



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

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**Inspection of Embassy Harare, Zimbabwe**



*Exterior of Embassy Harare*

Embassy Harare effectively focuses on the two main U.S. goals in Zimbabwe, promoting democratic systems and practices and addressing the crisis associated with the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). There is close and collaborative coordination between the United States Agency for International Development, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Department of Defense. Furthermore, the Ambassador has been effective in spurring a senior-level, Washington review of U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe and has actively participated in that review.

The public affairs section (PAS) faces an uphill climb in coordinating and focusing its activities following a dearth of sustained leadership. A new public affairs officer arrived six weeks before the start of the on-site inspection, but is bringing order and coherence to PAS operations.

Mission morale is fair, despite a deteriorating economy and the crime in Harare. A major boost to the morale of locally employed staff occurred during the inspection when the Department approved the mission's request to pay local salaries in U.S. dollars, restoring those employees' purchasing power on the local market. The mission is seeking similar relief for American staff for whom living costs have also become prohibitive.

American staffing is generous in comparison with other African posts. The embassy should conduct a rightsizing review in preparation for the move to a new embassy compound (NEC), to determine if some American and LES positions could be eliminated. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations has scheduled Harare for an NEC in FY 2006, but some security improvements can be made in the interim period. While the mission provides comprehensive administrative support services to the Department, CDC and DOD, OIG believes there may be more scope for sharing interagency services, particularly with USAID.

Embassy Harare also needs to quickly complete and gain approval for its emergency action plan. The last approved plan is dated February 1999.

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**OIG Report ISP-I-05-37A, Inspection of Embassy Harare, Zimbabwe**

The fieldwork for this report was conducted by the Office of Inspections in Zimbabwe from May 16 through May 27, 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 Zimbabwe*

A principal goal of the U.S. mission in Harare is the promotion of democratic systems and practices. U.S. support for a civil society and Zimbabwe's democratic elements has helped these groups to survive intense government repression over recent years. A second objective is global health. With an HIV infection rate of 25 percent, Zimbabwe faces a demographic catastrophe over the next decade. Over the last five years, the United States has been the single largest donor in Zimbabwe's fight against HIV/AIDS. In spite of a collapsing health care system and the emigration of health professionals, Zimbabwe provides better care to HIV/AIDS patients today than it did in 2000, in large part because of U.S. assistance.

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa that borders South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, and Mozambique. Of its population of approximately 13 million, 82 percent are Shona, 14 percent are Ndebele, less than one percent is of European origin, and three percent are from other ethnic groups, including Asian. Agriculture, mining and tourism are the principal components of a once-flourishing economy that has suffered serious decline in recent years.

At the time of the inspection, Zimbabwe had skyrocketing inflation, with a large difference in the exchange rates of the official (artificially low) U.S. dollar and the Zimbabwe dollar. Commodities such as sugar, maize, milk, and cooking oil were scarce and often unavailable in local markets. Food shortages also were exacerbated by the lack of foreign exchange. Most gasoline stations had no fuel, although there was some diesel fuel for sale in a few locations. The tourist sector had virtually collapsed, with the closing of many hotels, lodges, and tourist sites.

During the on-site inspection, the government of Zimbabwe undertook a nationwide crackdown on illegal vendors and others engaged in the parallel market, stating that the government was working to prevent stockpiling and price gauging. Police and military roadblocks were common. Embassy officers did not predict a quick end to the economic crisis and expect additional difficulties before the situation is resolved.

Despite the decline in basic freedoms, Zimbabwe retains the prerequisites for a successful democratic transformation to occur when conditions permit. It has an educated populace, vestiges of a once highly productive economy, and a large and vocal civil society, including independent elements in the judiciary, parliament, and the press.

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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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