



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

Inspection of Embassy Minsk, Belarus



Exterior of Embassy Minsk

A newly arrived Ambassador and deputy chief of mission are providing energetic and creative leadership at Embassy Minsk. Under their direction, the embassy's political/economic and public affairs sections are supporting Belarusian groups that are struggling to promote democracy and respect for human rights.

Morale is good among American and local-hire embassy employees. The mission should undertake several measures to continue this situation, particularly by expanding its dialogue with local hires and formalizing their career development planning.

The chancery is slated for a long-delayed renovation and expansion, but it will occur no earlier than FY 2008. Office of Inspector General inspection reports in 1994 and 2002 recommended that the renovation be undertaken as soon as possible. The need remains: the building, located next door to the Russian Embassy and occupied for decades by Soviet troops, is overcrowded and dysfunctional.

The assignment of an experienced consular section chief for the first time ever has given the section the opportunity to review and improve operations. The section is now planning ways to expand its range of contacts and public outreach beyond Minsk.

The public affairs section's vibrant outreach program helps counter the uniformly negative information on the United States spread by the Belarusian government. Its grants program helps sustain the beleaguered Belarusian independent media. Twelve American Corners provide windows on America in all major population centers.

OIG Report ISP-I-07-13A, Inspection of Embassy Minsk, Belarus

The fieldwork for this report was conducted by the Office of Inspections in Minsk, Belarus, between October 2 and 19, 2006. This is an unclassified summary of a full report, which receives limited official distribution. Both the report summary and the full report reflect the conditions reviewed during the fieldwork.

Background: Belarus



Map of Belarus

Belarus, a territory that has been contested by Russia, Poland, and Lithuania for centuries, became a sovereign nation for the first time after the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. Control by Russia and Poland deeply influenced Belarusian culture, language, and religion; the period of Soviet domination nearly wiped out Belarusian political and linguistic identity as well as Belarusian ties to the West.

Belarus has ten million citizens and is on the main transit and trade corridor between Russia and Eastern Europe. The economy is heavily agricultural, although its refineries, which process Russian crude oil for European markets, provide a major source of hard currency. There is minimal foreign investment. Belarus has been a major exporter of conventional arms to Iran, Sudan, Syria, and Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

Office of Inspector General

The Office of Inspector General conducts independent audits, inspections, and investigations to promote effective management, accountability, and positive change in the Department of State, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and the foreign affairs community.

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.

March 9, 2007