



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

**Inspections of the
Family Liaison Office and the Offices of Overseas Schools,
Commissary and Recreation Staff, and Casualty Assistance**

The Office of Inspector General inspected four Department of State (Department) offices that focus on the quality of life of Department employees who are assigned to overseas posts. These offices are the Family Liaison Office (FLO) in the Bureau of Human Resources and the Office of Casualty Assistance (OCA), the Office of Overseas Schools (OS), and the Office of Commissary and Recreation (CR) Staff in the Bureau of Administration.

Family Liaison Office

FLO helps family members address problems commonly encountered in working and living overseas. The office is presently addressing a challenging tension between its traditional advocacy role and the organizational demand that it show measurable successes on family employment issues.

FLO is highly regarded by its clients and by the other Department offices that work on related issues. Although the office's staffing levels have remained fairly consistent over the years, FLO's responsibilities have grown and diversified. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) determined that FLO must set its priorities carefully to avoid diluting its programs through lack of personnel or budget resources.

FLO serves a significant number of walk-in clients on sensitive personal matters but has inadequate space to perform all of its functions while respecting the confidentiality of its clients. The solution to this issue involves displacing a small office contiguous to FLO and expanding into that space. The Bureaus of Administration and Human Resources must cooperate in relocating the adjacent office as soon as possible.

For the past three years, FLO has requested funding for a pilot program to assist posts in hiring eligible family members for jobs that would normally go to foreign nationals. Department management should evaluate this initiative in light of its overall priorities and either fund a pilot project or remove this program from the agenda.

Office of Casualty Assistance

OCA serves as a single point of contact for victims of terrorist acts and for the surviving family members of employees who die natural deaths while in the service of the Department. The office assists all U.S. government employees and their family members who serve under COM authority, including Foreign Service nationals, and who become victims of terrorism, mass casualty, or certain other critical incidents, whether they are killed, injured, or impaired.

OIG found that OCA is an excellent example of attention to contingency planning. Its director since 1999 has designed a model for the office that can address mass casualty situations while providing clients with personal caseworker support. The small, select OCA staff oversees several well-trained and committed crisis support teams, which serve as a no-cost mechanism for enhancing the office's capacity in times of crisis. OCA has systematized assistance to employees and improved the quality of service to the families of victims.

Office of Overseas Schools

OS addresses the adequacy of the education provided to employees' children, which ranks as perhaps the single most important issue for many employees as they consider overseas assignments. The office has a highly effective director and 19 employees and operates a school grants program that totaled over \$9.2 million in FY 2005. The office assists 195 schools worldwide that teach 29,037 U.S. citizen children, and it effectively manages the Department's educational programs

As important as dependents' education is to the Department, the attention and resources invested in it have not significantly grown in several years. Grant support to overseas schools has not changed significantly since the 1960s. For example, overseas schools' grants totaled \$7.3 million in 1967, but had risen only to \$9.2 million in FY 2005. On the other hand, the Department has provided security enhancement grants totaling over \$34 million to schools. Recent budget increases underwritten from the Bureau of Administration's own limited resources have not been matched by significant increases from interagency funding sources.

Office of Commissary and Recreation Staff

CR delivers timely, high-quality services to approximately 130 commissary and recreation associations worldwide. This small office effectively performs its core functions, keeping associations financially viable and operating in compliance with Department regulations. The office is well managed and has high morale.

OIG found that customer satisfaction with CR services is very high among the commissary associations surveyed. OIG also noted that associations and posts universally recognized the value of CR services in promoting morale and quality of life for overseas employees.

Although CR does an admirable job in ensuring that the associations remain viable, the Central Commissary and Recreation Fund, a \$3.3 million fund established to support commissary operations overseas, needs better oversight from its board of directors. The board and the Assistant Secretary for Administration must be prepared to make difficult decisions about the future financing of the office in view of persistent operating deficits in the Central Commissary and Recreation Fund.

October 30, 2006

Office of Inspector General

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