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AND THE BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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Office of Inspections

January 2015

Inspection of Embassy Tbilisi, Georgia

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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

- During a period of political transition and regional instability, the Ambassador and deputy chief of mission direct the embassy's vigorous engagement with Georgia's Government and people. Embassy personnel give the Ambassador outstanding ratings.
- The embassy has insufficient U.S. staff to sustain the United States' active and productive policy agenda in Georgia. The Office of Inspector General inspection team concurs with the embassy's assessment that the political/economic, consular, and management sections—and possibly the security section—need additional staffing.
- Despite insufficient personnel in the management and information management sections, embassy customers are pleased with the services the sections provide.
- The political/economic, public diplomacy, and consular sections are performing well.

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 inspectors conducted personal interviews with approximately 70 Washington-based officials from 7 agencies and conducted more than 140 individual interviews with U.S direct-hire and locally employed staff members at Embassy Tbilisi. The team also reviewed 254 personal and quality of life questionnaires from embassy staff members, along with documents submitted by the embassy. The team physically inspected many aspects of the mission's operations.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between April 7 and 25, 2014, and in Tbilisi, Georgia, between May 19 and June 7, 2014. Ambassador Carol van Voorst (team leader), Laurent Charbonnet (deputy team leader), William Booth, Ronda Capeles, Robert Eckert, Robyn Hinson-Jones, Michael Hurley, Dolores Hylander, Barry Langevin, Charles Rowcliffe, Alexandra Vega, and Colwell Whitney conducted the inspection.

Context

Georgia and the United States established diplomatic relations in 1992, a year following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Since then, Georgia has become one of the most reformist and Western-leaning of the former Soviet republics. Russia invaded portions of Georgian territory in 2008 and subsequently recognized the “independence” of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two regions totaling about a fifth of Georgia’s land. Russian troops continue to occupy those areas, and almost a tenth of the Georgian population is internally displaced because of the conflict. Georgia broke diplomatic ties with Russia in 2008, and relations remain tense. Recent events in Ukraine have heightened Georgians’ sense of vulnerability and anxiety. The United States, which supports Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, has provided Georgia more than \$1 billion in assistance since 2008.

Georgia is the single largest non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization troop contributor to the war in Afghanistan and collaborates with the United States on a wide variety of strategic interests, including upholding U.S. and international sanctions on Iran, combating transnational crime, and strengthening export controls to limit proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The United States is helping Georgia deepen its Euro-Atlantic ties, continue to build modern democratic institutions, and enhance global security. In 2012 and 2013, fair and transparent elections resulted in peaceful and democratic transfers of political power and brought new leaders into the presidency and Prime Minister’s office. A burgeoning policy and action agenda with Georgia—and intense Washington interest in events there—have contributed to a relentless work pace. The embassy has asked for several new positions to handle the work load.

Dramatic economic reforms since 2003 have resulted in a low-tax, low-regulation business environment that put Georgia in eighth place in the World Bank’s 2014 Ease of Doing Business report. Facing high unemployment (officially 15 percent, unofficially at least double that) and weak economic growth, the Georgian Government is looking at further reforms to put it in line with European Union regulations. Georgia is scheduled to sign its Association Agreement with the European Union in June 2014. The United States and Georgia seek to identify opportunities for U.S. businesses to invest in Georgia and to increase bilateral trade.

The 714 mission employees include 135 U.S. direct-hire positions from 8 separate U.S. agencies, 14 local-hire U.S. staff members, and 565 Foreign Service national staff. Embassy Tbilisi has increased U.S. direct-hire positions by 52 percent since 2007, though the management platform has remained at 8 U.S. direct hires.

Leadership

Embassy Tbilisi's leadership team, known in Washington for diplomatic skill and substantive expertise, is pressing ahead on U.S. strategic goals in Georgia and playing an active role in shaping policy in Washington. The Ambassador, who is serving for the second time as chief of mission in a post-Soviet nation, and the deputy chief of mission (DCM) both have previous experience in Georgia and have worked in Washington policy circles. Under the front office's assured directions, senior Washington observers report, the embassy is engaging steadily and productively with the Georgians during a time of unsettling political transition.

Morale is good, as evidenced by OIG surveys and personal interviews. Employees of the rapidly growing mission appreciate the front office's collaborative and unpretentious management style. Section chiefs and agency heads report the executive team is attentive to their issues, supports their programs, and advocates U.S. interests and values. Respect for the policy judgment and operational dexterity of the front office is widespread, as is appreciation for the executive team's welcome of frank discussion.

The Ambassador's scores in OIG's personal questionnaire, which evaluates the chief of mission on more than a dozen leadership attributes, including communication skills, ethics, interpersonal relations, fairness, coordination, and problem-solving, were among the highest OIG has seen in the past 82 inspections for which statistics are available. Personal interviews on site corroborate that the Ambassador is regarded as a model and a mentor.

The Ambassador has a high and influential public profile in Georgia and has established himself as an honest broker in a fractious, fragile new democracy. At post and in Washington, the Ambassador is praised for his skill in promoting U.S. national objectives, particularly in the fields of democratic development and rule of law, without being perceived as interfering in Georgian internal affairs. His calendar records more than 200 meetings with officials at or above the rank of minister during his 21-month tenure, demonstrating extraordinary access to the highest levels of the Georgian Government. The Ambassador's public schedule, also intense and varied, covers a wide range of activities tied to embassy goals, including support for human rights, trade and business promotion, and people-to-people contacts. Senior policymakers in Washington value his perspectives and counsel on how to maintain Georgia's Euro-Atlantic trajectory and address its growing security concerns.

The DCM is a well informed and active supervisor of embassy programs, resources, and personnel. Her knowledge of Georgia, her access, and her policy depth make the DCM a capable alter ego for the Ambassador in directing the mission's external portfolios and in working with Washington stakeholders. The DCM's advocacy of gender equality has had a material impact within Georgia and on the embassy community.

Coordination and Strategic Planning

The front office partnership sets the pattern for close collaboration and communication among the eight agencies at post. The Chief of Mission's daily press brief and his weekly country team and senior staff meetings disseminate information and front office guidance as well

as spark interagency discussion. An extensive network of ad hoc consultation at all levels further integrates a mission that contains agencies located off site. Embassy employees take full advantage of the front office's openness to impromptu visitors and informal communication. The Ambassador and DCM maintain direct contact with individual agency chiefs and section heads through regular, frequent meetings. A DCM-chaired monthly assistance coordination committee and six subordinate interagency working groups keyed to mission goals ensure oversight and informed cross-agency cooperation.

Embassy leadership developed the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) as a whole-of-mission collaboration. It has been so successful that a joint ICS support team in Washington singled out the product as a model. Under the Ambassador's direction, the country team periodically reviews and updates the ICS to reflect changing realities on the ground. Internal planning documents, such as those for reporting and outreach, are matched to mission objectives. Employees understand the Ambassador's perspectives and concerns.

Morale and Workplace Issues

The operational tempo in Embassy Tbilisi—fueled by the accessibility of Georgia's officials and people, the many opportunities for collaboration, and strong Washington interest—is high. Much of the staff routinely works overtime. Concerned, the Ambassador and the DCM have repeatedly stressed to all employees the importance of leave and the need to balance the demands of work and life. The embassy has asked for additional staff for the sections whose workload can be directly attributed to insufficient personnel. As noted elsewhere in this report, the OIG team concurs that the political/economic, consular, and management sections—and possibly the security section—need additional staffing.

Absent an immediate increase in personnel, the OIG team suggested the front office look for economies of effort in areas such as paper flow. The front office processes a large volume of memoranda and reports, almost all reviewed by the DCM, who sets high quality standards. To reduce the workload on drafters and on the DCM, the mission might ease the requirements for formal memoranda on some internal matters, along the lines of the Ambassador's recent decision to dispense with written talking points on some issues. The team also suggested the front office address the concerns of employees regarding weekend work by issuing a policy outlining its expectations of staff availability during noncrisis days off.

Regional security officers credit exceptionally high staff participation rates in drills and checks to visible and vocal front office support for mission security programs.

First- and Second-Tour Professionals

The DCM oversees and contributes to a fully developed program for the embassy's 12 first- and second-tour (FAST) professionals. A FAST volunteer coordinates a program of career development training that has added innovative activities, such as an outing to observe riot police training, to more common in-house coaching. In addition to activities with the group, the DCM schedules a regular open-door period to encourage individual FAST employees to drop by her office. Although the embassy has a limited pool of seasoned Department of State (Department) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) officers, the DCM accepted OIG

team's report to her that several FAST staff members asked to be formally assigned individual mentors.

Locally Employed Staff

During the inspection, the Ambassador announced the Department's approval of a pay increase of almost 34 percent for the mission's 560-plus locally employed (LE) staff members. Representatives of the highly organized and active 30-member LE committee describe the Ambassador and DCM as attentive, supportive, and responsive and praise the two as committed advocates for the wage increase and other issues important to the LE community. Committee representatives report that regular meetings with senior management and interaction at the Ambassador's town halls and other events boost morale and two-way communication.

Policy and Program Implementation

Political/Economic Section

Officers in the combined political/economic section and the embassy front office concur that the section's workload is extraordinarily heavy. Section supervisors are alert to these pressures and encourage work-life balance, but the workload is driven by the embassy's excellent relationship with Georgia's Government, civil society, and business groups as well as the many labor-intensive cooperative endeavors the two governments undertake. Although such a productive relationship is laudable, officers work long hours.

Interoffice and interagency coordination takes place in a series of working groups that correspond to ICS mission goals. Officers from the political/economic section serve as the chair or deputy for five ICS-related working groups: Economic Growth, Democracy and Governance, Gender, Peace and Security, and Territories.

Political/Economic Staffing

The section chief is an 01-grade Foreign Service officer (FS-01) position currently filled by an FS-02 officer. Another FS-02 officer serves as the deputy section chief and head of the economic unit. Two other FS-02 officers supervise the teams that cover domestic politics and foreign relations. In Tbilisi's case, all officers report an atmosphere of respect and cooperation that results in a well-run and collegial section. An at-grade FS-01 officer will replace the current political/economic section chief in 2015. The FS-02 section chief also has been asked to serve as acting DCM.

Support for Georgia's economic development and the bilateral economic relationship are both high embassy priorities, but insufficient embassy resources are available for these purposes. The second ICS mission goal calls for deepening bilateral trade and investment and assigns this task to the political/economic section, USAID, the Foreign Commercial Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. None of the four outside agencies has American officers resident in Tbilisi, however. The political/economic section officers and LE staff members work hard to provide day-to-day counsel and guidance to a Foreign Commercial Service LE staff member who reports to the U.S. Department of Commerce office in Istanbul, Turkey, and two LE staff members who report to the U.S. Department of Agriculture office in Yerevan, Armenia. Though not specifically economic, the section also monitors two Open Source Center employees who report to London.

The current staffing complement of two Department economic officers is inadequate to cover U.S. economic interests in Georgia, including promoting U.S. exports. The economic unit struggles to cover the environment, science, technology and health portfolio; labor-related reporting; and outreach. The FY 2016 Mission Resource Request asks for an additional FS-03 economic officer position. The OIG team concurs with the embassy's request.

Reporting

Political and economic reporting from Embassy Tbilisi is regarded as timely and useful within the Department and other agencies, including the U.S. Department of Defense and the National Security Staff. One Washington end user said Embassy Tbilisi used “just the right judgment” in reporting. Another commented that the reporting provides information about elections, the media, and the economy that is not available from other sources.

The political/economic section writes a daily official-informal classified email that audiences in Washington praise. Timed to arrive at Washington’s opening of business, the official-informal email provides abbreviated news, analysis, and comments on events and developments in the U.S.-Georgia bilateral relationship, as well as embassy priority activities. Tbilisi’s official-informal email is the type of document that should be sent as a record email, per 5 FAM 443.1. As it is not, information that would benefit the historical record is lost.

Recommendation 1: Embassy Tbilisi should use record email for the daily official-informal email and other important emailed analysis. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Political/economic section LE staff members watch the nightly news and commentaries and, the following morning, orally brief the Ambassador and section chiefs on news stories and important developments in Georgia and the region. Using the LE staff’s notes from that briefing, political and public affairs officers produce two separate news documents for Washington audiences: the Tbilisi Update and the Tbilisi Press Clips. The Update adds embassy political and economic comments to the news stories, and the Press Clips add social media reaction. The creation of two separate and largely duplicative documents based mostly on the same original information is time consuming for the officers and the LE staff in both sections. The OIG team advised the political/economic and public affairs sections to cooperate on producing one document that combines news with comments and social media reaction.

Business Advocacy and Commercial Affairs

Tbilisi is a Foreign Commercial Service partnership post that is supervised by the Commercial Service post in Istanbul. A Tbilisi LE staff member, who reports to the senior economic/commercial officer, handles Gold Key Services, the International Partners Search program, and single company promotions and commercial advocacy and writes the Country Commercial Guide. The LE staff frequently consults the Commercial Service office in Istanbul via email, but the Foreign Commercial Service office in Istanbul has visited Tbilisi only twice since 2012.

The Ambassador has used his position to advocate for U.S. companies at the highest levels of the Georgian Government. Within the past year, the embassy has engaged the Government of Georgia on behalf of U.S. companies and exports in the aviation, computer, food, and heavy machinery industries. The embassy maintains a close relationship with an active American Chamber of Commerce in Georgia; the economic section and the Chamber have worked together to convince government officials and Parliament to enact legislation that will facilitate U.S. exports and investment as well as contribute to Georgia’s development.

Foreign Assistance Grants Management

The targets of U.S. foreign assistance to Georgia are sustainable economic growth, governing justly and democratically, peace and security, investing in people, and humanitarian assistance. Assistance has declined from \$85.4 million in FY 2012 to \$62 million in FY 2014. Under the guidance of the Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia (EUR/ACE), assistance to Georgia includes funding from the Economic Support Fund and Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) programs.

An additional grant for a \$1.3 million demining program is monitored by a political officer on behalf of the Bureau of Political and Military Affairs. The officer meets with the grantee, receives status reports to ensure that the funds are used properly, and makes recommendations for future demining programs.

Two eligible family members (EFM) work as the assistance coordinator and the deputy assistance coordinator and are the embassy's main conduit to EUR/ACE. They report to the DCM, not the political/economic section, to ensure that the front office is closely involved in grants management and lends its weight to that process. The assistance coordinator and deputy sit in the political/economic section, whose officers include them in meetings, help with drafting, and share information. The OIG team commends the arrangement but found that the officers advising the assistance coordinator often lacked the knowledge or experience to provide the help needed.

At the time of the inspection, the assistance coordinator and his deputy were near the end of their respective tours. Replacements have been identified but will need significant training, advice, and guidance from EUR/ACE and the Foreign Service Institute, before and after their arrival at post. The OIG team counseled the embassy and EUR/ACE to ensure the new hires get appropriate training in assistance and grants. In addition to formal training, EUR/ACE supports using quarterly video teleconference sessions as a training tool for new assistance coordinators.

Recommendation 2: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should use regular video teleconference sessions to train Embassy Tbilisi's incoming assistance coordinators. (Action: EUR)

Leahy Vetting

The assistance coordinator and his deputy also have Leahy vetting responsibilities. The political/economic section office management specialist is the backup. All three received training in the International Vetting and Security Tracking process. Accurate Leahy vetting in Georgia is challenging. Changes in government resulted in the misplacement of personnel files, especially those of officials at regional levels. The Leahy vetting workload is expected to increase in response to an upcoming INL corrections program. In 2013, 1,302 Leahy cases were approved. An additional 43 cases were suspended because of outstanding questions about units in which the candidates served or about possible human rights violations. In the first 5 months of 2014, 513 cases were approved and 55 suspended. No cases were rejected in 2013 or 2014.

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement

An INL office has been working with the Government of Georgia since 2004. The director, an FS-02, reports to the DCM and the Ambassador and is also tapped to be acting DCM. The INL director supervises three American personal services contractors and six LE staff members. The focus of the program is rule of law, with emphasis on peace and security as well as democracy and governance—programs that require information exchanges with USAID and the political/economic section. The sections complement each other. For example, INL's work with police, judges, and prosecutors provides information for the trafficking in persons and human rights reports.

The INL director is a grants officer representative responsible for three grants. The grants are for the American Bar Association to train criminal defense lawyers (\$780,000), legal education and socialization for high school and junior high school students (\$315,300), and one-time funding for a Women in Policing Conference (\$75,000).

Trafficking in Persons

The INL and the political/economic section officers cooperate closely on trafficking in persons issues. INL's experience with law enforcement, judges, and prosecutors augments the political section's information on trafficking trends and legislation. In 2013, the Department downgraded Georgia's trafficking in persons ranking from Tier 1 to Tier 2 as a result of a decrease in law enforcement activity. With Embassy Tbilisi's support, Georgia is currently strengthening its efforts to eliminate trafficking and return to Tier 1 status.

Public Diplomacy

Section Management

An FS-02 officer in an FS-01 section chief position guides the public affairs section, which makes good use of the entire spectrum of programs in the public diplomacy toolkit. Given the mission's high profile in the press, the information section helps the front office walk a fine line between providing assistance for economic development and democratic reforms and avoiding the perception of interference in domestic affairs. The cultural section manages a program of professional academic exchanges, speakers, and grants to realize mission goals. Closer collaboration with the front office would solidify the public affairs section's position as a platform for all the embassy's mission goals.

The public affairs officer attends a daily briefing on press highlights and breaking issues with the Ambassador and senior staff. The inspection team advised the front office that it would be useful to have the information officer (who handles press) also participate in this group. In addition, the OIG team counseled the public affairs section that, with the arrival of an assistant information officer later this year, the embassy could better distribute its workload by moving to the public affairs section production of a daily media summary (with input from the political/economic section) and social media commentary.

Position descriptions and classifications are up to date. One LE staff member monitors the section's budget and receives regular updates from her counterpart in the financial management office, tracking funds.

The staff is familiar with ICS public diplomacy goals, which are limited to stronger people-to-people ties and informing Georgians about U.S. foreign policy. A subsequent document, the Public Diplomacy Implementation Plan, more fully integrates public diplomacy tools with mission goals but is not widely known within the mission. Other sections are sometimes uninformed as to how the public affairs section can support their mission objectives. The public affairs section will benefit by having regular meetings with the Ambassador to better strategize whole-of-mission public diplomacy engagement.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Tbilisi should establish a schedule of periodic planning meetings between the Ambassador and the public affairs section. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Public Diplomacy Grants Management

Grants files ranging from less than \$1,000 up to \$955,000 are complete, up to date, and properly closed out. The public affairs section received \$2,610,000 in FY 2013 Economic Support Funds for grants in civic participation, media freedom, and administration and oversight that must be obligated by the end of FY 2014. Additionally, the FY 2014 public diplomacy budget has received \$150,000 in grants, with up to another \$80,000 in grant money coming by the end of the fiscal year. The four LE staff grants assistants use the proper forms, record monitoring dates and reports, do due diligence for competed grants, and include copies of letters for noncompeted earmarked funds. LE staff grants officer representatives have updated their training to the required 16 hours every 3 years.

The public affairs officer, cultural affairs officer, and information officer have grants warrants that are current for Tbilisi. In a few cases where the grant exceeds the public affairs officer's \$250,000 grant warrant limit, she acts as the grants officer representative because the grants officer is in the Department's Office of Acquisitions Management. The public affairs section manages small grants for other sections of the embassy.

American Spaces

The public affairs section manages nine well-functioning American Corners plus a bookmobile that serves communities of internally displaced persons. Total attendance at the Corners has increased from 47,000 in 2010 to 130,000 in 2013, and costs are shared appropriately with the hosting organization, under memoranda of understanding. The American Spaces office in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs provided \$197,000 in annual funding for the nine Corners. Activities in the Corners include English-language teaching; movie nights; speakers from the embassy; and discussions of the culture, society, politics, and history of the United States.

The bookmobile started operating in September 2013, bringing programs and resources to four villages. A Peace Corps volunteer and two Georgian alumni of public affairs programs

manage this “American Corner on wheels” to provide English lessons and teach about U.S. society and culture and the values of tolerance and conflict resolution.

Information Resource Center

The Department’s American Spaces office provides supplemental funds to American Corners but has discontinued providing funds to those Information Resource Centers inside embassies and without public access, such as the one in Tbilisi. Embassy public affairs sections must now bear the full funding burden for these Centers. Public access to the Tbilisi Information Resource Center is by invitation or request only, and the inspection team did not see any visitors in the Center during the inspection. The Center sends out newsletters to more than 300 recipients from the Parliament, the Prime Minister’s office, political experts, and academics. The inspection team did observe an abundance of expensive books and subscription magazines that are unused because of limited public access. The Center’s current operations reflect an ineffective use of resources.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Tbilisi should conduct a review to determine whether the Information Resource Center should continue to be funded and implement the result. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Cultural and Educational Exchanges

Eleven current ministers and key members of Parliament have visited the United States under the Fulbright and Muskie programs. Exchange programs enable the embassy to maintain close relationships with many key government leaders, even after the top-to-bottom change of government in fall 2012. The current President of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili, served on the 2009 Fulbright selection committee. The embassy and the Government of Georgia cofund a Fulbright graduate student program. The public affairs section manages more than 20 educational and professional exchange programs.

Public affairs sends between 30 and 35 Georgians each year to the United States on the International Visitor Leadership Program. Embassy sections actively compete to select candidates who align with mission goals. The section makes good use of Economic Support Funds in such programs as “English Language Through Civic Education,” a \$955,000 2-year grant to improve English-language instruction in seven regions of Georgia. The section also manages the English Access Microscholarship program that teaches English to 250 economically disadvantaged youths throughout Georgia.

The embassy competed for and won Department approval for a grant from the Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation. The \$600,000 grant will rehabilitate the 12th-century Gelati Monastery, one of the most important cultural landmarks of Georgia and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Media Engagement

The Ambassador effectively conveys policy points through media briefings after embassy events. He has a high public profile in Georgia and strives not to be perceived as interfering in domestic affairs, as everything he says in public is parsed in local media for its “true” meaning.

Social Media

Freedom House rates the media environment in Georgia as “partly free.” Most television stations are privately owned, and owners have partisan political loyalties. Media experts inside and outside the embassy note that Facebook is the most popular social media forum in Georgia. Unique in this region, Facebook is increasingly popular among influential Georgians and is often where news breaks. Topical issues often start on Facebook and end up on the evening television news.

The public affairs section makes good use of social media and receives some content from other sections of the embassy for posting. The DCM is currently participating in a monthly Web chat on topical issues, such as women in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math. Given the Ambassador’s high public profile, persons knowledgeable about social media advised the OIG team that now is not the time for the Ambassador to start to use social media as an individual, because that would risk media overexposure. Should this situation change, embassy social media experts will be best positioned to advise the front office on how and whether to engage on social media.

Broadcasting Board of Governors

As part of the inspection of Embassy Tbilisi, the inspection team conducted a limited-scope inspection of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) and the Voice of America (VOA). RFE/RL offers content in Georgian and Russian, and VOA offers content in Georgian, Russian, and English. Both entities broadcast in Georgian on domestic TV, FM radio affiliates, and the Internet. RFE/RL Russian content is available on FM, shortwave, and online, and VOA Russian and English content is available online. RFE/RL’s total media weekly reach is 2.9 percent of the population. VOA’s total weekly media reach is 2.7 percent (in any language, in any medium).

The inspection team found no issues with the relationship between Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) broadcasting entities and the embassy. The embassy press office treats these broadcasting entities as it does other news organizations. The embassy provides minimal administrative services to VOA, primarily processing occasional incoming shipments arriving through the diplomatic pouch.

On March 31, 2014, BBG signed a contract with affiliate radio station Green Wave to triple Georgian, Russian, and English broadcast time to 18 hours per day. The increased air time also has led to greater cooperation with VOA by using VOA programs, such as “Learning English,” and featuring programs about Georgians in the United States. This goal supports BBG’s 5-year strategic plan, *Impact Through Innovation and Integration*, goal #3, *Seize Targeted Growth Opportunities*.

For the period September 25, 2012, through December 30, 2014, the embassy has provided two grants totaling \$185,000 to RFE/RL's Tbilisi Bureau to produce a Russian-language program called "Bridging the Mistrust," broadcast to Russian-occupied Abkhazia to deflate misinformation about Georgia and to inform the rest of Georgia about Abkhazia. The inspection team reviewed the two grants, both derived from U.S. Government-provided Economic Support Funds. In 2011, RFE/RL received a 3-year grant for \$50,000 per year from USAID's International Research and Exchanges Board contractor to establish a journalism school that has educated 120 journalism students in the principles of free journalism. This training supports BBG's strategic goal #11, *Spur Development through Targeted Media Initiatives and Training*.

Six journalists have left RFE/RL for higher paying jobs in television and FM radio. RFE/RL has 76,000 followers on Facebook and in the past 2 years has targeted its programs more to 20–25-year-olds to capture the youth audience. This initiative supports BBG's strategic goal #7, *Elevate and Expand Social Media Innovation*.

Consular Management

Embassy Tbilisi provides the full range of consular services, including American citizens services and immigrant, nonimmigrant, diversity, and asylee/refugee follow-to-join visas. It also processes immigrant, diversity, and asylee/refugee follow-to-join visas for citizens of Azerbaijan.

The inspection team found no significant deficiencies in Tbilisi's consular management or operations. The consular section maintains strong visa security procedures and management controls, provides timely and courteous services, communicates effectively with Bureau of Consular Affairs consumers, and manages a sharply increased workload effectively. OIG surveys indicate high morale among consular staff.

Increased Workload Requires Greater Efficiency

Nonimmigrant visa applications doubled in the 12 months prior to the inspection, from about 8,000 per year to more than 16,000. Almost the entire increase occurred in the visitor visa (B1/B2) category, which rose more than 150 percent. Embassy staff advanced several possible factors that may have contributed to the increase in applications, but the OIG team was unable to attribute specific cause-and-effect relationships to them. The embassy has requested, and the inspectors support, assignment of an additional full-time consular officer to address the increased workload.

Although the Department authorized full implementation of a nonimmigrant visa renewal interview waiver program in January 2014, Tbilisi has not yet implemented it. Even if a new position is approved, an additional consular officer would not arrive before summer 2015. To maintain workload at sustainable levels, Embassy Tbilisi needs to implement available procedural efficiencies.

Recommendation 5: Embassy Tbilisi should implement the Department of State's nonimmigrant visa interview waiver program. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Validation Study Needed to Evaluate Visa Adjudication Criteria

Tbilisi's increased visa applicant volume was accompanied by a significant rise in its nonimmigrant visa refusal rate. However, the embassy's most recent visitor visa validation studies, covering FYs 2011 and 2012, show high rates of compliance; that is, timely departure from the United States. The embassy has not formally measured visitor visa compliance during the period of rapid application growth to determine whether the higher refusal rates are justified.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Tbilisi, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should complete a nonimmigrant visa validation study. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi, in coordination with CA)

Resource Management

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2013
U.S. Department of State	69	12	466	547	\$28,964,028
Diplomatic and Consular Programs	34	3	11	48	\$3,039,800
Population Refugees and Migration	1		1	2	\$206,328
Export Control and Related Border Security Program	2		2	4	\$183,400
International Narcotics Affairs	4		5	9	\$3,589,600
Consular	3	1	7	11	\$428,706
ICASS	6	6	408	420	\$12,173,400
Public Diplomacy	4	1	12	17	\$897,064
Public Diplomacy/Economic Support Funds			4	4	\$5,611,392
Diplomatic Security	6	1	12	19	\$699,105
Marine Security Guard	8		4	12	\$121,600
Representation	0			0	\$36,800
Overseas Buildings Operations	1			1	\$1,976,833
U.S. Department of Agriculture			3	3	\$80,750
Foreign Agriculture Service			3	3	\$80,750
U.S. Department of Defense	29	1	23	53	\$12,728,738
Defense Attaché Office	7		4	11	\$309,262
Office of Defense Cooperation	6		8	14	\$11,545,122
Defense Threat Reduction Office	2	1	3	6	\$200,000
Force Protection Detachment	2		3	5	\$232,592
Army Medical Research Centers	8			8	\$185,562
European Command	2			2	\$45,000

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	2		5	7	\$211,200
U.S. Department of Justice	6		2	8	\$2,021,659
Regional Legal Advisor	2		2	4	\$1,800,809
Legal Attaché Office	4		0	4	\$220,850
U.S. Agency for International Development	19	2	62	83	\$42,680,702
Peace Corps	4		2	6	\$1,758,752
Millennium Challenge Corporation	2		3	5	\$289,261
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	6		3	9	\$955,689
Totals	135	15	564	714	\$89,479,579

Source: Embassy Tbilisi

Management

The Ambassador told inspectors that the most critical resource requirement is the need to increase the management platform. The embassy has grown from 89 authorized American positions in 2007 to 135 in 2014, a rise of 52 percent. During the same period, however, the management staff has remained fixed at eight Americans. Nevertheless, under the leadership of an FS-01 officer who has often served as acting DCM, management services received good International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) survey marks of 4.23 out of 5, which is above regional and global averages. Despite insufficient staffing, the effective and well-organized management team delivers an excellent level of service to its customers in 28 of the 30 designated service categories. The management team has sought to address the community's dissatisfaction with the two lowest scored services, residential leasing and the furniture and appliances pools.

Support Staff Shortages

The embassy consists of eight separate U.S. Government agencies. Georgia continues to be an attractive regional base for employees covering the three countries of the Caucasus. The embassy received 91 National Security Decision Directive 38 (NSDD) requests between 2010 and 2014 and approved 48, though not all of those non-Department personnel have arrived at post. The embassy also requested six new Department positions in the FY 2016 Mission Resource Request and expects the total number of U.S. direct-hire personnel to increase by about 20 percent by the end of FY 2016. One of those six positions would be an additional general services officer position. The OIG team supports this request.

The Department's U.S. Mission Georgia Rightsizing Review of October 11, 2011, projected an increase of 15 positions by 2015; however, the increase in positions had already reached 19 in 2014 and is still growing. Embassy Tbilisi is not due for a rightsizing exercise until 2016, but the bureau and embassy have the ability to realign positions to workload on the basis of regional and mission priorities.

National Security Decision Directive 38

The U.S. Department of Defense assigns personnel to the embassy on continuing, recurring temporary duty status in excess of 1 year. The Department has no formal agreement allowing for this arrangement in Tbilisi. The embassy therefore is out of compliance with the Department's formal policy regarding continuing temporary duty assignments of personnel deriving administrative and technical staff status normally associated with permanent embassy staff.

In accordance with 2 *Foreign Affairs Handbook* (FAH)-2 H-114.1 a. (2), when a temporary duty assignment is extended, re-extended, or re-established so that the same or a different person is performing essentially the same functions beyond 1 year, that position becomes equivalent to a full-time, permanent, direct-hire position. In such a case, the chief of mission must require the sending agency to submit a formal NSDD 38 proposal to establish a permanent position.

The NSDD 38 process provides the Ambassador and the DCM management control over a simple and formalized chain of command and assists the Ambassador in fulfilling the responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all executive branch personnel in country.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Tbilisi should request the Department of Defense to submit an NSDD 38 request for each of the positions for which the cumulative time at the embassy by sequential temporary duty personnel reaches 12 months. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Financial Management

Ratings for the financial management office in OIG's pre-inspection survey averaged 3.8 out of a possible 5, slightly lower than the cumulative average for prior inspections at other missions. The ICASS customer satisfaction scores, however, were good in all categories of financial services, averaging 4.2 out of 5. A U.S. direct-hire financial management officer leads a local staff that delivers timely and efficient services.

Travel Voucher Processing

The financial management office does not use the Department's Global e-Travel system for processing domestic travel vouchers for LE staff. As the Georgian Government considers per diem to be taxable income, LE staff members are reimbursed in cash for all in-country travel. However, in 14 STATE 27921, the Under Secretary for Management approved the centralization of all overseas temporary travel voucher processing through the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services Post Support Unit, with a target of 100-percent implementation by

April 2015. To achieve the more cost-efficient centralized processing of Global e-Travel, the embassy is making the case to the Georgian tax authorities that per diem is a reimbursement for the costs of lodging and meals and should not be taxed as income.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Tbilisi, in coordination with the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services, should use Global e-Travel for in-country travel and submit claims for processing to the Post Support Unit. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi, in coordination with CGFS)

International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

Tbilisi is an “ICASS Lite” embassy, because the mission supports eight agencies and ICASS demand does not overburden management. The embassy will be adding three new general services operations “cost centers”—that is, ICASS-funded services, including travel, shipping, and procurement—to capture costs for other agencies better. Agencies are satisfied with the ICASS costs and services provided, as evidenced by overall customer satisfaction scores of 4.23 out of 5. Only two areas scored below 4 (“very good”): residential leasing and the furniture and appliances pool. The financial management office has a comprehensive ICASS temporary duty policy. In fact, in FY 2013 the embassy issued nine partial-year invoices totaling \$121,627 for six new positions and three long-term temporary duty employees. The further consolidation of USAID vouchering services with the financial management office is scheduled for June 30, 2014, with an estimate of 250 annual payments.

Human Resources Office

A U.S. direct-hire human resources officer and local staff members provide excellent customer service. ICASS customer satisfaction survey scores of 4.2 out of 5 and the OIG workplace and quality of life questionnaire score of 4.4 out of 5 attest to the community’s satisfaction with human resources services. The embassy is overdue on its biannual cost-of-living survey, last done in 2009, but has begun the process.

LE staff members’ concerns over their compensation package have been resolved. During the inspection, the LE staff was informed of the Department’s approval of an almost 34-percent wage increase, effective June 29, 2014. A new health insurance plan will be implemented in July 2014. The Bureau of Human Resources, Office of Overseas Employment granted the embassy a 1-year postponement to implement the mandate to pay local employees in local currency rather than in U.S. dollars; the delay will protect employees against possibly severe currency fluctuations caused by an unstable regional political environment.

Locally Employed Staff Retirement Age

Georgian labor law does not cite a mandatory retirement age; the minimal retirement benefits provided by the Georgian Social Security System mean that some embassy local employees continue working as long as possible, regardless of their ability to perform all assigned duties. Embassy management is considering establishing a Separation for Age Plan. According to 3 *Foreign Affairs Manual* (FAM) 7732.3, such a plan, based on sound management practices and prevailing local practice, is a legitimate way to establish age limits. Inspectors counseled embassy management that, before establishing any Separation for Age Plan, the

embassy should coordinate with the Bureau of Human Resources, conduct a survey of local comparators' plans, and ensure the plan is in accordance with Department regulations and local law.

Equal Employment Opportunity and the Federal Women's Program

Embassy Tbilisi's Equal Employment Opportunity counselor departed post for his next assignment during the inspection. The embassy nominated a replacement counselor, but she will be unable to attend required training until November 2014. The embassy issued a management notice to remind personnel that, until the nominee is formally trained, they can directly contact any Department Equal Employment Opportunity counselor or the Office of Civil Rights, which will assign a counselor to them.

The Federal Women's Program coordinator also departed post in May 2014; the embassy has not yet designated a replacement. Embassy management identified a USAID employee interested in holding the position; however, the Office of Civil Rights requires the program coordinator to be a Department employee. The chief of mission is required to designate a Federal Women's Program coordinator, per 3 FAM 1514.2 b. Failure to designate a Federal Women's Program coordinator could result in embassy employees being unaware of their rights. The OIG team commended the DCM for taking the initiative to arrange periodic informal Federal Women's Program get-togethers for American female supervisors.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Tbilisi should designate a new Federal Women's Program coordinator. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

General Services Operations

The embassy's increase in personnel has most affected the general services office. The office, led by an entry-level general services officer and an EFM, has improved internal management procedures by implementing tighter controls in residential leasing and furniture and appliances pools. Inspectors found no noteworthy problems in the procurement, customs and shipping, and travel units.

Motor Pool

The embassy is using motor pool vehicles and drivers for transportation of dependent school children to and from the sponsored school. At least twice within the past year, the motor pool driver was required to stop the vehicle because of unproctored, misbehaving students. This creates a hazardous situation. The OIG team found that the schools the embassy children attend offer transportation to and from school or are within walking distance from students' homes. The embassy-sponsored school recently started offering bus service to dependent children. Furthermore, families are eligible for a school transportation reimbursement, which provides three suitable transportation options.

In accordance with 14 FAM 433.2 and 433.3-4(1), government vehicle usage to transport dependent children to and from a sponsored school may be authorized when other transportation is unsafe, unavailable, or inappropriate. A chief of mission may approve such use, although the

exercise of this authority requires a written finding of the circumstances that justify the use of official vehicles and procurement of adequate liability insurance coverage. Liability arises when using U.S. Government vehicles for “other authorized use.” The OIG inspectors counseled embassy staff on the need to have an adult monitor the students’ behavior on the bus to and from school to ensure the safety of the driver and students.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Tbilisi should prepare a written justification under chief of mission signature describing the conditions that require the use of official government vehicles to transport students to and from school. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Facilities Management

The facilities management unit maintains the new embassy compound, which was completed in 2005 and includes a chancery, support annex, warehouse, and Marine security guard quarters on 19 acres of land. The unit’s 91 staff members are also responsible for maintaining the chief of mission residence, the DCM residence, and 20 government-owned and 84 leased properties. The addition of 11 new homes to the housing inventory to accommodate the growth in personnel has put a strain on the unit’s staff. The ICASS committee has approved three additional LE positions to assist with the workload.

Information Management

The embassy's information management section is an efficient, well-managed operation that meets the needs of 700 customers, as evidenced by good ratings in OIG questionnaires and ICASS surveys. The section consistently received an A+ rating from the Department's network and systems monitoring software and is among the top 5 performers (out of 304 Department sites) in the world. The information management officer implemented major cost savings to promote efficient operations, which trimmed \$14,000 a year from the classified pouch operations and \$16,000 a year from the updated Internet system, and dismantled an obsolete book shipment program that saved the Department more than \$100,000 a year. The embassy is in the midst of a staffing gap due to the curtailment of the former information program officer and the transfer of the information management officer. Direct-hire American staffing is currently at 50 percent.

The information systems officer and first-tour information management specialist have assumed the section duties and are making progress on several new projects. These include embassy SharePoint site enhancements, satellite installation for the Diplomatic Telecommunication Service Program office, and the implementation of the regional diplomatic post office operations among Tbilisi, Yerevan, and Baku. Although the information management section's workload has grown, staffing has remained unchanged over the past several years. The current staffing does not allow expansion of support responsibilities without additional resources. The information management officer requested a mail room clerk, which has been included in the FY 2014 ICASS budget for the regional diplomatic post office. Morale among the staff members is high, based on OIG surveys and interviews; they are collegial and support one another well. Given the short staffing and backup requirements, the degree of cooperation is noteworthy.

The OIG team interviewed all information management employees; inspected their facilities; and evaluated classified and unclassified computer systems, telephone and radio programs, mail room and pouch services, communications security, and emergency planning. All recommendations in the 2013 computer security assessment have been resolved. The classified annex to this report contains one recommendation concerning communications security.

Quality of Life

Schools

The International School of Tbilisi is a Department-sponsored school. Two members from the embassy community sit on its board. Relations between the school and the embassy are good. The school's modern, well-equipped facilities were constructed in 2008, at a cost of \$4.5 million. The school is located on the outskirts of the city, close to the U.S. Embassy and adjacent to the diplomatic housing area, where the embassy has several houses.

The school faces problems, however. The current student body of the International School of Tbilisi is 115, down from an enrollment of 165 4 years ago. Many American employees live downtown, where it is more practical for their children to attend other nearby schools; [Redacted] (b) (6) the International School of Tbilisi. Shrinking enrollment and other issues have affected the school's financial health; it has operated at a loss for the past few years. The school is hiring a new principal, who will be taking charge for the 2014–2015 academic year.

Employee Association

The Tbilisi Employee Association currently operates a retail store and cafeteria and provides dry cleaning, barber/hairdresser, tailor, and manicure services. Scores on the OIG workplace and quality of life questionnaires were average, at 3.4 out of 5. In 2013, the Tbilisi Employee Association had a loss of \$19,330 on sales of \$243,668. A new, energetic board convened in October 2013 and began addressing financial problems by establishing a viable markup policy for pricing merchandise and upgrading the point-of-sale and accounting software. The Tbilisi Employee Association took over the embassy cafeteria in fall 2013 and is hoping to start making a profit.

In February 2014, a team from the Bureau of Administration, Office of Commissary and Recreation conducted an internal review of the Tbilisi Employee Association operations, which disclosed several weaknesses in financial management, internal controls, and standard operating procedures. The association is in the process of complying with the review's findings and with Departmental regulations in 6 FAM 531. Recommendations that remain open include preparing bank reconciliations on a monthly basis, board members conducting surprise spot checks of inventory and cash counts, and the community liaison office submitting a budget so a liability account can be set up to track its funding. In addition, the association should prepare income statements itemized by activity to ensure each is self-sustaining. Lack of adequate internal controls could lead to potential fraud or abuse.

Recommendation 11: Embassy Tbilisi, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should require the Tbilisi Employee Association to institute the appropriate internal fiscal controls to facilitate proper oversight and management. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi, in coordination with A)

Community Liaison Office

The community liaison office is housed in an easily accessible, family-friendly space just off the chancery's main atrium. Four half-time EFM personnel share one full-time coordinator position and one full-time assistant coordinator position. Another EFM works on contract part time, producing the community liaison newsletter. The difficulty of the Georgian language and limited local English skills create a barrier for American staff and family members and increases the difficulty of living in Georgia. An LE staff member runs an extensive information service on Georgian society, events, and travel and serves as a convenient linguistic bridge for embassy personnel. The community liaison office received a 4.37 score (out of 5, with 4 defined as "very good") on the OIG-administered survey, regarding its support and services.

Health Unit

Embassy Tbilisi's health unit is spacious, modern, well organized, well equipped, and well staffed. The unit is headed by a Foreign Service health practitioner who supervises two local physicians specializing in internal medicine and emergency medicine. The staff includes a full-time LE nurse, a half-time EFM registered nurse, and an administrative assistant. The health unit operates from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., 5 days a week. Visits are by appointment or on a walk-in basis. The unit received a score of 4.16 out of 5 on the employee survey.

The health unit observes strong management controls for protection of personally identifiable information and history of illness. Current health records and archives are maintained in locked metal cabinets, as are logs for controlled medications and laboratory tests, patient sign-out sheets for medical testing supplies and equipment, specimen ledgers, and an immunization log.

Noncontrolled medication is kept inside a storage room secured with a cypher lock. Controlled medications are kept in a double-locking metal cabinet secured to the wall inside the same storage room. On the front of the controlled medications cabinet is a clear set of instructions for logging and maintaining the contents. Inspectors randomly checked the contents of the cabinet to verify quantities and expiration dates and found no anomalies. Vaccines are maintained at controlled temperatures inside a combination refrigerator/freezer. All vaccines were within their expiration dates.

Management Controls

The annual chief of mission management controls statement of assurance, dated July 5, 2013, identified no material weaknesses or reportable conditions. The management counselor did a good job in conducting risk assessments by section using OIG functional questionnaires. As a result of the internal controls exercise, the embassy made several changes in the warehouse and in supply organization to ensure separation of duties, the use of e-services for property accountability, and better controlling expendable supplies. Embassy management is looking at regionalizing nonexpendable property accountability with Embassies Yerevan and Baku.

The management controls functional questionnaire noted two instances of fraud and misuse of position by local staff over the past 3 years. One case involved two mailroom employees who ordered goods through the diplomatic post office. In the other case, an employee in the housing office received kickbacks from landlords. The embassy terminated one mailroom employee, disciplined the other, and terminated the housing employee. In both cases, management also instituted greater control and oversight over the sections.

Under the safety, health, and environmental management program, the embassy continues to test the water filtration systems at residences without distillers to determine whether the water meets recommended purification standards. When water does not meet standards, the embassy takes action to clean out any contaminants or install a new filtration system.

Allowance Overpayments

The embassy has overpaid employee allowances in 15 cases, which require repayment and range from 100 to 710 days overdue. The primary cause of the overpayments is failure to stop post allowances when employees travel outside Georgia. For example, post differential payments should cease when an employee arrives in the United States; however, if the human resources office is not informed of the employee's departure and travel plans, the payments continue through the payroll system. The same is true for employees transferring to Tbilisi from other posts, if their allowances are not stopped upon departure. In accordance with 4 FAM 492.2, an overpayment of an allowance requires the individual employee to reimburse the government. Management has instituted a procedure to notify the regional security office, facilities maintenance, and human resources office of employee travel requests for all departures longer than 10 days, including personal travel. An additional problem is that the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services has failed to make timely notifications to the embassy or employees of the debt owed, which could further delay or prevent repayment of these outstanding debts.

Recommendation 12: The Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services should identify and collect overpayment of post allowances from Tbilisi employees who were overpaid. (Action: CGFS)

Advance Overtime Authorizations

In FY 2013, Embassy Tbilisi paid a total of \$758,820 in overtime for LE staff and U.S. direct hires combined. Approximately 87 percent of that was for LE staff overtime. In June 2013, the management counselor informed ICASS members that all overtime must be approved in advance. A sample of time and attendance records, however, showed that supervisors in four embassy sections were not approving overtime in advance. During the inspection, the embassy issued a comprehensive overtime policy to all embassy employees, reemphasizing the need for prior approval. According to 4 FAH-3 H-523.2, overtime must be authorized in advance by an authorizing official. Failure to approve overtime in advance is an internal management control weakness.

Recommendation 13: Embassy Tbilisi should require authorizing officials to approve overtime in advance. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Embassy Tbilisi should use record email for the daily official-informal email and other important emailed analysis. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Recommendation 2: The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs should use regular video teleconference sessions to train Embassy Tbilisi's incoming assistance coordinators. (Action: EUR)

Recommendation 3: Embassy Tbilisi should establish a schedule of periodic planning meetings between the Ambassador and the public affairs section. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Recommendation 4: Embassy Tbilisi should conduct a review to determine whether the Information Resource Center should continue to be funded and implement the result. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Tbilisi should implement the Department of State's nonimmigrant visa interview waiver program. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Recommendation 6: Embassy Tbilisi, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should complete a nonimmigrant visa validation study. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi, in coordination with CA)

Recommendation 7: Embassy Tbilisi should request the Department of Defense to submit an NSDD 38 request for each of the positions for which the cumulative time at the embassy by sequential temporary duty personnel reaches 12 months. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Tbilisi, in coordination with the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services, should use Global e-Travel for in-country travel and submit claims for processing to the Post Support Unit. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi, in coordination with CGFS)

Recommendation 9: Embassy Tbilisi should designate a new Federal Women's Program coordinator. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Recommendation 10: Embassy Tbilisi should prepare a written justification under chief of mission signature describing the conditions that require the use of official government vehicles to transport students to and from school. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

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Recommendation 13: Embassy Tbilisi should require authorizing officials to approve overtime in advance. (Action: Embassy Tbilisi)

Principal Officials

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Richard Norland	09/12
Deputy Chief of Mission	Bridget Brink	07/11
Chiefs of Sections:		
Management	Robert Ruehle	06/12
Consular	Shannon Behaj	05/12
Political/Economic	Victoria Taylor	07/13
Public Affairs	Yaroslava (Lola) Petrova	07/13
Regional Security	James Hine	07/13
International Narcotics and Law Enforcement	Aaron Fishman	08/12
Other Agencies:		
U.S. Department of Defense	Col. Matt Dimmick	07/13
U.S. Department of Justice Millennium Challenge Corporation	Damian Bricko	07/13
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	Jim McNicholas	10/07 08/09
U.S. Department of the Treasury	Ed Maes	
Peace Corps	Ann Green	03/12
U.S. Agency for International Development	Maura Fulton	06/13
	Stephen Haykin	10/11

Abbreviations

BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
Department	U.S. Department of State
EFM	Eligible family member
EUR/ACE	Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia
FAH	<i>Foreign Affairs Handbook</i>
FAM	<i>Foreign Affairs Manual</i>
FAST	First- and second-tour
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
ICS	Integrated Country Strategy
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
LE	Locally employed
NSDD	National Security Decision Directive 38
OIG	Office of Inspector General
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VOA	Voice of America



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