



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

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## **Inspection of Embassy Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic**



*Embassy Santo  
Domingo*

Through effective leadership and influence, Embassy Santo Domingo skillfully managed to keep U.S.-Dominican bilateral relations on a steady and positive course in the transition to a new government in 2004 and in overcoming other challenges to the relationship over the past several years. The Ambassador and deputy chief of mission (DCM) work together well and have excellent relations with the Dominican government at all levels.

Because of the mission's creative and very successful transition initiative to bridge the gap between the old and new governments, the embassy has important, strategic, and helpful contacts in the new government.

Embassy Santo Domingo has been especially effective in providing oversight for the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) bilateral development programs valued at over \$23 million for 2005 and which cover programs in education, anticorruption, economic and judicial reform, health (including HIV/AIDS education and eradication), and good governance.

Santo Domingo is a focus county for transshipment of drugs to the United States, but the mission's law and drug enforcement components are making significant progress in interdiction and arrests, with an exponential increase in the number of extraditions to the United States in recent years.

Embassy Santo Domingo succeeded in advancing negotiations for the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), one of the top U.S. foreign policy priorities for the region, by encouraging the Dominican legislature to remove legal impediments to a free trade agreement.

The Ambassador and DCM have provided sufficient and effective supervision and control of interagency activities, which are frictionless and carried out in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation in sharing information. Although management has been effective in this area, there is a need for the Ambassador and DCM to be seen more in the various offices of the mission.

Office of Inspector General (OIG) also found other areas of concern, including:

- American employee morale is generally low, largely due to administrative support issues. With few exceptions, the consistent mission view is that the management section has not performed to standard, particularly in housing and maintenance units.
- The embassy's funding is problematic for this and future fiscal years. If projected requirements are not met, cutbacks in services may be required in areas that could negatively affect morale, particularly for Dominican employees.
- Some officers are in rabbit warren offices in a woefully inadequate building. However, despite justifiable complaints over poor physical working conditions in the consular section, the employees working there are among the unsung heroes of the mission and the consular service.

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**OIG Report ISP-I-05-32A, Inspection of Embassy Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic**

The fieldwork for this report was conducted by the Office of Inspections in Santo Domingo May 16 through June 8, 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



*Map of Dominican Republic*

The Dominican Republic, just 70 miles from the U.S. commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the second-largest Caribbean country after Cuba by population and area, is a U.S. ally in a region of strategic importance to the United States. In past decades, the Dominican Republic has become the United States' most reliable democratic supporter in the Caribbean. The country joined the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq, criticized Cuba's poor human rights record, and successfully negotiated a free trade agreement with the United States, its largest trading partner. The United States is the Dominican Republic's strongest supporter, promoting trade and providing aid and military support. Today, with nearly a million Dominicans in the United States and nearly 900,000 U.S. visitors to the island each year, the two cultures are increasingly influenced by each other.

The embassy runs one of the busiest visa sections in the world. The immigrant visa (IV) unit, the third-largest in the world, processed more than 42,022 IVs in FY 2004, while the nonimmigrant visa (NIV) unit adjudicated 72,315 cases. The fraud prevention unit is key to the integrity of both visa adjudication and passport/consular report of birth abroad determinations. The embassy also seeks more effective Dominican cooperation in carrying out better control of movement across its borders. Located astride key Caribbean drug smuggling routes, the Dominican Republic is a critical link in the U.S. war on international crime and drugs and a key partner in achieving U.S. policy goals of the Third Border Initiative.

In 2004, the Dominican Republic conducted its freest and fairest presidential election ever, and the embassy actively mediated between administrations to facilitate a smooth presidential transition, including agreement on legislation required to start negotiations on renewing the suspended International Monetary Fund agreement. The embassy played a prominent role in conducting negotiations with the Dominican Republic and other countries for the CAFTA. The embassy promotes broad-based, sustainable growth in the Dominican Republic and is assisting the Dominican government to complete reforms in banking, the fiscal structure, and the management of the electricity sector. Embassy assistance is directed (largely through USAID) toward Dominican health sector reform, better child and maternal health care, and control of the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

The embassy's fundamental goals are to help the Dominican Republic remain on a path to economic recovery and to strengthen its democratic institutions, especially those dealing with elections, administration of justice, and international trade. A top embassy priority is providing advice, training, and encouragement for the country to develop mechanisms to ensure transparent and accountable democratic institutions and an effective justice system.

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### Office of Inspector General

OIG conducts independent audits, inspections, and investigations that advance the missions of the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). OIG provides leadership to: promote integrity, efficiency, effectiveness, and economy; prevent and detect waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement; identify vulnerabilities and recommend constructive solutions; offer expert assistance to improve Department and BBG operations; communicate timely, useful information that facilitates decision-making and achieves measurable gains; and keep the Department, BBG, and the Congress fully and currently informed.

September 16, 2005