



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

Inspection of Embassy Sofia, Bulgaria



Embassy Sofia

Office of Inspector General's (OIG) inspection of Embassy Sofia found intense and effective use of the Mission Performance Plan (MPP) to coordinate progress on goals and objectives. The Ambassador and deputy chief of mission participate in regularly scheduled working groups that track progress toward each major goal in the plan, which is well-written and reflects current U.S. policy interests in Bulgaria. Meanwhile, the Public Affairs Section provides proactive and effective support in achieving all MPP goals.

The Ambassador has had noteworthy success in tightly aligning U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and MPP priorities. He has also been tireless in inserting post management into the USAID budget process and directing some of that budget toward innovative programs in such areas as trade development and Peace Corps self-help projects.

However, OIG also found several reasons for concern during the inspection. They include:

- The post's reporting has not been sufficient to meet legitimate interests of Washington readers, including policy makers. A reporting plan was under preparation, and OIG suggested it be coordinated with the desk to ensure that Washington and Embassy Sofia agree on reporting priorities.
- The information resource center is underutilized and would benefit from the fuller participation of other embassy elements, particularly in the area of information outreach to target audiences.
- The Department of State has repeatedly assigned inexperienced officers to key jobs. The warehouse had been poorly managed, and more attention to customer service and better supervision of the new officers and their Foreign Service national employees is needed.
- There is a general need for a better understanding of the underlying principles of management controls.

At an embassy where employees are geographically separated, the information management staff has provided good service and assistance to all employees.

At the time of the inspection, the embassy was within weeks of moving into a new embassy compound, an impressive facility that is secure, functional, and attractive. Coordination between the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and Embassy Sofia has been exemplary, and post management has led an excellent effort to prepare for the relocation.



Map of Bulgaria

Roughly the size of Pennsylvania, Bulgaria has a population of 7.5 million and is one of the oldest states in Europe. Occupied by the neighboring Ottoman Turks for 500 years, Bulgaria gained full independence only in 1908 and fell under Soviet domination in 1946. Following the Soviet collapse in 1990, Bulgaria has followed a slow and difficult path towards transformation of its political and economic structures. Bulgaria joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in April 2004 and is on track for integration into the European Union in 2007.

During most of 2003, the United States and Bulgaria celebrated the 100th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations in an ambitious series of public diplomacy programs conducted in 26 Bulgarian cities. Senior officials of both countries have said the U.S.-Bulgarian relationship has never been better. Indeed, Bulgaria's national reorientation toward U.S.-European models for political and economic development and charter membership in the coalition against terrorism have produced significant improvements in U.S.-Bulgarian

relations. Embassy Sofia is staffed by 101 direct-hire American employees and 331 locally employed staff members representing 12 U.S. government agencies.

Office of Inspector General

The Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) mission is to assess Department of State and Broadcasting Board of Governors operations and recommend ways to strengthen their integrity, effectiveness, and accountability.

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.