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

Report of Inspection

Embassy of Podgorica,
Montenegro

Report Number ISP-I-10-10A, November 2009

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PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

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

PURPOSE

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

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

METHODOLOGY

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

Harold W. Geisel
Acting Inspector General

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- The Ambassador has established productive relations with the Montenegrin Government and has advanced U.S. policy objectives, notably by speeding Montenegro's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) accession process, winning its recognition of Kosovo's independence, and securing Montenegrin troops for Afghanistan.
- The Ambassador uses his language fluency and skill in public diplomacy to enhance positive views of the United States among the Montenegrin public.
- [Redacted] (b) (5)

- Much of the considerable growth in staffing in the last few years has occurred in contravention of the Department's efforts to impose discipline on staffing through a model embassy concept. Management staffing has not grown commensurate with the rest of the Embassy, and the Department should approve new positions for an information management officer (IMO) and a general services officer (GSO).
- Under current plans, Embassy Podgorica will continue to occupy substandard, overcrowded workspace until 2023, when the new embassy compound (NEC) is scheduled to be completed.
- The political and economic section and embassy assistance programs both effectively support Mission Strategic Plan (MSP) goals, including preparing Montenegro for Euro-Atlantic integration.
- The public affairs section (PAS) plays a critical role in implementing the Embassy's ambitious policy agenda by carrying out a remarkably active and focused public diplomacy program. The section is understaffed in relation to its responsibilities, however, and needs an additional locally employed (LE) staff position.

- The consular section, which is starting nonimmigrant visa (NIV) services in the summer of 2009, will appropriately restrict the number of visas that it processes until a consular section with adequate space is built as part of the annex that is scheduled for completion in 2011.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between April 6 and 24, 2009, and in Podgorica, Montenegro, between June 18 and July 1, 2009. Ambassador Pamela Hyde Smith (team leader), Thomas Furey (deputy team leader), Craig Cheney, Robyn Hinson-Jones, Ralph Kwong, Barry Langevin, Ambassador Greta Morris, and Robert Ripley conducted the inspection.

CONTEXT

Montenegro was Yugoslavia's smallest republic. Its name aptly means "Black Mountains," but it also boasts a beautiful coastline and Southern Europe's only fjord. The population of approximately 684,000 is predominantly Orthodox Christian and 75 percent are Slavs either of Montenegrin identity or the nearly identical Serbian ethnic group. Most Montenegrins pride themselves on their indomitable spirit and warm hearts.



Montenegro's history has run in close parallel to Serbia's, with the notable difference that Montenegro never fell to the Ottoman Turks. With Russia's help, it also fended off Napoleon, and during the Balkan Wars in the early 20th century, it again fought and defeated the Turks. Montenegro sided with the Allies in World War I and was subsequently absorbed into nascent Yugoslavia. During World War II, the Axis powers split Montenegro's territory between Italy and Albania, but the mountainous terrain proved fertile for the communist partisans who heroically prevailed against the Axis powers and helped form the new Yugoslav state.

Development during Tito's Yugoslavia was uneven, and despite some gains in prosperity, Montenegro lagged behind the other five republics. In the 1990s, Montenegro remained linked with Serbia and undamaged by the bloody wars that Slobodan Milosevic, president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, conducted in every other Yugoslav republic and province. In 2006, Montenegro exercised its right to separate from Serbia. It declared independence peacefully, following a national referendum on the issue, and maintains cooperative bilateral relations with Serbia and other neighboring countries.

During the Milosevic era, robust U.S. assistance programs helped Montenegro distinguish itself from Serbia and initiate democratic and economic reforms. After independence, assistance budgets began diminishing but now the U.S. Government is increasing them slightly because progress appears to be lagging in some sectors. Considerable investment has flowed into the country since independence, increasing the prospects for continued stability.

U.S. goals for Montenegro entail helping the country attain market-based prosperity, strengthen its democracy, and fully integrate into NATO and the European Union. Montenegro's success in those endeavors would provide increased stability to the region and make the country a model for states like Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are farther behind in their evolution. Montenegro is strongly pro-United States, and we sustain close, productive ties.

When the United States opened its first embassy in Podgorica in 2006, it inherited buildings owned by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that were housing a consulate-style operation. The Department decided to make Podgorica a model embassy, which is a lean operation suited to small countries, requiring no new funding, and initially staffed by only two American employees. This concept has been evolving, making Embassy Podgorica more akin to a normal small embassy, but many challenges remain. The information technology (IT) platform [Redacted] (b) (5) [Redacted] and needs a major overhaul of unclassified communications; consular capacity was limited to American citizen services until summer 2009 and is still extremely limited; a tremendous amount of administrative assistance is required from neighboring embassies to sustain activities; and work space is extremely cramped. An unclassified annex will relieve some space problems but is not scheduled to be completed until 2011

Embassy Podgorica's staff currently comprises 20 U.S. direct-hires, three contract and eligible family member employees, and 71 LE staff, including 25 local guards. The Department's FY 2009 budget for Podgorica is \$4.5 million. USAID funding is \$5.4 million, but is expected to increase to \$9 million in FY 2010. Military training and humanitarian assistance funding totals \$1.3 million in FY 2009 and is expected to increase to approximately \$3 million in FY 2010.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

The Ambassador and deputy chief of mission (DCM) have worked hard on the dual tasks of establishing productive relations with the fledgling government of the world's second newest country, while also turning a consulate into a functioning embassy. The assets at the Ambassador's and DCM's disposal include Montenegro's pro-American Government, the country's small size, the legacy of extensive U.S. assistance programs, and a capable, energetic U.S. and local staff. Naturally, impediments also affect performance, and these include Montenegro's infrastructure, which is more post-socialist than first-world; a cramped, under-resourced chancery; and the inevitable start-up pains of any new venture. Nonetheless, Embassy leadership has many achievements to its credit, notably in forging highly positive relationships with the Montenegrin Government and public.

The Ambassador emphasizes and excels in outreach to the Montenegrin public; the OIG inspectors were impressed with his accomplishments. He travels widely, meeting with a very large number of average citizens, local officials, students, and participants in assistance programs. Maximizing the impact of his fluency in the local language, he gives his many speeches in Montenegrin, and is able to debate policy points on live television programs. The DCM, also fluent in Montenegrin, underlines the Embassy's approachability in his public appearances. Embassy leadership tunes its public messages and outreach programs to Montenegrin sensibilities with great care, informed by the results of a focus group the Ambassador called together shortly after his arrival. At the Ambassador's instigation, Embassy Podgorica also deploys current social networking technology, notably through a Facebook page that has attracted 3,000 adolescent and young-adult users. Recent redesign of the Embassy's public Web site has quadrupled web visits. Embassy Podgorica also uses traditional public affairs methods. For example, on the 30-year anniversary of a local earthquake, the Ambassador used a U.S. Navy ship visit as an opportunity to rekindle positive feelings about the United States by commemorating U.S. assistance both after the earthquake and today. The Embassy's focus on public outreach has resulted in widespread positive views of the United States and the Ambassador.

Embassy leadership has also succeeded in building close, friendly relations with Montenegro's senior decisionmakers in all sectors relevant to the United States, resulting in significant progress on MSP objectives. To help Montenegro integrate more fully into the Euro-Atlantic community, for example, the Ambassador and

DCM pressed at several levels in Podgorica and Washington to position Montenegro farther forward in the NATO accession process than would have occurred without their actions. Consequently, at NATO's recent summit in Bucharest, Montenegro was rewarded with an earlier "intensified political dialogue" than expected. Embassy leadership also succeeded in building a partnership with Montenegro on key U.S. goals worldwide. For example, overcoming the resistance of the third of Montenegro's population that allies ethnically and politically with Serbia, the Ambassador developed a strong case for Montenegro's recognition of Kosovo's independence, and the Montenegrin Government eventually took this bold step. The Ambassador also pushed for and won Montenegrin agreement to send troops to Iraq and then to transfer them to Afghanistan. The inspectors noted that Embassy Podgorica's leaders, especially the Ambassador, have great depth of knowledge and experience in the Balkans, attributes that have contributed substantially to constructing sound MSP goals and building support for U.S. policies.

The front office attends carefully to U.S. assistance programs, which have dwindled dramatically since the immediate aftermath of the conflicts provoked by the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The Ambassador initiated a comprehensive review of U.S. assistance programs and obtained full buy-in from other agencies to focus assistance programs on rule of law, exchanges, and economic development in the northern part of Montenegro, an area where refugees, poverty, and minority Muslim populations make for a potentially explosive mix. The Ambassador publicizes U.S. assistance programs extensively and deeply involved himself in the northern Montenegro development program during a long gap between USAID officers at post. The DCM manages an internal process that aims to track the progress of these programs.

Agency activities at small or start-up embassies, as is the case with USAID at Embassy Podgorica, are sometimes remotely supervised by a main office at larger neighboring embassies. The inspectors observed that remote supervision has brought the Embassy several benefits in expertise and technical assistance, while causing no controversies or problematic interference inside or outside the Embassy. The Ambassador believes, however, that these arrangements raise a host of management control problems and political challenges, and is eager to terminate these arrangements. He has succeeded in obtaining the concurrence of USAID and other agencies to end policy supervision of employees and programs in Montenegro from other posts.

Embassy leadership has developed an MSP process that includes American and local staff from all sections and agencies. This large group brainstorms at periodic off-sites and meets weekly to assess progress and find additional ways to implement goals. Every 6 weeks, the group also assembles to review the calendar and deconflict

workload issues. Besides these expanded country team meetings, the front office conducts a once-weekly Americans-only meeting, and short daily meetings with a small group of LE and U.S. direct-hire staff to review the press and set the daily agenda. Considering the regular and ad hoc individual meetings that the front office also holds with section and agency heads, Embassy Podgorica's meeting schedule struck the inspectors as too intense for an embassy its size. The weekly MSP meetings, in particular, absorb time that those not directly involved could spend on their regular duties. Furthermore, inspectors observed that the MSP meetings generate more initiatives than the small staff can reasonably implement.

Both the Ambassador and the DCM have good interpersonal relations with all employees, including the LE staff; the latter admire the Ambassador and report high job satisfaction. [Redacted]

In managing the internal operations of Embassy Podgorica, the Ambassador and DCM have worked hard to rectify many of the built-in shortcomings in staffing and infrastructure that they inherited. In fact, the Ambassador specifically requested that Embassy Podgorica be inspected in 2009 because he wanted an assessment of operations and working conditions in order to make improvements. [Redacted] (b) (5)

As a result of their leadership and the tireless efforts of their colleagues, the chancery platform—although it remains cramped—conforms far more closely to a typical small embassy, with dramatic increases in staffing (now at 20 U.S. direct-hires), management services, consular capacity, security, and communications. The Ambassador also found, and is directing the extensive upgrading of, a new residence. [Redacted]

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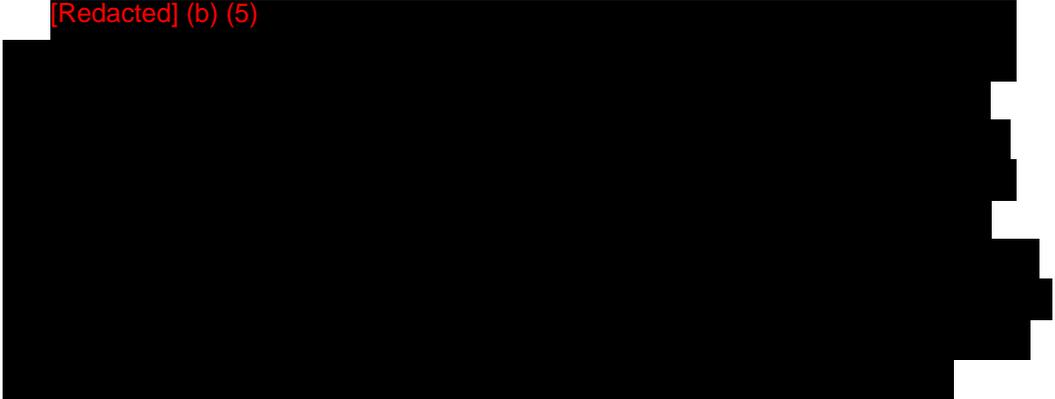
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Recommendation 1: [Redacted] (b) (5)

[Redacted]

Recommendation 2: [Redacted] (b) (5)

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

[Redacted]

Recommendation 4: [Redacted] (b) (5)

[Redacted]

RIGHTSIZING

The Department's rightsizing review of U.S. Mission Serbia and Montenegro, dated March 2005 and revised in June 2007, grouped Podgorica together with Belgrade even though Podgorica had become an embassy on October 5, 2006. In October 2008, the Department requested that Embassy Podgorica conduct its own rightsizing review with the support of Regional Support Center Frankfurt's regional management officer stationed at Embassy Zagreb. Embassy Podgorica submitted its input to the Department during the OIG inspection, but recalled its submission after the OIG team noted errors in the rightsizing template.

Recommendation 5: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with Embassy Zagreb and the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, should revise and resubmit Podgorica's rightsizing report. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with Embassy Zagreb and M/PRI)

In its review of Embassy Podgorica's American staffing vis-à-vis the model embassy concept, the OIG team noted that neither the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (EUR) nor Embassy Podgorica had a complete grasp of authorized or projected American staffing. EUR's model embassy concept and Embassy Podgorica's current staffing pattern are not synchronized. The Embassy's staffing pattern reflects positions, both filled and vacant, that are not reflected in the model embassy concept paper; the model embassy reflects positions that are not included in the Embassy's staffing pattern. The distilled merger of the current embassy staffing pattern and the model embassy concept would yield a total of 35 positions, which represents a 25 percent increase over the model embassy personnel limit. This would be a contradiction of the Department's intent to maintain a small embassy footprint and would place additional burdens on an already strained management support system.

Linked with rightsizing, the National Security Decision Directive 38 (NSDD-38) process also plays a role in Embassy Podgorica's American staffing. Currently, there is one NSDD-38 request pending for a consular officer, and a second will be forthcoming for an IMO. The Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation's (M/PRI) database lists six approved NSDD-38 non-Department positions, and M/

PRI is determining the disposition of two positions that are on the staffing pattern but not in the database. Embassy Sarajevo's legal attaché office also contacted Embassy Podgorica about placing three Federal Bureau of Investigation agents in Podgorica for a period of one year.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should reconcile its current staffing pattern, its National Security Decision Directive-38 actions and process, and the target model embassy staffing, and use the resulting information to develop and implement a rational plan to form the human resources and physical infrastructure needed to meet mission requirements. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with EUR)

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Embassy Podgorica's combined political/economic section is staffed with two full-time American positions and a part-time consular/political position. Three full-time LE staff cover political, economic, and commercial affairs.

Perhaps because the Embassy and the country are small, the political/economic section and other sections and agencies of the mission maintain an extremely high level of cooperation and coordination. According to one officer: "We are not like separate agencies, we are like members of the same team." Contacts are easily shared, linkages between projects are discussed, and opinions are exchanged.

The political/economic section is linked to Embassy Podgorica's MSP goals, which are stability through broad-based prosperity, a strong security partnership, rule of law and law enforcement, democracy and exchanges, and being a model embassy for transformational diplomacy. MSP meetings are held regularly, rotating the five goals on a weekly basis, with a sixth week devoted to reviewing the Embassy's long-term calendar of events. The mid-level economic officer chairs the MSP meetings on Promoting Broad Economic Growth and Prosperity.

There are numerous political spot reports on conversations with high-level government officials and political and social developments in Montenegro, and time-sensitive reporting is of high quality. Cables on pressing topics such as the lead-up to the March 2009 parliamentary election and a scene setter for the Deputy Secretary's visit reflect insightful understanding of the political landscape in Montenegro.

Analytical reporting has suffered from the political/economic counselor's 6-month absence, a lack of classified work space, an unusually protracted clearance process, and lack of attention as to whether cables have or have not been completed. The front office is frustrated that several analytical reporting assignments are still pending after almost a year.

Political/economic section officers report that they are already under considerable pressure from reporting requirements and special projects that strain the outer limits of section capacity. The OIG inspectors observed that the sole economic officer's willingness to take on work within and beyond her portfolio threatens to be overwhelming. During the long absence of the counselor, this officer shouldered political, economic, and commercial tasks, and kept up on a steady stream of reports, including Montenegro's World Trade Organization accession tribulations, financial abuses in the troubled National Railroad Corporation, and the impact of the global financial crisis. Even with all this, the officer has been committed to a variety of projects, including control officer for two Fourth of July celebrations, helping American businesses establish a chamber of commerce, and informally assisting USAID LE staff when the American officer-in-charge was away.

To date, the work responsibilities of the junior consular/political officer include drafting mandatory political reports and conducting some political outreach, in addition to doing American citizen services work. With the start up of NIV services in July 2009, the consular/political officer's time for political work will be seriously reduced if not eliminated. The front office recognizes that a reduction in reporting requirements and projects is essential if the political/economic section is to complete mandatory reporting in a timely manner. The Embassy, however, has not decided who will do the mandatory reports. Failure to be clear about who will be responsible for the reports will result in unrealistic pressure on the consular/political officer, to the detriment of the individual and the output of both sections.

The political/economic section is supported by three very able and enthusiastic LE staff, who share a cramped office. In addition to information gathering and reporting, the LE staff serves as translators since neither of the American officers is fluent in Montenegrin. With the exception of the inadequate work space, the three LE staff members are satisfied with their embassy experience.

The economic/commercial LE staff member is on USAID's payroll. In October 2009, USAID will cease to fund this position. In several cables, the Embassy formally requested that the Department take over funding for this position, which is key to reporting on economic and commercial issues and to supporting the introduction of American businesses to Montenegro. The OIG team supports this request.

Recommendation 7: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should approve Embassy Podgorica's request to fund the locally employed staff position that supports economic and commercial outreach in Montenegro. (Action: EUR)

Trafficking in Persons

The Embassy did an excellent job pressing the Government of Montenegro to seriously acknowledge the problem of human trafficking in the country and the region. Repeated demarches by the Embassy, made to Montenegrin officials from the working level to the prime minister, have produced some positive results. A major obstacle, the coordinator for combating trafficking in persons, was replaced with an individual who is committed to addressing the problem. In recent months there have been some arrests, speedy trials, and convictions of traffickers, and the Government has organized events to heighten public awareness of the problem.

Commercial Affairs

The Foreign Commercial Service officer for Montenegro is resident in Belgrade. Due to a lack of travel funds, that officer has reduced his trips to Montenegro from once a month to once a year. The economic officer at Embassy Podgorica spends approximately one third of her time supporting the commercial portfolio. She has been deeply involved in helping to establish a fledgling American Chamber of Commerce in Montenegro. This entity still requires considerable day-to-day attention from the Embassy, such as conducting market research for a handful of American companies interested in selling products to the Montenegrin market. As noted previously, the LE staff member who shares commercial work is still paid by USAID; her contract will expire in October 2009.

Law Enforcement Assistance

The Department of Justice's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) program and the International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program (ICITAP) support the rule of law portion of U.S. efforts to reduce corruption in Montenegro. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) funds both programs. OPDAT and ICITAP are complementary with excellent working relationships between the program heads. Both are well supported by the PAS.

The regional legal advisor supervising OPDAT is a Department of Justice employee, while the ICITAP director is a contractor who reports to ICITAP at Embassy Tirana. The OPDAT and ICITAP offices each have one American employee and one LE staff member. The two programs recently relocated to a location near the

courts in downtown Podgorica. The relocation alleviates some of the space pressures in the over-crowded chancery, and ideally positions the programs within one block of the offices of the judges, prosecutors, and police who are their primary interlocutors.

The OPDAT program goals are to strengthen the rule of law in Montenegro and to enhance the ability of authorities to investigate and prosecute complex transnational crime. Improvements in the rule of law will be required for Montenegro's eventual accession to the European Union. The regional legal advisor, who is experienced in the Balkans, trains approximately 87 prosecutors and 220 judges a year; the training focuses on anticorruption, organized crime, war crimes, and terrorism. About 60 OPDAT police training candidates a year are vetted to ensure that they have not committed human rights violations. The front office strongly supports the program, which is an integral part of the 2011 MSP.

The ICITAP program was initially focused on police academy development, forensics, and trafficking in persons. More recently, emphasis has been placed on assistance in fighting organized crime and corruption, while also providing assistance to criminal law legislative reform efforts.

Embassy Podgorica intends to allow funding to expire in the ICITAP program and to combine ICITAP responsibilities with OPDAT, creating one Department of Justice program in the mission. The Embassy's plan for the future of ICITAP in Montenegro is unclear, and there is no mention of ICITAP in the 2011 MSP.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, should clarify in writing what the relationship of the International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program will be to the Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training Program for as long as both programs continue to operate in Embassy Podgorica. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with INL)

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Ambassador describes public diplomacy as transformative and has made it a central pillar in the model embassy concept. Despite its small size, the PAS in Podgorica plays a critical role in implementing the Embassy's ambitious policy agenda and in carrying out a remarkably active, focused, and successful public diplomacy program. Nevertheless, this section of one American officer and three LE staff is woefully understaffed for the number of programs and more than \$1 million in resources for which it is responsible. The OIG team strongly endorses the Embassy's request for an additional LE staff member for the PAS (see Recommendation 9 below).

The public affairs officer (PAO) is managing the section's resources and staff with great skill and energy, demonstrating superb judgment in deploying the section's resources to achieve embassy goals. The PAO sees the Ambassador and DCM in daily staff meetings, and has a weekly one-on-one meeting with the DCM. He interacts frequently with the Ambassador, who plays an active role in the Embassy's public affairs program. The PAO participates in the MSP drafting process and the Ambassador's weekly interagency MSP review meetings, leading the discussions at those meetings on the Democracy and Exchanges goal and on outreach coordination. PAS participates in embassy efforts to promote a strong security partnership, working with the Defense attaché on public affairs for ship visits and military assistance, and with the political section and the Defense attaché on building support for Montenegro's accession to NATO. PAS drafts the press freedom section of the human rights report and contributes to other reporting as needed.

Media Activities

For a small country, Montenegro has an outsized media sector, including four public and 21 private television stations, three daily newspapers, and over 50 radio stations. Although many of the media are heavily politicized, the Embassy has been highly successful in conveying its messages through the media. The Ambassador, who speaks fluent Montenegrin and is a gifted interlocutor, is in constant demand for interviews. He appears in the media virtually every day and engages actively in outreach. The PAO and DCM have also done media and other public presentations. The OIG team informally recommended that the Ambassador continue to encourage other members of the embassy staff to engage in more outreach activities as time permits. This could provide them the opportunity to develop their public diplomacy and language skills.

PAS is able to place virtually all of its releases in the media. It manages the Embassy's attractive Web site and Facebook page, which also carry embassy statements. The Web site had almost 17,000 "hits" in 2008 and the Facebook page has over 3,000 "friends."

PAS carries out media training programs to enhance the professionalism of the media and increase their knowledge of issues outside the Balkans. In 2009, PAS held a workshop for economic journalists in Montenegro on "Reporting on the Global Economic Crisis," and sent a group of journalists to Arizona State University for a two-week course on civic journalism. In previous years, PAS has sent journalists on NATO-reporting tours. This year's NATO tour will focus on members of parliament. Over 100 Montenegrin journalists have participated in the training programs since they began 9 years ago.

Exchange Programs

Embassy Podgorica participates in the full array of exchange programs, using them to strengthen U.S.-Montenegrin relations and build human capacity in this country which is in transition. Montenegro hosted three American Fulbright scholars from 2008 to 2009; from 2009 to 2010, two American scholars will come to Montenegro and two Montenegrin scholars will go to the United States. Three or four Montenegrins participate annually in a junior faculty development program for 5 months on American college campuses. Exchanges for high school students and undergraduates to the United States help develop a successor generation with understanding and appreciation of the United States. PAS has requested increased funding to enable more than the current nine students to participate in the undergraduate program. The high school and undergraduate exchange programs began during the period when Montenegro was not yet independent. They are still linked with the Serbian programs and managed by Embassy Belgrade, which complicates the administration of the program and undercuts Montenegrin national identity.

The Embassy's International Visitor program budget funds 14 grantees yearly. The large number of grantees who have already participated in the International Visitor program, and the difficulty of finding suitable grantees in this small nation where English language skills are weak might warrant a small reduction in the number of grants. The section's U.S. speakers program engages Montenegrins in discussion of MSP issues. In FY 2009, PAS is programming speakers on corruption reporting, environmental awareness, and judicial reforms, among other topics.

The Embassy's democracy commission provides small grants to build capacity in the nongovernmental organization sector and promote public debate on the challenges facing Montenegrin society. PAS solicits grant proposals for each of the Embassy's MSP goals and works with the action office for each goal to prioritize the proposals. The democracy commission will fund eight or nine grants in 2009. PAS requested and received additional funding for the next year, which will enable the Embassy to increase the number of grants focused on promoting a broader debate on Montenegro's potential NATO membership.

As part of the Embassy's effort to promote ethnic and religious tolerance and encourage cooperation among the former Yugoslav republics, PAS successfully requested additional funding to hold a regional basketball camp. Athletes from Georgetown University will coach youths from Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia, Albania, and Slovenia at a summer camp in Montenegro. Similarly, the Embassy has made excellent use of the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation to strengthen religious tolerance and demonstrate American respect for Montenegro's cultural heritage. The Embassy has received grants for three consecutive years to support reconstruction of a mosque, an Orthodox monastery, and a Catholic church.

While PAS has programmed some cultural groups provided by the Department, it also finds it effective to provide grants to local cultural organizations to bring American performers to Montenegro. In one highly successful example, PAS awarded a grant to the Podgorica cultural center to bring an American jazz quartet to Montenegro for the jazz festival. The quartet presented a one-week workshop at the Podgorica music academy, followed by a joint concert. The workshop and concert exposed the young musicians and the Montenegrin audience to a uniquely American musical form and represented genuine cultural exchange.

American Corners

PAS has two active American Corners to promote better understanding of U.S. values and culture in Montenegro. The first American Corner is located in Podgorica's main cultural center and recently celebrated its fifth anniversary with a program attended by the mayor. Students and members of the public visit the attractive corner on a daily basis to use the library and attend film, lecture, and other programs, such as a recent discussion between the Ambassador and PAO, and a group of exchange program alumni. As part of the Embassy's efforts to provide assistance and capacity building to the economically deprived and politically sensitive region north of Montenegro, PAS recently opened a second American Corner in the town of Pljevlja. Both American Corners provide additional opportunities for Embassy staff to engage in outreach and use their language skills.

Alumni Relations

Although Podgorica is a new embassy, it has had over 700 exchange alumni since 2000. PAS does not have the human resources to develop an alumni database or programs to facilitate ongoing interaction with exchange alumni. The current three LE staff are overextended in carrying out their current activities. One LE staff member has assumed the duties of managing the Embassy's Web site and Facebook page; an eligible family member previously performed those duties. The LE staff member has other duties, including outreach to the Muslim community and managing youth exchanges. The Embassy has requested a fourth LE staff member to manage the Web site and Facebook page, to develop the alumni database and outreach programs, and to strengthen public diplomacy reporting. The OIG team strongly endorses this request.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs and the Bureau of Human Resources, should establish and fill an additional locally employed staff position in the public affairs section to manage the embassy Web site and alumni relations. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with EUR and HR)

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

The consular section in Embassy Podgorica is small, with only three employees, and basically exists in the start-up phase. The staff consists of one American officer who splits his time between the consular section and the political section, one consular assistant, who is an eligible family member, and one consular LE staff member. Up until the time of the inspection, the consular section only provided American citizen services but not visa services. The OIG team was impressed with the quality of consular services, including the extensive work that the consular staff provided on a difficult arrest case involving four American citizens.

During the inspection, the Embassy was finalizing plans to start limited NIV services in July 2009. NIV applicants from Montenegro have been applying for their visas at Embassy Belgrade. The Ambassador requested approval from the Department to start NIV processing in Podgorica as Montenegrins (including the president

of the country) have long complained that they could not understand the need to travel to Belgrade, Serbia, to apply for visas. The Department concurred with the Ambassador's recommendation to start processing a limited number of visa applications in Podgorica.

The Embassy is unable to provide full NIV services because there is not enough space in the chancery. The building was recently modified to create a small consular waiting room that seats a few people and a cramped consular work area, with one window for serving the public at one end. The three consular employees are crowded into this work area with all the necessary equipment and filing cabinets. Fortunately, the employees get along well with each other, considering the space restraints. The consular section will have the space to provide full NIV services once the annex is completed.

NIV applicants will schedule their appointments through the online appointment system created by the Department. The consular section plans to set aside a certain number of appointment slots for those categories of visa applicants (such as students) who have a higher priority than applicants for tourist visas. Applicants who cannot get an appointment in Podgorica in the necessary timeframe will continue to apply at Embassy Belgrade.

The Embassy estimates that 3,000 to 5,000 applicants from Montenegro will apply for NIVs once full service is provided in Podgorica. Until then, the Embassy will limit the number of applicants to 20 per week. The vast majority of NIV applicants from Montenegro will still have to apply in Belgrade until the new facility is completed.

In preparation for the start of NIV services, the consular staff in Podgorica has worked to ensure that the information available to the public through the Embassy Web site and telephone recordings is as accurate as possible. Part of the education process involves explaining how to use the new online visa application system, as Embassy Podgorica was scheduled to be the first post in the Balkans to use that system. The OIG team noted that the consular section appeared to make all of the necessary preparations for a successful launch of NIV services in Podgorica.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	U.S. Direct-hire Staff	U.S. Local-hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2009
Department-Diplomatic and Consular Programs	11	2	7	20	828,300
Department -ICASS	1	1	45	47	2,503,200
Department - Public Diplomacy	1	0	3	4	246,000
Department - Diplomatic Security	0	0	7	7	262,500
Department- OBO ¹	0	0	0	0	670,544
Department-Representation ²	0	0	0	0	16,600
Defense attaché office	2	0	1	3	453,500
Partnership for Peace	0	0	1	1	118,600
Department of Justice (DoJ)	1	0	1	2	786,000
DoJ - ICITAP ³	1	0	0	1	0
DoD-European Command	1	0	1	2	1,871,000
Foreign Area Officer-Olmsted Scholar ⁴	1	0	0	1	0
USAID	1	0	5	6	5,370,950
TOTALS	20	3	71	94	13,127,194

¹Per OBO

²Includes PAS representational funds of \$1,600

³ICITAP has no FY 2009 funding. Its current operations are funded from FY 2007 U.S. Support for Eastern European Democracy Act funds.

⁴Olmsted Scholar arrived during OIG inspection.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

The management section of Embassy Podgorica makes great efforts to provide adequate services to its customers, but it faces considerable challenges that hinder its ability to do so. Many deficiencies stem from the implementation of EUR's model embassy concept, which envisioned an embassy with a small footprint and empowered LE staff that drew management support from other embassies in the region. The principles of the concept remain valid, but the execution has been inconsistent, resulting in shortcomings in key administrative and logistical areas.

Embassy Podgorica's inability to establish reliable and efficient data communications has precluded effective use of standard automated management applications, such as those contained in the Web Post Administrative Software Suite (WebPASS) and Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS), thereby hampering the regional support that was to be a hallmark of the model embassy.

Recommendation 10: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration and Embassy Podgorica, should install and make operational the Web Post Administrative Software Suite and Integrated Logistics Management System applications. (Action: EUR, in coordination with A and Embassy Podgorica)

The lack of staff development in the months leading up to the transition of International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) from USAID to the Department has resulted in a lack of standard operating procedures and sufficient training for the LE staff. The largely unmonitored and uncontrolled increase of U.S. direct-hire employees beyond the model embassy staffing pattern has placed an unanticipated burden on a management staff designed to support 25 percent fewer American personnel.

Recommendation 11: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica, should provide embassy management section personnel with professional development training and expert subject matter assistance, including in business process improvement. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica)

The Embassy has repeatedly pointed out to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) that limited office space, particularly in the management section, creates a work environment that stifles productivity. Despite the projected completion in November 2009 of modular offices, which will be 2 years after the original anticipated completion date, and a three-story annex in 2011, the management section will continue to occupy very cramped quarters. The OIG team concurs with the Embassy that these two projects will not be sufficient to alleviate the space problems. Construction of a NEC is expected to be completed in 2023.

Recommendation 12: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should develop and implement a plan to alleviate functional space shortages that will continue to exist even after the scheduled completion of modular offices in the Fall of 2009 and a three-story annex in 2011. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with OBO)

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

The Embassy's ICASS council includes representatives of the Departments of Defense, Justice, State, and USAID. The Defense attaché office's operations coordinator chairs the council, having been elected in May 2008, and will be replaced by the PAO. The council meets regularly as recommended by the ICASS Service Center. The council did not fulfill its responsibility to provide input to the management officer's employee evaluation report (EER). The OIG team made an informal recommendation to correct that oversight. The council chair expressed an interest in providing input to the EERs of those Embassy Zagreb service providers who supply ICASS services to Embassy Podgorica.

Per guidance from Washington, Embassy Podgorica has limited membership on its ICASS council to reflect the Department's ICASS executive board but has not established a post budget committee. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that Embassy Podgorica establish a post budget committee. Due to the size of the Embassy, the council and budget committee can be identical or can elect to meet concurrently.

Shortly before the OIG inspection, a team from the ICASS Service Center visited Podgorica to provide post-specific ICASS training. The council chair assessed the training as useful but opined that U.S. direct-hire participation lacked in comparison to that of the LE staff.

Up until September 31, 2008, USAID provided ICASS services to Podgorica as an alternate service provider. On October 1, 2008, USAID's LE management staff transitioned to Department ICASS. The overall ICASS customer satisfaction survey results across the 29 areas surveyed showed that Embassy Podgorica was below bureau and worldwide averages in 18 of the areas with mixed results in the other 11 areas. Some of the responders were confused about whether they were commenting on the entire process, the Department, Embassy Zagreb, Embassy Belgrade, or Embassy Podgorica. The OIG team believes that these results will improve as the former USAID LE staff acclimatize to ICASS and receive the necessary training. Improvements will also occur as the support that Embassies Zagreb and Belgrade provide is formalized via memoranda of understanding.

A FY 2008 ICASS carryover of approximately \$220,000 has languished in USAID since the beginning of the fiscal year and should be transferred to the Department in July 2009.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Under EUR's model embassy concept, Embassy Zagreb's financial management unit provides approximately 70 to 80 percent of the financial services to Embassy Podgorica's ICASS customers. Embassy Podgorica's financial management unit consists of one LE class B cashier, who the management officer supervises. Podgorica's annual Department allotments are about \$4.53 million. Embassy Zagreb provides financial services to the Defense attaché office.

The class B cashier is experienced, knowledgeable, and well trained. Cashier operations are in accordance with established financial management procedures and requirements. Two potential informal recommendations in this area were quickly corrected by the cashier, one with the help of the OIG's security inspector, thus negating their need for inclusion in this report. Monthly and quarterly subcashier reconciliations are performed as required. [Redacted] (b) (5)

[Redacted]

In October 2008, a successful test of local currency electronic funds transfers via the Financial Services Center Charleston was conducted with the intention of having Embassy Zagreb implement local currency electronic funds transfers in May 2009.

The Cashier User guide states that the following information should be posted on a bulletin board outside the window: hours of operation, daily exchange rates, regulations and procedures, a note advising customers to count cash and wait for a deposit receipt, a cashier office access list, and sample OF-158. The class B cashier was in conformance with the Cashier Users guide, but was told to remove the bulletin board by post management. The OIG team informally recommended that a bulletin board with the required information be displayed as required by the Cashier User guide.

Locally Employed Staff Retirement

The local social security system (LSSS), which includes payroll tax, retirement, health insurance, and unemployment, covers all LE staff. They contribute 17.5 percent of their basic salary to LSSS retirement, health insurance, and unemployment, and the U.S. Government contributes 14.5 percent. LE staff payroll (income) tax is withheld and paid by the Embassy to the LSSS. The U.S. Government also pays a municipal tax, which is 15 percent of the LE staffs' income tax. Since 2007, LE staff and U.S. Government LSSS contributions have decreased annually, and in 2010, will total 16.5 and 13.5 percent, respectively. The percentages for 2010 will remain in place unless the law is changed again.

The Department authorized the Embassy to implement an LSSS adjustment payment plan effective May 14, 2006. The goal of the plan was to correct the Embassy's (Belgrade at the time) past underreporting of salary to the LSSS, and to recompense LE employees who entered on duty prior to May 30, 2004. Embassy Podgorica was not aware that this plan expired at the end of pay period 26 of 2008 until questioned by the OIG team. Podgorica is working with Zagreb to request Department authorization to continue the plan. Under the plan, an actuarially determined lump sum payment will be made to each eligible retiree or survivor at the time of the employee's retirement or death. The payment provides each affected retiree or survivor with a one-time lump sum amount that makes up for the Embassy's underreporting of salaries to the LSSS. To date, one payment has been made.

Any changes in the Montenegrin LSSS law and regulations that reduce or eliminate any gap between actual and theoretical LSSS retirement and survivor's benefits, such as raising the minimum retirement age, increasing the required minimum years of covered service, or revising the salary basis on which pension calculations are made, must be reported to the Department for due consideration.

HUMAN RESOURCES

EUR's model embassy concept also applies to human resources (HR). Embassy Zagreb provides approximately 70 percent of the HR services for both American and LE staff to Embassy Podgorica's ICASS customers. Embassy Podgorica's HR unit consists of two LE staff employees, who are supervised by the management officer. As a legacy of USAID's provision of ICASS services as an alternate service provider, both HR assistants have ancillary duties—the senior as procurement agent, and the junior as motor pool supervisor. Under the guidance of the management officer, ICASS LE staff roles and responsibilities will be realigned to reflect a Department ICASS operation instead of those of a USAID alternate service provider. In an effort to build on the senior HR assistant's supervisory skills, the management officer plans to move direct supervision of the receptionist/travel clerk to her. The HR assistants may also assume some financial management duties with the concurrence of Zagreb's financial management/human resources officer. The senior HR assistant is certified to perform computer-aided job evaluations.

In 2008, several EERs on American employees were submitted late to the Bureau of Human Resources. During that period, USAID was the alternate service provider; while the Ambassador's office management specialist tracked EERs. This legacy still exists to some extent. In its review of the EER tracking spreadsheet, the OIG team found that only one current work requirements statement was completed within the mandatory 45-day timeframe. The office management specialist reported that others may have been completed and forwarded directly to Zagreb without providing her a copy to update her spreadsheet. The OIG team informally recommended that the Embassy establish standard operating procedures to ensure that supervisors comply with EER and work requirements statement timelines.

The HR unit has neither tracked LE staff employee performance reports (EPR) efficiently nor checked to make sure that the EPR information is current; consequently, overdue evaluations have become commonplace. Evaluation reminders to both LE staff and American supervisors may also need improvement. The OIG team informally recommended that the Embassy establish procedures that require supervisors to complete EPRs on time.

The awards program functions appropriately, with 44 incentive awards given in Embassy Podgorica's April 28, 2009, awards ceremony. Up until 2007, Podgorica held two award ceremonies per year, but since spring 2007 it holds only one yearly. Awards are embassy-wide, and, to ensure fairness, award amounts have been standardized across agencies.

Locally Employed Staff Committee

OIG team members met with the LE staff committee. For a relatively new committee—their by-laws are dated November 22, 2006—the group’s grasp of issues affecting the LE staff in both the near and far term were impressive. The committee stressed that they have good communications with post management, especially with the management officer. They do not meet regularly; rather, they schedule meetings when problems arise. Those meetings provide a forum for broader discussion and communication. The committee reported that there was some past unhappiness with them amongst the LE staff. However, after a town hall meeting where the committee explained its role, LE staff members are now confident that the committee is looking for solutions to issues that affect all of them.

Of the five issues discussed, the committee has resolved three: converting from the U.S.-style leave plan to the local leave plan effective January 2009; implementing an LE staff salary increase effective June 2009; and establishing night differential for local guards. The Department was analyzing the remaining two issues. For one of those issues, the Department approved a supplemental health plan but approval lapsed due to the lack of local health insurance providers. As there are now providers in the market, Podgorica once again is seeking the Department’s approval to implement a supplemental health plan. For the other remaining issue, a change in Montenegrin law now allows employees contributing to the LSSS to also contribute to private pension plans. The Embassy sent a copy of the law to the Department, requesting approval to include that option in the local compensation plan. When the OIG team suggested the voluntary retirement system plan as an alternative once it is implemented by the Department, the committee expressed its interest in exploring that option on behalf of the LE staff.

GENERAL SERVICES

Responsibility for provision of ICASS general services transferred on October 1, 2008, from USAID to the Department. The general services section has made significant progress under difficult circumstances that include poor IT infrastructure, lack of standard operating procedures, inadequate facilities, and staff growth that has outstripped the Embassy’s support capabilities. Recent installation of Microsoft Exchange servers has improved communications, and recent approval to add six LE staff positions will alleviate some of the workload. Despite this progress, the section still has a fair distance to go to achieve acceptable operational performance levels. The general services section is capable of meeting the challenge with the proper

training, assistance, and leadership. A good start, in concert with the Department's Collaborative Management Initiative, would be to standardize its basic functions and develop process maps to define how it conducts common tasks.

Recommendation 13: Embassy Podgorica should develop and implement standard operating procedures and process maps for its general services operations. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

The model embassy staffing pattern includes a GSO position, but it remains unfilled despite the pressing need for someone to relieve the management officer of the workload of leading and managing the general services unit. The OIG team found weaknesses in many general services activities that could have been averted by an officer who was dedicated to this functional area. Moreover, a GSO would play a key role as the section continues to mature and develop its business processes. The addition of a GSO would also help to separate duties and thereby improve internal controls. The Embassy has requested a GSO position and is awaiting approval from the Department.

Recommendation 14: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and the Bureau of Human Resources, should approve and fill a general services officer position in Podgorica as soon as possible. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and HR)

Procurement

The Embassy procurement unit is in a nascent stage, lacking standard operating procedures, operating largely on a manual basis, and not yet applying a full range of tools to acquire goods and services. It is reorganizing itself to handle the workload and define its processes, but faces significant challenges in developing the human and technology resources needed to improve its operations and services.

The unit normally receives requests via free-form email, as it has not developed a standard form and does not have the capability to use eServices or other electronic request means. Instead of using WebPASS or ILMS procurement modules, agents complete purchase order forms and then fax or email them to and from Embassy Belgrade for necessary financial management actions. This is a time consuming

process that ILMS could solve if implemented. Procurement agents recently ordered and received file folders that are used to document competition and capture essential elements of information, but the unit had not yet used them. The unit plans to use contracts for services such as grounds maintenance, heating and air conditioning, and generators, but it has not yet completed any such contracts. The unit uses purchase cards for some local and online procurement, but it could expand the program to include PAS and other sections; this would reduce its own workload and expedite the delivery of goods and services to customers.

Recommendation 15: Embassy Podgorica should develop and implement standard operating procedures to document appropriate procurement competition and approvals. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 16: Embassy Podgorica should establish acquisitions guidelines that include appropriate means of procurement. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

The procurement unit tries to close out purchase orders, but cites its heavy workload as the main reason that it is unable to do that on a consistent and timely basis. As a result, the section has no systematic way to document that it followed the required procedures throughout the procurement process, that the order was completed or terminated, or that the contractor was paid.

Recommendation 17: Embassy Podgorica should establish procurement guidelines to close out purchase orders in a timely manner. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

The contracting officer did not have a copy of her certification of appointment on hand as required by 14 FAM 214 e. but received one from the Office of the Procurement Executive during the inspection. The OIG team informally recommended that she display the certification as required and that the procurement section keep copies of all certifications for contracting officers at post.

Motor Pool

The motor pool provides basic transportation services to its customers. As with other aspects of the Embassy's general services, policy and operating procedures remain undefined. Moreover, the section does not meet basic requirements for documenting daily vehicle use (14 FAH-1 H-814) and fleet inventory reporting (14 FAH-1 H-816).

The Ambassador has not prescribed countrywide policies that address business use and other authorized use of vehicles, and uniform, fair, and equitable treatment of personnel with regard to vehicle use. The normal means to disseminate this information is a vehicle policy memorandum that the Ambassador must review annually and republish as appropriate.

Recommendation 18: Embassy Podgorica should establish and distribute a vehicle policy that is subject to an annual review. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

An OIG inspector examined records that document the daily use of motor pool vehicles and found that drivers were using Optional Form 108, Daily Vehicle Use Record, but neglected to get signatures from passengers in all cases. Furthermore, the motor pool supervisor was destroying the forms after 3 months rather than retaining them for a period of 3 years after the disposal of each vehicle.

Recommendation 19: Embassy Podgorica should establish guidelines that require drivers to properly complete Optional Form 108 (Daily Vehicle Use Record) for all government-owned vehicles and to retain the forms for the required length of time. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

The Embassy has not established access to the ILMS motor vehicle inventory system and is therefore not maintaining accountability of its vehicle assets as required by 14 FAH-1 H-620. As a result, the OIG team inventoried the Embassy's vehicle fleet by comparing vehicle identification numbers with a spreadsheet.

Recommendation 20: Embassy Podgorica should establish access to the Integrated Logistics Management System, complete all required information regarding its vehicles, and comply with reporting requirements regarding its fleet. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

One driver attended driver training in May 2009 and became a certified instructor as part of the Department's efforts to reduce the occurrence and severity of vehicle crashes involving drivers and vehicles under chief of mission authority. The Embassy plans to train motor pool drivers as well as other employees who drive official vehicles as part of their duties.

Facilities and Housing

Embassy Podgorica's functional space is inadequate. Modular offices and a new annex, addressed earlier in this report, will provide partial relief but the Embassy will likely experience space problems until the completion of the NEC in the year 2023, unless it can implement interim solutions such as leasing space off-compound. Another possibility would be to place modular container offices on the concrete pad on which a large tent is now erected. With plumbing and electricity already installed in the tent, the container offices probably would be the least costly and most expedient solution, though security waivers could be required.

OBO is working to transfer title for the chancery from USAID to the Department and expects handover of official custody no later than August 9, 2009. OBO affirmed in a June 9, 2009 telegram to the Embassy that the title transfer and acquisition of land adjacent to the chancery are FY 2009 priorities for OBO. The Embassy is aware of a possible lawsuit by the architect of the chancery building that would contest the modifications made to the building, such as changes to the windows and addition of fire exit staircases from the top floor to the basement, as violations of his intellectual property rights. The architect lost a similar suit against the municipal government, which was the previous property owner. The management officer is keeping OBO apprised of developments in this action.

Embassy Belgrade provides facilities management support to Embassy Podgorica, but there is no formal agreement that defines the nature and extent of the support. Personnel in Podgorica lack experience in the Department's buildings maintenance system and in dealing with OBO, so the assistance and guidance of a facilities manager would be very helpful. Clear and mutual agreement regarding the working relationship, expectations, and deliverables would serve as a good foundation upon which the two embassies could build.

Recommendation 21: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with Embassy Belgrade and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should develop and implement a memorandum of understanding that addresses support provided by the regional facilities manager in Belgrade. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with Embassy Belgrade and OBO)

The Embassy recently received approval to lease a new warehouse. This will be a vast improvement over its current facility, which is overcrowded, poorly configured, and insufficiently segregated from commercial storage in the same building. The new building presents an excellent opportunity to begin afresh, as it is a new structure that is completely devoid of internal partitions and shelving. The Embassy, therefore, can design and fit out the interior as needed, but it lacks the expertise to do so. The Regional Support Center Frankfurt, however, has access to experienced logisticians who can provide such guidance and expertise to Embassy Podgorica.

Recommendation 22: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should develop and implement a plan for the design and fit-out of the Embassy's soon-to-be leased warehouse with emphasis on functionality and safety. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with EUR)

Safety, health, and environmental management (SHEM) is another area in which the Embassy must concentrate more effort. In the absence of a facilities manager, the Embassy designated the LE staff general services assistant as the assistant post occupational safety and health officer (POSHO). The Ambassador has designated members of the Embassy's SHEM committee, but they have not yet met. The OIG team identified possible issues for the assistant POSHO and made recommendations to address them. One issue involves the large glass partition between the dining room and swimming pool area in the chief of mission residence. The partition consists of three largely unsupported and substantial panes of glass that may meet structural standards, but its location in a high-traffic representational area adjacent to a swimming pool used by the embassy community, merits the highest consideration for safety. Another issue pertains to storage of hazardous liquids in the warehouse, as an OIG inspector found several cans of paint thinner on open shelves that could pose a serious fire hazard in a facility full of combustible materials.

Recommendation 23: Embassy Podgorica should begin regular meetings of the safety, health, and environmental management committee, and develop and implement a safety program. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 24: Embassy Podgorica should review the construction of the glass partition located between the swimming pool and dining room of the chief of mission residence for compliance with safety requirements and risk management, given its location in a high-traffic representational area. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 25: Embassy Podgorica should develop and implement a plan that requires proper storage for flammables and other hazardous materials in the warehouse. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

The Embassy's housing program, consisting of 18 short-term leased properties, is managed well. USAID concluded most of the leases as the former ICASS service provider, and the files are well organized and complete. The interagency housing board appears to function adequately, and the residences visited by the OIG inspector were of reasonable size for the locality and market availability. The Embassy participates in OBO's Rental Benchmark Initiative, which reduces the need for many lease waivers and, thereby, allows for quicker action by the Embassy in leasing properties. Employee satisfaction with housing is reflected in the absence of any assignment appeals since the inception of the program in 2001.

The Embassy leased a new chief of mission residence that has a lower rental cost, is in a better location, and has more representational space than the prior residence. The Ambassador has used the residence to good effect for many events, including a huge Fourth of July function in 2009 that was attended by the President of Montenegro. The inspectors note that any savings in lease costs likely will be outstripped by higher utility costs and one-time fit-out charges. Additionally, the Embassy paid considerable opportunity costs for the residence as the management staff spent substantial time and effort to acquire and prepare the property during a critical period in which it was morphing into a full-fledged ICASS service provider.

Property Management

The property management unit strives to provide adequate service while maintaining accountability for nonexpendable and expendable items in its charge. The current warehouse works against these goals, as it is unsuitable in terms of space, configuration, and security. The imminent move to a new facility is a welcomed change and would help to resolve those problems. It would also provide sufficient space for a central receiving area. The designation of receiving officers would also tighten internal controls by having personnel who are familiar with the goods and services that were ordered to confirm receipt.

Recommendation 26: Embassy Podgorica should centralize receiving and designate receiving officers for goods and services. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Nonexpendable property is managed using the WebPASS application from a database in Belgrade. This is inefficient because the available bandwidth yields poor data transmission and access. The data will soon be transferred to servers recently installed in Podgorica, but the better solution would be transition of nonexpendable property management from WebPASS to ILMS's asset management application, which is recommended earlier in this report.

Residential inventory files are neat and orderly, but some were incomplete. In some cases, there was no record of inventories conducted prior to employees departing post. In other cases, there was no inventory available to an incoming employee, and employees had not signed their inventories.

Recommendation 27: Embassy Podgorica should develop and implement a plan that requires complete residential inventories, to include signing of inventory forms by residents to acknowledge their responsibility and accountability. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Embassy's information management (IM) unit meets the majority of its day-to-day operational needs through recent installations and upgrades. Embassy Belgrade, EUR, and the Regional Information Management Center (RIMC) Frankfurt provide various levels of IM expertise and assistance to Embassy Podgorica,

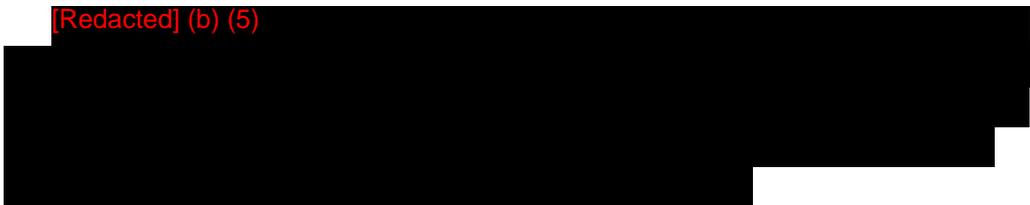
[Redacted] (b) (5)



The OIG team contacted RIMC Frankfurt to gauge its willingness and ability to provide an American IM specialist with oversight responsibility and accountability to assist the Embassy. RIMC Frankfurt agreed that the situation in Podgorica warranted immediate assistance and committed to sending a temporary duty IM specialist upon receipt of a formal request from the Embassy's management officer. The temporary duty IM specialist would be a stopgap measure until a permanent employee arrives.

Recommendation 28: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and the Bureau of Human Resources, should approve an information management officer position and assign an officer to it. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and HR)

[Redacted] (b) (5)



Recommendation 29: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and Embassy Belgrade, should develop and implement a memorandum of understanding that addresses all aspects of information management support of Embassy Podgorica for the interim period until an information management officer arrives in Podgorica. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and Embassy Belgrade)

The Embassy recently replaced its telephone switch with a newer model.

[Redacted] (b) (5)

[Redacted] (b) (5)

Recommendation 30: [Redacted] (b) (5)

[Redacted] (b) (5)

Recommendation 31: [Redacted] (b) (5)

QUALITY OF LIFE

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

Embassy Podgorica's CLO coordinator is carrying out a scaled-down version of responsibilities at a post that has provided limited support for the CLO. The incumbent is on his first overseas tour and has been serving as CLO coordinator since September 2008. Shortly after he started the job, he requested CLO training, but was told that no funding was available. His only training consisted of reading the CLO manual and a few hours of consultations in the Department during his rest and recuperation trip to the United States.

The CLO coordinator works 25 hours per week. There is no funding to pay overtime, so if he works additional hours, he takes compensatory time instead. Because of his background in computer technology and the fact that there is no IMO at post, he sometimes assists the LE staff in the IM office. He also assists with time and attendance for Embassy staff.

In lieu of a traditional newsletter, the CLO coordinator sends it to all members of the Embassy community via email. The newsletter includes information about events in the community, health issues, travel, weather, and links, including to the newsletters of neighboring posts. He is also responsible for newcomers' orientation. He prepares welcome packets for new employees and their families, and arranges for embassy sponsors. The CLO coordinator provides guidelines to the sponsors and has tried to pair an LE staff member with the American sponsor in order to help each new employee receive complete and current information. There is no formal orientation process at this small post. Instead, the sponsor and the CLO coordinator provide orientation when a new employee arrives.

No budget exists for CLO activities. The CLO coordinator has tried to arrange embassy community activities, such as a rafting trip, but has found little or no interest. The CLO coordinator is very knowledgeable about recreational opportunities in Podgorica and other parts of the country and readily shares this information with others.

The current CLO coordinator will depart in 2009. If the next coordinator has not had training, the OIG team encourages the Embassy to enable that individual to participate in CLO training as soon as possible.

Podgorica is a small town that offers little entertainment. The first mall and movie theater opened only recently. The international community is very small. There are a limited number of restaurants, many of which are not smoke-free. The winter is cold and rainy. Summer is better, and most expatriates go to the Adriatic coast on the weekends from Spring until Fall. Flights leaving the country are limited and expensive, and the roads are not good.

There are three eligible family members currently working at the Embassy. English language proficiency in Podgorica is low and there was no post language program in the past. The Embassy just received funding from the Foreign Service Institute and will be starting a post language program. This should assist both those who did not have language training in Washington prior to coming to Podgorica, and those who did and want to continue improving their language proficiency.

HEALTH UNIT

The Embassy lacks a health unit but does receive medical support from the regional medical officer (RMO) in Belgrade. The management officer stated that of all the personnel providing regional support, the RMO has visited post the most. The RMO psychiatrist, based in Vienna, also provides support and last visited Podgorica in February 2009. The Embassy has a post medical advisor who is a general practitioner practicing in Podgorica's only hospital. Local medical care providers do not offer adequate care, and are only used in emergencies. Patients are medically evacuated to London or Washington for the most routine matters. The Embassy's small stocks of controlled drugs are stored in the RSO's safe. Pandemic influenza concerns have necessitated a supply of gowns, goggles, masks, gloves for caretakers, and an adequate supply of Tamiflu, all of which are also under the control of the RSO.

Upon completion of the new three-story annex in 2011, current plans call for establishment of a health unit, either in the annex or open space in the chancery. Subject to approval by Embassy Podgorica's ICASS council, a local nurse will be hired at that time.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counselor in Zagreb is also the designated EEO counselor in Podgorica. The EEO counselor has not had any requests or cases from Podgorica since he took on this responsibility earlier this year, and the management officer in Podgorica is not aware of any EEO concerns. The EEO counselor has served as counselor at two posts, has had EEO training, and has done remote counseling for other posts by phone and email. He will have refresher EEO training in August. While the Workplace and Quality of Life Questionnaire score for “EEO sensitivity” in Podgorica was lower than the average, the questionnaires included no specific complaints.

The HR officer for Podgorica, who is based in Zagreb, sent a management notice in April to all U.S. direct-hires at Embassy Podgorica to inform them of the name and contact information of the EEO counselor. The notice also stated the Department’s EEO policy and outlined steps that employees should take if they believe that they have experienced discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or mental or physical disability.

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

In the 2008-09 academic year, [Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (6)

[Redacted]

The [Redacted] school is fully registered with the Government of Montenegro, but local law prohibits Montenegrin citizens from attending. The school attracts international families because it offers open houses, pot luck dinners, and other family activities, making it a center for the international community and improved quality of life in Podgorica. A physical education teacher is employed and the school has initiatives for students to join local sports teams.

[Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (6)

[Redacted]

[Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (6)

According to the director, the level of education at the school has become more rigorous in recent years. [Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (6) uses the mastery learning method of instruction in which no student is passed along to the next class until they have demonstrated proficiency of the subject matter in each unit. Every student is taught at his or her individual level, and there are many different levels of language ability. Theoretically, the school can take special needs children if they come with a tutor or an aide. There is a lab with ten computers and wireless Internet for students. The OIG team heard feedback that the students have the necessary skills to keep up with their peers when they return to the United States.

The outgoing director expressed disappointment with the Embassy's relationship with the school. [Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (6) initially opened the school in 2006 at the request of USAID because there was no English instruction for American or international students. Initially there was significant American input, but it has declined. The director raised the lack of embassy involvement with the Ambassador.

The OIG inspectors believe that the extent of Embassy involvement with [Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (6) is not unreasonable. One American embassy employee serves on the advisory board. Despite being severely overstretched, the embassy management section has agreed to help with customs clearance of books from a sister [Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (6). The RSO said that he will have money for necessary soft target upgrades after he sees what the new building requires. Recently, the Embassy invited the school to participate in an Earth Day art exhibition.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

MANAGEMENT SECTION

Many factors negatively affect the management section's internal control system. The lack of automated systems reduces the desktop visibility of processes that supervisors would typically have. The number of split positions, such as procurement/property management, makes adequate separation of duties difficult. The current overcrowded and disorganized warehouse is a challenge for property accountability. The lack of adherence to regulatory requirements, such as completion and retention of daily vehicle usage documents, causes difficulties in the proper utilization of government-owned property. Embassy Podgorica has taken steps to correct the conditions that cause some of these deficiencies.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: [Redacted] (b) (5)

Recommendation 2: [Redacted] (b) (5)

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

Recommendation 4: [Redacted] (b) (5)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with Embassy Zagreb and the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, should revise and resubmit Podgorica's rightsizing report. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with Embassy Zagreb and M/PRI)

Recommendation 6: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should reconcile its current staffing pattern, its National Security Decision Directive-38 actions and process, and the target model embassy staffing, and use the resulting information to develop and implement a rational plan to form the human resources and physical infrastructure needed to meet mission requirements. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with EUR)

Recommendation 7: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should approve Embassy Podgorica's request to fund the locally employed staff position that supports economic and commercial outreach in Montenegro. (Action: EUR)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, should clarify in writing what the relationship of the International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program will be to the Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training Program for as long as both programs continue to operate in Embassy Podgorica. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with INL)

Recommendation 9: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs and the Bureau of Human Resources, should establish and fill an additional locally employed staff position in the public affairs section to manage the embassy Web site and alumni relations. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with EUR and HR)

Recommendation 10: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration and Embassy Podgorica, should install and make operational the Web Post Administrative Software Suite and Integrated Logistics Management System applications. (Action: EUR, in coordination with A and Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 11: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica, should provide embassy management section personnel with professional development training and expert subject matter assistance, including in business process improvement. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 12: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should develop and implement a plan to alleviate functional space shortages that will continue to exist even after the scheduled completion of modular offices in the Fall of 2009 and a three-story annex in 2011. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with OBO)

Recommendation 13: Embassy Podgorica should develop and implement standard operating procedures and process maps for its general services operations. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 14: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and the Bureau of Human Resources, should approve and fill a general services officer position in Podgorica as soon as possible. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and HR)

Recommendation 15: Embassy Podgorica should develop and implement standard operating procedures to document appropriate procurement competition and approvals. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 16: Embassy Podgorica should establish acquisitions guidelines that include appropriate means of procurement. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 17: Embassy Podgorica should establish procurement guidelines to close out purchase orders in a timely manner. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 18: Embassy Podgorica should establish and distribute a vehicle policy that is subject to an annual review. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 19: Embassy Podgorica should establish guidelines that require drivers to properly complete Optional Form 108 (Daily Vehicle Use Record) for all government-owned vehicles and to retain the forms for the required length of time. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 20: Embassy Podgorica should establish access to the Integrated Logistics Management System, complete all required information regarding its vehicles, and comply with reporting requirements regarding its fleet. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 21: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with Embassy Belgrade and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should develop and implement a memorandum of understanding that addresses support provided by the regional facilities manager in Belgrade. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with Embassy Belgrade and OBO)

Recommendation 22: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should develop and implement a plan for the design and fit-out of the Embassy's soon-to-be leased warehouse with emphasis on functionality and safety. (Action: Embassy Podgorica, in coordination with EUR)

Recommendation 23: Embassy Podgorica should begin regular meetings of the safety, health, and environmental management committee, and develop and implement a safety program. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 24: Embassy Podgorica should review the construction of the glass partition located between the swimming pool and dining room of the chief of mission residence for compliance with safety requirements and risk management, given its location in a high-traffic representational area. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 25: Embassy Podgorica should develop and implement a plan that requires proper storage for flammables and other hazardous materials in the warehouse. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 26: Embassy Podgorica should centralize receiving and designate receiving officers for goods and services. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 27: Embassy Podgorica should develop and implement a plan that requires complete residential inventories, to include signing of inventory forms by residents to acknowledge their responsibility and accountability. (Action: Embassy Podgorica)

Recommendation 28: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and the Bureau of Human Resources, should approve an information management officer position and assign an officer to it. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and HR)

Recommendation 29: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and Embassy Belgrade, should develop and implement a memorandum of understanding that addresses all aspects of information management support of Embassy Podgorica for the interim period until an information management officer arrives in Podgorica. (Action: EUR, in coordination with Embassy Podgorica and Embassy Belgrade)

Recommendation 30: [Redacted] (b) (5)

Recommendation 31: [Redacted] (b) (5)

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

The deputy chief of mission has weak skills using the computer, including managing email.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Podgorica should develop and implement a plan to improve the deputy chief of mission's electronic communication skills.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Ambassador is very active in public diplomacy, using his fluent Montenegrin to engage with the media and in other outreach activities on a daily basis. Other members of the embassy staff participate in outreach much less frequently and have limited opportunity to use their language skills.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Podgorica should continue to encourage more members of the embassy staff to engage in outreach activities, as time permits, to develop both their public diplomacy and language skills.

MANAGEMENT SECTION

Required information is not displayed outside the cashier's office.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Podgorica should display required information outside the cashier's office, per the Cashier User guide.

The ICASS council has not established a post budget committee, which can be identical to the council membership and meet concurrently or can be comprised of different membership and meet separately, at the council's discretion.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Podgorica should require that the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council establish a budget committee.

The ICASS council did not fulfill its responsibility to provide input to the management counselor's employee evaluation report.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Podgorica should require that the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council provide input to the management counselor's employee evaluation report.

Last year, several U.S. direct-hires' employee evaluation reports were submitted late to the Bureau of Human Resources; this year's American work requirement statements are not current.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Podgorica should require compliance with timelines for American employee evaluation report and work requirement statements.

Overdue LE staff employee performance reports have become commonplace.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Podgorica should establish procedures for locally employed staff employee performance reports to be completed as required.

The contracting officer did not display her certification of appointment as required by 14 FAM 214 e., nor did the procurement section have a copy of the certifications proving that she is authorized to execute the duties of a contracting officer.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Podgorica should require that the contracting officer display her certification of appointment as required and retain copies of the contracting officer certifications.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

Officer	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Roderick W. Moore	09/07
Deputy Chief of Mission	Stephen L. Kontos	08/08

Chiefs of Sections:

Consular	Corey X. Gonzalez	05/09
Political Economic Management	Marcus R. Micheli	08/07
Political Military	Debra D. Taylor	08/08
Public Affairs	Sean A. Costanzo	10/08
Regional Security	Alexander J. Titolo	08/08
	Kevin K. Hamilton	07/08

Other Agencies:

Department of Defense	Gregory J. Broecker	01/09
Department of Justice	Johnathan S. Haub	10/08
Bilateral Affairs Office	Darrell Davis	10/08
U.S. Agency for International Development	Ramsey C. Day	02/09

ABBREVIATIONS

CLO	Community liaison office
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EER	Employee evaluation report
EPR	Employee performance report
EUR	Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
GSO	General services officer
HR	Human resources
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
ICITAP	International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance
ILMS	Integrated Logistics Management System
IM	Information management
IMO	Information management officer
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
IT	Information technology
LE	Locally employed
LSSS	Local social security system
M/PRI	Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation
MSP	Mission Strategic Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEC	New embassy compound
NIV	Nonimmigrant visa
NSDD	National Security Decision Directive

OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OPDAT	Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training
PAO	Public affairs officer
PAS	Public affairs section
[Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (6)	[Redacted] (b) (5), [Redacted] (b) (6)
QSI	Quality Schools International
RIMC	Regional Information Management Center
RMO	Regional medical officer
RSO	Regional security officer
SHEM	Safety, health, and environmental management
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WebPASS	Web Post Administrative Software Suite

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