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Report of Inspection

Embassy San Salvador,
El Salvador

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- Embassy San Salvador is ably led by a noncareer Ambassador who has leavened Department of State (Department) standard operating procedures with a welcome infusion of best practices from the private sector. Mission morale is uniformly high, in large part because of the open, collegial atmosphere fostered by the Ambassador and his deputy.
- The Ambassador and deputy chief of mission (DCM) provide the mission security program with excellent support and cooperation, and the security office enjoys a positive reputation among mission staff members. The local guard and personal security programs at this critical crime threat embassy are managed effectively, efficiently, and in line with Department policies.
- U.S. immigration and visa policies are exceptionally important to the U.S.-Salvadoran bilateral relationship. Embassy San Salvador has a well-coordinated approach to the government of El Salvador on consular issues, and the section enjoys strong support from mission leadership.
- The lack of a single representative who can respond to questions on the full range of operational elements of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has hindered the Ambassador's ability to resolve policy issues relating to deportations, the most serious bilateral irritant.
- Embassy San Salvador is making a concerted effort to eliminate duplicative administrative support systems and deserves credit for recognizing and proactively addressing this inefficiency.
- A strong management team supported by an experienced locally employed staff (LES) provides generally excellent service to the mission.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between December 18, 2005, and January 20, 2006, and in San Salvador, El Salvador, between February 8 and 22, 2006. Ambassador Eileen A. Malloy (team leader), Cheryl Martin (deputy team leader), William Belcher, Ronald Harms, Marjorie Lynch, Charles Rowcliffe, Robert Torres, and Michelle Wood conducted the inspection.

CONTEXT

El Salvador, a stable, developing democracy that is home to 6.6 million people, is among our closest allies. President Tony Saca, the conservative Nationalist

Republican Alliance (ARENA) party leader, began a five-year term in June 2004. The campaign for legislative and municipal elections scheduled for March 2006 was in full swing during the Office of Inspector General (OIG) inspection. El Salvador's free and fair electoral process, fully inclusive of former combatants, is but one indication of this country's recovery from the bloody civil war, which ended in January 1992.



Also notable is the successful subordination of El Salvador's military to civilian control, as well as the efforts of an increasingly trusted civilian police force to combat violent crime. However, despite concerted efforts by both the government and private citizens, public security concerns - especially criminal gangs - and endemic poverty remain important challenges to El Salvador's stability.

El Salvador has embraced free trade and demonstrated regional leadership by being the first country to ratify the Central America-Dominican Republic-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR). The country's long-term commitment to an open economy with sound economic policy reforms has resulted in increased exports, low levels of inflation, and over \$1 billion in U.S. investments. In 2001 El Salvador adopted the dollar as its currency. However, gross domestic product growth remains unacceptably low due to a lack of domestic and foreign investment, limited natural resources, low commodity prices, high energy prices, poor budget execution, and a series of natural disasters. Job creation has not kept pace with the needs of the population, adding to outward migration pressures. Salvadorans living overseas, mostly in the United States, remit nearly \$3 billion to relatives in El Salvador each year.

The most important bilateral concerns from the U.S. perspective are continuing to support the consolidation of democracy and the institution of a rule of law society, supporting the Salvadoran forces participating in coalition efforts in Iraq (the only Latin country in Iraq at this time), deterring illegal migration of Salvadorans to the United States and protecting U.S. borders, and the implementation of CAFTA-DR.

From the Salvadoran perspective the most important issues are the continuation and indeed enhancement of U.S. development assistance, continuation of the Temporary Protective Status currently enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of Salvadoran nationals in the United States, the institution of an orderly repatriation process for deportees to El Salvador, and the successful implementation of CAFTA-DR.

The U.S. Embassy in San Salvador houses eight federal agencies and employs 458 individuals (139 direct-hire Americans, 27 local-hire Americans and/or eligible family members (EFM), and 292 Foreign Service nationals (FSN)) in a modern, secure embassy compound that meets all current Department security standards.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Embassy San Salvador is ably led by a noncareer Ambassador who has leavened Department standard operating procedures with a welcome infusion of best practices from the private sector. The Ambassador and his newly arrived DCM insist upon a good flow of information within the country team and take pains to ensure that its members are well informed on the Ambassador's goals and priorities. One issue of concern to mission management has been the regional nature of other agency representation at the mission and the fact that these regional officers are not always available to respond to the Ambassador's questions and/or requests due to their travel and other regional responsibilities. In particular, the lack of a single DHS representative who can be held accountable for all DHS activities in country has hindered the Ambassador's ability to resolve policy issues with DHS/Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) leadership in Washington. This issue will be covered in greater detail later in this report.

The mission uses the Mission Performance Plan (MPP) as a written guide to interagency coordination on those issues of greatest importance to Embassy San Salvador. Recently the new DCM chaired a top to bottom review of the MPP goals and objectives. Based on the results of this exercise, the mission drafted an FY 2008 MPP submission that focuses mission resources on the five goals most important to U.S. national security objectives: economic growth and development in El Salvador; proper visa adjudication and enhancement of U.S. border security; strengthening democratic systems and practices in this key Central American state; enhancing law enforcement cooperation and the efficacy of the judicial system; and consolidation of administrative support services provided to the multiple U.S. federal agencies at the mission. Rather than a freestanding public diplomacy goal paper, embassy management has ensured that the public diplomacy tools provided by the public affairs section (PAS) are fully integrated into each goal paper's strategies and tactics.

The FY 2008 MPP performance goal paper on economic growth and development reflects a high degree of coordination among all mission elements providing assistance to the government of El Salvador, including the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Defense Military Group, the Department's international visitor grants, and the Millennium Challenge Account. The FY 2008 MPP submission also included the

new collateral paper on foreign assistance and transformational diplomacy in which the mission makes a persuasive argument for more U.S. government assistance to El Salvador to support economic growth so as to create jobs and help alleviate poverty. The Ambassador makes a direct connection between the need to grow the Salvadoran economy and the desire of the U.S. government to deter illegal immigration from El Salvador.

There were no reports of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) problems or concerns expressed during the course of the inspection. The Ambassador and DCM both exhibit due consideration for all aspects of the EEO program and work closely and positively with all entry-level officers (ELO), a diverse mixture of different generations and races that is evenly divided between males and females. The DCM takes prime responsibility for oversight of the ELO mentoring and development program. ELOs interviewed by OIG reported that he is always available to them when needed, and is friendly, even-tempered, and open to their concerns. The DCM has made a point of inviting the ELOs and their spouses to his residence and includes them in official representational events as well.

This Ambassador has set a high standard for leadership. He is a natural communicator, able to convey to his staff members his personal vision for excellence in both the mission's substantive and managerial work. He has made time to mentor and train the next generation of Foreign Service officers who have benefited greatly from their exposure to his leadership skills.

The Ambassador and the DCM have made clear that the morale of the mission staff is very high on the front office's priority list. They demonstrate this in both word and deed. For example, the Ambassador recently initiated a quality of life committee on which all segments of the mission community have representation with a charter to identify any problematic aspect of working or living in El Salvador and to provide mission management with proposed solutions. The Ambassador has had every employee of the mission, including the local FSN staff, to lunch at his residence, a gesture much appreciated by all and evidence of his concern to foster a real community among mission employees. Morale at this embassy is exceptionally good, due in large part to the excellent leadership of this Ambassador.

SECURITY

The Ambassador and DCM provide exceptional oversight and guidance to the regional security officer (RSO), resulting in a well coordinated, focused, and proactive security program. Security practices and training are consistent with identified threats, and the mission considers its host country security support and cooperation to be excellent.

The Ambassador and DCM have developed a very positive rapport with the security specialists at the embassy. The Ambassador realizes that he is responsible for the security of the embassy, and is very sensitive to the threats against his mission. During the course of the inspection, discussions about the Ambassador and DCM's stewardship of the mission's security program, their interaction with the Department of Defense and law enforcement agencies at the mission, the dissemination of time-sensitive information, and their support of the RSO, painted an impressive picture of their positive involvement in security issues. Every individual interviewed expressed the highest degree of respect and appreciation for the job that the Ambassador and his DCM were doing in addressing mission concerns and the welfare of their people.

The RSO has unlimited access to the Ambassador and to the DCM to discuss security issues that are outside the scope of the normal country team meetings. The Ambassador leaves the day-to-day operations of the security program to the DCM and RSO, who have a regularly scheduled weekly meeting. The DCM indicated to OIG that he is always available to the RSO to discuss security issues at any time. The RSO confirmed this and indicated that his relationship with the front office is among the best that he has experienced in his Foreign Service career.

Because Embassy San Salvador's operations are colocated and are on a modern compound in facilities that meet Department security standards, the inspection focused on areas of a procedural nature. This involved a review of the Marine security guard, local guard, residential security, and surveillance detection programs.

The RSO, one assistant RSO, and the security OMS will be rotating to new assignments in the summer of 2006. Two recently arrived assistant RSOs will provide continuity for the security program and are being well integrated into the daily operations of the security office. The fact that current and previous security management has documented the various security programs well should smooth this transition.

The residential security program, under the direct supervision of an assistant RSO and administered by an FSN investigator, is comprehensive, effective, and in compliance with applicable standards. The success of the program can be measured by the fact that, in a critical crime threat environment, there have been no successful residential burglaries.

The embassy has eight mobile patrols that circulate throughout the housing areas on a 24-hour basis and can respond rapidly to residential emergencies. The local guard contractor provides a security dispatch office in the chancery to provide operational control of the local guard force and mobile patrol activities, including central monitoring of residential security alarms.

The classified annex to this report contains a more comprehensive review of the embassy security program.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

POLITICAL SECTION

With an impressive victory in the 2004 presidential elections and overwhelming (some 70 percent by recent polls) popular support for President Saca, ARENA continues the dominance of El Salvador's executive branch that began at the end of El Salvador's civil conflict in 1989. This succession of ARENA governments, and the popularity of its recent presidents, has led to the adoption of policies, from accession to CAFTA-DR to the provision of troops for the coalition efforts in Iraq, that track with U.S. interests but that do not always enjoy broad popular support. The March 2006 legislative and municipal elections will provide ARENA an opportunity to raise its minority position in those areas and reverse the 2003 election results that favored candidates from the main leftist and several centrist smaller parties.

The political section's head directs a staff of two mid-level officers, an ELO, an office management specialist (OMS), and three FSNs; coordination is markedly informal, but sufficient to ensure that the standing work of the section, from mandatory reporting to demarches, is done. Reporting on high-level visits and chief of mission encounters aside, most of the reporting is done by the mid-level officer who covers many of the non-ARENA parties and labor, and by the ELO. The OMS is working to organize the section archives electronically, in conformance with Department directives, for easy access.

The second mid-level officer oversees two employees, an FSN, and an EFM with a strong background in finance and administration, and manages a large training and procurement program to strengthen El Salvador's law enforcement capability. Funded by grants from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, these programs are directly related to important U.S. interests, including the activities of Salvadoran gangs who also operate in the United States, and narcotics interdiction. In addition to overseeing the expenditure of these Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs funds, the officer is a key liaison between the mission and Salvadoran authorities on operational

issues affecting both countries, including the newly enacted U.S. directive to repatriate immediately non-Mexicans detained after entering the United States illegally - a program that, given the large numbers of Salvadorans who make such entries, could present daunting operational issues for the Salvadoran authorities who will be receiving these returnees. El Salvador has agreed to host a U.S.-sponsored regional International Law Enforcement Academy, and at present a contract employee is working on issues connected with its establishment.

Because of ARENA's support for many U.S. goals, it is somewhat natural to focus on the party in power, the political section shares with mission leadership solid access to the party's leaders and a wide range of executive branch officials. This work is appropriate and important. It is also important, however, to strengthen ties with all elements of El Salvador's political landscape: it is never in any democracy's long-term interest to have one dominant party and never in long-term U.S. interest to discount any element of political life. Washington end-users need to be well briefed on all centers of power, including negative as well as positive influences.

ECONOMIC SECTION

Economic issues in El Salvador are of much more than theoretical importance to the United States: lack of economic opportunity has been a critical element in the decision of an estimated two million Salvadorans to enter the United States and remain there, most illegally. Although El Salvador's succession of natural disasters have also prompted migration, 15 years after the end of the nation's brutal 12-year civil conflict it is mainly economics, not politics, which fuels Salvadoran migration and poses real border control issues for the United States. Remittances from Salvadoran family members in the United States are a critical element in the national economy, and that of countless families, and increasingly linked to the nation's internal stability.

El Salvador was the first country to ratify CAFTA-DR and is working towards a compact with the Millennium Challenge Account, which has judged the country eligible to apply for that form of assistance, available only to countries that meet basic standards of good governance, investment in human capital, economic freedom, and fighting corruption. El Salvador's plan for compact funds includes road and infrastructure projects which will help link the northern region of the country to a port and therefore world markets, thus creating labor and eventually export opportunities for more of the country's agricultural regions.

The economic section is at the center of Embassy San Salvador's broad focus on finding ways to strengthen this small nation's economy, both as advocate for enlightened economic and government policies, including its CAFTA-DR and the Millennium Challenge Account engagement, and as seasoned reporter on developments. An experienced senior officer supervises a mid-level officer and an ELO, all supported by an OMS and three FSNs; all seven work collegially and maintain close contact both through formal meetings and numerous daily interactions. The section works with the resident representative of the U.S. Commercial Service on investment inquiries, and with the PAS on major initiatives requiring press and public outreach, such as CAFTA-DR and intellectual property rights.

The section's sound and focused reporting is notable for the links it draws between the subject at hand, whether it is developments in the textile sector, the economic effects of violence on local business and foreign investment, a micro analysis of the uneven effects of remittances on a representative town, or the wider issue of migration on U.S. interests. The section thus shapes its work not only in tune with the mission's goals, as articulated in the MPP, but with the U.S. government's national interests in controlling its borders. The section's leadership, its organization and quality of reporting, are commendable.

LAW ENFORCEMENT COORDINATION

There are six law enforcement (LE) entities represented at Embassy San Salvador: Department of State, Diplomatic Security, Regional Security Officer

- Federal Bureau of Investigation, Legal Attaché
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), DEA Attaché
- Department of Defense, Force Protection Detachment
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- Citizenship and Immigration Service

Temporary duty personnel awaiting the arrival of permanently assigned heads of agency are in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Citizenship and Immigration Service.

The embassy's law enforcement community benefits from effective mission leadership and a collaborative spirit of interagency coordination. This high level of interagency coordination can be attributed to their physical proximity within the

chancery and accessibility to the Ambassador and DCM. All members of the law enforcement community state they have immediate access, when needed, to the DCM and Ambassador.

The Law Enforcement Working Group (LEWG), chaired by the DCM, addresses and coordinates law enforcement issues. To increase interagency coordination LEWG attendance includes key non-law enforcement agencies and mission section chiefs (political and consular, for example) with a need-to-know. All LE heads state that the LEWG is their formal forum for law enforcement coordination and describe it as focused and well organized. The DCM intends to adjust the LEWG process by tasking LE entities to provide updates on ongoing initiatives in order to enhance interagency coordination. LE heads report that in addition to this formal meeting, constant informal coordination takes place in this highly collaborative mission environment.

One coordination problem that is beyond the control of Embassy San Salvador to resolve has created serious bilateral friction with the government of El Salvador. The lack of a designated DHS representative who can respond to the Ambassador's questions and requests relating to any and all units of DHS has hindered the Ambassador's ability to resolve policy issues relating to the deportations of Salvadoran nationals. The Salvadoran government, for both internal political and fiscal reasons, wants large scale deportation flights from the United States to be coordinated in advance so that they can make provisions to absorb their nationals in an orderly manner. The government of El Salvador has a facility that can absorb up to 70 deportees in one day. They believe they have an agreement with the U.S. government to restrict deportations to this number.

Recently DHS/ICE has increased the pace of deportations significantly by sending chartered plane loads of Salvadorans being deported for criminal offenses, on occasion numbering over 100 per flight. For example, during the inspection, a flight chartered by DHS/ICE landed in El Salvador with 120 deportees. The Salvadoran government initially claimed that the U.S. government had failed to provide advance notification for this flight. Due to the absence of the regional ICE representative, the Ambassador was unable to clarify whether the embassy had followed the proper procedures, but the fact that the flight carried more than 70 deportees left the embassy once again in the position of explaining to a close and valued partner why the United States is not able to reach agreement on an orderly deportation process. The fact that the ICE representative, who has regional responsibilities, was away on travel and that no one from the other DHS agency represented at the mission, CIS, had responsibility for coverage of urgent action items in the absence of the ICE representative, inhibited the Ambassador's ability

to refute the Salvadoran assertion that timely notification for the flight had not been made. (It was later discovered that the Salvadoran government had indeed received a fax notification some days earlier.) The lack of a clear channel back to DHS for resolution of policy issues has allowed this bilateral irritant to fester for too long. OIG will discuss the subject of DHS expansion at overseas posts and chief of mission coordination issues in greater depth in a separate report.

CONSULAR OPERATIONS

In a country where the number one bilateral issue is arguably U.S. immigration and visa policies and procedures, it is important that the consular section and the front office work well together. OIG found that at Embassy San Salvador, the consular section and front office have mutual respect and strongly support each other. The Ambassador and DCM play close attention to consular issues. They oversee the visa referral policy and require every officer using the referral system to attend a referral training session. The Ambassador himself makes no referrals, and there is no undue influence placed on visa adjudicating officers to issue improper visas. The DCM meets weekly with the consular section chief, reviews the section chief's visa decisions, (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2) The consular section is integrally involved in the MPP process. The FY 2008 MPP contains the goal of proper visa adjudication, and numerous other goals contain consular responsibilities. The consular section chief builds partnerships with other sections and agencies at the embassy so there is good cooperation on matters of mutual interest. An example of this is the Salvadoran Deportation Working Group in which five different embassy offices, including consular, work with local authorities on issues related to Salvadorans deported from the United States. OIG found the consular section to be expertly managed and on the cutting edge in using modern leadership and team building concepts.

Staffing

Even with only 13 of the 14 Foreign Service officer positions filled, the consular section is generously staffed. However, only two of the positions are mid-level, with the remainder filled by untenured ELOs. Only one ELO is in an entry-level officer rotational position. The section chief, who is an FS-02 filling the vacant FE-OC consul general position, has done a remarkable job developing this large group of inexperienced officers into productive, efficient Foreign Service officers. While the consul general position probably will not be filled until after the current

section chief completes her tour, the Department has upgraded one FS-04 position to FS-03 and is trying to fill it in the FY 2006 assignment cycle. The Department is also in the process of upgrading another ELO level position to FS-03. OIG supports this increase in mid-level positions. While it may be hard to justify the number of officers based on workload statistics alone, OIG found that their hours are used productively either within the section or on temporary duty assignments to embassies urgently in need of consular assistance. Not a moment of time is wasted during work hours, and the busy ELOs unanimously told OIG that working in this section was a positive experience and that their enthusiasm is high.

Additional considerations when reviewing staffing levels are the steadily increasing immigrant visa (IV) and American citizens services (ACS) workloads and the uncertainties of the future of temporary protective status for Salvadorans in the United States. Changes in the temporary protective status could have severe impacts on consular work at this embassy. Changes to the office staffing levels could be re-examined after a clearer picture of future workload emerges.

While there is some lingering resentment over computer aided job evaluation downgrades, the 25 FSNs have good morale and work well with the officers. The section is introducing a series of new procedures that will free some FSNs to perform other duties. The section makes good use of EFMs to perform duties, such as biometric data collection, that cannot be done by FSNs.

Facilities

The consular section needs to increase the size of the ACS waiting room, add several more interview booths, and replace some aging interview windows. However, OIG concluded that a larger project that addresses longer-term needs, as well as these immediate ones, would be more sensible. It is certain that the section will outgrow its current space as workloads continue to increase. In addition, there are five FSNs stationed in a booth outside the hard line that cannot be brought inside without a major remodeling of the section. Initially the embassy hoped to fund a large-scale renovation through the use of consular improvement initiative funds. With that program discontinued, they will now need to submit new plans to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) for funding.

Recommendation 1: Embassy San Salvador, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, should submit plans to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations for a capital construction project for a redesigned consular section that addresses current and projected needs, and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations should include the project in its overseas long range building plan. (Action: Embassy San Salvador, in coordination with WHA and OBO)

The flow of visa applicants is organized to reduce time spent exposed to the elements, yet some standing in the sun and rain is unavoidable. OIG informally recommended that the embassy install a covering over the area where applicants wait outside the gate into the compound.

Management

The section chief is an innovative manager who has created an environment that challenges, educates, and develops the skills of each officer and FSN. This team has implemented all applicable consular best practices and has shared with the Bureau of Consular Affairs and other consular sections a host of new ones they have developed. Under the section chief's guidance, they have designed a model training program for all officers that provides balanced training and development by using a point system. Both officers and most FSNs rotate throughout the section every six to eight months. Officers are assigned portfolios, for example children's issues, on a rotating basis. There is a well-organized, two-week orientation program for new officers. The consular chief oversees leadership classes for all employees. The section has a full complement of local standard operating procedures, has all FSNs take correspondence courses (recently 25 completed the ACS course), and has a mid-tour skills development program. All the innovations are readily available to consular managers elsewhere in the form of turnkey projects through Embassy San Salvador's Intranet web site.

In cooperation with the PAS, the consular section has reached an estimated three million Salvadorans in the last two years through an energetic outreach program. Every officer is expected to do some public diplomacy work. In the public waiting area, applicants view a video with an explanation of the visa process and have access to information from other sections of the embassy.

Public inquiries are handled efficiently through a combination of telephone tree recordings, a user-pays information service, and a correspondence/information unit within the section. The section is developing an Internet-based answering system that will not only handle most routine inquiries, but will also capture data to enable consular staff to identify the areas of most interest to the public.

Visas

The government of El Salvador estimates that up to 30 percent of the nine million Salvadorans in the world today live in the United States. A recent survey discovered that 75 percent of Salvadorans want to leave El Salvador for the United States. Therefore, it is clear that the visa unit faces considerable challenges. The section uses computer data analysis to good effect to anticipate future workloads. Helped by a post-September 11, 2001, drop in nonimmigrant visa (NIV) applications, the section has managed to adapt to the more time-consuming post-September 11, 2001, security procedures without a reduction in service to the public. The wait time for an NIV appointment is three days. IV numbers doubled in the last year to over 10,000 applicants and are projected to continue to increase as the number of Salvadorans in the United States grows. The section has shown great flexibility in shifting resources from the NIV unit to the IV unit as needed. They also are introducing timesaving procedures. For example, in March 2006 they will start a new IV program that uses the call center to make IV appointments, which will decrease the FSN workload. During the inspection, the consular section shifted to a mandatory use of the electronic visa application form in order to reduce dramatically FSN data entry work.

As stated in the embassy's recent fraud summary telegram (06 San Salvador 198), local civil documents have an extremely low level of credibility, and fraudulent tax documents and job letters are presented regularly. The Bureau of Consular Affairs NIV interview handbook advises that a visa officer's decision should be based on the interview itself rather than on documents in those countries where such documents are unreliable. OIG found that the consular web page tells applicants they may bring these documents to their interview. While adjudicating visa officers do not necessarily put much credence in these documents, OIG informally recommended that the public not be encouraged to bring in any documents not specifically required by visa regulations.

The IV unit pays close attention to the panel physicians. Concerns about their fees charged and the reliability of exams have prompted the unit to review thoroughly these physicians' contracts and consider some changes to them.

Despite a refusal rate that has risen steadily in recent years, because of the attention paid to courteous service and the officers' outreach efforts, the section has a favorable reputation with Salvadorans. The results of a validation study conducted in 2004 have not yet been analyzed. To have confidence that the NIV refusal rate is justified, the section needs to review the previous validation study and conduct a new one in 2006. OIG made an informal recommendation that a new study be conducted.

American Citizens Services

The ACS workload is expanding as more American citizens settle in El Salvador. In 2005 there were 2,370 new registrations by American citizens. From 2003 to 2005 the number of federal benefit checks distributed monthly by the ACS unit rose from 800 to 1,200. There are an estimated 18,000 American citizens resident in El Salvador. The consular section keeps in touch with many of them through its 55 wardens. They also send messages by e-mail directly to those who provided an Internet address when they registered. The section recently updated the warden list and plans to reorganize the warden system when the new ACS computer system is installed in April 2006. The section believes that there are many American citizens living in El Salvador who are not registered, particularly dual nationals. OIG informally recommended that the section establish relationships with local radio stations for dissemination of emergency and other messages to that community.

The ACS unit has extensive contacts with many local officials and airline managers who would play a role in managing a disaster. However, they do not have contact with all who might be involved, including the National Emergency Committee. They are in the process of developing a disaster assistance plan and are preparing an airplane accident crisis management exercise that will include local authorities. OIG reviewed with them the essential elements of a disaster plan.

Fraud Prevention and Border Security

The fraud prevention unit's January 2006 fraud summary telegram demonstrates that it has a firm grasp of the situation in El Salvador with regard to visa fraud, as well as extensive contacts with local law enforcement/immigration officials. OIG found that the fraud prevention unit has initiated several productive programs, including a cooperative arrest program with the National Police which has resulted in the arrest of 18 people for fraud within the last nine months; an airport visit program, under which officers and FSNs go to the airport biweekly for consultations with immigration and airport authorities; and an anti-gang conference

Press and Information

Although there are a few radio outlets outside the capital, the press and information unit works most closely with media centered in San Salvador, where the two largest dailies, the television stations, and most radio stations are based. Many media outlets have close connections with influential political and business families; the focus is principally on local news, while international events, unless they directly impact El Salvador, receive more limited coverage. Few of the chronic problems typical of the media in developing countries, from lack of training to adherence to basic professional and ethical standards, are evident. However, true investigative reporting is rare, and there appears to be a significant degree of self-censorship in reporting across the board. Focus on local issues to simplify some aspects of press work: mission events, influential U.S. visitors, anything related to CAFTA-DR, and issues affecting migration in particular, receive wide coverage without a great deal of prompting.

During the inspection period the information and consular sections collaborated on a press conference concerning the new EVAF program for visa applicants; the acting consul general and the information officer shared the podium and alternately explained aspects of the new process, and the exemplary cooperation of the two sections was evident. The information unit followed the conference by scheduling a week's worth of follow-up interviews in various media carefully designed to expand the information exchange begun at the press conference. The close collaboration also serves another goal of the outreach program: providing entry-level officers experience in public speaking. PAS officers and staff have formally addressed ELOs on media relations and public speaking and offered regular "murder board" practice sessions to prepare ELOs, as well as mid-level officers who do not regularly face the press, for live and recorded TV, radio, and print media interviews, especially on controversial issues. This is valuable preparation for all Foreign Service officers for the kinds of public outreach that transformational diplomacy demands.

The cultural affairs officer supervises the operations of the small information resource center located in a nearby chancery annex, which is open for public access. Due to a staffing gap the center was closed for a considerable period in 2005. However, its new director, who has solid experience in both computers and library management, is already working to update and tighten its collection, reach out beyond the base of students and journalists who form the core of its audience, and meet the needs of anyone requiring information on U.S. government and society.

Cultural and Educational Exchanges

In 2005, the cultural unit experienced an almost complete turnover in personnel, including the unit head and two of three FSNs. The replacement trio is working quickly to acquire the organizational and technical skills needed to manage a full program of International Visitor Leadership Program and Fulbright exchanges. International Visitor Leadership Program nominees in the past have properly come from many segments of Salvadoran society, but even so the section is working to enlarge the pool of candidates from outside San Salvador to include greater numbers of women and other minorities, and to encourage the preservation of ties with all exchange program alumni by bringing them into mission activities and working with existing institutions like the Fulbright Alumni Association. In a move that has since been emulated by other regional missions, the public affairs officer arranged two years in a row to purchase two container-loads of texts (approximately 70,000 books, most in Spanish) from the International Book Bank to donate to severely under-resourced libraries, from the elementary to university level. The program supplemented book donations from other sources and resulted in local library holdings increasing by a 100,000 volumes.

English Language Instruction

The Salvadoran government has declared that by 2021 it wishes to have in place a program in which all Salvadoran students will study English from primary school onward. That goal comes, in part, from a determination to supplement El Salvador's commodity export-based economy to one with a considerable service focus. Several U.S. firms have already established call centers in El Salvador, indicating the premium that is increasingly placed on English language ability.

However, the base from which this program will be launched is weak, even if English words abound in commercial use, the media, and advertising. The quality of current English instruction is generally low: many Salvadoran English teachers, for instance, cannot pass the 500-level of the key test used to indicate enough competency to participate successfully in U.S. undergraduate education. Educating enough competent teachers will challenge the nation's resources. The PAS assists in these efforts by providing English enrichment materials to teachers, partnering with the binational center on language programming, sponsoring on-line and other professional development programs, and using its English Language Fellow, now in her third year in country, and the periodic visits of the regional English language officer to provide workshop training sessions for practicing teachers.

Another PAS innovation has been to support Peace Corps volunteers who teach English as part of the new Youth Development Program. The volunteers have lots of enthusiasm but no supplies and little formal training. The PAS negotiated 50 percent discounts from two major English as a second language book publishers, secured more than 2100 books (textbooks and teachers' guides) and persuaded the publishers to provide a dozen training sessions to teach the volunteers how to use the material most effectively.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

AGENCY	U.S Direct – Hire Staff	U.S. Local – Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2005
					(\$ in thousands)
State – D&CP *	42	7	28	77	1,659
State – ICASS	6	13	83	102	5,318
State – Public Diplomacy	3	2	10	15	609
State – Diplomatic Security	2	-	2	4	713
Marine Security	12	-	5	17	175
State – Representation	-	-	-	-	34
State – OBO	1	1	30	32	1,402
Foreign Commercial Service	2	-	6	8	848
Defense Attaché Office + FAO	8	-	3	11	381
Office of Defense Cooperation (MILGP + TAT + FPD)	11	-	8	19	12,700
Foreign Agriculture Service	-	-	2	2	111
Drug Enforcement Administration	6	-	2	8	124
Federal Bureau of Investigation **	3	-	-	3	-
Department of Homeland Security***	3	-	2	5	294
USAID ****	24	3	103	130	38,900
AID-RIG	11	1	4	16	1,256
Corps of Engineers	1	-	2	3	300
Department of Justice	1	-	-	1	72
Peace Corps *****	3	-	2	5	2,122
TOTALS	139	27	292	458	\$67,018

* State P&CP includes 5 RSO employees, not reflected under DS
 ** Present on a TDY basis. Permanent presence late FY 2006.
 *** Includes ICE + CIS
 **** Assistance to El Salvador \$34.2 million of the \$38.9 million total funding
 ***** Does not include 117 Peace Corps volunteers

OVERVIEW

Overall, the management section carries out its many and varied responsibilities very well. It has a strong management team supported by experienced LES and provides good services to the mission. The mission's FY 2007 MPP included a management goal paper focused on management and organizational excellence. It addresses adequate training for all American and locally employed International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) personnel, evaluating and consolidating duplicative services, and ensuring staffing is in line with the Department's rightsizing and consolidation goals. The FY 2008 MPP contains a management paper on consolidation of duplicative services. The management section works with the MPP drafters to match resource requests to strategies and tactics listed in the MPP.

The OIG workplace and quality of life questionnaires (WQLQ) completed by the American staff showed that they perceived the management section to be functioning effectively. The WQLQs gave high marks to the Ambassador and DCM's attention to morale issues, and OIG found that the overall morale of mission employees is high. Due to time and staffing constraints, OIG focused upon issues that surfaced both during the survey phase in Washington and after OIG's arrival at the mission.

Two general services officers (GSO), a facilities maintenance manager, a financial management officer, a human resource officer, two part-time community liaison office coordinators, an assistant community liaison office coordinator, and an information management officer with three direct-hire American subordinates support the management counselor. The American staff is supported by a highly competent LES of 127 employees, including 14 EFM and other resident Americans. The following paragraphs describe management areas of special interest, those of concern, and those needing improvement.

RIGHTSIZING AND REGIONALIZATION

Embassy San Salvador provides regional support to other Central American missions in the areas of medical, human resources, and engineering services. The Strategic Networking Assistance Program coordinator for all of Central America is located at the embassy, and embassy consular officers assist other missions when needed. USAID, DEA, DHS, and the defense attaché office use the mission as a regional hub. Costs are low in San Salvador, and there are good flight connections

to other Central America countries, most of which can be reached in about one hour by air. While a formal examination of the costs of moving regional support from El Salvador would be outside the scope of this inspection, it appears that relocating the Department of State regional support services now in San Salvador to the United States would cost more than is presently expended on them. OIG is not in a position to comment on other agency regional positions.

The mission compound has modern, and except for the consular section, adequate facilities. USAID and most other U.S. government agencies are colocated on the compound.

The NSDD-38¹ process has effectively aided mission management's efforts to manage staff growth. Management said the process forces agencies to pay serious attention to administrative requirements and costs, thus allowing ICASS to assess a proper share of the financial burden of operating the mission. The FY 2008 MPP includes requests for four new American direct-hire positions, one for DEA, and three for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but none for the Department. OIG discussed best practices in management of the NSDD-38 process with mission management and provided suggestions for further improvements in light of anticipated budget reductions.

CONSOLIDATION OF SERVICES

Duplicate management support services exist among agencies located in San Salvador. The mission deserves credit for recognizing this situation and proactively addressing it. Both the Department and USAID provide the same services in multiple areas including warehousing, financial management, contracting and procurement, motor pool, administrative supplies, residential maintenance and leasing, reproduction services, and reception and switchboard. Both are aware of the duplication and are engaged in ongoing efforts to initiate consolidation of appropriate administrative services.

¹National Security Decision Directive 38, Staffing at Diplomatic Missions and Their Constituent Posts, issued on June 2, 1982, assigns ambassadors the authority and responsibility to determine the appropriate size, composition, and mandate of all staffing operating under their authority.

In particular, the Department and USAID have identified mail and messenger, receptionist, and expendable supplies as areas most readily consolidated and have asked for assistance from Washington. To assist in their efforts, and under the auspices of the State/USAID Joint Management Council, the ICASS service center has agreed to provide, and has scheduled for March 2006, a shared services visit from a team comprised of Washington-based Department and USAID staff. The team will conduct baseline costing and qualitative service analysis and provide guidance to assist the mission in making informed decisions. Based on the information provided in the analysis, the Department and USAID service providers can decide which duplicative services are best consolidated and present those findings to the mission ICASS Council. OIG supports the mission's approach to the consolidation of services.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

The ICASS council is active and has regular quarterly meetings. It has implemented service standards that all agencies accepted. The council carefully considers issues brought to it before making decisions. Past deliberations have resulted in a reduction in costs and increased the quality of management services. ICASS agreements have been enacted with all serviced entities. ICASS budget projections are developed in conjunction with client agencies that participate in establishing them.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

An experienced financial management team provides quality financial services. In response to a recommendation made by OIG in the 2000 inspection report, the embassy selected a locally employed individual who was trained and appointed as a certifying officer. The person acts as an alternate to the financial management officer, so there is now always someone available to certify funds availability. This employee has proven reliable and handles the responsibilities of the position well. The financial management office initiated a control system to track travel advances that has cleared \$50,000 in outstanding amounts in the past 18 months. Some of these advances were as old as five years. The office has also initiated a new accounts receivable tracking system that more effectively controls billing.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The human resources officer also serves Embassy Guatemala City, to which he travels five or six times a year. These regional duties have not adversely affected the mission but rather are a good fit with San Salvador's volume of work. The human resources office has successfully managed to get mission supervisors to complete employee evaluation reports in a timely manner to ensure that employees receive prompt feedback on their performance and that potential step increases are not delayed. The staff is in the process of updating and revising the LES Handbook.

Position announcements are advertised on the embassy's Intranet and Internet sites and, for highly skilled positions, in newspapers. As few Salvadorans have ready access to the Internet, this effectively limits the pool of potential applicants for most positions chiefly to friends and relatives of current employees. While mission staff members are qualified and dedicated workers, in the interest of providing equal opportunity, all vacancy announcements should reach a wider audience. The human resources staff can expand advertisements in newspapers and contact schools, among other efforts, to reach a greater audience. They should also keep records of their efforts to increase opportunities for a more diverse group of Salvadorans.

Recommendation 2: Embassy San Salvador should expand the distribution of vacancy announcements beyond its Intranet and Internet sites through newspaper advertisements, school contacts, and other means in order to reach a wider pool of interested individuals and should also maintain records of these efforts. (Action: Embassy San Salvador)

Out of 292 LES, the mission has 16 families with more than one member working for it. In three of the 16 cases three family members work at the mission; in the other 13 cases two members work for the mission. These relationships include cousins, in-laws, and nephews as well as first-degree relatives. The mission has a nepotism policy that is followed, and no family members inappropriately supervise others or work together. However, the mission does not have a policy regarding the number of family members that may be employed. OIG informally recommended that the embassy consider whether such a policy is warranted.

Upon receiving applications for positions, the human resources LES place a cover sheet on each with required criteria and then review the documents, noting on the cover sheet which criteria are met. All applications that meet the qualifications are forwarded to the selecting American officer. In a limited sample of past decisions, OIG found no qualified applicants excluded from consideration by the selecting officer. However, several American officers and LES suspected that this might have happened, although none provided specific cases that could be reviewed. In order to ensure that applications are handled fairly, OIG informally suggested that the human resources officer randomly select some applications that LES indicated had failed to meet the criteria, review them to ensure that the applicant did not meet the requirements set, and only then forward the papers of the approved applicant pool to the selecting official.

AVIAN INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS

Avian influenza preparedness is high on the priority list of mission management and its emergency action committee (EAC). The regional medical officer and the health unit took the lead in developing mission plans to deal with the possibility of an avian influenza outbreak or other pandemic. The regional medical officer also has given several community talks on the issue. The mission has responded to Department directives by developing a comprehensive plan that was transmitted to the Department in February 2006. OIG reviewed the plan; it has tripwires covering possible scenarios with detailed actions to take in response to each, including when to convene a meeting of the EAC. Upon the appearance of sustained human-to-human transmission anywhere in the world, the embassy proposes to evacuate family members and nonessential personnel to the United States. The reason for not sheltering them in place is because El Salvador does not have the medical resources to treat more than a handful of patients infected with avian influenza.

The government of El Salvador is aware of the danger of avian influenza, and its Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance has developed a plan of action for use in the event of an outbreak. The consular section disseminated information about avian flu to resident American citizens as requested by the Bureau of Consular Affairs in November 2005 (05 State 202102). It sent e-mails to wardens and Americans who had provided their e-mails when they registered with the embassy. As yet no Americans have contacted the consular section with concerns about avian flu.

PREMIUM TRAVEL

The management section processed more than 200 orders for Department travel during FY 2005. Of these, eight were for premium grade (primarily business class) airline tickets that were allowed by Department regulations, as all of the travel was over 14 hours in duration.

GENERAL SERVICES

The GSO provides quality services and excellent customer service, as reflected in high scores in the WQLQs. General services operations, such as maintenance of the chancery and adequacy of expendable supplies, received scores well above average. The motor pool's responsiveness received the fourth highest score in 53 rated management areas, a truly exceptional accomplishment. A supervisory general service officer leads the section and is supported by 35 LES. The assistant general service officer position was vacant but was to be filled by March 2006.

The office uses different automated programs for its standard processes and to record requests for services. GSO units use both Microsoft Access and Microsoft Word for standard processes. For service requests, only the motor pool unit uses the work order software found on the embassy web site. The property, procurement, and expendable supplies units use electronic request forms. The office would benefit by using a uniform automated system such as the Department's Web Post Administrative Software Suite for standard processes and the embassy's automated work order for all service requests. OIG made an informal recommendation on this issue.

The shipping and customs unit functions well. USAID manages a commercial travel contractor working under a General Services Administration contract that serves all elements of the mission. The procurement activities of the unit comply with both Department and federal regulations. The property unit is performing satisfactory work. OIG found that although housing in San Salvador is good, the embassy's housing board accepts for consideration all housing assignment appeals, regardless of the justification. This and other operational weaknesses were identified, and informal recommendations were made to address those issues.

Real Property

The U.S. government owns three properties in San Salvador, including the well-landscaped 26-acre chancery compound where the Ambassador's residence is located, the DCM residence, and the USAID director's residence. The chancery was built in 1992 at a cost of \$19.5 million. The compound has annexes that house USAID, the cafeteria, the commissary, the motor pool offices, facilities maintenance, a warehouse, and the Marine House. All government-owned properties are well maintained.

Housing

The embassy staff is relatively pleased with its housing, which is a mixture of both apartments and single family homes. Only the military group and some DEA employees are on living quarters allowance.

The mission interagency housing board is active and meets on an as-needed basis, but OIG noted some weaknesses in its operations and procedures. OIG found that some embassy residences exceed the space standards, but there are no waivers or approvals for them in the lease files. The housing board appeal process needs to be strengthened. OIG found that the housing board has accepted appeals based on circumstances contrary to the embassy housing handbook. Most of the reassignments have been made based upon convenience of the employee. OIG reviewed all the housing appeals from April 2005 to February 2006 and found only two appeals with good reasons for reassignments. Finally, the housing questionnaire and the housing handbook need to be updated. The housing questionnaire does not provide sufficient information about the different neighborhoods where the residences are located or description of the type of housing available at the mission for future employees to make informed decisions as to their preference. In addition, there is no disclaimer that preferences expressed in the housing questionnaires are not guaranteed. The housing handbook needs to reflect new Department regulations. OIG made informal recommendations on these issues.

Facilities Maintenance

The facilities maintenance office is well managed and operated. The facilities maintenance manager reports to the management counselor, and facilities maintenance and GSO offices coordinate their activities very well. The mission has a LES safety coordinator who effectively manages the embassy's safety, health and environment management program. The LES coordinator provides program

continuity; she has increased safety training for mission staff and achieved greater compliance with program requirements. OIG commends the mission for hiring a LES to effectively run the safety program.

The facilities maintenance office is working on the embassy's water well project. Since 1993 the embassy has been dependant on an underground water well to meet all its water needs. This water well was installed and funded by OBO due to the lack of reliable water from the local water authority. Recently, the quality of water from the well has deteriorated, and the mission is currently relying 100 percent on the local water authority for its water requirements at a cost of some \$5,000 per month. In January 2006, a water quality expert visited the mission and recommended that the approximately \$17,000 needed to repair the well be appropriated, and that work begin as soon as possible. According to the report of the water quality expert, the improvements will provide relief for the embassy water system for approximately four years. At that point, it is likely that the groundwater level in the area will be so low as to make this well unusable.

The embassy submitted a request to OBO for \$150,000 for the drilling of a new and deeper water well that would meet the mission's long-term needs. OBO indicated that this request would have to compete with others submitted worldwide and requested additional information about the advantages and disadvantages of city water and water well, including costs, reduction methods, and risks. OIG made an informal recommendation on this issue.

Motor Pool

The mission has a medium size fleet of fully armored, light armored, and standard passenger vehicles. The motor pool is well run, its vehicles are well maintained, and drivers' overtime is kept to a minimum. Embassy personnel are properly charged for other authorized use of official vehicles. As previously noted, the motor pool received high scores for its responsiveness on the WQLQs.

OIG found that the embassy is using a customized form to record vehicle mileage and the signatures of users. Embassy personnel do not annotate and sign the Daily Trip Record (OF-108) at the time of use, as required by regulations and mission policy. In addition, some agencies do not follow the mission policy on use of official vehicles. OIG made informal recommendations addressing these and other operational areas.

Property Management

Overall, the property operations at Embassy San Salvador are adequate, but work remains to be done before the mission is in full compliance with property management regulations. The embassy maintains apparently excessive stocks of residential furniture and furnishings. Although the property management section assured OIG that minimum stock levels are observed, there are no established written minimum and maximum stock levels. In addition, inventory overages are not documented and recorded in the property records. Some residential files show minor discrepancies in the housing inventory. OIG made informal recommendations on these issues.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Embassy San Salvador has a qualified, fully trained EEO counselor and a Federal Women's Program coordinator. Their names and contact information are displayed prominently in various places in the embassy. The mission has the Department's sexual harassment policy both in English and in Spanish on its web site. The embassy has no pending EEO cases.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SECURITY

Embassy San Salvador operates a comprehensive information management (IM) program that includes management of the Department's classified and Sensitive But Unclassified networks, and mail, pouch, radio, and telephone services. The IM office meets the information technology needs of its 247 users from the Department and seven other federal agencies. IM staff are customer-service oriented, knowledgeable, and proactive; their creation of an online prearrival check-in system for newcomers, for instance, decreased the in-processing time by 2 1/2 days. However, OIG found areas for improvement in the inventory of nonexpendable property and in position descriptions. The embassy's information security posture is adequate, but OIG identified an issue with the information systems security officer designation that requires attention.

Information Management

Inventory System

The IM office's nonexpendable property is not inventoried in the Worldwide Property Accountability System (WPAS). Based on information received during the 2004 information management officer conference, which indicated WPAS would be replaced by the E-Score application, the IM office no longer maintains an inventory in WPAS. However, according to 06 State 8942, all missions are required to complete an annual inventory of nonexpendable property in WPAS. Although the Department plans to replace WPAS with two integrated applications, the Department's instruction indicates that this cannot be accomplished until missions reconcile their WPAS inventory. The IM office's lack of an inventory in the WPAS system is thus contributing to a global discrepancy in the Department's property management program.

Recommendation 3: Embassy San Salvador should acquire from the Bureau of Administration the Worldwide Property Accountability System software and immediately inventory information management nonexpendable property. (Action: Embassy San Salvador, in coordination with A)

Position Descriptions

Work requirement statements for the majority of the IM LES staff lack security requirements. Of the 19 LES under the IM office, only one has security awareness information in his work requirement statement. In this post-September 11, 2001, environment it is essential that all computer technicians, switchboard operators, radio technicians, and mailroom staff are aware of the security responsibilities related to their occupation. When personnel are not aware of how critical security is in their occupation, the embassy is left vulnerable in several ways including malicious activity on the network, mail improperly screened, and damage to people or the compound due to lack of training. OIG made an informal recommendation on this issue.

QUALITY OF LIFE

OVERSEAS SCHOOLS

The majority of embassy children at the mission attend the (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) , also known as the (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) . A few dependents attend the other schools in San Salvador, including the (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) (b) (6) and (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) . None of these schools receive educational grants from the Department.

As reported in OIG's 2000 inspection report, the (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) (b) (6) continues to charge a higher tuition rate and entrance fee to U.S. dependents than to the Salvadoran students who make up the majority of the student body. Because the school does not receive U.S. educational grants funds, there is no incentive for the school to change this policy. In addition, the Department's assessment and an independent study by two consultants concluded that the secondary program of the American School is not adequate.

Some employees expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of information received from the embassy about the (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) prior to arrival, while others expressed dissatisfaction with the educational quality. Although the embassy provides information about schools in El Salvador through its web site, the information is old and needs to be updated. OIG informally recommended that the embassy update the school information in its web site and in its welcome telegram. Such information should include the findings of both the Department regional education officer's report and the review done by the two independent consultants.

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

Embassy San Salvador has two community liaison office (CLO) coordinators, a CLO assistant, and a regional Strategic Networking Assistance Program coordinator. Embassy personnel are pleased with CLO activities, and the CLO team can certainly take some of the credit for the mission's high morale.

The CLO is an excellent source of information and an advocate for the needs of U.S. staff members and their family members. It focuses on orientation and welcoming activities, liaison with the mission and community, security liaison, event planning, education issues, and family member employment. The two CLOs and the CLO assistant are active in the mission EAC and in the quality of life committee.

Although CLO activities are well attended, there is a perception among some mission employees that those activities are primarily targeted at families. OIG found that the CLO has events that are oriented for those officers who are single or childless, including a book club, game nights, a theater group, and ladies/gentlemen nights. OIG noted that the CLO does not have a suggestion box and informally recommended that one be set up so that embassy personnel can provide ideas for activities.

AMERICAN EMPLOYEE RECREATIONAL ASSOCIATION

An active and solvent American Employee Recreational Association is a morale booster for the mission. The association provides 17 different services, ranging from the cafeteria to the swimming pool. The human resources officer serves as president of an eight-member elected board that employs a full-time manager. During April 2005, the Office of Commissary and Recreation Affairs made a visit to San Salvador to review the Association's operations and wrote a trip report with several recommendations for specific improvements. The board agreed with these recommendations and is implementing them.

HEALTH UNIT

A regional medical officer heads the health unit, which also includes one locally employed nurse, two EFMs sharing one nurse position, and a receptionist. The unit provides quality care for the mission in a country with few medical resources that meet American standards. The Avian Influenza Preparedness section above provides more information on health unit activities.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Based on a limited review, Embassy San Salvador internal controls are satisfactory. The Ambassador signed the annual management controls certification on June 24, 2005, verifying that the embassy management control systems provided adequate assurance that management control objectives were achieved. The certification noted no deficiencies requiring corrective actions. The Ambassador designated the management officer as the mission's management controls officer, and that officer focuses time and attention on this responsibility.

The embassy completed a Bureau of Resource Management risk assessment questionnaire in November 2005. The scores by function were above 90 percent except for counternarcotics, which scored a highly acceptable 88 percent. No material weaknesses came to OIG's attention during the course of fieldwork.

CONSULAR SECTION

Consular officers pay close attention to management controls. They maintain inventories and other accounts as required and keep close control over visa foils. The section has good line-of-sight from officers' desks to the LES work areas. The deputy section chief reviews nonimmigrant visa system exception reports on a regular basis.

PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING

Embassy San Salvador effectively manages blanket purchase agreements, purchase cards, and simplified acquisition purchase orders. The embassy's already efficient procurement operations could be made even more so through use of an automated application, such as WebPASS.

Formal contracts require better acquisition planning and coordination. In order to promote competition and decrease prices, Federal Acquisition Regulation 7.104 and 7.105 require advance planning and milestones for acquisition of goods and services. The \$3.3 million local guard contract expired on December 31, 2005, and a bridge contract for \$170,000 was required. OIG found that there were no formal planning or deadlines established for this contract. Formal acquisition planning with offices requiring services, and adherence to deadlines by all parties, is required to ensure successful acquisition outcomes.

Recommendation 5: Embassy San Salvador should develop acquisition planning milestones for contracts that exceed \$100,000 in coordination with offices that require services. (Action: Embassy San Salvador)

SCHOOLS GRANTS

(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) and (b) (6)(b) (6) also known as the (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6), received Department of State grants to assist in security upgrades. OIG conducted a review of the school grants and found the files to be in accordance with Department's regulations.

LOCAL GUARD CONTRACT AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY GRANTS

On April 1, 2006, the new \$3.8 million local guard contract will be initiated. At the time of the inspection, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the embassy were working on the final details to have funds available to award this contract. OIG's review of billing invoices submitted in 2005 under the former contract found that the mission uses the Guards Electronic Monitoring Systems reports to verify actual hours worked by local guards. The mission deducts from contract payments when services are not delivered.

OIG reviewed the public affairs section's grants for the FY 2005 and found that they are in accordance with Department and federal regulations.

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Consular Operations

The flow of visa applicants is organized to reduce the time they are exposed to the elements, yet some standing in the sun and rain is unavoidable.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy San Salvador should install a covering over the area where visa applicants wait outside the gate into the compound.

Local civil documents have an extremely low level of credibility, and visa applicants present fraudulent documents regularly. The Bureau of Consular Affairs NIV interview handbook advises that an officer's decision should be based on the interview itself and not documents in countries where documents are unreliable.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy San Salvador should instruct visa applicants to bring only documents specifically required by visa regulations to their interview.

The refusal rate for visa applicants has risen steadily in recent years. The results of a validation study conducted in 2004 have not yet been analyzed.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy San Salvador should analyze the results of the 2004 visa applicant validation study and conduct a new study in 2006.

The embassy believes that many dual national American citizens living in El Salvador have not registered. To reach this population the section must use the media, in particular radio.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy San Salvador should establish relationships with local radio stations for dissemination of emergency and other messages to unregistered American citizens.

Not all adjudicating visa officers feel that they have the (b) (2)(b) (2) trend information they need to determine which visa applicants warrant special scrutiny.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy San Salvador should establish procedures so that each newly arrived consular officer receives a (b) (2)(b) (2) trend briefing from embassy sections with a (b) (2)(b) (2) responsibility and that all consular officers receive such a briefing quarterly.

Management Operations

Human Resources

The mission has a nepotism policy that is followed, and no family members inappropriately supervise others or work together. However, the mission does not have a policy regarding the number of family members that may be employed.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy San Salvador should consider whether a policy limiting the number of family members employed at the mission is warranted by the particular circumstances of El Salvador.

Upon receiving applications for vacant positions, the human resources LES place a cover sheet on each showing required criteria and also review the documents. The staff note on the cover sheet which criteria are met. All applications that meet the qualifications are forwarded to the selecting American officer. Several American officers and FSNs believe that in the past not all qualified applicants were considered.

Informal Recommendation 7: In order to ensure that all applications are handled fairly, Embassy San Salvador should have an American officer randomly select some applications for vacant positions that fail to meet announcement criteria and review them prior to forwarding any of the applications to the selecting official.

General Services

The general services office uses different automated programs for its standard processes and to receive requests for services.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy San Salvador should use a uniform automated system, such as the Department's Web Post Administrative Software Suite for standard processes and the embassy's automated work order for all service requests.

Housing

The interagency housing board approves appeals based on justifications that are contrary to the embassy's housing handbook.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy San Salvador's interagency housing board should follow the criteria stated in the embassy's housing handbook regarding reassignments of housing.

The embassy's housing questionnaire does not provide sufficient information about the different neighborhoods where the residences are located or description of the type of housing available at the mission. In addition, there is no disclaimer that preferences expressed in the housing questionnaires are not guaranteed.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy San Salvador should update its housing questionnaire and include information about the different neighborhoods, the types of housing available, and a statement that preference for the type of housing and a neighborhood are not guaranteed.

The embassy's housing handbook does not reflect recent 15 FAM changes.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy San Salvador should update its housing handbook to reflect all current Department regulations.

Some embassy personnel live in residences that exceeded the maximum space standards. The embassy does not have space waivers and approvals in the residences files.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy San Salvador should submit request for waivers/approval to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations for all U.S. government leases that exceed space standards, and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' response should be included in the residence files.

Facilities Maintenance

There is no safety information displayed in the carpenters' working area, the facilities maintenance shop, or the warehouse.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy San Salvador should install safety information displays in all work sections where they are needed.

Motor Pool

The embassy uses a customized form to record vehicle's mileage and signature of passengers. Embassy personnel do not annotate and sign at the time of use the Daily Trip Record (OF-108).

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy San Salvador should require that drivers complete the reverse side of the *Daily Vehicle Use Record* form (OF-108) and have passengers sign when motor pool services are used.

Not all the agencies at the mission follow the mission vehicle policy.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy San Salvador should ensure that all agencies follow the mission vehicle policy. Any circumstances that preclude agencies from adhering to mission vehicle policy should be documented.

Property Management

The embassy does not have inventory overage documentation.

Informal Recommendation 16: Embassy San Salvador should prepare an inventory overage document and keep it with the annual property management report.

There were discrepancies in some of the embassy's residential property files.

Informal Recommendation 17: Embassy San Salvador should update residential property files, especially household inventories.

There is no written replacement cycle program for residential properties (i.e., furniture and appliances). There are no established written minimum and maximum stock levels.

Informal Recommendation 18: Embassy San Salvador should develop a plan for the management of all nonexpendable items to include an acquisition plan, a replacement cycle program for furniture and appliances, and a justification for the quantities of items to be stored in the warehouse.

Not all property management functions have standard operating procedures.

Informal Recommendation 19: Embassy San Salvador should establish written standard operating procedures for all property management functions.

Embassy San Salvador does not have all the required nonexpendable property accountability reconciliation reports.

Informal Recommendation 20: Embassy San Salvador should keep copies of all required nonexpendable property accountability reconciliation reports (i.e., comprehensive, visual, inventory coverage, displaced property, missing property and unrecorded property) on file for three years. These reports should be kept together in one folder per year along with the DS-582 Inventory Certification.

Overseas Schools

Embassy San Salvador has not updated general school information in its web site.

Informal Recommendation 21: Embassy San Salvador should update the school information in its web site. Such information should include the findings of both the Department regional education officer's report and the review done by two independent consultants.

Community Liaison Office

Embassy San Salvador's community liaison office does not have a suggestion box.

Informal Recommendation 22: Embassy San Salvador should provide a suggestion box so embassy personnel can provide ideas for community liaison sponsored activities.

Information Management

Work requirement statements for the majority of the IM LES lack security requirements.

Informal Recommendation 23: Embassy San Salvador should revise the locally employed staff's work requirement statements to include specific security responsibilities.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Department of State:		
Ambassador	H. Douglas Barclay	12/03
Deputy Chief of Mission	Michael Butler	08/05
Chiefs of Sections:		
Management	John Lipinski	08/05
Consular (acting)	Virginia Hotchner	07/04
Political	Carlos Garcia	08/05
Economic	Jessica Webster	08/03
Public Affairs	Donna Roginski	08/03
Regional Security	John Root	08/03
Other Agencies:		
Department of Agriculture		
Foreign Agricultural Service (regional)	Steve Huete	08/03
U.S. Commercial Service	Daniel Thompson	08/03
Department of Defense		
Tactical Assistance Team	Robert Bell	07/05
Defense Attaché Office	Jerry Zayas	08/02
Force Protection Detachment	Antonio Fors	03/05
Corps of Engineers	Manuel Urquilla	02/02
Federal Bureau of Investigation	Leo Navarrete	08/06
Department of Justice		
Drug Enforcement Administration	Ivan Rios	09/05

Department of Homeland Security		
Citizenship and Immigration	Vacant	
Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Abraham Lugo	07/99
Peace Corps	Michael Wise	11/98
U.S. Agency for International Development	Mark Silverman	06/01
Regional Inspector Office	Timothy Cox	07/05

ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	American citizens services
ARENA	National Republican Alliance
CAFTA-DR	Central America-Dominican Republic-United States Free Trade Agreement
CLO	Community liaison office(r)
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
Department	Department of State
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EAC	Emergency action committee
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFM	Eligible family member
ELO	Entry-level officer
FSN	Foreign Service national
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
IM	Information management
IV	Immigrant visa
LE	Law enforcement
LES	Locally employed staff
LEWG	Law enforcement working group
NIV	Nonimmigrant visa

OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OMS	Office management specialist
PAS	Public affairs section
RSO	Regional security officer
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WPAS	Worldwide property accountability system
WQLQ	Workplace and quality of life questionnaire

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

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