



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
AND THE BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
*OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL*

---

ISP-I-13-42A

Office of Inspections

September 2013

---

## Inspection of Embassy Minsk, Belarus

---

~~**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** This report is intended solely for the official use of the Department of State or the Broadcasting Board of Governors, or any agency or organization receiving a copy directly from the Office of Inspector General. No secondary distribution may be made, in whole or in part, outside the Department of State or the Broadcasting Board of Governors, by them or by other agencies or organizations, without prior authorization by the Inspector General. Public availability of the document will be determined by the Inspector General under the U.S. Code, 5 U.S.C. 552. Improper disclosure of this report may result in criminal, civil, or administrative penalties.~~

---

## **PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION**

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) 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 BBG, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and 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.

The process for this inspection was unique because of constraints on time and the limited number of official Americans that the Government of Belarus permits in the country. (See Context Section of the report.) The OIG team conducted some interviews of both American and locally employed (LE) staff in Vilnius, Lithuania, a 3.5-hour drive from Minsk. Several members of the team, but not all, travelled in small groups sequentially to Minsk to conduct the on-site inspection. While in Minsk, most of the work involved interviewing American and LE, staff, with relatively less time spent performing a document 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

## Table of Contents

Key Judgments	1
Context	2
Executive Direction	3
American Staffing	4
Policy and Program Implementation	5
Reporting and Analysis	5
Foreign Assistance	6
Public Affairs Section	6
Broadcasting Board of Governors	8
Consular Operations	8
Nonimmigrant Visas	10
Resource Management	12
Management Operations	12
Rightsizing	13
Financial Management	13
International Cooperative Administrative Support Services	13
Human Resources	13
General Services	14
Motor Pool	15
Real Property	15
Facilities Management	17
Equal Employment Opportunity	17
Information Management	18
Quality of Life	20
Schools	20
Community Liaison Office	20
Medical	20
Employee Association	20
Management Controls	21
Travel	21
Cashiering	21
List of Recommendations	22
List of Informal Recommendations	24
Principal Officials	25
Abbreviations	26

## Key Judgments

- Embassy Minsk has been unable to comply with numerous security, consular, information technology, reporting, and management requirements primarily because of a five-person staffing ceiling imposed by the Government of Belarus.
- The chancery is in a seriously degraded condition, necessitating that embassy employees work from an annex. A \$34 million Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations rehabilitation project, scheduled for 2010, was suspended because of staffing restrictions. Without maintenance, the chancery will continue to deteriorate.

[Redacted] (b) (5)

- Senior embassy officials have made inappropriate visa referrals. Host government limitations on American staff numbers in Minsk have forced most Belarusians to apply for visas outside Belarus. With referrals affording the only access to a Minsk interview for many visa applicants, the referral program is unusually vulnerable to misuse.
- The ratio of local staff to American staff is too high, with 119 locally employed staff members supporting 5 U.S. direct hires.
- In 2012 the Belarusian Government gave notice that it would not honor the lease on the building in which the public affairs section is located beyond March 2014. [Redacted] (b) (5) The embassy should terminate the lease and relocate the section.

All findings and recommendations in this report are based on conditions observed during the on-site review and the standards and policies then in effect. The report does not comment at length on areas where the OIG team did not identify problems that need to be corrected.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between March 25 and April 12, 2013, and remotely from Embassy Vilnius, Lithuania, and in Belarus, Minsk, between May 24, 2013, and June 7, 2013. Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft (team leader), Lavon Sajona (deputy team leader), Richard Behrend, David Davison, Patricia Murphy, Shawn O'Reilly, Donna Roginski, Paul Smith, Alexandra Vega, and Timothy Wildy conducted the inspection.

## Context

After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Belarus became an independent state. Three years of parliamentary democracy ended with the 1994 presidential election of Alexander Lukashenko, who remains in office. He has consolidated power through a series of rigged elections and has ruled the country by suppressing freedom of speech, obstructing peaceful assembly, and preventing the establishment of an independent judiciary and parliament.

Relations between the United States and Belarus deteriorated as the latter became increasingly authoritarian. In 2008 the U.S. ambassador was recalled following the threat of expulsion. Later that year, the Belarusian Government expelled additional U.S. diplomats, reducing embassy staff from 35 to 5. That ceiling remains in effect.

The U.S.-Belarus Democracy and Human Rights Act of 2011 provides the legal foundation for U.S. policy in support of civil society, human rights, and the democratic aspirations of the people of Belarus. The United States has also imposed sanctions on Belarus under several additional laws and executive orders. These sanctions include travel and financial sanctions and asset freezes against officials who have undermined democratic processes and against state-owned and other companies that have supported proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or money laundering. The European Union also maintains a broad range of sanctions against individuals and firms.

A chargé d'affaires leads a staff of 4 American and 119 locally employed (LE) staff members at Embassy Minsk. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) office and the regional security office (RSO) in Embassy Kyiv provide support for their respective functions. Embassy Minsk staff members, both American and local, are subject to regular harassment by the Belarusian security services. American staff residences have been entered surreptitiously. [Redacted] (b) (5) The embassy and all U.S. and Belarusian staff are under constant physical surveillance.

In July 2012 authorities installed police checkpoints at all embassy gates and at the public affairs office. Police take personal information from both U.S. and Belarusian citizens before allowing visitors to enter. Except in rare cases, when U.S. Government officials make temporary visits to Minsk, host-country authorities require that an equivalent number of permanent American staff members leave the country to maintain the five-person limit. This restriction and persistent harassment hamper mission operations and program implementation.

In 2008 embassy staff vacated the unsafe and deteriorating chancery building to work from annexes. The public affairs section (PAS) operates from a separate building in downtown Minsk. Government authorities have told the embassy that PAS must vacate that location by March 2014.

## Executive Direction

To visit Embassy Minsk is to step back in time to an era when American diplomats in Eastern Europe operated in inhospitable environments. Three of the five American officers do at least double duty as a result of the five-person cap that the Government of Belarus imposed in 2008. At that time, the Department of State (Department) assumed that the cap was temporary and that post would resume work at full capacity once bilateral relations returned to normal. However, the restriction remains in place with little indication of its being lifted any time soon.

The chargé d'affaires is the only officer with no formal additional functional duties; however, he acts as backup political/economic officer, press officer, and backup public diplomacy officer. The political/economic officer is also the de facto deputy chief of mission (DCM), press officer, and backup consular officer. The management officer also functions as the post security officer, human resources officer, financial management officer, general services officer, facilities maintenance officer, backup information management officer (IMO), medical liaison, occupational health and safety officer, and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) contact. The public affairs officer spends a quarter of her time as the embassy's sole consular officer. The IMO serves as backup financial management officer.

The embassy does not have classified communications. Staff members operate on the assumption that everything sent on unclassified systems or spoken on the telephone is monitored by Belarusian security services and other local security agencies.

In this challenging environment, the chargé d'affaires seeks to improve the atmospherics of the U.S.-Belarus relationship by focusing on pragmatic steps forward. He has worked to build trust and understanding where possible, in spite of serious bilateral differences.

The chargé has worked out practical arrangements whereby Belarusian authorities provide information on trafficking in persons (TIP), [Redacted] (b) (5). After the host government refused to allow small grants recipients and libraries to accept donations from the embassy, the chargé persuaded Belarusian authorities to lift the prohibition.

The chargé has also reinforced embassy security measures. When he arrived at post in 2012, access control was haphazard. Badges were not issued to visitors, and the local guard force used familiarity as a criterion for granting personnel access to the compound. The chargé and management officer/post security officer moved quickly to implement the required access control policy and procedures. The chargé has also worked with the Kyiv-based RSO to enhance mission security.

## American Staffing

The small American staff has shown creativity and dexterity in its efforts to function in a challenging environment. From 2008 to 2010, Embassy Minsk had no public diplomacy or political/economic officers. The Department and embassy then decided to swap the regional security officer and consular entry-level officer positions for public diplomacy and political/economic positions. As a consequence, reporting and public diplomacy programs have increased, but only at the expense of [Redacted] (b) (5) American citizens services. For the Embassy to meet [Redacted] (b) (5) standards, it is imperative that there be a knowledgeable Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) presence in Minsk for an extended period. However, unless there were exceptions to the staffing limit, the Belarusian Government would count an OBO presence against the five-person ceiling, requiring the removal of one of the current five American staff members.

If the Belarusian Government relaxes the ceiling even slightly, questions will arise about the appropriate mix of functional positions for six, seven, or eight American employees. Because Embassy Minsk cannot comply with functional requirements at current or incremental staffing levels, the result would be a choice among unsatisfactory alternatives. The embassy favors adding a consular officer as a sixth position, partly to relieve the public diplomacy officer of her consular responsibilities and partly with the expectation that additional visa services could induce positive reciprocity from the host government. The question of whether additional visa services are the leading priority demands scrutiny as part of a broader policy review to address the question of what number and functional mix of American employees at Embassy Minsk best advances U.S. goals.

The Department's 1 *Foreign Affairs Manual* (FAM) 014.1 a. sets the following as a general organizational objective: achieving a proper balance among mission needs, efficiency of operations, and effective employee utilization. This inspection report can inform a policy review of American staff composition that determines the proper balance.

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Minsk, should undertake a review that focuses on the connection between U.S. policy objectives in Belarus and American staffing assignments and priorities at Embassy Minsk. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Minsk)

## Policy and Program Implementation

### Reporting and Analysis

The embassy's reporting and analysis inform the Department's understanding of political and economic conditions in Belarus. The chargé d'affaires and a small political/economic section (a single American officer and three LE staff members) produce a high volume of quality reporting. They contend with severe restrictions placed on the embassy's access to host-government officials by drawing on open sources and engaging an extensive range of contacts in the diplomatic community, international organizations, and Belarusian society. They also communicate frequently with accessible officials and have sought, with some success, to expand access and raise the level of dialogue. Coverage includes economic developments, foreign relations, and human rights. Most reporting consists of news accompanied by embassy commentary. Officers travel occasionally from Minsk to Vilnius to produce classified analyses of political, economic, and social issues. Washington consumers hold these products in high regard, as they frequently contain details and insights not available elsewhere.

### Reporting Requirements

Embassy Minsk is overburdened with reporting requirements. Some are nondiscretionary and relevant directly to U.S. interests in Belarus. However, many of the instructions the embassy receives address global and regional issues for which there is little common interest or basis for discussion with the Government of Belarus. The embassy sensibly ignores some of these instructions, and the Department's country desk tries to filter certain taskings, but the process is time consuming and wasteful. In one instance, the embassy received a rebuke for an overdue response to a demarche instruction on an ocean fish species—not an issue that preoccupies Belarusian authorities (the country has no coastline) or constitutes a basis for bilateral cooperation. Placing Minsk on MINIMIZE<sup>1</sup> would relieve the embassy of indiscriminate taskings to multiple posts. Under MINIMIZE, tasking Minsk would require an affirmative decision of a senior official in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should request that the Department of State place Embassy Minsk on MINIMIZE. (Action: EUR)

### Non-Record Messages

Federal Records Act regulations<sup>2</sup> and 5 FAM 443.2 define categories of communications that must be preserved. Embassy Minsk occasionally uses non-record email to communicate information that includes these categories, such as reports of meetings with senior officials. The embassy also employs non-record email to limit distribution to American staff. However, it is possible to achieve the same result by selecting the appropriate TAGS<sup>3</sup> on record emails and

---

<sup>1</sup> Department status that reduces routine communications to a post and requires senior-level authorization for outgoing communications to that post.

<sup>2</sup> 36 CFR 1222.22.

<sup>3</sup> Labels that indicate the subject matter of cables.

adjusting State Messaging and Archive Retrieval Toolset<sup>4</sup> profiles for LE staff members to block access to such messages in the application's archive.

***Informal Recommendation 1:*** Embassy Minsk should comply with Department of State requirements for preservation of email records, using TAGS and adjusting employee profiles for State Messaging and Archive Retrieval Toolset access as necessary to control internal distribution.

## **Foreign Assistance**

Government of Belarus restrictions make the provision of assistance to nongovernmental organizations and other elements of civil society extremely challenging. These issues are discussed in the classified annex to this report.

## **Public Affairs Section**

PAS works in an especially hostile environment. The Belarusian Government controls the media, which project negative images of the United States, and impedes public diplomacy programs at every turn. Nonetheless, PAS provides accurate information about the United States, develops programs, and provides assistance to civil society. The Belarusian Government has given PAS a March 2014 deadline for vacating its current offices, located in central Minsk, 15 minutes from the embassy.

Prior to the 2008 drawdown, 2 American officers and 18 LE staff members worked in the section. Today, there is one public affairs officer who divides her time between PAS and the consular operation. She cannot give her full attention to either section, a situation that creates a number of problems, including staff supervision. The political/economic section head provides some assistance by overseeing the section's media reporting and two LE staff members who work in the media unit.

## **Educational and Cultural Unit**

The embassy has a small Fulbright program. The FY 2012 budget for students and scholars was \$121,500, all from U.S. sources. Several small, separately funded programs allow for additional exchanges, including the Muskie graduate fellowship program, the English teaching assistant program, and the Eurasian undergraduate exchange program.

PAS advertises exchange programs on its Facebook page and the embassy Web site, but the Belarusian Government blocks other avenues of publicity. The government also places roadblocks in the path of Belarusians selected to participate in the International Visitor Leadership Program by denying passports to some, disapproving leave requests for others, or even stopping would-be participants at the airport. Nonetheless, PAS works closely with officers in the mission to find viable candidates for the program. Last year 24 people traveled as international visitors. [Redacted] (b) (5)

---

<sup>4</sup> A Department system that allows users to send emails and cables from Microsoft Outlook.

### ***Information Platforms***

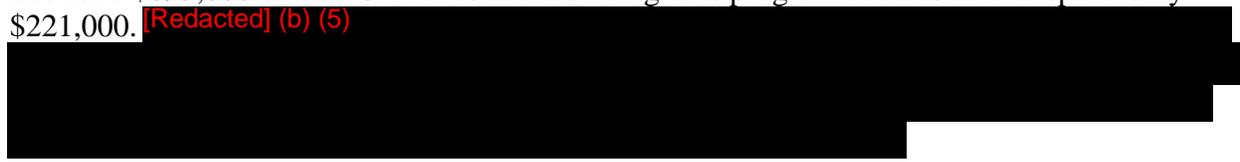
PAS maintains an Information Resource Center that is open to the public by appointment. All PAS staff works out of the center, which had more than 1,000 visitors in FY 2012, plus an additional 5,000 visitors attending special programs. Staff members focus on promoting freedom of access to information and teaching host-country audiences and library professionals how to find accurate information on the United States, in spite of the Belarusian Government's efforts to limit Internet freedom.

PAS extends the reach of its information and public diplomacy efforts via eight InfoUSA sites located in municipal libraries in Belarus. These sites provide free public access to embassy-donated resources (books, DVDs, online databases, equipment, periodicals, etc.). They also host programs by visiting U.S. experts and cultural groups, and sponsor exhibits and book, movie, and English-conversation clubs. The Belarusian Government occasionally refuses to permit libraries to accept book donations, prohibits InfoUSA coordinators from attending training meetings at the Information Resource Center, and requires that every book intended for donation be weighed individually. Because of the InfoUSA sites' success in extending the mission's outreach efforts in the face of such restrictions, Washington has relaxed some of the normal requirements for such operations, including the requirement for yearly renewal of memoranda of understanding between PAS and the InfoUSA sites. The OIG team concurs with this decision.

### ***Grants and Grants Management***

Given its small size, PAS Minsk has a large grants program. In FY 2012 PAS spent nearly \$780,000 on grants, of which \$701,000 came from the Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (AEECA) budget. PAS used nearly \$63,000 in AEECA funds to supplement its otherwise modest budget (\$17,250) to bring in American speakers in policy-relevant fields.

Most AEECA funds are devoted to the mission's small grants program, which supports civil society projects developed by local nongovernmental organizations. In FY 2012 PAS allocated \$695,000 of AEECA funds to the small grants program but was able to spend only \$221,000. [Redacted] (b) (5)



Files for the small grants program that the OIG team examined were in good order and contained all relevant documentation. Files for alumni grants and regular public diplomacy grants were less complete. Some lacked the required grants officer representative designation letter, others lacked a summary note to the file or other documentation indicating that a program had taken place.

***Informal Recommendation 2:*** Embassy Minsk should add missing information to alumni and regular public diplomacy grants files in accordance with required rules and procedures.

## Broadcasting Board of Governors

Despite transmission reductions brought on by recent sequestration budget cuts, the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Belarusian Service continues to engage a significant audience within a closed, authoritarian society. To meet sequestration funding levels, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) carried out a research-driven review of transmission effectiveness, which led to the elimination of 4 hours of repeat shortwave and mediumwave radio in Belarusian. All original programming hours were preserved on both shortwave and mediumwave for the legacy audiences. Internet and satellite television are far more popular platforms in Belarus, and the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Belarusian Service provides programming in both. This review and transmission reduction was consistent with BBG's goal 5 (*Rationalize Program Delivery*) of its 5-year Strategic Plan, *Impact through Innovation and Integration*, which calls for "pragmatic, research-based decisions on which shortwave and mediumwave radio transmissions and facilities to continue, and which to draw down."

There were also salary, travel, and in-house Internet service reductions. These cuts will affect reporting on human rights abuses in a country that restricts the free flow of information. By providing reduced reporting, the BBG is not implementing fully goal 4 (*Prioritize Support for Democracy and Countering Pockets of Extremism*) in Belarus. The plan directs BBG to focus on closed, authoritarian societies such as Belarus, while sustaining and selectively expanding coverage as resources allow. The inspection team found that the decision to make the cuts was made for budgetary reasons in response to the challenges of sequestration but were executed with attention to larger strategic aims.

The Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Belarusian Service has moved decisively toward using Internet and social media sites to maximize distribution of news coverage.

[Redacted] (b) (5)

This initiative supports the BBG's 5-year Strategic Plan, goal 6 (*Combat Internet Censorship and Jamming*) and goal 7 (*Elevate and Expand Social Media Innovation*).

The Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Belarusian Service has developed a series of weekly programs entitled "Liberty in Prisons" designed for prisoners in Belarus, including political prisoners. The Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Belarusian Service also publishes books on themes related to Western values for distribution in Belarus and organizes formal presentations after the release of a new book. Embassy Minsk personnel frequently attend these events and occasionally host them.

Journalists reporting for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Belarus are under constant threat of intimidation, detention, and arrest. Belarus is the only country in Europe that has never allowed local rebroadcasts of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty programs.

## Consular Operations

The public affairs officer serves simultaneously as the consular section chief, devoting approximately 25 percent of her time to providing American citizens services, adjudicating

nonimmigrant visa cases, and managing the consular section. This workload, in addition to the active public affairs portfolio, is too much for one officer to handle effectively. PAS is not located on the embassy compound, so the three LE consular staff members are left unsupervised and unable to receive the public for the majority of every workday.

Consular interviews, for American citizens as well as nonimmigrant visa applicants, used to be scheduled on 2 days per week. In recent months competing demands on the officer's time have limited interviews to 1 day per week. The amount of officer time available for consular work is insufficient to handle even American citizens services, which take the highest priority. The regional consular officer, based in Frankfurt, provides invaluable advice and assistance to the consular section in Minsk.

***Shipment of Controlled Consular Items***

The section keeps the supply of controlled consular items [Redacted] (b) (5) to a minimum, [Redacted] (b) (5) Embassy Vilnius resupplies Embassy Minsk with controlled consular items via properly documented transfers. [Redacted] (b) (5)

**Recommendation 3:** [Redacted] (b) (5)

Embassy Minsk does not have classified pouch shipments. The Integrated Logistics Management System's Diplomatic Pouch and Mail system will not allow an information manager to register a classified pouch to be sent to a completely unclassified embassy. The information manager at Embassy Vilnius could use a manual procedure to bypass the system's restrictions.

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Vilnius, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should develop an appropriate manual method for documenting the shipment via nonprofessional courier of consular-controlled supplies to Embassy Minsk. (Action: Embassy Vilnius, in coordination with DS)

### *American Citizens Services*

The number of American citizens services cases in Belarus is small, but the work is often complex and difficult. In FY 2012 the consular section handled 67 passport cases; 15 consular reports of birth abroad; 1 loss of nationality case; and 26 welfare and whereabouts cases, including 3 international parental child abduction cases; 1 arrest; 3 cases of assistance to victims of crime; and 93 notarial.

American citizens services always take priority over other consular work, and the Department expects officers to perform this function to the highest standard. Recently, American citizens in Belarus have complained to the Bureau of Consular Affairs about the difficulty of obtaining support from the consular section in Minsk. The consul does, however, make emergency services for American citizens her highest priority. She has done excellent work in emergency cases, including foiling the kidnapping of an American citizen by repeatedly calling his cell phone until the kidnappers, alarmed by the U.S. Government label appearing on his phone's screen, released him unharmed. However, given the consular officer's part-time schedule and limited time for interviews, it is important that the section establish a system that gives American citizens services the highest priority.

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Minsk, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should establish an appointment protocol that gives American citizens services cases priority over visa applicants. (Action: Embassy Minsk, in coordination with CA)

### **Nonimmigrant Visas**

In FY 2012 Minsk adjudicated 876 nonimmigrant visas. The section limits the categories of these visas it will accept to diplomatic and official visas (other visa requests submitted by diplomatic note and third country diplomatic note); visas for Belarusians over the age of 70; visa referrals; visas for embassy staff; and visas for individuals traveling for U.S. Government-sponsored programs. In 2011 the Bureau of Consular Affairs gave the section permission to adjudicate student visa renewals; however, the section has never exercised this authority because the consular chief has no time to take on this additional work.

The consular officer adjudicated 166 diplomatic and official visas for members of the Belarusian Government in FY 2012. These cases accounted for 19 percent of the total visa adjudications in Belarus, all of which were nonimmigrant visas. The consular section also issued nonimmigrant visas (requested via diplomatic note) for friends and family members who were visiting Belarusian officials assigned to the United States. In addition, embassy officers submitted visa referrals for contacts of government officials. As a consequence, virtually the only Belarusians not inconvenienced by the government's limits on embassy American staff are Belarusian officials and their associates.

The nonimmigrant visa referral program in Minsk is unusually vulnerable to misuse. Most of the more than 12,000 Belarusians who apply for U.S. visas are required to travel to a nearby post; Moscow, Kyiv, Vilnius, and Warsaw handle most of these applications. Because of limited American staffing in the consular section, the Bureau of Consular Affairs rightly limits the categories of visas that Embassy Minsk can adjudicate. Without a visa referral, a Belarusian

citizen under the age of 70 effectively cannot get a visa interview in Minsk. This situation creates pressure on embassy officers to provide referrals in order to obtain a visa interview locally.

The OIG team examined and analyzed all referrals, which make up 10 percent of the visa workload, submitted in the past year. The analysis revealed a number of referrals that do not meet the standards of the worldwide visa referral program (9 FAM Appendix K), including a referral for a businessman, refused a few months previously in Moscow, who did not meet the criteria for an interview in Minsk. Many referrals do not indicate how the referral directly supports U.S. national interests and do not specify the nature and degree of contact the person making the referral has had with the applicant, as is required by 9 FAM Appendix K. Recently, a number of B visa<sup>5</sup> referrals have been made for private Belarusian citizens at the request of the Foreign Ministry, in which the only stated U.S. Government interest was “to build good relations with the Foreign Ministry.” The worldwide visa referral program specifically states that “Officers should not refer individuals solely on the basis of a recommendation from a third party, even a key contact. . . .” The embassy’s referral program would benefit from more careful scrutiny from the chargé d’affaires.

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Minsk should implement procedures to verify that officers complete visa referrals in accordance with Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Minsk)

**Informal Recommendation 3:** Embassy Minsk should provide a hard copy of the worldwide visa referral program to all referring officers during their briefing.

### *Visas Viper*

The embassy holds Visas Viper meetings monthly, and the consular section submits reports on time each month. [Redacted] (b) (5) Given the absence of other agency or law enforcement personnel at the embassy, the significant constraints on officer time, and the absence of classified communications at post, this requirement is unlikely to produce any useful information.

### *Fraud Prevention Unit*

The fraud prevention unit provides valuable assistance not only to the consular section in Minsk but also to the consular sections of neighboring posts, which adjudicate most Belarusian nonimmigrant visas. The unit’s success is particularly commendable given that its activities are hampered by a law that makes it a criminal offense for anyone other than a government to carry out investigations in Belarus. If the unit had a travel budget permitting regular visits to neighboring posts that process Belarusian visas, the LE fraud investigator’s effectiveness would be further increased.

---

<sup>5</sup> Temporary visitor visas.

## Resource Management

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2012
<b>Department of State</b>					
Diplomatic and Consular Programs	3	0	7	10	\$527,181
International Cooperative Administrative Support Services	1	0	71	72	\$2,514,200
Public Diplomacy	1	0	15	16	\$497,100
Diplomatic Security	0	0	20	20	\$274,380
Representation	0	0	0	0	\$17,900
OBO	0	N/A	N/A	0	\$341,003
Other – Consular Affairs Machine Readable Visas	0	0	1	1	\$25,450
Other – Consular Affairs Diplomatic and Consular Programs	0	0	2	2	\$23,001
<b>USAID</b>	0	0	7	7	—
<b>AAECA</b> (USAID/Department of State)	0	0	3	3	\$819,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>\$5,039,215</b>

Source: Embassy Minsk

### Management Operations

Embassy Minsk provides excellent customer service in a difficult and at times hostile operating environment. The Belarus-imposed restrictions on U.S. direct-hire staffing make it difficult for regional support personnel to obtain visas. The embassy must obtain host-country approval to lease residences and office space, auction and dispose of inventory vehicles, and travel beyond a 25-mile radius from Minsk. U.S. sanctions prevent the embassy from using some local companies, including many gasoline stations. The embassy's Internet provider is on the European Union's sanction list, and there is no alternate provider. Belarus is still a cash economy in most areas, which adds other complications.

Despite these obstacles, in 2013 the staff received International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) scores above 4 (on a 1–5 scale) in all areas; 26 of 31 categories received scores above 4.5. OIG survey scores were also high.

The management officer is a good and effective leader. She also serves as the human resources officer, financial management officer, general services officer, facilities management officer, and post security officer. She has oversight responsibilities for 93 local employees: 54 in management, 8 in facilities maintenance, 27 in the guard force, and 4 in security. The large number of Department taskers often overburdens the embassy and makes compliance with management controls difficult. The management officer's most pressing concerns pertain to security and maintaining qualified and appropriate staffing.

## **Rightsizing**

The 2011 Embassy Minsk Rightsizing Report does not reflect current operating conditions. The report projects increased staffing levels of 26 U.S. direct hires by 2015. Throughout the report, embassy operations were based on the return of American staff. At the time of the 2008 drawdown, LE staff was verbally assured of continued employment. In Embassy Vilnius, 48 management LE staff members support 41 U.S. direct hires. In Minsk the ratio is 54 to 5.

The current state of bilateral relations makes a large U.S. direct-hire staffing increase unlikely. Although the next rightsizing review is not scheduled until 2016, it is important that the embassy conduct the review sooner, given the unrealistic assumptions in the 2011 report.

**Recommendation 7:** Embassy Minsk, in coordination with the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, should resubmit its rightsizing report based on current operating conditions, realistic staffing predictions, programmatic and funding goals, and the minimum number of U.S. direct-hire staff necessary to run the embassy. (Action: Embassy Minsk, in coordination with MPR/I)

## **Financial Management**

The financial management office functions well. Five LE staff members support operations. The staff is cross-trained and attempts to maintain an appropriate separation of duties, which is difficult in such a small post. Unliquidated obligations are minimal.

### ***Designated Billing Office***

Vendors are sending invoices for goods and services to the procurement unit instead of the financial management office. Recent Department guidance (13 State 05793) states that “Consistent with sound internal controls and proper separation of duties, the post financial management office should function and be identified as the designated billing office for contracts, purchase orders and purchase card invoices paid at posts. This control appropriately separates the ordering, receiving, billing, approval, and payment process for posts.”

***Informal Recommendation 4:*** Embassy Minsk should instruct vendors to send their invoices for goods and services to the financial management office for processing.

## **International Cooperative Administrative Support Services**

There is an ICASS council, but USAID is the only other agency at post. The Department pays more than 90 percent of the budgeted ICASS costs.

## **Human Resources**

The human resources office has two LE staff members. The senior human resources assistant also has regional mission position classification responsibilities for 16 countries. This

workload is excessive. The Frankfurt Regional Support Center assigned these duties without a memorandum of understanding with Embassy Minsk.

**Recommendation 8:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with the Frankfurt Regional Support Center, should discontinue using Embassy Minsk's human resources assistant to provide regional position classification support to other embassies. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Frankfurt RSC)

Embassy Minsk does not receive sufficient regional human resources support. It is difficult for the small staff to maintain adequate management controls and provide services. There are numerous out-of-date position descriptions. The last time the Frankfurt Regional Support Center made a human resources assistance visit to Minsk was in 2010.

**Recommendation 9:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with the Frankfurt Regional Support Center and Embassy Minsk, should identify issues that need attention, develop a schedule, and perform periodic visits to Embassy Minsk. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Frankfurt RSC and Embassy Minsk)

**Informal Recommendation 5:** Embassy Minsk should revise all locally employed staff position descriptions.

#### ***Official Residence Expense Employees***

The chargé's official residence expense staff is excessive. According to the post profile, the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs authorized three official residence expense employees for the ambassador and two for the DCM. After the 2008 drawdown, the embassy placed all the ambassador's employees under the charge's supervision in conformance with the Department's verbal assurance that no LE staff member be terminated. However, because official residence staff members are not government employees, this decree does not apply to them.

Per regulations, the embassy is not allowed to employ official residence expense staff. The chargé d'affaires has this responsibility. Currently, one of the expense staff members works at the charge's residence, and the others are part of a representational team that frequently works out of the embassy. This arrangement violates Department hiring policies.

**Recommendation 10:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should review the number of official residence expense employees authorized for Embassy Minsk and adjust staffing levels accordingly. (Action: EUR)

#### ***Local Employee Association***

Association members expressed general satisfaction with their relationship with management. The chargé and management officer meet with the association quarterly or upon request.

#### **General Services**

The general services office capably handles customs and shipping, housing, motor pool, procurement, personal property management, and travel operations. A general services assistant provides good leadership to 27 LE staff members.

### **Motor Pool**

Motor pool size exceeds current mission needs, with 17 vehicles and 7 drivers to support only 5 U.S. direct hires. Per 14 FAM 432.2, the size and composition of the embassy fleet is based on four criteria: (1) Department staffing, with a 4-to-1 ratio of direct-hire positions per vehicle as a guideline; (2) USAID staffing, also with a 4-to-1 ratio of professional positions per vehicle; (3) how vehicles are used in support of the agency administration transportation requirement; and (4) annual mileage of 12,000 miles per vehicle. Maintaining excess vehicles is a waste of government time and money.

**Recommendation 11:** Embassy Minsk should reduce the size of its motor pool according to Department of State guidelines. (Action: Embassy Minsk)

### **Real Property**

The condition of the restricted (99-year land lease) government-owned buildings ranges from poor to good. The 1.2-acre embassy compound includes the chancery, consular annex, and management annex. The annexes underwent renovations in 2003 and 2006 and are in good condition. The land lease expires in 2091.

### **Chancery**

The chancery is in terrible condition. OBO condemned the building in 2008 because of structural concerns. The chancery has been unoccupied ever since. In 2010 OBO scheduled a \$34 million rehabilitation project that it later suspended because of Government of Belarus staffing restrictions.

OBO acquired the \$1.4 million chancery building in 1992. It had previously served as a residence and a Soviet military facility. OIG inspection reports from 1994, 2002, and 2006 had already cited inadequate office space and structural issues. [Redacted] (b) (5)

[Redacted]

[Redacted] (b) (5)

OBO funded a project to relocate the main electrical system from the basement of the chancery to the annex, but the project is stalled because of personnel restrictions. Equipment remains inside awaiting removal. With staffing restrictions in effect, OBO has not considered a subsequent chancery rehabilitation plan

or included the embassy in its OBO Top 80 building list. [Redacted] (b) (5)

**Recommendation 12:** [Redacted] (b) (5)

**Recommendation 13:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Minsk and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should negotiate with the Government of Belarus an exception to current staffing restrictions to allow the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations to complete its \$34 million chancery rehabilitation project. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Minsk and DS)

**Recommendation 14:** Embassy Minsk should remove nonsensitive equipment located in the chancery and store it in the warehouse. (Action: Embassy Minsk)

### *Housing*

Short-term leased housing, which includes the chargé d'affaires residence, four officer residences, and two temporary duty apartments, is adequate. All leased units are below the OBO space threshold allowed for Category 3 embassies.<sup>6</sup> OBO approved the lease of the temporary apartments because of the frequent regional support personnel visits, insufficient modern hotels, and Belarusian Government's harassment of U.S. embassy visitors in hotels.

### *Public Affairs Building Lease*

The leased PAS building is unsuitable for diplomatic operations. The office space configuration is poor, with LE staff members dispersed among three floors. There are no elevators, and the bathrooms are inadequate. [Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (7)(F)

The OBO and DS team that reviewed alternate lease options was horrified by the condition of the PAS office and recommended that employees vacate the building. The OIG team agrees that it is in the embassy's best interest to terminate the lease and relocate the section.

In 2012 the Government of Belarus notified the embassy that it would not honor the lease beyond March 2014. This action sparked a Department dispute about the Belarusian Government's prerogative to terminate a legal agreement that states the embassy has the right to renew the lease for two more 10-year periods or until March 14, 2032. The incident also launched a debate about whether the Government of Belarus is obligated to find alternative space at the same cost. So far, the Government of Belarus has resisted negotiations on the subject.

At the embassy's request, OBO and DS sent a team to find an alternative building to lease. In April 2013 the team reviewed six lease options and found only one that met OBO and DS requirements, but at a cost of three times the current lease of \$150,000 a year. This price is

<sup>6</sup> A category 3 embassy is a medium-size embassy with an active bilateral relationship with the host country.

the going commercial rate and is within range for commercial properties of this type. OBO and DS will also incur additional costs to prepare the building for occupancy.

**Recommendation 15:** Embassy Minsk, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should relocate the public affairs section to another leased office space prior to the termination of the current lease in March 2014. (Action: Embassy Minsk, in coordination with OBO)

### *Personal Property Management*

The personal property management unit does an adequate job of managing inventories valued at \$2.37 million. Shortages are low, at 0.29 percent.

### *Warehousing*

The short-term leased warehouse is located 30 minutes from the chancery, making LE staff supervision problematic. The warehouse costs \$88,000 annually and is too expensive and large for current needs. Viable alternatives include combining warehousing with Embassy Vilnius, using the European Logistical Support Office's Expedited Logistics Program,<sup>7</sup> leasing a smaller and less expensive warehouse closer to the embassy compound, and storing inventory on the embassy compound.

**Recommendation 16:** Embassy Minsk, in coordination with Embassy Vilnius, should explore warehousing alternatives, including renting a smaller and less expensive facility. (Action: Embassy Minsk, in coordination with Embassy Vilnius)

The warehouse contains many unused items awaiting disposal. In Minsk it is difficult to have an auction or donate without customs documents or permission from the host government. In 2008 some inventory and customs records were shredded during the U.S. direct-hire exodus. The Government of Belarus allows donations only to the Minsk International School.

**Informal Recommendation 6:** Embassy Minsk should dispose of or auction unneeded inventory items.

### **Facilities Management**

The regional facilities manager, based in Embassy Vilnius, provides appropriate technical and consultative support to Embassy Minsk. He makes quarterly visits, which OBO funds.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Embassy Minsk does not have an EEO counselor. The embassy has requested that the incoming joint consular/public diplomacy officer take the EEO course before her arrival in January 2014. In the interim, the embassy uses counselors from neighboring embassies as required. Embassy Minsk does not have LE staff liaisons to address local staff EEO concerns.

---

<sup>7</sup> Fast and cost-effective system for providing diplomatic posts with commonly used items.

**Informal Recommendation 7:** Embassy Minsk should select locally employed staff members to serve as Equal Employment Opportunity liaisons for local staff.

## **Information Management**

With only one American IMO and two LE information technicians providing services, a number of information management areas are not receiving adequate attention. The IMO also serves as the backup financial management officer and the backup post security officer and will soon take on backup consular duties. The section also has one LE mail clerk and one LE telephone operator. The embassy maintains 11 system servers for 125 users.

After the forced reduction of American staff in 2008, Embassy Minsk reached agreement with the information management office at the U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt for online remote information systems support. This arrangement does not include travel to Belarus to provide routine required systems support and has worked well. The services that Frankfurt provides are outlined in a desktop support service-level agreement, which both parties signed and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs approved. The most recent agreement expired in 2012 and has not yet been renewed. There are a number of additional services that the IMO is currently discussing with Frankfurt, such as support for a new consular systems server that will soon be installed in Minsk, as well as the possible transfer of the BlackBerry and email servers from Minsk to Frankfurt in order to provide more secure support. The absence of an agreement places information systems at risk.

**Recommendation 17:** Embassy Minsk, in coordination with Consulate General Frankfurt and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should establish a new service-level agreement for information systems support. (Action: Embassy Minsk, in coordination with CG Frankfurt and EUR)

Because of the staffing cap and the 2 weeks required to obtain a visa to Belarus, receiving technical assistance on short notice is not possible. If there is a communications emergency, such as the temperature control systems failure in 2012 that shut down embassy servers, the IMO is the only resource available. Embassy Minsk has designated the IMO as backup consular officer and will send him to Washington for consular training for 2 months during summer 2012. Although the IMO is currently overextended, it is imperative that the five officers be able to back one another up, and the backup role is critical for mission operations. The management officer is the designated backup to the IMO, but that role is limited to nontechnical responsibilities. The OIG inspection team believes that during the IMO's planned extended absence for consular training, the IMO position should be filled by a qualified information officer on a temporary duty assignment.

**Informal Recommendation 8:** Embassy Minsk should arrange for a qualified American information officer to serve at the embassy during the planned extended absence of the information management officer.

The embassy does not have an up-to-date information technology contingency plan that reflects current staffing levels and responsibilities. In accordance with 12 FAM 613.11, the IMO is responsible for maintaining a current information technology contingency plan that is

coordinated fully with the embassy emergency action plan. Lack of such documentation puts embassy operations at risk during a crisis.

**Recommendation 18:** Embassy Minsk should update and test its information technology contingency plan in accordance with Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Minsk)

[Redacted] (b) (5)

**Recommendation 19:** [Redacted] (b) (5)

Embassy Minsk maintains an inventory of laptop computers that are available to American and LE staff for long-term use. The general services office is responsible for the laptop inventory, but there are no standard operating procedures for the overall management of the program. Since the current IMO's arrival in August 2012, none of the laptops issued to staff have been returned for virus and security software updates.

**Recommendation 20:** Embassy Minsk should establish standard operating procedures for the distribution, use, and maintenance of laptop computers. (Action: Embassy Minsk)

## **Quality of Life**

U.S. direct hires fully earn their allowances, which include a 25 percent hardship differential, 15 percent cost of living allowance, 15 percent service needs differential for a third-year extension, and two rest and recuperation trips for a 2-year assignment. Minsk lacks English-language pastimes, and staff is subject to monitoring and harassment. These factors can cause excessive stress. Nevertheless, morale is high.

### **Schools**

Minsk has a small international school [Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (6)

[Redacted] and the parents are satisfied with the educational program.

### **Community Liaison Office**

There is no community liaison office coordinator. The LE staff management assistant prepares a periodic newsletter that identifies the city of Minsk events and activities.

### **Medical**

Regional medical visits are infrequent because of the Belarusian Government's staffing limitations. A part-time LE staff physician, widely known in the community, provides excellent care and has extensive access to hospitals and pharmacies in the city.

### **Employee Association**

The embassy does not currently have an employee association and is considering a partnership with the association being formed at Embassy Vilnius.

## Management Controls

Management controls for Embassy Minsk are seriously deficient. Although there are many contributing factors, severe staffing restrictions are at the top of the list.

The 2012 chief of mission controls statement of assurance noted that a physical security survey has not been performed within the past 3 years. As discussed earlier in the report, there are serious facilities, [Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (7)(F) deficiencies that did not appear in the 2012 statement. The OIG team stressed that, in preparation for the 2013 statement, it is important that the mission review, document, and establish an improvement plan to resolve current deficiencies.

## Travel

The embassy has not issued tickets for business- or premium-class air travel in the past 2 years. For security reasons, the embassy does issue first class train tickets, which it reports.

## Cashiering

An inspector observed the management officer perform a cash reconciliation, which was in balance. The cash accountability was recently reduced from [Redacted] (b) (5) to [Redacted] (b) (5). The cashier maintains a separate drawer for salary disbursements [Redacted] (b) (5). These funds are not part of the cashier's accountability.

The alternate cashier has a separate cash allotment. His accountability had not been replenished since the last time he relinquished the responsibility as principal cashier (2 weeks prior). As a result, he only had the equivalent of 10 cents of local funds available and would have been unable to perform his duties if the cashier had been unavailable for any reason during that 2-week period.

***Informal Recommendation 9:*** Embassy Minsk should replenish the alternate Class B cashier's accountability when transitioning the responsibility from the Class B cashier.

## List of Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Minsk, should undertake a review that focuses on the connection between U.S. policy objectives in Belarus and American staffing assignments and priorities at Embassy Minsk. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Minsk)

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should request that the Department of State place Embassy Minsk on MINIMIZE. (Action: EUR)

**Recommendation 3:** [Redacted] (b) (5)



**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Vilnius, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should develop an appropriate manual method for documenting the shipment via nonprofessional courier of consular-controlled supplies to Embassy Minsk. (Action: Embassy Vilnius, in coordination with DS)

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Minsk, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should establish an appointment protocol that gives American citizens services cases priority over visa applicants. (Action: Embassy Minsk, in coordination with CA)

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Minsk should implement procedures to verify that officers complete visa referrals in accordance with Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Minsk)

**Recommendation 7:** Embassy Minsk, in coordination with the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, should resubmit its rightsizing report based on current operating conditions, realistic staffing predictions, programmatic and funding goals, and the minimum number of U.S. direct-hire staff necessary to run the embassy. (Action: Embassy Minsk, in coordination with MPR/I)

**Recommendation 8:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with the Frankfurt Regional Support Center, should discontinue using Embassy Minsk's human resources assistant to provide regional position classification support to other embassies. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Frankfurt RSC)

**Recommendation 9:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with the Frankfurt Regional Support Center and Embassy Minsk, should identify issues that need attention, develop a schedule, and perform periodic visits to Embassy Minsk. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Frankfurt RSC and Embassy Minsk)

**Recommendation 10:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should review the number of official residence expense employees authorized for Embassy Minsk and adjust staffing levels accordingly. (Action: EUR)

**Recommendation 11:** Embassy Minsk should reduce the size of its motor pool according to Department of State guidelines. (Action: Embassy Minsk)

**Recommendation 12:** [Redacted] (b) (5)

**Recommendation 13:** The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Minsk and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should negotiate with the Government of Belarus an exception to current staffing restrictions to allow the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations to complete its \$34 million chancery rehabilitation project. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Minsk and DS)

**Recommendation 14:** Embassy Minsk should remove nonsensitive equipment located in the chancery and store it in the warehouse. (Action: Embassy Minsk)

**Recommendation 15:** Embassy Minsk, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should relocate the public affairs section to another leased office space prior to the termination of the current lease in March 2014. (Action: Embassy Minsk, in coordination with OBO)

**Recommendation 16:** Embassy Minsk, in coordination with Embassy Vilnius, should explore warehousing alternatives, including renting a smaller and less expensive facility. (Action: Embassy Minsk, in coordination with Embassy Vilnius)

**Recommendation 17:** Embassy Minsk, in coordination with Consulate General Frankfurt and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should establish a new service-level agreement for information systems support. (Action: Embassy Minsk, in coordination with CG Frankfurt and EUR)

**Recommendation 18:** Embassy Minsk should update and test its information technology contingency plan in accordance with Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Minsk)

**Recommendation 19:** [Redacted] (b) (5)

**Recommendation 20:** Embassy Minsk should establish standard operating procedures for the distribution, use, and maintenance of laptop computers. (Action: Embassy Minsk)

## 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 Minsk should comply with Department of State requirements for preservation of email records, using TAGS and adjusting employee profiles for State Messaging and Archive Retrieval Toolset access as necessary to control internal distribution.

***Informal Recommendation 2:*** Embassy Minsk should add missing information to alumni and regular public diplomacy grants files in accordance with required rules and procedures.

***Informal Recommendation 3:*** Embassy Minsk should provide a hard copy of the worldwide visa referral program to all referring officers during their briefing.

***Informal Recommendation 4:*** Embassy Minsk should instruct vendors to send their invoices for goods and services to the financial management office for processing.

***Informal Recommendation 5:*** Embassy Minsk should revise all locally employed staff position descriptions.

***Informal Recommendation 6:*** Embassy Minsk should dispose of or auction unneeded inventory items.

***Informal Recommendation 7:*** Embassy Minsk should select locally employed staff members to serve as Equal Employment Opportunity liaisons for local staff.

***Informal Recommendation 8:*** Embassy Minsk should arrange for a qualified American information officer to serve at the embassy during the planned extended absence of the information management officer.

***Informal Recommendation 9:*** Embassy Minsk should replenish the alternate Class B cashier's accountability when transitioning the responsibility from the Class B cashier.

## Principal Officials

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Arrival Date</b>
Chargé d'affaires	Ethan Goldrich	07/2012
Political/Economic/Press Officer	Christopher Panico	10/2010
Chiefs of Sections:		
Management/Security	Andrea Gastaldo	09/2012
Public Affairs/Consular	Carrie Lee	07/2010
Information Management Officer	Nijay Saini	08/2012

## Abbreviations

AEECA	Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia
BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
Department	U.S. Department of State
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FAH	<i>Foreign Affairs Handbook</i>
FAM	<i>Foreign Affairs Manual</i>
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IMO	Information management officer
LE	Locally employed (staff)
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PAS	Public affairs section
RSO	Regional security office
TIP	Trafficking in persons
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development



**FRAUD, WASTE, ABUSE,  
OR MISMANAGEMENT  
OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS  
HURTS EVERYONE.**

CONTACT THE  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
HOTLINE  
TO REPORT ILLEGAL  
OR WASTEFUL ACTIVITIES:

202-647-3320

800-409-9926

[oighotline@state.gov](mailto:oighotline@state.gov)

[oig.state.gov](http://oig.state.gov)

Office of Inspector General  
U.S. Department of State  
P.O. Box 9778  
Arlington, VA 22219