



Office of Inspector General  
*U.S. Department of State*  
and the  
*Broadcasting Board of Governors*

# MONTHLY REPORT OF **ACTIVITIES**

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*audits, inspections, testimony, and special activities*

**December 2000**

This report describes testimony provided by the Inspector General or other OIG officials and lists OIG reports issued during the period indicated. This report includes unclassified summaries of classified reports; all text in this report is unclassified. Classified reports are not distributed publicly. On occasion, OIG distributes an unclassified version of a classified report; in such a case, this listing also indicates the issued date of the original report. In addition, all major reports, together with OIG investigative activities are summarized in the Inspector General's semiannual reports to the Congress, which are publicly available every June and December.

## **Congressional and Outreach Activities**

There is no activity to report for December.

## **Reports Issued by the Office of Audits**

### **Review of Humanitarian Demining Management and Procurement Activities (01-PP-003)**

At the request of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs (PM/HDP), the OIG reviewed demining procurement activities. The primary purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of PM/HDP in procuring and accounting for demining supplies and services. This included the review of controls over financial assistance, equipment and services purchased with Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Projects funds, as well as coordination and planning. OIG also examined the performance-based contract recently awarded by PM/HDP used to obtain demining supplies and services. OIG found the need for improved planning and coordination between PM/HDP and posts. OIG also determined that controls over financial assistance and equipment need to be strengthened. In addition, OIG found that PM/HDP could improve oversight of contracts and grants awarded for demining supplies and services.

Major recommendations include implementing a Memorandum of Agreement between PM/HDP and posts, strengthening property accountability policies and procedures, developing a manual to be used by post officials, and coordinating purchases to obtain quantity discounts.

### **Application of Agreed-Upon Procedures Report (01-FM-006)**

Under OIG's direction, Leonard G. Birnbaum and Company performed required procedures solely to assist the Office of Personnel Management in assessing the reasonableness of Retirement, Health Benefits, and Life Insurance withholdings/contributions as well as semiannual headcount information submitted by the Department of State. The sufficiency of the procedures was solely the responsibility of the Office of Personnel Management. We were not asked to, and did not, perform an audit on the withholdings or contributions; thus, we did not express an opinion on these accounts.

## Reports Issued by the Office of Inspections

### Embassy Bogota, Colombia (ISP/I-01-06 & ISP/I-01-07)

The United States' principal policy objectives in Colombia are to support counternarcotics efforts while continuing to promote democracy and free market reform. The Ambassador and deputy chief of mission exercise strong control over a large, diverse, and extraordinarily busy mission. Interagency coordination is rigorous and effective but not without debate. Significant numbers of U.S. Government visitors and officials on temporary duty in Colombia -- between 500 and 1,000 on any given day -- also add to the management challenge, one the Embassy meets successfully. However, stronger mission oversight is needed to energize an ineffective interagency administrative support council and provide guidance to a poorly trained personnel staff.

Congressional approval of an additional \$1.3 billion to support "Plan Colombia," a broad Colombian Government initiative to come to grips with Colombia's most pressing political, security, and economic challenges, has significantly increased demands on Embassy Bogota to support the counternarcotics, social and economic development programs integral to "Plan Colombia." Embassy Bogota faces major space and security concerns in implementing these U.S. policy initiatives in Colombia. Security awareness is high in an environment of ongoing insurgent operations, narco-terrorism, and the world's highest kidnapping rate. Although occupying a new chancery building that meets all security requirements, the building design did not anticipate the extraordinary expansion of permanent and temporary duty personnel, particularly in the narcotics affairs, military, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and consular staffs. In the high threat environment of Bogota, relocation of personnel off the chancery compound is inadvisable and has not been authorized, except for some USAID personnel. The Embassy is acquiring hardened mobile units to be sited on the compound to accommodate some of this staff growth. Until these units are in place, dozens of authorized new positions cannot be filled.

Demand for consular services greatly exceeds the mission's resources. Despite effective and innovative management, a growing backlog of some 200,000 visa applicants is an increasing drain on several mission elements and an impediment to bilateral trade. Additional staffing had been authorized, but positions remained unfilled at the time of the inspection. Additional workspace and improved information systems are also needed. The consular section does a good

job of keeping American citizens informed of dangerous conditions and assisting Americans who become victims of Colombia's endemic crime and violence.

There is no reliable interface between the consular section and the Drug Enforcement Administration for sharing information from automated data bases needed to process visa applications. The Office of Inspector General has identified this as a global problem, but it is most acute in Bogota where the intensity of the U.S. counternarcotics effort is unparalleled and the volume of visa applications and fraud requires both efficiency and accuracy of background screening.

A severe recession, ongoing political insurgency, and escalating political and drug-related violence create a difficult climate for commercial promotion. Within this context, the mission is effective in promoting U.S. exports. The Foreign Commercial Service, the Foreign Agricultural Service, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the political/economic section cooperate effectively, under the leadership of the Ambassador, to advance market-opening Colombian reforms.

So far, the mission has managed its resources well to provide adequate administrative support to its rapidly expanding programs. However, shortfalls and backlogs are beginning to occur as the support infrastructure is stretched near its limits. Increases in funding for support costs and numbers of administrative support staff should be factored in to any further program growth.

## **Reports Issued by the Office of Security and Intelligence Oversight**

During this reporting period, OIG security oversight inspections were conducted at the following embassies: Beirut, Lebanon; Helsinki, Finland; Nicosia, Cyprus; Antananarivo, Madagascar; Port Louis, Mauritius; and Rangoon, Burma.