society with which PD officers typically engage, including the media, schools and universities, and cultural and intellectual circles. The government requires a diplomatic note to carry out even routine PD activities and programs. This requirement often delays visa issuance to Americans participating in embassy-sponsored programs and has prevented Algerian nominees from going to the United States on exchange programs by denying them permission to travel.

A capable public affairs officer with previous PD experience leads 2 American officers and 10 LE staff members in a section where all employees share a clear understanding of Mission Strategic and Resource Plan priorities. At the time of the inspection, all three American officers had recently arrived. Despite the logistical challenges, the section is carrying out a diverse range of programs and activities.

Although new at post, the American officers have begun developing relationships with Algerian contacts. OIG believes that the time and effort put into establishing these relationships represent a vital investment. Deepening substantive relationships with Algerian interlocutors will allow the American officers to understand and analyze their sectors, enabling them to implement the Mission Strategic and Resource Plan PD strategy effectively. The public affairs officer understands the challenge and the need to lead her staff in a multiphased effort to expand contacts with Algerians, analyze and report on the PD sectors, and allocate resources strategically.

LE staff members are competent in their specialties and familiar with the range of available programs and resources. In some cases, frictions among the local employees, including an unwillingness to communicate with one another, diminish their effectiveness. The public affairs officer is aware of the problem and is taking appropriate steps to address it.

Educational and Cultural Affairs

The cultural affairs officer arrived with solid experience in directing a cultural program of similar size and scope, including responsibility for the Fulbright program. In general, LE staff members are efficient and knowledgeable in their areas of responsibility and actively engage in program work.

OIG identified shortcomings in the nominations process for the International Visitor Leadership Program that undermine the quality of nominees selected for the program as well as their professional experience in the United States. For example, the embassy does not regularly offer visitor-specific programming suggestions that the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs needs to develop appropriate itineraries for participants. American officers do not consistently participate in the pre- or post-trip briefing of nominees, nor do they write the justification that accompanies the nomination, which is instead prepared by a local employee. These deficiencies jeopardize the success and impact of this important program.

Recommendation 5: Embassy Algiers should implement a plan to assign specific responsibilities to officers who nominate Algerians for the International Visitor Leadership Program. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

There is good coordination between the local employees handling the International Visitor Leadership Program and alumni affairs. PAS does a creditable job promoting State Alumni, the Department's Web site for participants in Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs-sponsored exchanges. Establishing an alumni organization in Algeria would be difficult, given the government's suspicion of organizations and activities.

The embassy has traditionally worked with the host government on cultural and speaker programs. The host government provides suitable venues at no cost, which offers considerable savings. At the same time, this arrangement gives the host government undue influence over embassy programs. The public affairs officer is reviewing this program model with the aim of finding other venues that would give the embassy autonomy over its program agenda. OIG supports this effort.

PAS oversees Access programs at 13 schools. Typically funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, these programs provide young people in predominantly Muslim countries with instruction in the English language and in American culture and values. Because Access targets nonelites, it provides a useful means of reaching a priority Mission Strategic and Resource Plan audience. A reduction in funding means that the embassy will need to eliminate the program in five schools. PAS is in the process of choosing which ones, working with objective criteria that include responsiveness of school management and geographic location of schools. At the same time, PAS is exploring other funding options to make up the shortfall.

Few Algerians study in the United States due to costs and cultural factors, including the influence of the French educational system. The embassy hopes to increase the number of students who seek higher education in the United States. At the time of the inspection, a regional educational advising coordinator had not visited in 2 years. The coordinator's counsel is essential to meeting the embassy's goal of increasing study in the United States.

Recommendation 6: The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Algiers, should schedule a regional educational advising coordinator visit to Algeria. (Action: ECA, in coordination with Embassy Algiers)

Information and Media Affairs

The first-tour information officer brings valuable work experience to the job. She is active in the Ambassador's monthly media forum. Newspapers remain the dominant medium in Algeria, and PAS devotes considerable resources to monitoring them, as well as to tracking radio, television, and the Web. A local employee from the information unit provides the Ambassador and senior officers with a daily oral brief. The section also produces a comprehensive written daily media digest that the Ambassador and Washington readers value. The digest requires a significant investment of time by a senior local employee and by the information officer responsible for editing it. A consequent lack of time for contact work represents a hidden cost of the digest. Although journalists come to the embassy for press events and email facilitates an exchange of information, neither of these interactions is an adequate substitute for developing relationships with reporters and editors, which takes time, outreach, and a strategic approach.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Algiers should streamline production procedures and the scope of coverage of its daily media digest product.

At the time of the inspection, the embassy had no written media policy articulating spokesperson roles and responsibilities or procedures for dealing with the press. Because the front office and the public affairs officer had already identified the need for one, and PAS was in the process of developing a document that would serve as the basis for the policy, OIG did not leave a recommendation on the subject.

Internet usage is growing but still limited in Algeria. Facebook is the dominant social medium. The embassy successfully uses its Web page and social media to disseminate and amplify policy information, promote programs, and facilitate contact with younger Algerians. PAS Algiers places appropriate emphasis on social media and allocates resources to locally relevant social media.

In recent years, PAS Algiers has hosted very few speakers from the Bureau of International Information Programs. Given the network of three American Corners around the country, the embassy has an ideal venue for speakers. OIG discussed with the public affairs officer the importance of communicating the section's needs and enlisting the assistance of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' Office of Press and Public Diplomacy to bring speakers to the embassy.

Public Diplomacy Platforms

The embassy's Information Resource Center reopened in June 2011, following a several-year hiatus. An information resource officer visited in April to train the interim director and advise on setting up an Information Resource Center. At the time of the inspection, the embassy was in the process of hiring permanent center staff. In the meantime, PAS staff members had been temporarily reassigned to work in the Information Resource Center, a necessary step given the initial enthusiastic response from Algerian contacts. Following advertisement of the resources at a major book fair, 25 to 30 new people a day were visiting the center through the course of the inspection.

PAS oversees operations in American Corners in three Algerian cities and has tentatively identified a location for a fourth Corner in the capital. OIG believes that, given the Mission Strategic and Resource Plan priority of reaching young people and women and the difficulty of travel in country, the American Corners provide an invaluable platform from which to engage Algerians. A local staff member dedicates most of her time to supporting the American Corners. PAS provided the equipment to conduct digital video conferences to one American Corner and had ordered equipment for the others. American Corners directors, who are employees of the hosting organization, also recruit local speakers.

Grants and Administrative Matters

OIG's review found missing or inadequate documentation in some grants files. PAS does not consistently use the Federal financial report form (SF-425), and some grants files do not include required information and paperwork. Missing documentation included evidence that embassy personnel had conducted checks of the Excluded Parties List System, a requirement of Grants Policy Directive 19. Nonuse of required grants forms is also contrary to Grants Policy Directive 3, which mandates use of certain forms in administering Federal assistance programs.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Algiers should implement procedures for the accurate and complete documentation of required information in public grants files. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

PAS Algiers does not use a software application to keep track of its professional contacts. Although not a Department requirement, using such an application is far more efficient than relying on manual processes and individual employee contacts to support PAS outreach. The protocol office and the political section use a Department standard application for contact management, which PAS might also use. The effect of not using contact management software is diminished operational effectiveness in conducting outreach and programming.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, should obtain and use contact management software that meets the needs of the public affairs section. (Action: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with NEA)

Consular Affairs

The consular section is small and generally well managed and provides the full range of consular services. An experienced officer on a temporary duty assignment heads the section. Local staff members are well trained and operate as a cohesive team. However, long gaps in permanent officer staffing have begun to erode strict adherence to good management practices. When the section's second American officer arrived at the end of the inspection, procedures began to return to normal. The section has ample work space and sufficient numbers of interview windows, although some are not in use because of nonfunctioning audio equipment. Although there are no specific consular goals in the FY 2012 Mission Strategic and Resource Plan, the introductory narrative notes the importance of the consular section to mission operations. The section works well with other elements of the mission, including the regional security office and PAS.

American Citizens Services

The consular section provides efficient services to U.S. citizens. However, the security situation in Algeria makes it difficult for officers to travel and provide emergency services to U.S. citizens outside Algiers. The embassy maintains up-to-date guidance to the public about security conditions and the limited ability of consular personnel to respond to emergencies outside the capital. The section provides routine services for American citizens through an Internet-based appointment system, with appropriate exceptions for emergency cases. There are approximately 2,000 U.S. citizens registered with the embassy, who are assigned to a warden zone as part of the section's robust warden system. Although U.S. citizens are encouraged to use the Internet-based registration system, the section also accepts written registrations.

Consular Management

Consular management and local staff observe consular leadership tenets. All LE staff members have been cross-trained in at least two of the consular functional areas. The section is sufficiently staffed to meet its visa and American citizens service workload. Standard operating procedures for all routine functions are in use and available to everyone in the section. The deputy chief of mission reviews the adjudications of the consular section chief.

Records Management

The consular section properly secures accountable consular items and reconciles inventories on a regular basis. The accountable consular officer and alternate have been designated in writing. However, immigrant visa records and some other records containing personally identifiable information are not being properly secured after hours. Personally identifiable information pertaining to American citizens is protected under the Privacy Act of 1974 and must be securely safeguarded. (b) (5)

[REDACTED]

Recommendation 9: (b) (5)

[REDACTED]

Visas Viper

The Visas Viper program is an interagency initiative to make information available to consular visa sections about known and suspected terrorists. The deputy chief of mission chairs the embassy's Visas Viper committee, which meets monthly. All required representatives attend meetings, and the consular section submits monthly reporting cables in a timely manner.

Nonimmigrant Visas

The consular section processes more than 7,000 nonimmigrant visas a year via an online appointment system. Because of a 7-month staffing gap in an officer position, the embassy was

forced to drastically reduce the number of visa appointment slots. As a result, the wait time for nonimmigrant visa appointments increased to more than 60 days. The acting consular section chief also limited the number of appointment slots that would be available after his departure so as not to overburden the incoming first-tour officer. During the inspection and for several months prior to it, the consular section was scheduling appointments every work day and was adding special appointments 1 day every other weekend to accommodate legitimate business travelers. As a result, all available appointment slots have been filled and requests for special consideration and advance appointments create additional work for the staff.

To process all nonimmigrant visa applicants as quickly as possible, the consular section reviews applicant information and collects the required biometric finger scans before applicants pay the processing fee. Although consular staff are careful to confirm that applicants have sufficient funds to cover the visa fee, regulations in 7 FAH-1 H-743.1 a. and 7 FAH-1 H-751 b. require payment of the fee prior to other processing steps.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Algiers should update nonimmigrant visa procedures so that consular staff collect the machine readable visa fee before processing a visa case. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

The current method of scheduling nonimmigrant visas in the morning and other services in the afternoon limits the number of appointments the section can provide and sometimes creates congestion in the waiting room. Establishing separate days for nonimmigrant visas will allow the consular section to schedule more appointments per day, simplify end-of-day procedures, and facilitate continued staff cross-training.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Algiers should alternate appointment days for nonimmigrant and immigrant visas.

Referral Program

The consular section is properly implementing the worldwide referral policy. Referring officers receive briefings on the visa referral policy and sign compliance agreements.

Immigrant Visas

The section conducts immigrant and diversity visa interviews on a daily basis. Diversity visas, a category of limited immigrant visa available through a lottery system, make up more than 70 percent of the total immigrant visa workload. The section's overall immigrant visa workload has increased steadily over the past few years and is likely to continue to do so as the Algerian community in the United States grows.

Innovative Practice: New Resident Orientation

Innovative Practice: New Resident Orientation

Issue: Many recipients of immigrant visas, particularly diversity visas, have never traveled outside Algeria and do not know what to expect when they arrive in the United States for the first time.

Response: The consular section in Algiers offers immigrant visa and diversity visa recipients the opportunity to pick up their visa packets in person on one of two orientation days each month. The sessions are strictly voluntary; those who choose not to attend receive their packets by courier. The sessions use a PowerPoint presentation based on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services pamphlet, *Welcome to the United States*, to cover details such as what to expect at the airport, resources available in the United States, and cultural norms.

Result: The program has been well received by the local population. Approximately 20 to 30 people attend each session.

Resource Management

| Agency | U.S. Direct-Hire Staff | U.S. Local-Hire Staff | Foreign National Staff | Total Staff | Total Funding FY 2011 |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Department of State | | | | | |
| Diplomatic and Consular Programs | 27 | 1 | 18 | 46 | \$1,755,307 |
| Machine Readable Visa | 2 | - | 3 | 5 | \$57,330 |
| ICASS | 6 | 12 | 268 | 286 | \$7,055,500 |
| Public Diplomacy | 3 | 1 | 10 | 14 | \$733,914 |
| Diplomatic Security | 3 | - | 71 | 74 | \$1,309,351 |
| Marine Security | 7 | - | 3 | 10 | \$60,384 |
| Representation | - | - | 0 | 0 | \$27,650 |
| OBO | 1 | - | 0 | 1 | \$3,835,882 |
| Department of Agriculture | | | | | |
| Foreign Agricultural Service | 1 | - | 2 | 3 | \$265,913 |
| Department of Defense | | | | | |
| Defense Attaché Office | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 | \$453,370 |
| Office of Security Cooperation | 2 | - | 2 | 4 | \$236,000 |
| Department of Justice | | | | | |
| Federal Bureau of Investigation | 3 | - | 1 | 4 | \$239,286 |
| Department of Justice – ICITAP | 1 | - | 1 | 2 | \$2,200,000 |
| Department of Treasury | 1 | - | 0 | 1 | \$629,848 |
| Other Foreign Assistance* | | | | | |
| Democracy Assistance | - | - | - | - | \$710,000 |
| Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Disarmament, and Related Programs | | | | | \$775,000 |
| International Military Education and Training | - | - | - | - | \$950,000 |
| Food for Peace | - | - | - | - | \$6,213,000 |
| Totals | 61 | 15 | 381 | 457 | \$27,507,735 |

Source: Embassy Algiers, FY 2012 Congressional Budget Justification.

*FY 2010 totals.

Management Operations

Embassy Algiers operates in an unusually difficult and dangerous environment that requires strong American management skills and expertise. The current management section has neither the staff nor the experienced leadership to operate effectively. The professional credentials of the current management team do not constitute a recipe for success: a management officer who had never served overseas previously; U.S. direct-hire unit chiefs who, with one exception, were serving in their functional areas for the first time; and LE staff members with mixed levels of proficiencies and who are still recovering from malfeasance cases in the recent past. Many of the findings in this inspection report mirror those of the last two inspections in 2001 and 2006. The former deputy chief of mission, who departed immediately prior to the OIG inspection, provided neither guidance nor sufficient mentoring to the management section. The absence of adequate front office support contributed to protracted debates and bureaucratic logjams at the working level. The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs characterized the management section's operations in more positive terms than OIG found to be warranted.

OIG questionnaires reflect nearly universal dissatisfaction with the management section and the services it provides. OIG noted numerous deficiencies in processes and procedures. Lack of transparency and trust in several management units exacerbates this problem.

The recent arrival of a new deputy chief of mission with management credentials has created significant optimism within the section. Many embassy employees noted the positive change in atmosphere and the deputy chief of mission's direct involvement in resolving issues that caused particular morale problems. The executive office is aware that rebuilding trust, confidence, expertise, processes, customer service, and leadership in the management section will be a long-term undertaking that requires intense supervision.

Financial Management

Unlike other management units, the financial management office functions well. Led by a first-tour financial specialist with extensive experience in private industry, the office received good marks from embassy customers in OIG's survey. Accounting and vouchering processes function efficiently. Approximately 40 percent of embassy vouchers are processed offshore by the Bureau of Resource Management's Post Support Unit. The Class B cashier has established appropriate internal controls (b) (6)

The cashier has satisfactorily addressed all outstanding recommendations from a June 2011 cashier monitor report. The office effectively manages the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) platform but needs to address two minor issues. First, one agency that should be represented on the ICASS council has been omitted. Second, the council did not provide an annual service provider performance assessment this year, as required by 6 FAH-5 H-222.3-4(9).

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Algiers should include all relevant agencies on its International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council and budget committee.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Algiers should complete the required annual International Cooperative Administrative Support Services service provider performance assessment.

The Class B cashier deposits consular fee collections into a local bank account when the amount on hand exceeds the authorized advance. The local bank requires confirmation that funds are tax exempt in order to transfer them from the local account to the U.S. Disbursing Office account. The embassy provides potentially sensitive details about the number and type of consular services rendered as part of the bank deposit process. The embassy is in the process of negotiating a new banking agreement, which provides an opportunity to revisit this practice.

Recommendation 11: Embassy Algiers should cease the practice of providing a detailed list of consular services to the local bank. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

The embassy makes most payments by cash or check, including salary payments to LE staff. Salary checks for LE staff normally are received from Bangkok every other Sunday. However, the checks are distributed over a 3-day period, apparently to accommodate a request from the local bank. This practice is inefficient and unnecessary.

Recommendation 12: Embassy Algiers should distribute locally employed staff paychecks on the same day they are received. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

The financial management office is in the process of transferring the embassy's bank account to a new institution. Once this has been completed, Embassy Algiers will initiate a pilot program to deposit a limited number of LE staff salary checks by electronic funds transfer. Should this plan succeed, the embassy will expand the pilot program to include all salary payments. It is standard practice at most overseas missions, even those in the developing world, to make the majority of payments by electronic funds transfer. (b) (5)

Recommendation 13: Embassy Algiers should implement a policy to make payments by electronic funds transfer whenever possible. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Human Resources

The human resources section suffers from the perception that it does not administer American and LE staff hiring and employment policies fairly and in accordance with regulations. Suspicion and mistrust have damaged relations between the human resources office and other elements of the mission. A perceived lack of transparency permeates three basic functions of the office: LE staff hiring, LE staff position classification, and eligible family member hiring. The office's below-average scores on OIG questionnaires reflect the seriousness of the problem.

The recent assignment of a full-time human resources officer has benefited the embassy as a whole; however, that the employee is a first-tour officer and learning on the job places her at a disadvantage in managing the office. Local staff and an American family member are knowledgeable and well trained in human resources procedures. However, friction among human resources staff members contributes to diminished office performance.

Recommendation 14: Embassy Algiers should schedule a team-building exercise for its human resources staff. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

The most troubling aspect of the working environment in the mission is the perception that hiring is not administered fairly. OIG reviewed hiring policies and procedures and found them to be generally consistent with Department personnel regulations. Despite the existence of numerous policies and procedures relating to the proper method of hiring LE staff, and notwithstanding the fact that American employees are involved at all levels of the hiring process, local employees still believe that the hiring process is unfair. One problem is that some important documents, such as the human resources handbook for LE staff, have never been translated into French. This oversight contributes to a lack of understanding about human resources policies.

(b) (5)

Recommendation 15: Embassy Algiers should translate the human resources handbook for locally employed staff; the local compensation, leave, and benefits plan; and other hiring guidance into French and make them available to all local employees. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 16: Embassy Algiers should implement a plan to brief all locally employed staff on the hiring policy as described in the human resources handbook. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

The U.S. citizen eligible family member hiring process also generates complaints of favoritism and lack of fairness. The embassy's hiring practices do not conform to Department recruitment policy guidelines contained in the *Local Employee Recruitment Policy Guidebook*. For example, the embassy has not constituted a post employment committee to review the qualifications of U.S. citizen eligible family members and U.S. veterans who apply for embassy positions. The committee must document its deliberations and prepare a formal memorandum to the chief of mission, recommending appointments for all U.S. citizen eligible family members and veterans who are hired at the mission. The human resources office has drafted, but not yet completed, a family member appointment handbook and other implementing guidance for hiring eligible family members. In the absence of a properly functional hiring process, the embassy cannot address concerns that eligible family member hiring is not transparent and free of improper influence.

Recommendation 17: Embassy Algiers should complete and issue the family member appointment handbook. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 18: Embassy Algiers should conduct a group meeting with all eligible family members to discuss the hiring and employment process as it pertains to them. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

In October 2011, the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs concluded a memorandum of understanding to transfer LE position classification responsibilities to the Frankfurt Regional Support Center in order to standardize the position classification function and thereby alleviate employee concerns about the equity of the process.

Recommendation 19: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should request that the Frankfurt Regional Support Center begin conducting reviews of locally employed staff position classifications and descriptions. (Action: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with EUR)

Embassy Algiers has an adequate LE staff training policy and tracks training of its employees. However, there is no consolidated plan to implement this policy based on priorities and availability of funding, which diminishes the effectiveness of the training the embassy provides.

Recommendation 20: Embassy Algiers should implement a consolidated training plan for its locally employed staff. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Embassy Algiers has a post orientation program for incoming LE staff. The sessions cover administrative issues but do not give new staff members important information regarding mission operations.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Algiers should broaden its locally employed staff orientation program to include discussion of overall mission operations.

The inspection team reviewed each language-designated position and found that the designations accurately reflect requirements. French or Arabic language skills remain essential in this operating environment for many embassy positions.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Embassy Algiers has designated two EEO counselors and two LE staff EEO liaisons. Both EEO counselors have attended the Department's 4-day training course within the past year. Notices are posted in several common locations throughout the embassy.

The local employee EEO liaisons have not received training and have not met with their American counterparts. A cable announcing EEO training for both EEO counselors and LE staff EEO liaisons arrived during the course of the inspection. The embassy authorized one of the local liaisons to attend and followed guidance for enrolling in the course. However, the Office of Civil Rights informed the nominated employee that enrollment was not possible.

Recommendation 21: The Office of Civil Rights should clarify its instructions concerning Equal Employment Opportunity training procedures for locally employed staff. (Action: S/OCR)

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Algiers should establish a schedule of regular meetings between its Equal Employment Opportunity counselor and locally employed liaisons.

General Services

The general services office functions at a basic level. Key cost centers, such as customs and shipping, procurement, and housing, earned low scores and negative comments on OIG

questionnaires. The unit has been preoccupied with two issues: the termination on short notice of leases for 24 apartments, and lengthy delays in clearing shipments through local customs. The two issues have consumed considerable staff time and energy. Lack of staff experience and professional knowledge exacerbates the situation. Nevertheless, the general services staff has moved up the learning curve and shown improvement.

Areas of responsibility for the supervisory and assistant general services officers are ill-defined. One officer is responsible for housing, one is responsible for customs, and both share the remaining areas. Clearer lines of authority are necessary to facilitate accountability in each functional area.

Recommendation 22: Embassy Algiers should assign direct responsibilities for components of the general services portfolio to the supervisory general services officer and the assistant general services officer and incorporate these responsibilities into their work requirements statements. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Procurement

The embassy has deployed the Department's standard logistics application, the Integrated Logistics Management System, to the procurement process. General services staff uses the system to prepare purchase orders, blanket purchase agreements, and petty cash purchases. Expanded use and visibility of the system, which could enhance management controls, is discussed in the Management Controls section of this report.

The procurement unit has only a handful of active contracts; the majority predates the hiring of the current unit supervisor. An OIG inspector examined four formal contracts and found them lacking in essential documentation: three did not include the mandatory trafficking in persons Federal Acquisition Regulation clause 52.222-50; two did not contain current contracting officer representative letters; and two did not fully document competition. None was well organized and conformed to guidance provided in chapter 7 of the Department's Overseas Contracting and Simplified Acquisitions Guidebook.

Recommendation 23: Embassy Algiers should update its contracts and contract files so that they are well organized and contain all documentation and clauses required by the Federal Acquisition Regulation and Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Property Management

The property management unit is working to improve its physical infrastructure and operational processes based on guidance from a September 2011 assistance visit by an Office of Logistics Management employee. This visit documented, and the OIG inspection confirmed, a number of deficiencies in warehouse life safety and internal controls that warrant priority attention.

The current warehouse configuration has exits that traverse warehouse space, lacks separation between the warehouse area and workshops and maintenance storage, and allows

uncontrolled access to the receiving area. The absence of adequate internal controls creates vulnerability to unauthorized access and theft.

Recommendation 24: Embassy Algiers should alter the configuration of the warehouse to limit access to the receiving and stock areas to authorized personnel only. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

OIG also noted that warehouse shelving rests on wooden platforms that could prevent the flow of water from the sprinklers down through the shelving during a fire. In addition, stored items are stacked within 3 feet of the sprinkler heads, which is contrary to Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) guidance based on the International Fire Code standard. This practice could reduce the effectiveness of the sprinkler system, placing personnel and stock at greater risk to injury and damage from fire.

Recommendation 25: Embassy Algiers should replace wooden decking on warehouse racks with metal waterfall decking to enhance fire suppression system capabilities. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 26: Embassy Algiers should allow 3 feet of clearance between stored items and the nearest sprinkler head to allow proper water coverage in case of fire. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Although the embassy held a property auction in March 2011, the warehouse contains a large quantity of unneeded property that is not stored safely. Items are stacked dangerously high and have overflowed into the loading dock and driveway areas, which have become a dumping ground for safes, garden furniture, windows, and other debris. This inattention to proper inventory control and disposal practices has resulted in a property management problem as well as a safety hazard.

Recommendation 27: Embassy Algiers should dispose of excess personal property. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Housing

OIG questionnaire results reflected considerable dissatisfaction with the housing program, most notably with the decision this summer to vacate a 24-unit apartment building with only about 4 months' notice. OBO based its decision to terminate the lease on the building's poor rating on a 2002 seismic engineering assessment. Although the move would have been difficult under any circumstances, it was further complicated by what respondents cited as poor communication and lack of transparency.

OIG also heard allegations that the housing board was not following regulations when making housing assignments. OIG was not able to substantiate these allegations partly because housing board minutes were available only for the 6-month period prior to the inspection. Although OIG heard conflicting accounts of how the housing assignments process works, it is clear that a lack of transparency and written documentation contribute to broad customer dissatisfaction with the program. Because housing is a major morale issue, particularly at hardship posts, it is important that the newly installed interagency housing board comply with

guidance on housing program administration in *Foreign Affairs Manual* regulation 15 FAM 212 to build confidence among employees that the assignments system is fair.

Recommendation 28: Embassy Algiers should implement standard operating procedures for the interagency housing board to execute the housing assignments process in accordance with Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

The general services office faces a challenge in leasing residential properties that meet security and cost requirements, because mission policy requires that apartments be located in buildings that are leased exclusively by embassy occupants. In the past, some leased apartments remained unoccupied for extended periods, which incurred unnecessary costs. The embassy has brought itself into compliance with regulations in 15 FAM 313.5 by divesting itself of unoccupied apartments or assigning empty apartments to permanent residents. However, the embassy must now contend with the difficulty of finding apartments in a tight rental market.

According to an OBO assessment, Embassy Algiers lease costs are unreasonably high relative to local market conditions. The eligible family member housing assistant who is fluent in French has begun to renegotiate leases, with positive results. According to embassy data, the renegotiation of six leases has yielded annual savings of almost \$418,000. The remaining leases are broadly similar in cost to newly negotiated leases and are thus likely to reflect local market conditions.

Motor Vehicle Operations

Motor pool services received high OIG and ICASS customer satisfaction scores, which is unsurprising, as the embassy provides round-the-clock transportation for official and unofficial trips at no cost. However, OIG identified deficiencies in motor pool program administration that ranged from policy lapses to recordkeeping deficiencies to nonuse of electronic applications. See the Management Controls section of this report for recommendations to regularize embassy practices in this area.

The embassy has not taken full advantage of the WebPASS Vehicle Registration and Maintenance application, a tool that automates the process of vehicle fleet recordkeeping. Instead, the embassy tracks fuel consumption, mileage reports, and maintenance scheduling using spreadsheets. However, the impending deployment of the Department-wide fleet management system will soon make both systems obsolete.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Algiers should automate its motor pool operations recordkeeping and reporting by deploying the Department of State's fleet management system when it becomes available.

Motor pool drivers consistently prepare the Daily Vehicle Use Record (Form OF-108) for vehicles under the direct control of the motor pool supervisor, as required by 14 FAM 436.1. The embassy does not prepare these records for vehicles used by the regional security office. As a result, the embassy is unable to account for the use, mileage, fuel consumption, maintenance, and condition of vehicles under the control of the regional security office. This lapse in procedure represents an operational and management controls deficiency.

Recommendation 29: Embassy Algiers should implement internal controls that require all motor vehicle operators to complete the Daily Vehicle Use Record (Form OF-108). (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Customs and Shipping

Lengthy delays in clearing official and personal shipments through local customs represent perhaps the most nagging and morale-killing issue at post. Customs clearance of household effects and unaccompanied baggage commonly takes more than 40 days. At the time of the OIG inspection in mid-October, one official shipment had been at port for almost 9 months. The current front office attaches high priority to the problem and is engaging host nation officials and working with Washington contacts to resolve it.

Facilities Management

OBO provides adequate attention and assistance to the mission through regular trip reports, financial audits, and technical support visits. The new embassy compound, which was occupied in 2007 ahead of schedule due to security concerns, has presented ongoing maintenance issues. For example, decorative tiles have loosened and fallen from the façade. OBO is working with the construction contractor on remediation. A second example is the building automation system. According to a February 5, 2011, status report, the automation system is not operating properly because some components are not functioning and others were omitted during the original construction. In addition, the LE staff technician responsible for the system has neither the training nor the equipment to operate and maintain it. Because the building automation system also supports the fire suppression system, assuring full functionality of the former is important to fire safety.

Recommendation 30: The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, in coordination with Embassy Algiers, should bring the embassy's building automation system up to fully functional and maintainable status. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Algiers)

As-built drawings provided by the new embassy compound construction contractor are inaccurate and incomplete. Department guidance (07 State 136139) states that OBO will provide as-built hard copy and electronic drawings of a completed new embassy compound. In addition to being a standard deliverable upon completion of a new embassy, correct as-builts are essential to facilitating continued maintenance and repair.

Recommendation 31: The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, in coordination with Embassy Algiers, should update the new embassy compound as-built drawings so that they are accurate and complete. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Algiers)

The facilities management unit is transitioning its workforce and organizational capabilities to operate and maintain the complex mechanical systems of the new embassy compound. It faces significant challenges in the recruitment and retention of technical personnel, such as electricians and heating/ventilation/air conditioning technicians. During the OIG inspection, two such technicians submitted their resignations, and three similar positions already were vacant. The embassy also may have problems filling a senior position that will oversee the

entire facilities management unit and provide continuity in a section that has seen much personnel turmoil in the U.S. direct-hire position.

Recommendation 32: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with the Bureau of Human Resources, should request an exception rate range as a means to recruit and retain facilities maintenance engineering staff. (Action: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with DGHR)

Safety, Health, and Environmental Management

Embassy Algiers' safety, health, and environmental management program is unsatisfactory. The hiring of a well-qualified LE staff member as assistant post occupational safety and health officer offers possibilities for improvement, subject to adequate attention and support by post leadership. An OIG inspector conducted a walkthrough of warehouse and vehicle maintenance areas and noted numerous unsafe conditions and practices, including combustible materials stored close to fuel pumps; an emergency eyewash station obstructed by a large antifreeze container; an automobile supported by two jack stands with inadequate backup safety; petroleum products and automobile batteries stored in the open; objects precariously stacked on very high shelving; and inadequate personal protective equipment, such as steel-toed shoes, that have remained on order since August 2011.

Recommendation 33: Embassy Algiers should implement a schedule of vehicle maintenance shop inspections to identify and address safety, health, and fire hazards. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

According to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Overseas Security Advisory Council, Algeria has the fourth-highest vehicular accident rate in the world. Algeria also is on the Department Motor Vehicle Safety Management program's list of elevated risk countries, which requires additional training for certain drivers. The Department uses the Smith System driver training program to provide safe driver training. In August 2011 Embassy Algiers sent an employee to be trained as an instructor. At the time of the inspection, the employee planned, but had not yet begun, to initiate training.

Recommendation 34: Embassy Algiers should provide Smith System driver safety training to all chauffeurs, including incidental drivers. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Embassy Algiers does not consistently hold safety, health, and environmental management committee meetings as required by 15 FAM 933.2 a. Although records indicate an improvement in the frequency of safety committee meetings in 2011, the embassy has held only two meetings in the past 3 years. OIG attributes this record in part to lengthy staffing gaps in the facilities management specialist position, a vacancy in the assistant post occupational safety and health officer position, and lack of front office oversight.

Recommendation 35: Embassy Algiers should hold safety, health, and environmental management committee meetings at least semiannually per Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Information Management and Information Security

The information management (IM) program meets the basic information processing and communication needs of the mission but falls short of requirements in process and program management. The office's focus on meeting the mission's day-to-day operational needs and providing excellent customer service is reflected in high marks on OIG and ICASS surveys. This emphasis on customer service, however, has left the staff with minimal time for developing and implementing standardized processes and training.

OIG reviewed the full range of IM programs—computer networks and pouch, telephone, radio, and mail operations—and found deficiencies in the telephone and mail operations, information security practices, and information technology (IT) contingency planning. In addition to making recommendations to correct these deficiencies, OIG also counseled embassy personnel on issues such as securing removable media, systems access control, systems documentation, and physical security of IM spaces.

Information Security

Embassy Algiers' information systems security posture could be improved by regular monitoring and information security training for the LE systems staff. The information systems security officers are not performing systems reviews and monitoring consistently, which has resulted in lapses in computer resources management. For example, OIG identified the use of a generic default account to administer the mission's BlackBerry server. Generic accounts create problems with identification and accountability and weaken information security. Also problematic is the absence of systems maintenance logs, which are critical for monitoring systems changes and ensuring security. The IM staff implemented a process for logging systems maintenance and immediately stopped the use of the generic account once OIG brought these issues to their attention.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Algiers should implement standard operating procedures for the regular performance of information systems security officer duties.

The LE system administration staff has not had the required information assurance training for system administrators. As a result, the staff has minimal understanding of the information security requirements for the Department's IT assets. Increased information systems security officer monitoring of information security practices and attention to staff training would strengthen the staff's familiarity with the Department's information security needs. According to 5 FAM 845, the Department is required to provide computer security training to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of its information. The Bureau of Diplomatic Security funds and provides role-based information assurance training to personnel responsible for administering and managing the Department's computer systems.

Recommendation 36: Embassy Algiers should provide information assurance training to the locally employed computer management staff. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Information Technology Contingency Planning

The embassy's IT contingency plans for the unclassified and classified computer networks are incomplete. The documents do not reflect the current information resources supporting the networks. Further, they do not outline activities designed to recover and sustain critical IT services following an emergency. The embassy is in the process of configuring a new alternate command center to use as a contingency communication and operation center. The conditions and viability of this center are discussed in the classified annex to this report.

According to 12 FAM 622.3-2 a. and b., IM staff must complete and test IT contingency plans. Although the IM staff does an exceptional job in meeting the mission's day-to-day operational needs, it has not adequately planned for contingency operations. Having current and complete IT contingency plans provides the embassy with the necessary operational capability for addressing emergency outages. In addition, the involvement of senior management is essential to conduct operational needs analyses and develop contingency operation policies. The IM staff cannot define the critical business operations without management's support. Once created, the plans have to be tested for consistency and viability. Testing the plans provides a training opportunity for emergency response personnel and familiarizes staff with the required emergency operations tasks. OIG also identified this deficiency in its 2008 inspection report.

Recommendation 37: Embassy Algiers should complete and test the information technology contingency plans for the classified and unclassified networks and implement a procedure for periodic updates as systems environments and resources change. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

The IM office needs to coordinate IT contingency plans with the mission's emergency action plan. The IT information in the emergency action plan is outdated and is not coordinated with the rest of the elements of the plan. Per 12 FAM 622.3-2 e., the embassy must ensure that its IT contingency plans are consistent with its emergency action plan.

Recommendation 38: Embassy Algiers should align the information technology contingency plans with the embassy's emergency action plan and update the information technology section of the emergency action plan. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Customer Service

Embassy Algiers does not consistently use available help desk software to manage IT service requests. Customers submit requests by phone, email, and in person, but rarely by eServices, the Department-provided Web application designed to track a wide range of support requests. The staff does not always enter phone, email, and in-person requests into eServices due to lack of time. By not tracking service calls, the mission cannot effectively analyze its workload and make informed decisions about resource allocation and LE staff member training.

Recommendation 39: Embassy Algiers should implement a standardized procedure to manage information technology service requests. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Telephone Operations

Work responsibilities for telephone operations are not adequately distributed to achieve separation of duties. Telephone operations encompass the embassy and residential telephone lines, cell phones, BlackBerries, and residential Internet services. One LE staff member performs all technical management aspects of these services with minimal U.S. direct-hire employee oversight. Although American employees were closely monitoring the work done on the embassy's telephone lines, IM staff members were not maintaining access and maintenance logs. The section corrected this deficiency during the inspection.

The mission is dependent on one LE staff member for land and mobile communication needs. This individual is the only one trained to configure and assign accounts to the mission's BlackBerry servers. This dependence creates security and business continuity vulnerabilities. The IM staff needs to be cross-trained on BlackBerry administration to allow for separation of duties and adequate support.

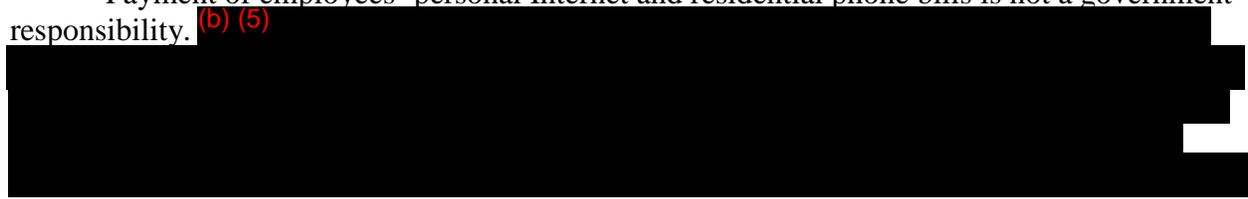
This same employee is also responsible for installing and configuring the residential wireless routers and for managing wireless routers passwords, including those located in the Ambassador's and deputy chief of mission's residences. Although users are advised to reset passwords after the initial setup, IM management was unable to confirm the status of the Ambassador's and deputy chief of mission's wireless router passwords. IM management immediately reset the passwords for both residences and secured the passwords during the inspection. Management is also preparing to send out a notice to educate customers on residential wireless password management.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Algiers should update the roles and responsibilities of the locally employed telephone staff to facilitate separation of duties.

An embassy telephone operator processes the bills for and payment of personal telephone and Internet services, including accepting cash from employees to pay bills. These duties are not included in her position description. Managing these bills is time consuming and distracts from the completion of her duties. Department regulation 3 FAH-2 H- 441.1 indicates that "a position description is an official statement of the duties, responsibilities, and qualification requirements of a position." If the telephone operator continues to process these bills, her position description should reflect this duty.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Algiers should update the position description of the telephone operator who processes personal telephone bills to reflect actual job responsibilities.

Payment of employees' personal Internet and residential phone bills is not a government responsibility. (b) (5)



Recommendation 40: (b) (5)

Mail Operations

Respondents to OIG questionnaires gave low scores to embassy mail services because of strict limits on receipt of personal mail through the diplomatic pouch. The embassy plans to replace the current pouch personal mail service with a diplomatic post office. However, the embassy has not completed the necessary steps, such as obtaining written host nation approval, requesting a U.S. ZIP code, and providing training for mail clerks.

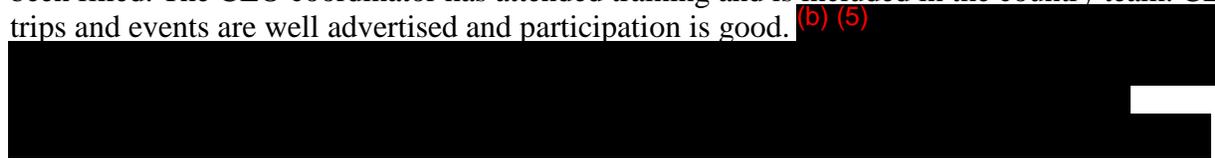
Although embassy management is waiting for formal host nation approval, there are other planning steps that it can take in the meantime. For example, the embassy does not have a written plan for the diplomatic post office implementation. Developing a plan would allow post to identify the required steps in advance and meet objectives on the targeted schedule.

Recommendation 41: Embassy Algiers should develop a plan for the diplomatic post office implementation that covers at a minimum the required implementation steps and training needs. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Quality of Life

Community Liaison Office

The community liaison office (CLO) staff consists of two part-time CLO coordinators and an LE staff assistant. One co-CLO position was vacant at the time of the inspection. The ICASS council approved an additional eligible family member assistant position, but it has not been filled. The CLO coordinator has attended training and is included in the country team. CLO trips and events are well advertised and participation is good. (b) (5)



Recommendation 42: Embassy Algiers should deposit all community liaison office funds with the American Embassy Employee Association. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Employee Association

The American Embassy Employee Association operates a small commissary that is open 2 hours per week and is staffed by association board members on a volunteer basis. The association has no paid employees. Although the volume of business does not justify a full-time employee, the association would benefit from hiring a part-time employee.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Algiers should hire a part-time association manager to assist with the management of the American Embassy Employee Association.

Medical Unit

At the time of the inspection, a temporary duty regional medical officer was covering a gap caused by the curtailment of the Foreign Service health practitioner. The replacement, also a first-tour employee, is scheduled to arrive in December. A local doctor and an eligible family member medical nurse complete the unit staff.

The medical unit and the regional medical technician from Cairo perform periodic food and sanitation inspections of the embassy food service operation. The most recent report in June 2011 uncovered significant critical deficiencies in the embassy's cafeteria, which is operated under a concession agreement between the embassy and the service provider. The general services office oversees implementation of the agreement, including requirements that the concessionaire properly adhere to health and food safety standards. Inspector observations determined that the embassy has yet to implement many of the recommendations from the June inspection report.

Recommendation 43: Embassy Algiers should comply with the requirements of the 2008 licensing agreement with the cafeteria contractor that relate to the maintenance of professional health and food safety standards. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Management Controls

Management controls at Embassy Algiers are weak. The most recent chief of mission management controls statement of assurance, signed on July 12, 2011, did not identify weaknesses in internal controls. However, as noted in this report, the inspection team found significant internal controls vulnerabilities in management operations.

Management Section

Separation of duties in the supply chain management process is insufficient. Despite the designation of the financial management office as the billing office on purchase orders, invoices are routed to the procurement unit, which also dispenses payment checks to vendors. The procurement section therefore routinely orders goods, receives invoices, and makes payments, thereby creating a vulnerability to fraud.

Recommendation 44: Embassy Algiers should designate the financial management office as the billing office for all invoices. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 45: Embassy Algiers should prohibit its procurement unit from distributing vendor payment checks and implement a payment system that provides adequate separation of duties in the supply chain management process. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

The Integrated Logistics Management System allows participants in the supply chain process to perform their individual job tasks, such as procurement, receiving, and property management. Embassy Algiers is not taking full advantage of the system's capabilities for sharing information and improving internal controls, most notably between procurement and receiving. Changes in systems permissions to allow key LE staff access to additional modules would improve controls and operational efficiency.

Recommendation 46: Embassy Algiers should provide general services and financial management personnel access to Integrated Logistics Management System modules that are related to the performance of their duties. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

OIG's review of the embassy's bulk fuel program found internal controls shortcomings. There is no clearly defined process for replenishing the four in-ground fuel tanks. Deliveries normally are made during nonduty hours due to local traffic regulations. The duty driver is responsible for overseeing the procedure, including verifying the tank levels at the monitoring station, monitoring fuel dispensing, matching the delivery slip quantity with the monitoring station readout after pumping, and processing the delivery slip for payment. The drivers' understanding of the process and necessary internal controls responsibilities is spotty. (b) (5)

Moreover, there is no before-and-after check of pump readings, either monthly to reconcile with log sheets or daily to reconcile non-duty-hour dispensing. The lack of oversight of fuel procedures poses a vulnerability to fraud and theft.

Recommendation 47: Embassy Algiers should implement procedures for fuel replenishment and dispensing that include adequate internal controls to prevent fraud and theft. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Motor Vehicle Policy

Embassy Algiers' vehicle policy memorandum (Mission Policy 2009-1007, dated October 14, 2009) is outdated and does not comply with 14 FAM 430. For example, it is not reviewed at least annually and does not refer to or incorporate Department of Motor Vehicle Safety Management program standards per 14 FAM 432.5. It also does not require employee payment for other authorized use of official vehicles and allows use of official government vehicles for personal use that is inconsistent with the standards in 14 FAM 433.4 a. (2). The motor pool supervisor did not have hard statistics but estimated that 70 percent of transportation by government-owned vehicles during nonduty hours is for personal use. Employees are authorized shipment of privately owned vehicles to post and normally should not use official government vehicles for personal use except under the limited conditions allowed by regulations.

Recommendation 48: Embassy Algiers should publish a vehicle use policy that incorporates the Department of State's Motor Vehicle Safety Management Program, method for collecting appropriate charges for other authorized use of official vehicles, and chief of mission approval of other authorized use of official vehicles. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Embassy Algiers should abolish the Ambassador's Council and implement a plan to establish a local employee association. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 2: Embassy Algiers should implement a mentoring and professional development program for entry-level officers and specialists. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 3: Embassy Algiers should define portfolio responsibilities in the political/economic section for each American and locally employed staff member and include these responsibilities in their work requirements statements. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 4: Embassy Algiers should document the need for a commercial specialist position in the economic section in its next strategic planning request. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Algiers should implement a plan to assign specific responsibilities to officers who nominate Algerians for the International Visitor Leadership Program. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 6: The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Algiers, should schedule a regional educational advising coordinator visit to Algeria. (Action: ECA, in coordination with Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 7: Embassy Algiers should implement procedures for the accurate and complete documentation of required information in public grants files. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, should obtain and use contact management software that meets the needs of the public affairs section. (Action: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with NEA)

Recommendation 9: (b) (5)

Recommendation 10: Embassy Algiers should update nonimmigrant visa procedures so that consular staff collects the machine readable visa fee before processing a visa case. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 11: Embassy Algiers should cease the practice of providing a detailed list of consular services to the local bank. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 12: Embassy Algiers should distribute locally employed staff paychecks on the same day they are received. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 13: Embassy Algiers should implement a policy to make payments by electronic funds transfer whenever possible. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 14: Embassy Algiers should schedule a team-building exercise for its human resources staff. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 15: Embassy Algiers should translate the human resources handbook for locally employed staff; the local compensation, leave, and benefits plan; and other hiring guidance into French and make them available to all local employees. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 16: Embassy Algiers should implement a plan to brief all locally employed staff on the hiring policy as described in the human resources handbook. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 17: Embassy Algiers should complete and issue the family member appointment handbook. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 18: Embassy Algiers should conduct a group meeting with all eligible family members to discuss the hiring and employment process as it pertains to them. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 19: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should request that the Frankfurt Regional Support Center begin conducting reviews of locally employed staff position classifications and descriptions. (Action: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with EUR)

Recommendation 20: Embassy Algiers should implement a consolidated training plan for its locally employed staff. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 21: The Office of Civil Rights should clarify its instructions concerning Equal Employment Opportunity training procedures for locally employed staff. (Action: S/OCR)

Recommendation 22: Embassy Algiers should assign direct responsibilities for components of the general services portfolio to the supervisory general services officer and the assistant general services officer and incorporate these responsibilities into their work requirements statements. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 23: Embassy Algiers should update its contracts and contract files so that they are well organized and contain all documentation and clauses required by the Federal Acquisition Regulation and Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 24: Embassy Algiers should alter the configuration of the warehouse to limit access to the receiving and stock areas to authorized personnel only. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 25: Embassy Algiers should replace wooden decking on warehouse racks with metal waterfall decking to enhance fire suppression system capabilities. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 26: Embassy Algiers should allow 3 feet of clearance between stored items and the nearest sprinkler head to allow proper water coverage in case of fire. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 27: Embassy Algiers should dispose of excess personal property. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 28: Embassy Algiers should implement standard operating procedures for the interagency housing board to execute the housing assignments process in accordance with Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 29: Embassy Algiers should implement internal controls that require all motor vehicle operators to complete the Daily Vehicle Use Record (Form OF-108). (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 30: The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, in coordination with Embassy Algiers, should bring the embassy's building automation system up to fully functional and maintainable status. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 31: The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, in coordination with Embassy Algiers, should update the new embassy compound as-built drawings so that they are accurate and complete. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 32: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with the Bureau of Human Resources, should request an exception rate range as a means to recruit and retain facilities maintenance engineering staff. (Action: Embassy Algiers, in coordination with DGHR)

Recommendation 33: Embassy Algiers should implement a schedule of vehicle maintenance shop inspections to identify and address safety, health, and fire hazards. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 34: Embassy Algiers should provide Smith System driver safety training to all chauffeurs, including incidental drivers. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 35: Embassy Algiers should hold safety, health, and environmental management committee meetings at least semiannually per Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 36: Embassy Algiers should provide information assurance training to the locally employed computer management staff. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 37: Embassy Algiers should complete and test the information technology contingency plans for the classified and unclassified networks and implement a procedure for periodic updates as systems environments and resources change. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 38: Embassy Algiers should align the information technology contingency plans with the embassy's emergency action plan and update the information technology section of the emergency action plan. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 39: Embassy Algiers should implement a standardized procedure to manage information technology service requests. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 40: (b) (5)

Recommendation 41: Embassy Algiers should develop a plan for the diplomatic post office implementation that covers at a minimum the required implementation steps and training needs. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 42: Embassy Algiers should deposit all community liaison office funds with the American Embassy Employee Association. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 43: Embassy Algiers should comply with the requirements of the 2008 licensing agreement with the cafeteria contractor that relate to the maintenance of professional health and food safety standards. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 44: Embassy Algiers should designate the financial management office as the billing office for all invoices. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 45: Embassy Algiers should prohibit its procurement unit from distributing vendor payment checks and implement a payment system that provides adequate separation of duties in the supply chain management process. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 46: Embassy Algiers should provide general services and financial management personnel access to Integrated Logistics Management System modules that are related to the performance of their duties. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 47: Embassy Algiers should implement procedures for fuel replenishment and dispensing that include adequate internal controls to prevent fraud and theft. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

Recommendation 48: Embassy Algiers should publish a vehicle use policy that incorporates the Department of State's Motor Vehicle Safety Management Program, method for collecting appropriate charges for other authorized use of official vehicles, and chief of mission approval of other authorized use of official vehicles. (Action: Embassy Algiers)

List of 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 Algiers should eliminate political/economic section subscriptions that can be replaced with online resources.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Algiers should streamline production procedures and the scope of coverage of its daily media digest product.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Algiers should alternate appointment days for nonimmigrant and immigrant visas.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Algiers should include all relevant agencies on its International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council and budget committee.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Algiers should complete the required annual International Cooperative Administrative Support Services service provider performance assessment.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Algiers should broaden its locally employed staff orientation program to include discussion of overall mission operations.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Algiers should establish a schedule of regular meetings between its Equal Employment Opportunity counselor and locally employed liaisons.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Algiers should automate its motor pool operations recordkeeping and reporting by deploying the Department of State's fleet management system when it becomes available.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Algiers should implement standard operating procedures for the regular performance of information systems security officer duties.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Algiers should update the roles and responsibilities of the locally employed telephone staff to facilitate separation of duties.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Algiers should update the position description of the telephone operator who processes personal telephone bills to reflect actual job responsibilities.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Algiers should hire a part-time association manager to assist with the management of the American Embassy Employee Association.

Principal Officials

| | Name | Arrival Date |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Ambassador | Henry S. Ensher | 7/11 |
| Deputy Chief of Mission | Elizabeth M. Aubin | 9/11 |
| Chiefs of Sections: | | |
| Consular | Vacant | |
| Management | AnnaMary Portz | 10/10 |
| Political/Economic | Vacant | |
| Public Affairs | Tashawna S. Bethea | 7/11 |
| Regional Security | Vacant | |
| Other Agencies: | | |
| Foreign Agricultural Service | Kurt F. Seifarth | 10/10 |
| Department of Defense | Col. Keith L. Phillips | 1/11 |
| Department of Justice - ICITAP | Gary A. Bennett | 11/10 |
| Federal Bureau of Investigation | Vacant | |
| Treasury | Robert Demler | |

Abbreviations

| | |
|------------|---|
| CLO | Community liaison office |
| Department | Department of State |
| EEO | Equal Employment Opportunity |
| ELO | Entry-level officer |
| FAH | <i>Foreign Affairs Handbook</i> |
| FAM | <i>Foreign Affairs Manual</i> |
| ICASS | International Cooperative Administrative Support Services |
| IM | Information management |
| IT | Information technology |
| LE | Locally employed (staff) |
| MEPI | Middle East Partnership Initiative |
| OBO | Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations |
| OIG | Office of Inspector General |
| PAS | Public affairs section |
| PD | Public diplomacy |

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