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AND THE BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
*OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL*

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Office of Inspections

December 2014

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**Inspection of  
Embassy Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire**

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

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of State (Department) and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).

### **PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

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

- **Policy Implementation:** whether policy goals and objectives are being effectively achieved; whether U.S. interests are being accurately and effectively represented; and whether all elements of an office or mission are being adequately coordinated.
- **Resource Management:** whether resources are being used and managed with maximum efficiency, effectiveness, and economy and whether financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- **Management Controls:** whether the administration of activities and operations meets the requirements of applicable laws and regulations; whether internal management controls have been instituted to ensure quality of performance and reduce the likelihood of mismanagement; whether 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 cursive script that reads "Robert B. Peterson".

Robert B. Peterson  
Assistant Inspector General for Inspections

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## **Key Findings**

- In his first 6 months, the Ambassador gained the respect of his country team and wider mission for his leadership, expertise, commitment to improving management performance, and willingness to focus on issues underlying poor morale.
- The Ambassador inherited a number of internal management issues. These include low regard for front office leadership; serious problems in the management section; deficiencies in the chancery construction; and challenges in finding and maintaining residential property (exacerbated by a rapid increase in U.S. direct-hire positions), regaining supervision over locally employed staff, and supervising and mentoring a large group of first- and second-tour officers. All of these issues contribute to low embassy morale.
- The embassy has suffered a series of buildings systems failures, caused by building defects dating to the original construction of the chancery and a lack of commissioning, limited maintenance staff expertise, and the absence of preventive maintenance when the embassy was in evacuation status.

All findings and recommendations in this report are based on conditions observed during the on-site review and the standards and policies then in effect.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between April 10 and 25, 2014, and in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, between April 28 and May 16, 2014. Ambassador Lawrence Butler (team leader), Timothy Wildy (deputy team leader), Arne Baker, Georgienne Bednar, Pasquale Capriglione, Paul Cantrell, Darren Felsburg, Mark Jacobs, James Norton, and Joyce Wong conducted the inspection.

The OIG team interviewed 78 Washington-based officials from 4 agencies. At Embassy Abidjan, the OIG team interviewed 79 U.S. direct-hire employees and 73 locally employed staff members. The OIG team reviewed 41 OIG personal questionnaires, 46 OIG work life quality of life questionnaires, and 104 OIG locally employed staff questionnaires, along with documents submitted by the embassy. A classified annex to this report covers security and other issues.

## **Context**

Côte d'Ivoire is a French-speaking West African country with an estimated population of 21.1 million and a per capita gross domestic product of \$1,600 in 2013. Once considered the economic powerhouse of West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire spent the first decade of this millennium embroiled in a series of political and security crises. The most recent political conflict took place after the October 2010 presidential election, when outgoing President Laurent Gbagbo refused to accept the electorate's decision, and post-electoral violence led to major atrocities and the deaths of some 3,000 Ivoirians. In April 2011, President-elect Alassane Ouattara assumed office following Gbagbo's arrest and subsequent transfer to The Hague to await trial before the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. The United Nations has maintained a peacekeeping mission, United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire, since April 2004 to facilitate the implementation of an internal peace agreement between the country's warring parties.

To assist Côte d'Ivoire with its post-crisis recovery, the United States and Embassy Abidjan seek to support the Ivorian Government's efforts to promote democratic reforms that improve accountability and governance; encourage its progress in achieving national reconciliation; advise the Ivorian Government on ways to increase its citizens' access to justice and human security; promote Ivorian Government policies to diversify the economy, attract U.S. and other foreign trade and investment, and reduce corruption; and build the government's capacity to assist the 450,000 Ivoirians afflicted with HIV/AIDS.

Embassy Abidjan, formerly a regional hub with a new embassy compound built in 2005 for a much larger staff, is now a mid-sized embassy with 72 U.S. direct hires and 342 locally employed (LE) staff members. The embassy put staff on ordered departure from December 2010 to June 2011 and returned to being a fully accompanied post in March 2012. In addition to resuming regular staffing of U.S. direct hires, the embassy is beginning to expand. In an 18-month period, the embassy approved 10 new positions. There is renewed interest from U.S. Government agencies looking to expand their current programs for Côte d'Ivoire or to use Abidjan as a platform for their regional activities.

In addition to the new embassy compound, other U.S. Government facilities include the Open Source Center and RETRO-CI, which is a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention laboratory facility.

## **Leadership**

The Ambassador arrived in November 2013 to assume charge of an embassy in a country still feeling the aftereffects of the 2011–2012 internal political violence. The Ambassador leads a small interagency country team that works effectively together toward well-defined objectives: support Côte d'Ivoire's continuing transition to and strengthening of regional and national security, governance, and growth; avoid repetition of politically inspired violence in the 2015 national elections; and continue efforts to build local capacity to manage the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The Ambassador inherited internal mission management issues that compete for his attention: low regard for front office leadership; serious problems in the management section; deficiencies in the chancery construction; and challenges in finding and maintaining residential property (exacerbated by a rapid increase in U.S. direct-hire positions), regaining supervision over and improved performance by a large group of LE staff members, and supervising and mentoring a large group of first- and second-tour U.S. staff (FAST). All of these issues have contributed to low mission morale.

In his first 6 months, the Ambassador, an experienced West Africa hand, gained the respect of his country team and wider mission for his leadership, expertise, commitment to improving management performance, and willingness to focus on issues underlying poor morale.

The Ambassador is using the National Security Decision Directive 38 process to ensure that the management platform can support mission growth. His predecessor approved 12 different requests from September 2011 until the current Ambassador's arrival. Since then, the only approvals he has given were for two additional Marine security guards and for two Department of Treasury representatives. For the latter, he stipulated stringent advance funding criteria to ensure that residences and offices are in place prior to the arrival of new staff. Because of the high costs of maintaining a U.S. direct-hire position in Abidjan, the Department of Defense is considering rescinding an earlier approved staffing increase request.

The OIG team's review of documentation (reporting cables and calendars) showed that the Ambassador engaged regularly with senior Ivoirian Government officials and senior international community counterparts in implementing U.S. policy. The Ambassador demonstrated that he can get short-notice access to senior Ivoirians and that he meets with the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General, other ambassadors representing countries on the United Nations Security Council, and the senior French military in country, all of whom work together to support Côte d'Ivoire's democratic transition. The Ambassador, who is fluent in French, also arranges for meetings at the embassy with representatives of Côte d'Ivoire's civil society.

The deputy chief of mission (DCM) brought broad East Africa experience when she arrived in 2012. The OIG team observed that she possesses detailed knowledge of Côte d'Ivoire's political establishment and provides informed advice to the Ambassador on personalities in support of his policy implementation.

Washington-based consumers of mission reporting are pleased with Embassy Abidjan's output.

### **Interagency Coordination**

The Ambassador maintains a comprehensive schedule of internal meetings with his interagency representatives. He conducts the meetings collegially, displaying confidence with his knowledge and understanding of their in-country programs. His senior staff acknowledges the Ambassador's professional expertise and experience, as well as his support for their programs. His management style is confident, hands off, and informal. He encourages senior staff to engage with him directly, and his focus on business keeps meetings short and productive.

### **Morale**

Morale among U.S. direct-hire staff members at Embassy Abidjan is poor, as revealed in OIG questionnaire responses and personal interviews and as based on OIG team observations. Reasons included dissatisfaction with living conditions, such as housing, traffic, and cost of living; with poor performance in many areas of the short-handed management section; and with the DCM's interpersonal style.

The Ambassador is taking steps to address these areas, such as initiating a rotating monthly wine and cheese happy hour where U.S. direct-hire staff can relax and socialize and by encouraging U.S. and LE staff to establish an embassy association and commissary. Both American and LE staff acknowledged subsequent improvements in morale. Working with LE staff, he also built on his predecessor's and the DCM's prior initiatives that addressed areas of concern the LE Staff Association raised with the OIG team during the 2008 OIG inspection. He made a popular decision to adjust embassy hours to allow for a Friday noon closing. The Ambassador has selected his next DCM, who will assist him in expanding upon these efforts.

### ***Deputy Chief of Mission***

The DCM shares responsibility for the management of and morale in the embassy. In OIG questionnaire responses and interviews, U.S. staff complained about the DCM's leadership, particularly between August and November 2013, when she served as *chargé d'affaires*. Embassy staff did acknowledge the DCM's political acumen and gave her credit for seeking to identify and taking some steps to address issues affecting mission performance. For example, she succeeded in recruiting experienced mid-level officers to fill gaps and to replace inexperienced officers, laying the groundwork for future improvements in the management area.

After his November 2013 arrival, the Ambassador sought to address staff concerns with mentoring. Some staff members noted a positive change in the DCM's interpersonal style as a result, but overall she was ineffective in improving the embassy's management functions (based on declining scores for International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) in a February 2014 survey). Some of the low scores can be attributed to staffing and experience gaps, but embassy personnel described the DCM in questionnaires and interviews as often treating routine issues as urgent and then micromanaging the response. In interpersonal interactions, staff perceived the DCM as unpredictable and prone to being abrasive with or raising her voice to

employees she deemed as underperforming. The DCM is scheduled to depart Abidjan in June 2014.

### **Recruiting**

Embassy Abidjan is not a service needs post,<sup>1</sup> despite having experienced lengthy absences in key positions. Between 2011 and 2014, Embassy Abidjan experienced serious gaps in the management officer position (13 months); the supervisory general services officer position (30 months); the human resources officer position (from 2010 vacant, or, until recently, support provided remotely from Embassy Lome); a 4-month absence of the financial management officer, followed by a gap in this position as of late April 2014; a prospective lengthy gap following the current consular section chief's departure in June 2014, with no named successor; and a gap of at least 2 months when the current DCM departs mid-June 2014.

Additionally, the embassy has 19 FAST officers, of whom 16 are Department of State (Department) officers. This represents 26 percent of the total U.S. direct-hire staff in Abidjan and 44 percent of Department positions. This high percentage of inexperienced staff levies an additional burden on embassy senior and mid-level management for supervision and mentoring, contributes to the management section's performance decline over the past 2 years, and creates a vulnerability for internal management controls.

### **Professional Development and Mentoring of First- and Second-Tour Officers**

Embassy management has faced a challenge in creating a developmental program for the large group of FAST officers, which comprises Department generalists and specialists, as well as staff from other agencies. The OIG team observed that the group collectively displayed an attitude of dissatisfaction with their experience in the embassy, which contrasted sharply with the observed or described good performance and attitude of these individuals.

The Ambassador and DCM are committed to mentoring the FAST officers and meet regularly with the FAST group to provide broader professional development and mentoring. Additionally, after the Ambassador's arrival, the front office attempted to engage the group in developing a FAST program by providing a model draft for its consideration and action. Several FAST participants reported the group's reaction to be one of suspicion as to what the front office's ulterior motive was; others reported not being interested and questioned the utility of a FAST program for such a diverse range of participants. The OIG team counseled the Ambassador on ideas for engaging this group more effectively.

### **Emergency Preparedness and Security**

U.S. direct-hire staff described the Ambassador as being committed to embassy personnel security. The Ambassador received high scores in security on OIG questionnaires and in interviews with embassy staff during the inspection.

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<sup>1</sup> A service needs post is one that, due to severe staffing shortages, is eligible for additional recruitment initiatives, such as a service needs differential for Foreign Service officers who accept a 3-year assignment at such a post.

## Policy and Program Implementation

### Political/Economic Section

The political/economic section is fulfilling its reporting and policy advocacy responsibilities. The section chief is a first-time section supervisor. Since her arrival in August 2013, she and her deputy have devoted considerable time to developing the skills of the section's two other U.S. direct-hire reporting officers, the office management specialist, and the eligible family member political/economic assistant, all of whom are on their first assignment. Every officer, except for one, is language qualified in French, and most noted that their contacts' preferred to speak French in meetings. Almost all of the section's American employees, including the office management specialist, participated in public diplomacy outreach activities.

#### *Timely, Varied, and Well-Sourced Reporting*

In the 8 months preceding the inspection, the section produced 148 cables, of which 51 were readouts of the Ambassador's meetings with Ivorian Government officials and senior-level contacts or were reports of demarche deliveries. There were 41 cables on Ivorian political developments, including human rights and reconciliation issues. Washington end users praised the section's ample coverage of the spectrum of Ivorian politics, especially its insights on the internal dynamics of the government and opposition coalitions. The OIG team's review confirmed that political reporting was generally well sourced and consisted of a good mixture of spot messages and analytical pieces. Although the section produced fewer economic cables, it reported on issues related to the mission's Integrated Country Strategy goals, including the Ivorian Government's progress in meeting International Monetary Fund and World Bank benchmarks and its efforts to create conditions conducive to attracting private sector investment. The section also compiles a biweekly roundup cable of brief writeups of different issues. The OIG team counseled the section chief on the importance of ensuring that high-priority issues are not bundled into the roundup cables but are transmitted as individual reports. The OIG team also encouraged the section chief to continue her staff's efforts to rebuild and expand biographies and upload them onto the Department's Diplopedia SharePoint site.

#### *Inefficient Use of Section's Locally Employed Staff Resources*

The production of a political/economic press highlights summary consumes at least 3 hours of the political/economic specialists' time every day and has led to an imbalance of workloads among the political/economic section's four LE staff members. Because the press summary takes precedence over almost all of the specialists' other duties, the LE staff translator and the former administrative assistant/now commercial assistant have had to assume some of their colleagues' responsibilities. The public affairs section (PAS) also compiles a comprehensive daily press review in English that is disseminated widely throughout the embassy and to Washington consumers. In accordance with 3 *Foreign Affairs Manual* (FAM) 1214 b. (3), managers should make effective use of resources. Elimination of the political/economic press highlights, which is primarily in French and distributed only to the political/economic section, PAS, and front office, would reduce redundancy and provide the political/economic specialists more time to carry out their regular duties, including outreach to Ivorian contacts.

**Recommendation 1:** Embassy Abidjan should eliminate the daily political/economic press highlights report. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***Section Supports Trade Promotion Efforts***

Along with the Ambassador, section staff has carried out commercial advocacy on behalf of U.S. firms. The section also regularly briefs U.S. business representatives interested in doing business in Côte d'Ivoire.

***Upcoming Change in Leahy Vetting Coordinators***

The primary Leahy vetting coordinator is the political/economic section's office management specialist; her backup is the regional security office's office management specialist. Both individuals have received formal instruction on using the Department's International Vetting and Security Tracking system.<sup>2</sup> As the two coordinators will depart from post this summer, the embassy is preparing for their successors to receive the relevant training.

***Foreign Assistance Self-Help Program***

Côte d'Ivoire receives assistance money through the Bureau of African Affairs' Special Self-Help Program, including \$47,000 for the FY 2013 funding cycle. Management of this program recently switched from the U.S. Agency for International Development to the Department, and embassies are being required to assume more duties than before. Embassy Abidjan is currently filling its vacant Special Self-Help Program staff coordinator position. Based on the coordinator's field monitoring responsibilities and other duties requiring French-language proficiency, the OIG team counseled the political/economic section chief on the merits of maintaining the position as an LE staff slot, given the uncertain availability of a French-speaking eligible family member.

**Public Diplomacy**

Since 2012, PAS has been rebuilding a public diplomacy presence that was drastically reduced following the ordered departure of U.S. direct hires in December 2010. At present, PAS engages regularly with Ivoirian audiences. In FY 2013, the Information Resource Center, which is part of PAS, conducted 171 programs for target audiences, increased from 82 the previous year. PAS typically carries out multiple public diplomacy programs daily. On some days, as many as four activities take place, including work with journalists, social media engagement, English-language activities, educational advising, and programs with relevant audiences on specific themes such as Earth Day.

The OIG team conducted interviews with PAS staff. The team reviewed PAS files, along with documents the section produced. The team observed regular section meetings, including daily activity at the Information Resource Center, and PAS interaction with Ivoirian journalists

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<sup>2</sup> This system is for completing and documenting Leahy vetting in the field and for submitting approved cases for further vetting in Washington.

and exchange visitors. The OIG team found no problems that warrant a recommendation in the conduct of the exchange programs or the press and information operation, including educational advising and alumni activities and oversight of the American Spaces, which are public diplomacy platforms in hosting organizations with a focus on issues related to the United States.

### ***Planning and Coordination***

Staff expressed concerns about the section's increased volume of work, including frustration over insufficient coordination of program activities and the flow of information, despite the weekly section meeting. Some noted scheduling conflicts and a duplication of efforts. Staff also generally expressed a desire to participate in medium- and long-term planning activities. Although the strategic focus of their work was appropriate, employees indicated the need to maximize limited time and resources. Some of those interviewed also noted a lack of recognition and acknowledgement of their efforts from managers. All of these concerns appeared to affect morale. The OIG team discussed with the public affairs officer ways to address these issues.

### ***Information Resource Center***

The active Information Resource Center distributes reading materials electronically to subscribers, to whom the center charges a modest fee. This "recycling" program puts the money collected back into the public diplomacy program. In FY 2013, this activity generated \$958. The OIG team believes that the money involved does not justify the program's continuation, given the transaction costs of handling and accounting for small amounts of cash. The public affairs officer agreed to discontinue charging patrons for electronic subscriptions in the center.

### ***Inadequate Grant Files***

PAS budgeted \$27,000 for grants in FY 2014. The section also administers public diplomacy grants funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Bureau of International Information Programs to cover American Spaces and educational advising costs, among others. In FY 2013, those Department-funded grants brought the PAS total to \$226,671. OIG team interviews and a review of the files identified a number of deficiencies and instances of noncompliance with Department grant regulations. Although grants generally supported embassy priorities, some grants files lacked program, financial, closeout, or monitoring reports. Thirteen grants from FYs 2012 to 2013 lacked receipts. In a small number of grants, required signatures were missing. The public affairs officer does not meet regularly with LE staff to review grant issues. There is also no formal procedure, such as review by committee, for choosing grant recipients. These shortcomings create vulnerabilities and make it difficult to measure how well grants are meeting mission goals.

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy Abidjan should implement procedures to comply fully with applicable grants policy directives published by the Department of State's Federal Assistance Division. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

Only one LE staff member acts as the grants officer representative on all public diplomacy grants. In addition to grants management, the employee has numerous other duties.

However, the employee does not have subject-matter expertise in all areas covered by the section's grants. As a result, he cannot monitor and perform the full spectrum of grants officer representative responsibilities on every grant. Inadequate monitoring creates a potential vulnerability.

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Abidjan should provide training for additional staff members to act as grants officer representatives in accordance with the subject matter of the grants. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

The OIG team discussed with the public affairs officer ways to strengthen monitoring, tracking, and selecting recipients of public diplomacy grants.

### **Consular Services**

The OIG team reviewed the consular section's operations and management controls and identified no significant shortcomings, except for the items discussed below.

#### ***Consular Personnel Not Fully Prepared for Crisis Management***

In the event of a crisis, consular staff is unprepared to operate emergency communications equipment, including laptops and portable satellite telephone systems. Current laptops are old and use an antiquated operating system that the Department no longer supports. New laptops are slated to arrive soon, and consular staff will require training on their use. In addition to laptops, the consular staff uses portable satellite telephones in the field to communicate with the embassy, the Department, local government authorities, and private U.S. citizens. The portable satellite telephones enable communication via Internet and telephone and are of primary importance during a crisis. The consular section is not conducting periodic drills to ensure that consular staff is proficient in the use of these telephones.

Per 7 FAM 1812.3-3 (Off-site Equipment), consular sections should test off-site equipment regularly and ensure that consular personnel are familiar with its operation. According to 7 FAM 071 (Introduction), the consular section chief is responsible for managing post's warden system, including periodic testing, and 12 FAH-1 H-711 (Crisis Preparedness – Purpose) notes that effective emergency planning requires training, drills, and exercises.

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Abidjan should perform periodic drills that test consular staff members' ability to operate emergency communications equipment and access networks during a crisis. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

In the event of a crisis, consular staff is unfamiliar with the range of support it could expect to receive from, or provide to, other U.S. embassies in the region. Department regulation 12 FAH-1 H-332 (Post Profile) recommends that consular managers be aware of employees at U.S. embassies in neighboring countries who possess relevant skills and who could assist in a crisis. The consular section provided no documentation that it met this requirement. During past crises in Côte d'Ivoire, consular staff coordinated the evacuation of private U.S. citizens to neighboring countries. The consular sections in U.S. embassies in those receiving countries have played central roles in coordinating Abidjan evacuations.

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Abidjan should establish working agreements with U.S. embassies in neighboring countries that identify the types of consular support that Embassy Abidjan could receive from and provide to those embassies in the event of a crisis in Côte d'Ivoire or the region. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***No Line-of-Site Supervision of Consular Cashier Booth***

The accountable consular officer is unable to supervise properly the consular subcashier because she does not have line-of-site supervision of the cashier's booth. This deficiency stems from a design flaw in the configuration of the consular section. Per 7 FAH-1 H-734.5 (Secure Facilities and Equipment), visual observation is a key part of cashiering supervision. The section could address this flaw by installing a window in the wall of the cashier's booth or by providing a video monitor system.

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Abidjan should provide a means by which the accountable consular officer can observe the consular subcashier at work in the cashier booth. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***No Service Counters Appropriate for Handicapped Access***

The consular section does not have a service window with a counter low enough to accommodate customers in wheelchairs. Counters at all of the section's eight service windows are 42-inches high. Customers in wheelchairs are unable to have their fingerprints taken, sign documents, or converse with consular staff in comfort. Per 7 FAH-1 H-282 (Evaluating Consular Section Space), consular sections should offer handicapped access, including a window low enough for wheelchairs, whenever possible.

**Recommendation 7:** Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should provide a counter at a consular service window that is at an appropriate height for customers in wheelchairs. (Action: Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with OBO)

## Resource Management

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Positions	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2013
<b>Department of State</b>					
Diplomatic and Consular Programs	16	1	48	65	\$2,506,700
ICASS	8	4	118	130	\$10,138,700
Public Diplomacy	3	0	13	16	\$1,011,834
Diplomatic Security	4	0	6	10	\$2,204,977
Marine Security	8	0	3	11	\$150,100
Consular	3	1	6	10	\$513,841
Representation	0	0	0	0	\$24,000
Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations	1	0	0	1	\$2,181,033
<b>Open Source Center</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	not available
<b>Department of Defense</b>					
Defense Attaché Office	4	0	2	6	\$233,866
Office of Defense Cooperation	2	0	2	4	\$153,310
Foreign Affairs Office	2	0	0	2	not available
Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention	0	0	1	1	\$52,797
<b>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>\$5,605,090</b>
<b>USAID</b>					
U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief	8	0	11	19	\$60,596,300
Office of Development Credit	4	0	8	12	\$11,800,643
Office of Transition Initiatives	2	0	2	4	\$8,033,375
<b>Totals</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>\$105,206,566</b>

Source: Embassy Abidjan financial management office

### Management Overview

Embassy Abidjan’s management section is rebuilding infrastructure after a decade of political turbulence that included an ordered departure in 2010–2011 and staffing gaps in U.S. direct-hire positions. The embassy reports that its administrative support platform is under strain from staffing growth as personnel return to Abidjan. A combination of post-conflict operating conditions, rapid staffing growth, and staffing gaps in key positions have contributed to a

challenging operating environment for management section personnel, dissatisfaction among embassy customers, and weak internal controls.

### **Customer Service Needs Improvement**

The embassy does not use eServices, the Department's quality management system for administrative services, to monitor performance and customer satisfaction. In responses to OIG questionnaires, U.S. direct hires rated 25 of 26 administrative services far below the averages of prior posts inspected by OIG in recent years. Customers rated 17 administrative services below 3 on a 5-point scale. The percentage of ICASS services that met uniform service standards is below the average of other embassies in the Bureau of African Affairs. For example, the management section did not complete 90 percent of requests for travel authorizations and orders, 82 percent of procurement requests for micropurchases, and 63 percent of requests for office supplies in accordance with uniform service standards during the month of March 2014. Although the embassy has deployed eServices, it does not make use of the system. To address customer service concerns, the embassy could make use of existing customer service tools to set priorities, enhance accountability, and communicate service improvements to the embassy community.

**Recommendation 8:** Embassy Abidjan should implement a plan to set performance goals for the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services system service providers using uniform service standards information. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

### **New Embassy Compound Maintenance Issues**

Embassy Abidjan occupied the current chancery, constructed at a cost of \$74.5 million, in 2005. Since the previous OIG inspection in 2008, the embassy has experienced a series of costly buildings systems failures. Buildings systems issues include the following:

- The embassy abandoned in place one of the water-cooled York chiller systems in 2012 and procured an air-cooled chiller system at a cost of about \$950,000. The original water-cooled chiller system did not include a water treatment system to reduce corrosion and mineral deposition in the chiller system. A second water-cooled chiller system also will need to be replaced.
- The embassy replaced forced-entry/ballistic-resistant doors at the chancery at a cost of \$2.569 million in May 2014. The original doors did not meet Department standards in terms of installation and did not function properly.
- In April 2014, the Department approved \$495,000 to fund replacements of the asphalt membrane roofs of the chancery and other buildings. Defects dating to the original installation include improperly installed flashing, scuppers, and concrete pads on the chancery roof. As a result, the roof leaks during the rainy season and water penetrates windows on the upper floors of the chancery.

- The embassy reports leaks in the building's domestic hot water risers caused by inadequate soldering of copper joints. The embassy will likely need to undertake a buildingwide program to repair faulty soldering, including in the controlled access areas of the embassy.

OIG's 2008 inspection identified a lack of facilities maintenance personnel trained to maintain the chancery's buildings systems as a key challenge. The report also recommended that OBO provide regional contract support to assist in preventive maintenance. The new embassy compound did not undergo an independent commissioning process to ensure that the chancery and related buildings complied with terms and conditions of the construction contract prior to final acceptance by the government. Because of a combination of construction defects dating to the original construction of the chancery, limited maintenance staff expertise, and a lack of preventive maintenance during periods when the embassy was in evacuation status, buildings systems have suffered premature failures. From 2011 to 2013, for example, the embassy did not have a functioning work order system in place to perform preventive maintenance. The former Ambassador identified chancery construction defects as a reportable condition to the Department in his 2013 annual management controls statement.

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations has taken steps to systematize preventive maintenance in the chancery. For example, in May 2014, the bureau approved \$432,000 in funding for annual service contracts for the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems; generators; fire suppression system; and other buildings systems. This is the first time that the embassy will have had the benefit of contracted support services. At other posts, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations has initiated a recommissioning process to identify systematically building problems not identified after the original construction handover. Recommissioning is a standard practice in the construction industry to identify necessary repairs. Because the remaining building defects may involve significant capital expenses and construction in controlled access areas of the embassy, a comprehensive assessment is necessary.

**Recommendation 9:** The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, in coordination with Embassy Abidjan, should schedule a recommissioning project to identify and address construction issues in the chancery and associated buildings. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Abidjan)

### **Staffing Is Not Aligned to Support Current Operations**

The embassy is overstaffed with local employees. Prior to the country's civil war, Embassy Abidjan was a regional hub for West Africa; however, the embassy has retained a number of legacy LE staff positions dating from the period it served a much larger clientele. The Department's 2010 rightsizing report<sup>3</sup> noted overstaffing at Embassy Abidjan relative to its peer posts in the Bureau of African Affairs. The report also noted that the embassy performed many functions in house, such as painting, gardening, custodial services, and vehicle maintenance, that contractors do in other countries.

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<sup>3</sup> The Department prepares rightsizing reports every 5 years to determine optimal staffing levels for overseas missions.

Some sections, such as travel and housing, report staffing and skills shortages. For example, the facilities maintenance section employs only one heating, air conditioning, and ventilation technician to support the chancery's complex chiller system. Other sections are overstaffed. For example, the embassy employs two upholsterers but outsources furniture reupholstering to a contractor. It also employs four dispatchers and two supervisors in a small motor pool. Because of a Department-mandated hiring freeze, about 30 positions are currently vacant, a situation that allows the embassy to examine its staffing needs and reprogram resources through abolishing positions rather than reduction-in-force procedures. In 2015, the embassy must complete a rightsizing exercise with the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation to determine optimal staffing levels. Conducting the 2015 rightsizing review will require more time than would normally be the case, because of the need to resolve legacy staffing issues and align staffing to support the embassy's current needs.

**Recommendation 10:** The Bureau of African Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Abidjan, should send temporary duty support to help the embassy prepare a staffing realignment plan in coordination with the 2015 rightsizing study. (Action: AF, in coordination with Embassy Abidjan)

### **Inadequate Management Policies and Procedures**

Many management policies and procedures required by regulation are out of date or do not exist. For example, the embassy has not issued post-specific policies relating to control of official vehicles, sale of employee personal property, and housing, among others. The long-term absence of a management officer and supervisory general services officer contributed to this deficiency. The lack of updated policies can contribute to internal controls breakdowns and excessive costs.

**Recommendation 11:** Embassy Abidjan should establish and distribute administrative policies related to official vehicles, sale of employee personal property, housing, and other areas required by regulation. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

### **Financial Management**

The OIG team found no anomalies in funds management, unliquidated obligations, and the suspense deposit account. During March 2014, a financial management rover based in Paris conducted a pre-inspection of the section and recommended that the embassy issue a notice explaining the temporary quarters subsistence allowance and reminding employees to itemize their expenses on the temporary quarters subsistence allowance form. The Paris rover also recommended that Embassy Abidjan issue a management notice reminding employees to pay their bills on time.

#### ***Incorrect Calculation of Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance***

The embassy has inconsistently interpreted the temporary quarters subsistence allowance calculation. On some occasions, the embassy based the allowance on the meals and incidental expenses because the embassy paid the hotel directly. On other occasions, the embassy calculated the allowance based on the full per diem. The embassy did not review or adjust any of

these vouchers. The Department's Office of Allowances stated that the temporary quarters subsistence allowance calculation is based on the full per diem. The OIG team also requested additional guidance to assist the embassy in understanding and calculating the allowance correctly.

**Recommendation 12:** Embassy Abidjan should review the temporary quarters subsistence paid vouchers, recalculate the allowance, and collect any overpayment from U.S. direct-hire employees. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

**Recommendation 13:** Embassy Abidjan should publish a management notice on the temporary quarters subsistence allowance and distribute it to all embassy staff. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***Improvements Needed for Compliance with Prompt Payment Act***

Embassy Abidjan does not have an effective system of internal procedures to ensure compliance with requirements of the Prompt Payment Act. Thirty-two invoices remain unpaid for one vendor since October 2013, and the embassy's vendor payments tracking system is inaccurate. A recent meeting with one of the embassy's largest vendors addressed unpaid invoices and the impact on the company's accounting records. The electronic spreadsheet for logging and tracking invoices contains incomplete and unreliable data for when the embassy receives the invoice and how staff processes it. The ICASS uniform service standards require the embassy to process invoices within 15 days from date of receipt. Increased communication within the embassy about the roles and responsibilities regarding invoice payments and consistent entry and monitoring of the invoice spreadsheet would facilitate compliance with the Prompt Payment Act and build better relationships with vendors.

**Recommendation 14:** Embassy Abidjan should maintain an accurate and up-to-date electronic spreadsheet to log and track invoice payments. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***Requests for Exoneration from Value-Added Tax***

Embassy Abidjan does not have an organized system for preparing and processing the Ivorian Government's value-added tax forms to relieve vendors from their financial liability to the local tax authority. Some vendors complain that the embassy did not submit the required forms and have raised concerns with the front office. The embassy employee responsible for this process could not identify all invoices that the embassy needs to submit. The OIG team identified three pending invoices that date to September 2013 and May 2012. The embassy would improve its relationship with the vendors by preparing and submitting the requests for exoneration from value-added tax on time so that vendors can reconcile their accounts.

**Recommendation 15:** Embassy Abidjan should establish written standard operating procedures for the value-added tax exoneration process, including logging in invoices, preparing the requests, and providing all completed documentation to vendors. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

### ***Alternate Cashier Advance and Operation***

Embassy Abidjan's alternate cashier does not have an operating advance. The *Cashier User Guide*, dated May 2013, states that the alternate cashier should maintain a sufficient advance to sustain cashier operations during brief absences of the principal cashier. Without this advance, the embassy risks interruption of cashiering operations.

**Recommendation 16:** Embassy Abidjan should authorize a sufficient advance to the alternate cashier to sustain cashier operations during absences of the principal cashier. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

### **Human Resources**

The section updated its compensation plan in 2013 and its LE staff handbook in 2014. The section adheres to Department performance management standards and deadlines for work requirements statements, performance evaluations for direct-hire and LE staff, and LE within-grade increases. Post allowance and differential reports are up to date.

### **General Services and Facilities Maintenance**

The OIG team reviewed operations in procurement, housing, motor pool, facilities maintenance, and property management. The team counseled employees on managing blanket purchase agreements and petty cash purchases more efficiently, establishing housing make-ready budgets, and improving motor vehicle recordkeeping of daily trip tickets. The embassy has established a partial program of preventive maintenance for the chancery. It also has a functioning safety, health, and occupational safety program and reports that it has remedied most safety issues identified in a 2013 safety visit.

### ***Longer Lease Terms May Improve Efficiency of Housing Program***

The embassy negotiates leases with a maximum term of only 30 months, because of the time-consuming requirement to register leases longer than this period with local authorities. Regulations in 15 FAM 228 and 15 FAM 313.2 strongly encourage minimum lease terms of 5 years. In some cases, the embassy exceeds the \$5,000 make-ready budgets outlined in 15 FAM 313.1 a. for new residences because of deficiencies in the properties turned over by property owners. With shorter lease terms, make-ready costs are allocated over a shorter time, making housing more expensive. With longer lease terms, the embassy avoids the time-consuming process of negotiating leases every 30 months.

**Recommendation 17:** Embassy Abidjan should negotiate short-term leases with a minimum term of 5 years to the maximum extent practicable. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

### ***Motor Pool Fleet Lifecycle Replacement Plan Can Improve Efficiency***

The embassy's motor vehicle fleet consists of 72 official vehicles with an acquisition cost of \$3.22 million. The embassy reports significant problems in maintaining the readiness of its vehicle fleet. For example, at one point in early 2014, 32 vehicles were not serviceable because

of maintenance issues. The embassy's plan to move maintenance services from the warehouse to the chancery will improve oversight, and use of the Department's new fleet management system will assist with dispatching and recordkeeping. However, many vehicles in the fleet are past their serviceable lifespans: 29 vehicles are more than 5 years old and may be eligible for replacement. Retaining an older fleet increases operating costs and the risk of mechanical breakdowns.

**Recommendation 18:** Embassy Abidjan should establish a lifecycle replacement plan for its motor vehicle fleet. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***Embassy's Government-Owned Warehouse Is Underutilized and Distant from Chancery***

The embassy's government-owned warehouse is underutilized and does not facilitate efficient property management practices. For example, it has six separate warehouses and a total space of 41,000 square feet, which is excessive given that several office buildings on the warehouse compound are vacant. Conversely, the warehouse lacks sufficient climate-controlled storage space. Furthermore, the warehouse's location about an hour's drive from the chancery inhibits American officer oversight. Although the American assistant general services officer visits about once a week, this level of oversight may be insufficient in a high-fraud environment. OIG's 2008 inspection recommended identifying an alternative warehouse facility closer to the chancery to increase controls and efficiency and allow sale or exchange of the existing warehouse compound.

**Recommendation 19:** Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should prepare a request to the Department of State identifying options and alternatives for replacing the existing government-owned warehouse. (Action: Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with OBO)

**Information Management**

The information management section effectively manages new technology projects, including an upgrade of the embassy's satellite system to a new X-band terminal, an update of server room cable infrastructure, and the expansion of bandwidth circuitry that enables implementation of an integrated and efficient foreign affairs network for all agencies at the embassy.

The OIG team counseled section staff on updating the communications annex in the emergency action plan and standard operation procedures, records and inventory management, and contingency communications readiness.

***No Off-Site Backup Tape Storage for Classified Network***

Embassy Abidjan has not instituted off-site backup media storage procedures for the classified network. Per 12 FAM 629.2-9, embassies should have an off-site storage location in an approved and controlled facility to minimize the loss of data in an emergency.

**Recommendation 20:** Embassy Abidjan should implement off-site backup tape storage for the classified network system. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***No Emergency Power-Off Control in Warehouse***

The warehouse has no emergency power-off control for the information systems center computer room, as required by 12 FAM 629.4-3. In an emergency, embassy staff may not be able to access the computer room to shut off power.

**Recommendation 21:** Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should install an emergency power-off control outside the computer server room at the warehouse. (Action: Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with OBO)

***Inadequate Recordkeeping and File Retirement***

The embassy does not maintain and retire official records in accordance with 5 FAM 414.5. The embassy has not issued guidance and procedures for maintaining and retiring official records. Staff store official records on shared electronic drives but do not organize records by year or according to traffic analysis by geography and subject or specified terms. Good records management reduces vulnerabilities and enables the Department to perform its functions and recover from a disaster.

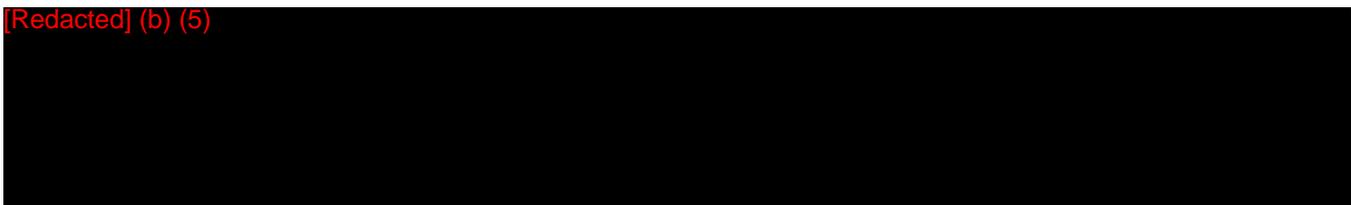
**Recommendation 22:** Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should implement procedures to maintain and retire official records in accordance with Department of State standards. (Action: Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with A)

***Improper Saving of Political/Economic Common-Use Electronic Files***

The political/economic staff is not saving its work regularly in the section's common-use electronic files. A review of the section's common-use 2013 and 2014 files in the shared drive showed that staff organized folders by traffic analysis and geography terms. However, some related documents were filed under separate traffic analysis and geography terms folders instead of being consolidated under one common folder, and there were major traffic analysis and geography terms folders missing in the 2014 files. In addition, in many folders, there were long periods for which no documents on active issues were stored. Several section members will be transferring from the embassy this summer, and their work may be permanently lost if not saved in the common-use folders according to a uniform labeling format. Per 5 FAH-4 H-215.5 a., there should be procedures in place for employees to incorporate record material into the appropriate file upon completion of assignments or projects. To date, section staff has also not used record emails.

**Recommendation 23:** Embassy Abidjan should require political/economic section staff to store their completed work documents in the section's common-use folders. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

[Redacted] (b) (5)



[Redacted] (b) (5)

**Recommendation 24:** [Redacted] (b) (5)

***Insufficient Contingency Communications Tests and Training***

Portable contingency communications assets are essential in the event of telephone and data circuit outages or remote emergency field operations. The embassy is not performing live monthly tests of the portable satellite terminal and associated equipment per 5 FAH-2 H-653.2. To facilitate operational readiness, it is also vital that LE staff know how to operate and maintain this system.

**Recommendation 25:** Embassy Abidjan should perform monthly tests of the portable satellite terminal and associated contingency equipment. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

**Recommendation 26:** Embassy Abidjan should train applicable locally employed staff to operate and maintain the portable satellite terminal and associated contingency equipment. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***Out-of-Date Communications Appendix in Emergency Action Plan***

The embassy does not have an accurate communications appendix in the emergency action plan, as required in 12 FAH-1 Appendix 7.1 and 12 FAH-1 H-024.8 b. A properly documented and tested emergency action plan affects the embassy's capacity to operate effectively in the event of a disaster or unforeseen incident. Contingency planning and testing mitigate the risks such events pose to embassy operations.

**Recommendation 27:** Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with the Bureau of Information Resource Management, should update and test the communications appendix in the emergency action plan in accordance with Department of State regulations. (Action: Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with IRM)

## **Quality of Life**

Morale is poor, according to OIG survey results. Abidjan has a tropical climate and good restaurants but offers few entertainment options. Hardship factors include crime, traffic, and limited goods and services. U.S. direct-hire employees receive a 30-percent cost of living allowance, a 25-percent hardship differential, and two rest and recuperation trips for a 2-year assignment.

### **Community Liaison Office**

Staff gave the community liaison office operation low marks in OIG-administered questionnaires and the ICASS customer satisfaction survey. In surveys, staff complained about the sponsor and orientation programs, insufficient activities for families, the information found in the newsletter, and lack of cohesion among American and LE staff members. One reason for the low scores is the embassy community's changing demographic. Following the period of political turmoil that led to an ordered departure in 2010, the embassy reinstated the community liaison office when the Department allowed the return of adult dependents in March 2012. It was not until fall 2013 that dependent children returned and started attending local schools. The community liaison office did not respond quickly enough to the change in demographics, resulting in a significant drop in customer satisfaction. The embassy is planning to hire a community liaison office assistant coordinator to bolster the program and to replace the community liaison office coordinator when his spouse's tour ends in December 2014.

### **Schools**

U.S. direct-hire dependents attend three schools. Parents are generally satisfied with the quality of education. The Ambassador appointed two representatives to the board of directors of the International Community School of Abidjan, which is the recipient of a Department grant. In April 2013, the Department's regional education officer visited each school; observed its operations; and met with administrators, school board members, teachers, parents, embassy staff, and students. The regional education officer made recommendations to improve the international school's operations, including hiring and training a new director, increasing tuition, implementing academic testing, increasing school and extracurricular activities, conducting a security audit, requesting a security grant, and allowing the director to run operations. The board of directors is in the process of implementing recommendations noted in the regional educational officer's report.

### **Health Unit**

The OIG team found no deficiencies or noncompliance issues with Department regulations in the health unit's operations. A Foreign Service health practitioner, two local registered nurses, a laboratory technician, and an assistant provide medical services. A regional medical officer based in Bamako and a regional medical officer/psychiatrist based in Accra provide regional medical coverage. The unit also provides limited occupational health services to LE staff.

**American Employee Recreation Association**

At the time of inspection, a prospective board of directors was in the process of forming an association.

## Management Controls

The annual chief of mission management controls statement of assurance, signed on July 19, 2013, stated that the embassy completed all required internal management controls reviews. The evaluation of the systems of management controls provided reasonable assurance that the embassy achieved the referenced management controls objectives. The evaluation, however, did disclose three potential material weaknesses and/or significant deficiencies:

[Redacted] (b) (5)

- The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations never commissioned the chancery, and the builder installed some of the building's support systems components incorrectly.
- The embassy has 27 unabated safety, health, and environmental management concerns identified in the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations report.

The OIG team identified other serious long-standing weaknesses in the general services section, described earlier in this report.

### *Property Management Internal Controls*

The embassy uses paper-based transactions to record transactions of personal property at the warehouse, contrary to Department property management regulations in 14 FAM 414.2-1 a. (1). Property management transactions are approved exclusively by LE staff, a practice dating to periods when American personnel could not access the warehouse because of civil unrest. LE staff members sign paper DS-584 nonexpendable paper property transaction forms rather than use the electronic property management system, which provides greater accountability. Use of the Department's electronic property management system is mandatory under 14 FAM 414.2-1 a. (1) and is especially important for remote-location warehouses, where American supervision is limited and the risk of property theft or loss is high.

**Recommendation 28:** Embassy Abidjan should use electronic property management recordkeeping for all personal property transactions. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

### *No Standard Operating Procedure for Receiving Property*

The embassy does not have written standard operating procedures for receiving personal property at the warehouse and chancery. The embassy also has not secured the receiving facility and limited access by other warehouse staff, which increases the possibility of theft or pilferage of items awaiting receipt. The embassy reported three separate instances of theft or loss over the past 2 years, involving laptops, iPads, and representational furniture at the warehouse facility. The OIG team's spot check of procurements identified one shipment for which furniture valued at \$61,065 was on the packing list but for which no receiving report was prepared; the shipment was marked complete by the receiving clerk, and no action was taken to identify a shipping discrepancy promptly, as required by 14 FAM 413.6. In the absence of written procedures for receiving property, the risk of theft, diversion, or loss of government property is increased.

**Recommendation 29:** Embassy Abidjan should implement written standard operating procedures for property management. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***Subcashier Controls***

Five subcashier supervisors have not performed periodic reconciliations, as required by 4 FAH-3 H-397.2-3. The financial management officer is responsible for assisting with any difficulties in obtaining verifications. Without this management control, errors and misuse of funds may go undetected.

**Recommendation 30:** Embassy Abidjan should require that all subcashier supervisors conduct the monthly or quarterly unannounced cash verifications and monitor compliance with this requirement. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***Accounts Receivable Are Delinquent and Billed Improperly***

The embassy's accounts receivable system does not capture costs, provide clear lines of communication, maintain organized files, and provide answers to employees' questions about the status of their accounts. The system is not clear to embassy employees, and the financial management section's inability to answer questions about employee accounts has resulted in their questioning the credibility of the accounts receivable process. Accounts receivable is money due from embassy employees for personal use of cell and home phones, fuel, and other authorized use of official vehicles and is considered a loan. Per 4 FAM 493, debts should be paid within 30 days of the initial notice of indebtedness.

**Recommendation 31:** Embassy Abidjan should update its 2007 Accounts Receivable Administrative Notice to explain the process for billing employees and remind employees of their responsibility to pay their debts, distribute this notice to embassy staff, and include it as part of the new employee check-in process. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

Mission employees complain about delays in receiving cell phone bills and the requirement for them to tally charges for personal calls, instead of the financial management section, and pay the amount directly to the cashier. Most employees pay their bills on time, but several have accounts that are 60 to 90 days or more overdue. One individual waited 6 months before paying \$1,900 in 2013 and owes \$1,000 for 2014. The financial management section sent two reminders to the employee. A manual filing system that organizes bills by category and date received and that handles all incoming bills in a systematic, orderly manner would facilitate information retrieval and timely billing.

**Recommendation 32:** Embassy Abidjan should establish a manual filing system to track and bill embassy employees for their personal telephone charges. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***Uncollected Employee Debts***

As of May 6, 2014, Embassy Abidjan had nine employees with accounts 90 days overdue, for a total of approximately \$3,900. If the embassy cannot collect the debt, it should

refer the debt to the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services, Accounts Receivable Branch. Department regulations 4 FAM 493 outline the process for collecting debts.

**Recommendation 33:** Embassy Abidjan should collect unpaid employee debts and refer any uncollectable debts to the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

***Unauthorized Embassy Boat***

The embassy has not obtained permission to employ a boat captain and operate a motorized boat. Authority to operate a boat absent bona fide operational needs may be an improper use of appropriated funds. If the Department permits the embassy to operate a boat for morale purposes, questions such as liability insurance, safety procedures, and reimbursement to the U.S. Government for other than official use must be resolved.

**Recommendation 34:** Embassy Abidjan should request via front channel cable permission from the Bureau of African Affairs to operate an embassy boat. (Action: Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with AF)

***Potential Lapse in Local Employed Staff Health and Life Insurance Coverage***

The current contract for LE staff health and life insurance benefits will expire on September 30, 2014. These benefits could lapse without a bridge contract to continue coverage. The human resources section started the health insurance solicitation process a year ago but did not receive the required survey material from the Bureau of Human Resources until March 2014. Seven months is an insufficient time to award a new health and life insurance contract.

**Recommendation 35:** Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with the Bureau of Human Resources and the Bureau of Administration, should expedite the review and award of a bridge contract to continue the locally employed staff's health and life insurance coverage. (Action: Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with DGHR and A)

***No Policy for Official Travel***

Embassy Abidjan has not established a travel policy to ensure that staff perform official travel in a manner most advantageous to the U.S. Government and consistent with travel regulations. The embassy generally issues restricted economy class tickets to local employees on official travel and full-fare economy class tickets to U.S. direct-hire travelers, but it has not established a policy concerning use of restricted tickets, as required by 14 FAM 564.2 d. The embassy does not use contract fares, where available, and does not retain documentation of cost-construct forms for indirect travel. The embassy expends about \$60,000 monthly on travel services. Issuance of a travel policy would improve internal controls and potentially reduce embassy travel costs.

**Recommendation 36:** Embassy Abidjan should issue a policy on performance of official travel that includes procedures for use of restricted economy class tickets, contract fare use, and cost-constructive travel. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

## List of Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** Embassy Abidjan should eliminate the daily political/economic press highlights report. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy Abidjan should implement procedures to comply fully with applicable grants policy directives published by the Department of State's Federal Assistance Division. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Abidjan should provide training for additional staff members to act as grants officer representatives in accordance with the subject matter of the grants. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Abidjan should perform periodic drills that test consular staff members' ability to operate emergency communications equipment and access networks during a crisis. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Abidjan should establish working agreements with U.S. embassies in neighboring countries that identify the types of consular support that Embassy Abidjan could receive from and provide to those embassies in the event of a crisis in Côte d'Ivoire or the region. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Abidjan should provide a means by which the accountable consular officer can observe the consular subcashier at work in the cashier booth. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

**Recommendation 7:** Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should provide a counter at a consular service window that is at an appropriate height for customers in wheelchairs. (Action: Embassy Abidjan, in coordination with OBO)

**Recommendation 8:** Embassy Abidjan should implement a plan to set performance goals for the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services system service providers using uniform service standards information. (Action: Embassy Abidjan)

**Recommendation 9:** The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, in coordination with Embassy Abidjan, should schedule a recommissioning project to identify and address construction issues in the chancery and associated buildings. (Action: OBO, in coordination with Embassy Abidjan)

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**Recommendation 24:** [Redacted] (b) (5)

**~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~**

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## Principal Officials

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Arrival Date</b>
Ambassador	Terence McCulley	11/2013
Deputy Chief of Mission	Cheryl Sim	08/2012
Constituent Post(s)	N/A	
Chiefs of Sections:		
Management Officer	Stephen Dodson	05/2014
Consular	Kristin Bongiovanni	06/2011
Political/Economic	Kristen Grauer	08/2013
Public Affairs	Jonathan Cebra	09/2011
Regional Security Office	Yvon Guillaume	08/2013
Other Agencies:		
Department of Defense	Michael Lee	08/2013
U.S. Agency for International Development	Jeanne Briggs	11/2012
Open Source Center	James Smaugh	08/2013
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Fazle Khan	04/2013

## **Abbreviations**

DCM	Deputy chief of mission
Department	U.S. Department of State
FAM	<i>Foreign Affairs Manual</i>
FAST	First- and second-tour (officers)
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
LE	Locally employed (staff)
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PAS	Public affairs section



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

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