



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

Limited-Scope Inspection of Embassy Belmopan, Belize



Embassy Belmopan, Belize

OIG conducted a limited-scope inspection of Embassy Belmopan and found that the move from Belize City to Belmopan in November 2006 had a detrimental effect on policy operations and morale, particularly that of the locally employed staff.

The inspection noted the need for some form of stationary embassy presence in Belize City which was still the political, economic, commercial, social, tourism, and media center of the country and destination of between 800 thousand and one million American tourists each year. In the first nine months of 2007,

embassy vehicles averaged over 100 100-mile round trips per month between Belize City and Belmopan on a two-lane highway with a high accident rate.

The apprehension of fugitives, though highly successful, was an unfunded activity that came out of International Cooperative Administrative Support Services resources with reimbursement only for the last stage of international transportation. It overburdened the regional security officer and more than justified an assistant regional security office to continue the work and ensure that it did not cause the neglect of other security needs.

The build-to-lease (BTL) housing project for Embassy Belmopan must be considered a success. The project went from concept to completion in only 20 months, a period that allowed embassy personnel to occupy the housing at the same time that the new chancery compound became ready for use. The homes were spacious, well appointed, and were situated on a private, well landscaped compound that provided a tranquil, suburban-like setting. The security features of the compound provided the occupants in this high-crime post with a comfortable sense of security. However, the BTL program suffered from design and technical issues, limited construction management oversight, high lease costs, and disputes over operation and maintenance expense payments between the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations and post.

Resource management had benefited significantly from the strong support of the Charleston Financial Center and especially the Florida Regional Center (FRC), whose frequent visits for training and evaluation had strongly supported financial and human resources management and general services. Because at least 13 key locally employed staff have left the embassy because of the move to Belmopan and the difficult commute for those still living in Belize City, post must call upon the FRC to help provide training for the replacement LE staff.

OIG Report ISP-I-08-13, Inspection of Embassy Belmopan, Belize

The fieldwork for this report was conducted by the Office of Inspections in Belmopan between October 15 and 19, 2007. 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.