



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

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**Inspection of Embassy Bogotá, Colombia**



*Exterior of Embassy Bogotá*

The U.S. mission in Colombia is one of the largest in the world and has more law enforcement agencies than any other U.S. mission. In all, there are 25 agencies present, representing 42 cost centers involved in International Cooperative Administrative Support Services. The Ambassador has an exceptionally cohesive and productive “one-mission-one-team” operation and is fostering a constructive U.S.-Colombian relationship.

The success of Embassy Bogotá, and its multifaceted support to the government of Colombia’s “Plan Colombia,” can be attributed to the highly effective interagency cooperation created by the Ambassador and the day-to-day coordination of his deputy chief of mission.

The embassy’s narcotic affairs section is working toward transferring its programs entirely to the Colombian government. The section’s primary, long-term objective is transformational diplomacy. The NAS promotes rule of law through programs that extend beyond traditional training of police, prosecutors, and judges to integrated, coordinated, institutional democracy building throughout Colombia.

A secure chancery was built in 1995 at a cost of \$65 million, and funding was approved in 2005 for a new \$30.6 million office annex. Nonetheless, the embassy is under severe pressure from staffing growth that has doubled the size of this mission in ten years. The mission’s security and administrative operations cannot support continued growth in staffing. The mission must reduce personnel, streamline operations, and consolidate services, and should conduct a top-to-bottom, interagency, rightsizing review as a first step in this process.

Colombia has nine U.S.-Colombian binational cultural centers, which teach English and host cultural programs. They also are excellent platforms for expanding English language programs for education and promoting democratic values and mutual understanding.

In one of the largest consular sections worldwide, four of the five American supervisors are stretched into positions that are a grade or two higher than their ranks, and a sixth supervisory position remains vacant. Despite the lack of appropriate mid-level management, the section provides good service while paying considerable attention to detecting applicants who are narcotics traffickers or terrorists.

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**OIG Report ISP-I-06-16A, Inspection of Embassy Bogotá, Colombia**

The fieldwork for this report was conducted by the Office of Inspections in Bogotá from October 4-28, 2005. This is an unclassified summary of a full report, which receives limited official distribution. This report summary, and the inspection report, reflects the conditions at post during the period of the fieldwork.

## Background

Colombia, with its population of 44 million people and an area of 440,000 square miles, is one of



*Map of Colombia*

South America's largest countries. The nation has the third-highest population in Latin America and a landmass equal to that of California and Texas combined. The capital and largest city is Bogotá, with a population of about six million. Other large cities include Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, and Cartagena.

Until 1998, Colombia had the longest record of continuous economic growth (40 years) in the Western Hemisphere. In 2003, Colombia had an estimated gross domestic product of \$79.2 billion, a growth rate of 3.4 percent, and a per capita gross domestic product of approximately \$1,852. Principal products include petroleum, coffee, coal, bananas, cut flowers, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, and printed material. The United States is its chief trading partner.

Under the nation's constitution of 1991, the president is chief of state and head of the government and is elected to a four-year term and may not be reelected. At the time of the inspection, the Colombian

Constitutional Court ruled on an amendment to the Constitution that would provide President Alvaro Uribe with a legal means of seeking a second term in office. President Uribe, a lifelong Liberal, ran on an independent ticket and won the August 2002 election with 51 percent of the vote in the first round. His current popularity ratings are around 70 percent, with the majority of Colombians supporting his strong stance against narcotics trafficking and the nation's indigenous terrorist movements.

Key issues facing the Uribe government at the time of the inspection included the proposed demobilization plan, which would integrate former right-wing paramilitary members into lawful society; the 40-year-old battle and extant peace processes with domestic guerrillas; and the proposed Free Trade Agreement with the United States. At the same time, the Uribe government is working closely with the United States on a wide range of rule-of-law initiatives designed to improve governance, reduce corruption, and improve civilian control over the military.

Colombia is the source of 90 percent of the cocaine and 50 percent of the heroin entering the U.S. market. U.S. bilateral assistance to Colombia aims to reduce the flow of narcotics to the United States, enhance regional stability, and improve good governance. The links between narcotics trafficking and narco-terrorism make the mission's work even more vital to U.S. security.

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### Office of Inspector General

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OIG's Office of Inspections provides systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department of State, its posts abroad, and related activities. Inspections cover policy implementation, resource management, and management controls. As part of the inspection, particular attention is given to consular, security, and information technology operations.

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