



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

Review of the Staffing of Embassy Baghdad

Iraq remains the number-one U.S. foreign policy priority, and the successful staffing of Embassy Baghdad is vital to this effort. In keeping with its oversight responsibilities, OIG reviewed the staffing of Embassy Baghdad. OIG determined that the transition from the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to Embassy Baghdad had been rational, orderly, and well planned and that Embassy Baghdad's strong and inspiring leadership was an important morale-booster and recruiting factor. Over all, Department officials have done an exceptional job in personally recruiting volunteers for Iraq who are motivated by patriotism, a desire for adventure, career-enhancement, and a sense of participating in a worthy venture. These factors seem to outweigh the attraction of financial and career-related inducements.

To recruit staff for Embassy Baghdad, the Department uses personal targeting, which aims to find the best volunteers, combined with the Iraq Service Recognition Package (ISRP), a mix of significant financial and career incentives. This strategy was sufficient to staff the embassy for the 2005-06 assignment cycle. However, OIG shares the widely held concern that future assignments to the embassy will become increasingly scarce as the talent pool of qualified and highly motivated Foreign Service officers shrinks with each cycle. An increasing number of eligible Foreign Service officers are also likely to be influenced more by financial rewards and family considerations than by less tangible considerations.

To overcome this problem at Embassy Baghdad and prepare for future emergency-staffing situations elsewhere, the Department will either have to expand its current benefits package for Baghdad and other dangerous and hard-to-staff posts or undertake drastic measures, including directed assignments. The issue of directed assignments is a complicated one that deserves further study prior to implementation. There are, however, a number of less-dramatic possibilities under consideration by the Department for enhancing the Department's ability to recruit for combat-zone posts. These include implementing:

- Greater use of flexible tours of duty,
- A more rational approach to the separate maintenance allowance (SMA),
- Temporary relief from time-in-class and time-in-service limits,
- Higher grade pay for stretch assignments,
- Removal of restrictions on the use of when-actually-employed (WAE) and contract employees,
- Exemption from taxation,
- Linked assignments, and
- Additional availability of family-friendly arrangements.

Furthermore, to provide greater clarity and to highlight the greater danger faced by these posts, the Department should redesignate "Footnote N" posts as "combat zone posts."

Background

Establishing an embassy on short notice is not a new challenge for the Department, which has done so recently in the nations of the former Soviet Union and elsewhere, and even more recently in Kabul.



Map of Iraq

The U.S. Mission in Iraq, however, was established under extraordinary circumstances--morphing the unique bureaucracy and culture of the CPA into a diplomatic mission, and it was done in a war zone. Further, every operational step was under unprecedented scrutiny from Washington and from the media. Based on interviews and other research connected with this review, OIG concluded that the creation of Embassy Baghdad represents a significant achievement and that the transition from CPA to Embassy Baghdad was rational, orderly and well planned.

As of mid-February 2005, the process of recruiting for and assigning employees to the embassy for the summer 2005-06 assignment cycle was progressing quite well, demonstrating that the combination of personal incentives and/or the ISRP's benefits is, for now, adequate. OIG also noted that curtailments from Baghdad have been quite low.

At that time, 55 of 141 jobs with the Department had been filled, while 62 positions had candidates being closely vetted for suitability by the Bureau of Human Resources. However, 13 positions had no bidders.

To conduct this review, OIG looked at the process of staffing Embassy Baghdad, from the origins of the CPA to the embassy's opening on June 28, 2004. OIG reviewed the current status of filling positions, the outlook for future staffing, and new financial, family, and career enhancements that would increase Iraq's appeal to bidders and volunteers. OIG spoke with Department and other agency officials in Washington and Baghdad, including the then U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, and reviewed relevant data and documents.

Office of Inspector General

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March 30, 2005