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

Report of Inspection

Embassy Bamako, Mali

Report Number ISP-I-06-12, February 2006

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The inspection was conducted in Washington, DC, between September 14 and September 30, 2005, and in Bamako, Mali, between October 3 and October 19, 2005. Ambassador Morris Hughes (team leader), Cheryl Martin (deputy team leader), Frances Jones, Katherine Schultz, and Michelle Wood conducted the inspection.

CONTEXT



Mali has 11 million people. With an area of 1.24 million square kilometers, it is physically the largest country in West Africa, about the size of Texas and California combined. Mali has a history of moderate Islam.

Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world - the 2004 per capita gross domestic product of \$290 million places it among the world's 10 poorest nations. Mali continues to face long-term food security prob-

lems, aggravated in 2004 by a locust infestation. Mali has surpassed Egypt to become Africa's largest cotton producer. It is the third largest producer of gold in Africa after South Africa and Ghana.

Mali imports food, machinery, and petroleum products mainly from France, Switzerland, Cote d'Ivoire, Belgium, and Luxembourg. The crisis in Cote d'Ivoire has hurt Mali's economy: it has disrupted traditional trade routes and reduced remittances from Malian guest workers. Mali's economy has also suffered from the increase in world oil prices, the decrease in cotton prices, and a decrease in gold production. As a result, in 2004 gross domestic product growth was 1.7 percent instead of the 4.9 percent predicted. Economic development in Mali is hampered by a chronic foreign trade deficit. The annual population growth is 2.2 percent down from 3.3 percent in 1998, but this decrease in population growth rate will not be sufficient to pull Mali out of its poverty. Malaria is the most lethal disease affecting Mali. Officially, 1.7 percent of the population is HIV/AIDS positive, but experts believe the figure is closer to three percent. Latest government indicators show a literacy rate of about 30 percent and school enrollment of 64 percent at the primary level and only 28 percent at the secondary level. Unemployment in 2004 remained high. The life expectancy for men in Mali is 47, and for women it is 48.

Mali became independent from France in 1960. The first president, Modibo Keita, pursued socialist market schemes that failed. He was deposed in a coup led by Moussa Traore in 1968. In 1991 when army headed by Amadou Toumani Touré took control. Touré ruled for a year and called multiparty elections. Opposition leader Alpha Konaré was elected president in June 1992. He inherited a Tuareg rebellion in the north, but a truce was arranged in 1996. Konaré was reelected in 1997. He served until 2002 when Amadou Toumani Touré returned to power in elections characterized as free and fair. Notwithstanding its persistent level of deep poverty and its incomplete evolution toward democracy, Mali is playing an increasingly influential role in the region.

Mali and the United States enjoy excellent relations, and there are few areas of contention between the two countries. Mali normally adheres to the positions taken by the African Union as a collective in the United Nations. Although Mali has not agreed to sign a bilateral Article 98 agreement to protect U.S. forces from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, military-to-military cooperation is expanding. U.S. trade and investment in Mali is limited.

The U.S. mission in Mali is growing. There were 21 direct-hire Americans in 2000. There are now 61 direct-hire Americans in the mission. The embassy's program budget in 2000 was \$3.66 million and is now \$5.7 million. Department of Defense operations, including humanitarian assistance, are likely to expand and will require additional administrative support resources. A mission to implement a Millennium Challenge Account project will likely require additional staff. Of the 61 direct-hire Americans, 18 are USAID employees, three are in the Office of the Defense attaché, six are U.S. Marines in the detachment, and three are Peace Corps employees. In addition to the direct hires, there are 157 Peace Corps volunteers in Mali, eight part-time, intermittent, and temporary Americans, 37 direct-hire local employees, and 114 Foreign Service nationals (FSN) employed on personal services agreements. There are almost 1000 American citizens resident in Mali.

The construction of a NEC is planned for completion in mid-2006. Most mission elements will be in the new facility.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

The Ambassador arrived at post six weeks prior to the inspection. He served three tours as a deputy chief of mission (DCM) and is a quick study. He has a thorough understanding of U.S. policy priorities in Mali and the interagency resources available to him, and is exceptionally well placed to lead the mission during a time of transition. The mission has five new officers, and three more positions will be filled during the coming year. Some of the new arrivals are first tour officers, and others are fairly new to the Foreign Service. They will need encouragement, training, and support to become an integral part of what will be a new mission team. The move to the NEC presents opportunities and challenges that the Ambassador is well placed to anticipate as he managed a similar move in Tunis.

The Ambassador's priority is to continue U.S. support for a successful, moderate Muslim democracy in Mali. He believes strongly that it is in the national interest of the United States to provide long-term assistance to Africa. In Mali, he will use mission resources to strengthen the country's social and economic foundation. He believes the key to development is education, and he will use his influence with the government of Mali to put greater emphasis on elementary education to increase literacy, especially among women. The Ambassador will use his ready access to the leadership of the country, including frequent meetings with the President, to advocate these policy priorities. The Ambassador plans to use public diplomacy to a greater extent to explain U.S. policy. He plans to attend as many public events as he can, give speeches and interviews to the press, and speak on the radio, and he will encourage all members of the country team to do the same. An energetic and well-supported outreach program is a fundamental and welcome part of the program the Ambassador has set for the mission.

The Ambassador plans to increase reporting and analysis from the mission. He is aware of specific requests from Washington, and a recent cable on political parties was well written. In view of Mali's leadership in counterterrorism, its participation in peacekeeping missions, and its openness to cooperation with the United States, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) believes the embassy will be an important player for U.S. interests in Africa.

Mission Bamako has more than doubled in size since 2000. There is every expectation that mission size will expand in the next two years. Antiterrorism cooperation, military-to-military contact, and humanitarian civic action programs in the far north are important initiatives that are growing. The DCM coordinates interagency planning. He also is in charge of community affairs. This is a complicated and time-consuming portfolio in an isolated hardship post. The quality of the FSN staff is uneven. It has proven impossible to find qualified local hire Americans to employ in Bamako. For these reasons, an American direct-hire office management specialist should support the DCM. The embassy is too large and too complicated for the Ambassador's office management specialist to provide any support for the DCM.

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of African Affairs should request, and the Bureau of Human Resources should approve, the conversion to a permanent position of the expiring diplomatic readiness initiative position for an office management specialist to report to the deputy chief of mission (Position No: 0000-1140). (Action: AF, in coordination with DGHR)

The DCM was chargé for seven months prior to the Ambassador's arrival. He did a superb job under difficult circumstances. There were extensive staffing gaps that reduced the embassy at one point to five officers. These staffing gaps did not interfere with five VIP visits, including one by former President Carter. By all accounts, the visits were successful. The DCM and his reduced staff did a good job preparing for the arrival of a new ambassador, and they did a good job preparing for the embassy inspection. The DCM maintained a satisfactory level of reporting and representation during the period he was chargé, and his peers credit him with keeping up morale while dealing with complicated staffing issues. Agency heads were universal in their praise of the DCM and the good International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) support they receive from the embassy. The DCM as chargé oversaw the drafting of the embassy's Mission Performance Plan (MPP). All members of the country team felt they were included in the process in an appropriate way. The Ambassador said he used the Bamako MPP to prepare for his appointment to Mali and found it to be well written and useful.

The Ambassador and DCM focus on those community issues that have had a negative effect on morale and recruitment. Two areas of particular concern are the (b) (6)(b) (6) and the difficult living conditions in Bamako. Both issues are being addressed as well as possible under the circumstances. The DCM will rejoin

the school board to represent the Ambassador and the embassy's interests. An entry-level officer has just filled the long-vacant general services officer (GSO) position and will focus on improving the service orientation of the section. The new human resources officer will update and reissue the FSN compensation plan. She will also focus on implementing the results of the computer aided job evaluation survey.

These hopeful signs notwithstanding, the inspectors recommend that the embassy review its administrative support requirements. American staffing at Embassy Bamako has doubled in the past five years, and additional staff is anticipated as new programs begin. The mission will have the responsibility to maintain a new \$72 million office complex, which is being built to standards that are not common in Mali. The embassy should work with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) on a plan to obtain the technical support it will need to maintain the NEC.

Communications with FSNs are good. The FSNs are loyal employees and admire embassy management. The FSN executive committee has several outstanding requests that need to be addressed. Additional training is one request that the embassy is already budgeting for.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Embassy Bamako has close and effective interagency coordination. The five agencies at the mission commended the Ambassador for his early and genuine interest in their programs. He has visited each agency and plans to do so regularly. Once a month the country team meeting is held at the USAID building and includes FSNs. An agency head credits the front office with being the most supportive, open, and professional mission leaders encountered during 18 years in West Africa. This sentiment was repeated so clearly by the other agency representatives at the mission that OIG takes note of this exceptional and healthy interagency environment.

USAID has approximately \$40 million in program funds. It has focused its efforts on improving education and health care in Mali. The embassy and USAID support Peace Corps volunteers and their projects by providing financial support and technical support when it is needed. A USAID program to distribute radios and enhance Mali's commercial radio network is a particular success. There are now 140 radio stations throughout the country broadcasting freely. This network is

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REPORTING

Mali is an unusual, close to unique, African state, and the rationale for sustained U.S. interest in and involvement in Mali is equally specific and unusual. Unlike several of its neighbors, it is not a failing, problematic nation whose internal conflicts feed and are fed by regional instability. Although one of the poorest nations on earth, with the exception of the drought years in the early 1980s, it has not had sustained humanitarian disasters requiring international assistance. Beyond some gold, it has limited mineral resources and has not been the focus of large-scale foreign, including American, commercial engagement. The volume of bilateral trade is relatively small. Although Mali is overwhelmingly Muslim, there is scant evidence that fundamentalist Islam has been able to attract any significant level of support.

What makes Mali unique is that it is a promising experiment in democracy. It has held national elections and has had two peaceful and successful changes of government in the past 13 years. This is all the more remarkable given the unpromising democratic soil of its past doctrinaire Socialist government, a low literacy rate, and a high rate of poverty. None of the obvious conditions for the emergence of a viable democracy were in place in the late 1980s, but by 2005 Mali enjoyed not only a functioning national and local government structure but also a free and vibrant media environment and some improvement in the provision of basic education and health services to its population. The fact that the country is close to signing a Millennium Challenge Account compact is itself evidence of progress. If Mali is a test case for the thesis that democracy is a necessary base from which development can flow, it merits careful monitoring, reporting, and analysis.

At present, the section's reporting is essentially limited to a relatively regular (usually biweekly) review of major political and economic developments, trip wrap-up cables, and responding to the Department's taskings on major periodic reports,

including those on human rights, religious freedom, and the commercial environment. Washington interlocutors note that the volume of reporting has dipped notably in recent months, which is directly attributable to staffing issues, but give high marks for the section's timely and quality responses involving mandatory reporting.

Bamako also hosts a significant number of high-level visits, for many of which the section provides control. In recent months these have included two visits by former President Carter, a Congressional staff delegation, and delegations from the Departments of Energy and Agriculture, all of which required significant preparation time, escort duties, and reporting. In 2004, when the section was fully staffed, the current economic officer was able to travel widely and report from various parts of Mali. Since then he has very rarely traveled and, indeed, spends only a limited amount of time making contacts and pursuing and reporting in depth on emergent political and economic issues - the kind of reporting that is particularly important in tracking Mali's democratic development.

STAFFING

Unfortunately, with current and prospective staffing the embassy does not have the human resources to provide the kind of reporting and analysis needed to document developments in addition to submitting mandatory reports and providing support for visitors. Over the last several years, when the mission was fully staffed, the combined political/economic section had a mid-level section chief, a temporary entry-level professional economic position established under the diplomatic readiness initiative, an entry-level professional rotational officer who spent half days in the consular section and half days as a political officer, and four local staff. However, due to staffing gaps at the time of the inspection, the diplomatic readiness initiative economics officer who will depart post in November 2005, was the only officer in the section. Although the embassy requested that his position be made permanent in two MPPs, and weighed in repeatedly on the importance of the position, it has not had a positive response from Washington.

At a minimum, Bamako will have no officer in the political/economic section until a new consular officer arrives, thus freeing the entry-level professional political/consular officer to devote at least some time to reporting. Admittedly, the recent staffing gaps (which are unfortunately common in embassies like Bamako) in both the consular and political/economic section are partially responsible for this gap. But if Mali is indeed, as one former U.S. ambassador has written, a "poster

child” for African democracy, then it should have at least two full-time officers able to monitor its progress and point out its weaknesses as well as meeting the responsibilities of mandatory reporting, ordinary diplomatic interactions, and visit control.

Recommendation 2: The Bureau of African Affairs should request, and the Bureau of Human Resources should approve, the conversion of the expiring diplomatic readiness initiative position for an economic officer (Position Number 20110002) to a permanent position. (Action: AF, in coordination with DGHR)

One area of diplomatic discourse that could be streamlined is the presentation of demarches. The new Bureau of Language Services web page provides French translations of demarches and sometimes talking points - which are absolutely necessary in French-speaking Mali. This has helped shorten the process and saved time for the section employee who functions as the de facto embassy translator. Mali virtually always votes with the African Union position, and rarely commits itself to a position in an interview. Sometimes interlocutors in the Malian ministries have limited or no background in the issue in hand. It appears that the amount of time devoted to the formal presentation of all demarches yields scant return. Insisting on the formal, in-person presentation of all demarches consumes a great deal of time, time that could be better devoted to investigation, reporting, and making new contacts.

CONSULAR OPERATIONS

Assisted by two FSNs, the newly arrived consular officer at Embassy Bamako is providing good service to nonimmigrant visa and American citizens services customers. After renovations using FY 2005 consular improvement initiative funds, the consular public waiting area is adequate, but the consular work area does not have enough workstations or storage places and does not have line of sight supervision. The move to the NEC will solve these problems. The DCM reviews the consular officer’s visa decisions. The visa referral system works well but needs to be reissued periodically to ensure officers in all sections understand the policy. There are consular contributions to the MPP. The regional consular officer visited Embassy Bamako two weeks before the OIG inspection, reviewed internal management controls, and suggested 15 corrections for procedural shortcomings, 11 of which the consul has made or is in the process of making. The warden system is adequate.

Staffing

Until summer 2005, one full-time officer who was consular section chief, and one consular/political officer who worked half days in each section staffed the consular section. In early summer the consular section chief was medically evacuated, and the part-time officer transferred to another embassy. The Bureau of Consular Affairs covered the gap with two separate temporary duty assignments. A new consular/political officer arrived in September 2005; he is beginning his second Foreign Service tour but his first tour as a consular officer. At the time of the inspection he was working full time in the consular section. A full-time consular officer will arrive in January 2006 to fill the position vacant since the summer of 2005. The Bureau of Consular Affairs recently created a mid-level consular position for Bamako, but it is unclear when that position will be filled. The section also has a consular associate and two FSNs. In May 2004 the embassy fired its two previous consular FSNs, along with five local guards, for malfeasance and corruption in the scheduling of visa appointments.

Management

The consular section has few embassy-specific standard operating procedures. (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)

(b) (2) The new consular officer has not yet established a time for regular staff meetings with the FSNs. Emergency warden system procedures are not clearly shown in the duty handbook. OIG made informal recommendations regarding these deficiencies and also advised the consular officer to update and prioritize the consular contact list.

Nonimmigrant Visas

The immediate concerns regarding nonimmigrant visas are how best to schedule interviews and how best to establish off-site fee collection. The arrangement with the current call-in visa scheduling system is inefficient and will soon end. The embassy has the option to adopt a bureau executive office administered user pays visa information and appointment system. An effective user pays system combined with off-site fee collection would significantly improve the pace of visa interviewing and adjudicating. The consular section will work with the public affairs section to publicize any new payment or appointment system.

Antifraud and Border Security

The most common fraud concern for consular work in Mali is the unreliability of local documents. The consular officer will make this the focus of his antifraud work. Once the regional security office is fully staffed, he will coordinate with the RSO in addressing the problem. OIG advised the consular officer to discuss with the Bureau of Consular Affairs how best to report on the sort of petty fraud prevalent in Mali. The entire consular staff needs antifraud training. The two FSNs began on-line training twice but failed to complete the course because of the press of work. OIG advised the consular officer to get a briefing from the DCM on counterterrorism issues in Mali.

The two local employees told OIG that they were under considerable pressure from nonimmigrant visa applicants to schedule interviews or help to reverse negative decisions. Applicants telephone them both during and after work hours and offer them money and other inducements. In light of previous problems, the consular officer will need to be an observant manager and find ways to minimize pressure on the FSNs. OIG advised the consular officer to establish an accounting log to record the FSN investigator's expenses, fees paid, and number of office visits.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Since her arrival in July 2004, the current public affairs officer (PAO) has had only four months to devote exclusively to the direction and shaping of Bamako's public diplomacy program. She served as acting DCM from September to November 2004 and again from January to August 2005. The latter was a particularly difficult period as multiple staffing gaps throughout the mission made it difficult to keep the embassy functioning.

Nevertheless, with the amount and quality of section activities and initiatives it is difficult to tell that the public affairs section (PAS) has not benefited in the past year from constant leadership and undivided attention. With a local staff of eight, the PAO has crafted ambitious and targeted outreach programs which track with MPP priorities and use modest program resources well. The PAS staff is divided between a small office inside the chancery and the American Center, at least a 20-minute (often considerably longer) drive away. For most of the past year the PAO has juggled mission-wide issues and directing two different staffs in two different locations.

The local employees, several with many years of service, have benefited from past training opportunities, and can competently execute some continuing programs (press coverage, exchange visitor processing) with little direction. Other initiatives require hands-on guidance, particularly in the beginning phase, and the PAO has successfully launched several new programs and consolidated efforts on several key themes. When she arrived, the PAS chancery workspace was one large, undifferentiated room in which the PAS, her staff, and also the local staff of the Defense attaché office worked. A year later, and through her persistence, there are private workspaces for each section, a room that can be shut off and used for meetings and interviews, and sanitary facilities. As noted below, significant changes were also made at the American Center. Her staff has built on the PAO's enthusiasm and guidance; all appreciate her concern for the quality of their workspace and her determination to improve program areas at the American Center that are really the public face of the U.S. government in Mali.

Outreach Programs

The focus of PAS efforts relate directly to U.S. interests in Mali's developing democracy, including the development of a responsible press, the timely provision of information about the United States, its society and culture, the strengthening of civic life, and forging links to Mali's Muslim leaders and populations.

In recent months PAS has organized several day- to week-long seminars on creating and improving the professional skills of journalists, both those writing in French and those who can work in English for various international media sources. The section has instituted a quarterly press lunch for the exchange of opinions. Several U.S. speakers have addressed audiences both in the capital and in other Malian cities on topics ranging from the traditions of democratic governance and creating civic institutions to the 2004 U.S. presidential elections. In recognition of the role students played in the democracy movement of the early 1990s, PAS has made book donations on nonviolent social action to Martin Luther King centers that have been established in several teacher-training institutes. Recent International Visitor Program participants have included the imams of four major Malian cities. After being selected for participation in the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation program, PAS is administering grants that will help preserve a portion of the ancient Islamic manuscripts for which Mali is famous, as well as structures at the World Heritage site of the Kankou Moussa Mosque in Gao, northern Mali. At the American Center the PAS, in cooperation with a USAID contractor, mounted an exhibition featuring the work of a women's cooperative that produces illuminated hand-produced copies of the old Islamic manuscripts gathered in

Timbuktu. PAS also distributes some 200 copies of each edition of *Hi* magazine to Arabic readers throughout the country and, because of the high demand, could easily distribute twice that number.

American Center

The PAS was originally housed in a wing of the chancery, but after the 1998 embassy bombings the American Center, including its library and the PAS employees responsible for information outreach and program support, moved to rented premises on the other side of the Niger River from the embassy but close to Mali's sole university. The PAO and her staff have worked to make what had been a bare-bones collection of rooms into an inviting space that includes two large rooms that are used for major events, a reduced but well-used library, computer access to databases and for educational advising, classrooms for English-language training, and staff offices. While less than elegant, the center is in fact a functional space where the embassy meets the general Malian public, and the time and effort spent upgrading it is justified. When OIG visited the center it was full of secondary and university students doing research on topics ranging from educational opportunities in the United States to the U.S. civil rights movement.

French is indeed the *lingua franca* of Mali, but interest in learning English is growing and PAS is working to further English language instruction. Several Malian former Fulbright and Humphrey exchange scholars active in the Malian Association of Teachers of English are now using space in the American Center to teach English using an American curriculum, rather than working from the British materials used by Bamako's private language schools. Language students are able to access the center's books, periodicals, and reference sources on the United States as enrichment materials. The program helps to encourage the link between the Malian Association of Teachers members and the embassy, and is part of the larger effort to ensure that all former exchange program participants, many of who are community leaders, remain part of the embassy's contact base.

The center also houses special events, including some of the book discussions led by the center director, himself a noted writer with wide connections throughout Mali. These discussions, held at the center and throughout the country, focus on American books that address current issues, such as HIV/AIDS. Copies of the book are sent beforehand to invited participants, who make up the bulk of the audience. The discussions are open to all and typically draw a larger audience of academics, journalists, and civic leaders and often range beyond the specific book at hand.

When the NEC is completed, the American Center will be closed and all PAS staff, materials, and equipment will be consolidated in the new chancery building, which in turn will simplify coordination and direction of all PAS programs. While the new space will not be able to house all the activities that are currently held in the center, and access will be governed by the more stringent embassy security procedures, PAS staff believes the main functions of the center can be maintained in its new premises.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2005
State - D&CP	18	1	21	40	1,442,413
State - ICASS	8	0	136	144	3,789,300
State - Public Diplomacy	1	1	9	11	495,700
State - Diplomatic Security	1	1	1	3	202,443 (1)
State - Marine Security	6	0	4	10	368,075
State - Rep					14,400
State - PD Rep					6,000
State - OBO	3	0	6	9	957,701 (2)
CDC	1	1	0	2	516,528
Defense Attaché Office	3	0	2	5	177,914
NIH	2	0	0	2	1,877,000
Peace Corps	3	47	5	55	3,069,166(3)
USAID	15	2	105	122	39,057,550
Totals	61	53	289	403	51,974,190

- OBO has 3 USPSCs and 6 U.S. sub-contractors
- (1) Includes WSU funds
- (2) Combined OBO-NEC and facility maintenance
- (3) Not including 157 Peace Corps Volunteers

The operations and customer service orientation of the management section received average scores on OIG’s WQLQ. Other agency heads were generally pleased with ICASS support. There is every reason to think that customer service support will get better. After a gap of several months, newly arrived officers have filled the vacant GSO, human resources, and financial management officer positions, and there is a new community liaison office coordinator. The facilities manager position will be filled in January 2006.

While coping with staffing gaps, VIP visits, and the arrival of a new Ambassador, the management section chose to implement a commendable initiative to improve the housing pool. That push is nearly completed and has already had a positive effect on embassy morale, but it created extra work for the general services and facilities maintenance offices. The management officer is aware of the need to improve the performance of the FSNs in the facilities maintenance office following several dismissals for cause from that office earlier in 2005.

Planning for the move to a NEC in mid-2006 is underway. The new facility will greatly improve the mission's security posture. Maintenance, however, will be a problem. Given the low level of technical skills available in Mali, OIG recommends that together with OBO the embassy implement a plan to obtain responsible maintenance and repair support for the NEC.

The management officer is an experienced officer who has the interests of the embassy at heart. He works closely with the DCM, and together they will play a key role in carrying out the move to the NEC. With new and enthusiastic officers in all the sections he supervises, the management officer has the opportunity to standardize procedures at post for such things as the sale of personal property, to review resource requirements for the future expansion of the mission, and to improve customer service across the board.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

New Embassy Compound

The NEC is under construction on a 12-acre site near the new bridge crossing the Niger River, with an anticipated completion date of April 2006. It will replace the present U.S. government-owned chancery, located in a congested area of downtown Bamako, which was constructed in the late 1930s and purchased in 1963. One of the top priorities for Embassy Bamako is to ensure that adequately trained staff is prepared to maintain the new embassy compound.

The NEC is scheduled to formally open in June 2006. The \$72 million building incorporates sophisticated, state of the art heating, ventilation and air conditioning, security, and computer systems that require skill levels at present not found in post

maintenance staff. The building contract includes provisions for a variety of options including having the contractor provide maintenance on the building after completion. Given the skill levels of post staff, and the limited amount of training that can be provided before the move to the new compound, OIG believes OBO and the embassy should review the contract options with respect to the staffing expertise at Embassy Bamako and determine if the contractor should be retained to provide maintenance for the new facility as required by 15 FAM 613. The primary purpose of such an option would be to ensure that the embassy has trained maintenance staff.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Bamako, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should develop and implement a plan that complies with the Department's comprehensive preventative, routine, and special maintenance program for the new embassy compound in accordance with Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Bamako, in coordination with OBO)

General Services Operations

General services operations face many challenges but are on the whole well managed and provide, according to most agencies, an acceptable level of service. During the inspection a new first tour GSO arrived at post who is enthusiastic about the challenges to be faced. During most of the inspection, however, the management officer was the acting GSO.

The embassy has consolidated warehouse and housing operations for all agencies and plans to consolidate the motor pool once it has relocated to the NEC. Staff viewed decisions of the housing board as fair and equitable, and the OIG review of housing both for the Department and other agency employees supported the WQLQ scores. All houses included swimming pools, emergency generators, and extra water tanks. Customers considered customs and shipping to be acceptable, and the NEC project director stated that the section had often gone out of its way to assist in expediting shipments for the new office building. The embassy is proactive in reducing inventories to minimum levels to assist in the move to the NEC.

During the inspection the senior procurement FSN was attending training at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington. OIG reviewed a selected sample of

contracts and a selected sample of property leases for short-term properties, both of which met Department standards. OIG informally recommended that the mission develop an acquisition plan to assist in orderly annual procurement. The use of the credit card program was reviewed and met Department requirements. The embassy was in the process of submitting the annual report on the program, but OIG has included an informal recommendation on its completion.

Fire and Safety

An official vehicle control policy was implemented that included the use of the motor pool during business hours and safety issues. The policy notes that all vehicles are under the control of the chief of mission, that safety belts are mandatory, and that the health unit screens all drivers. One aspect not specified in the Department directive is that vehicle driver duty time be restricted to not more than 10 hours. Mission management in fact follows the 10-hour restriction and will include the restriction in the next policy update. The embassy is in the process of acting on the purchase of fire extinguishers for motor vehicles, a recommendation from the September 2005 Fire and Safety Inspection done by OBO.

Facilities Maintenance

Overall embassy staff did not believe the maintenance of housing was adequate. In part this was because the facility maintenance specialist had curtailed and a replacement had not yet arrived at post. As with general services responsibilities, the management officer was covering the position during the inspection, though the newly arrived GSO was taking over daily management responsibility. Embassy staff was critical of housing maintenance. In part, this may be due to a reduction in maintenance personnel pending hiring new staff for the NEC. OIG believes that the embassy's challenge is to improve the service time for housing maintenance requests while simultaneously training staff for the NEC.

Maintenance staff expressed frustration at not having sufficient supplies readily available, but understood that with the new building opening in FY 2006 the embassy is being conservative about purchases. The department work order system was in place and is a useful tool in answering maintenance requests. An informal recommendation was made to review the process used to update the property base.

International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

The ICASS council reconvened this fall with the arrival of new staff. The chairman is the executive officer for USAID. She brings experience both in management and training to the position. The first meeting with the new council included on-site training that was in effect a mini-ICASS training session. Post is fortunate to have strong leadership from the ICASS chairman and interested and enthusiastic agency heads on the council.

The embassy finance office has requested verification of agency workload counts and the council plans to review ICASS service standards at its next meeting. To reinforce the need for adequate and up-to-date service standards, OIG made an informal recommendation for the council to approve service standards and a second informal recommendation to review workload modifications after all the actual data has been collated. Reviewing data that has been modified is not a correct indicator of workload count.

Finance

Overall management of the finance office, from travel voucher to cashing, was above the Department average for fiscal services. The finance manager, though relatively new to the embassy, is well versed and knowledgeable in all phases of financial management operations. His experience will be of great assistance to the newly reconvened ICASS council. Embassy Bamako is also ably assisted by Bureau of African Affairs “rovers,” who are based in Paris and who have provided assistance on internal controls for the cashier as well as for budget updates for all post-held allotments. The financial management officer plans to review an OIG suggestion that the embassy use a local bank for accommodation exchange.

OIG made informal recommendations for the embassy to develop a representation budget and a travel and training budget to ensure proper planning and effective allocation of funds. OIG informally recommended that the 2001 embassy policy on cashier operations and accommodation exchange be updated. Specifically, the policy on accommodation exchange for interns, fellows, and Fulbright scholars should be amended to include only traveler’s checks or cashier’s checks.

The process of reviewing obligations and subsequently deobligating where disbursements will not be made needs attention. The Bureau of African Affairs

“rovers” identified the need to review FY 2003 and FY 2004, which at the time of the inspection had unliquidated obligations of \$262,474 and \$388,391, respectively. Deobligation requires coordination between the general services and finance sections to determine if further disbursements will be made. OIG made an informal recommendation to review these unliquidated balances. In past years the embassy has carried over ICASS funds and needs to be assured that the funds have been properly obligated for reasonable expenditures in the current year.

Human Resources

Overall management of human resources received an average score on the WQLQ. The office is off to a fresh start with the arrival of a well-qualified and enthusiastic human resources officer. She was helpful to OIG and responsive to their many questions concerning the local compensation plan for FSNs and wage surveys, which have not resulted in a pay increase for two years. Both the FSN compensation plan and handbook need to be updated.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Bamako should update and distribute its Foreign Service national compensation plan. (Action: Embassy Bamako)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Bamako should update and distribute the Foreign Service national handbook. (Action: Embassy Bamako)

The findings of the computer aided job evaluation process have not been implemented at the embassy, although they have been implemented at USAID Bamako. The results of the survey for the embassy are expected shortly and will be implemented as soon as possible.

The FSN awards program needs to be explained in writing to the staff. American supervisors could use the awards program more effectively to reward good performance among the locally employed staff. OIG informally recommended that a mission-wide training program be included in the post travel and training budget, with particular attention to FSN development.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SECURITY

Embassy Bamako's information management office supports 101 users distributed throughout the chancery compound, the administrative building, the American Center and the warehouse. Embassy Bamako's staff gave the information management operations the highest overall score on the WQLQ for its customer service ethic. Although the information management office meets most of the Department's information management and information security guidelines, OIG identified the following information management areas for improvement: developing standard operating procedures such as ordering replacement hardware (printers, radios), updating and developing contingency and security plans, monitoring the use of government resources appropriately, and establishing a central location to receive and track calls from customers needing assistance. The information security areas of configuration management and access control also need improvement.

Information Management

There are no standard operating procedures for the unclassified network, mailroom, radio program, and pouch facility. Without documented procedures the embassy is dependent upon the knowledge of those at post. For example, in mid-2004 the embassy received four printers from the Department that proved inoperable. Current information management staff did not know how to obtain replacements from the Department. When personnel with the knowledge are unavailable, critical processes such as emergency restore, operations of the servers, and/or pick-up or forwarding of mail are disrupted.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Bamako should develop standard operating procedures for all information management functions including mail, pouch, and radio procedures. (Action: Embassy Bamako)

Embassy Bamako requires replacement radios for the emergency action committee. Currently all committee members are using radios which lack secure transmission. 5 FAH-2 H 713.3 states that emergency action committee radio networks are specially configured and radios used on this network must be capable of encrypted transmission. In the event of a catastrophe the emergency action committee will not have a secure method to communicate.

Other mandatory information management related documentation is outdated. 5 FAM 867 requires all posts to have a contingency plan, systems security plan, and

operational procedures for software and hardware. Embassy Bamako's contingency plans and systems security plans for ONP and Classnet are dated 2003 and have not been updated to reflect the staff and equipment changes made since 2003. OIG informally recommended that the embassy update its contingency and systems security plans.

Post personnel are using computer resources inappropriately. OIG conducted a search for non-work-related digital media and identified several employees who stored personal pictures on government equipment. 5 FAM 723(6) (a) states that personal use of U.S. government computers is prohibited if the use results in additional charge to the government. OIG reviewed all administrative notices for this calendar year and found nothing relating to personal use of government computers. Without enforcement of appropriate use of government resources, the cost of storing and backing up data (including personal resources) can become expensive.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Bamako should perform random checks of computers assigned to embassy employees to ensure that government resources are used appropriately and periodically send out administrative notices to remind personnel of appropriate use of U.S. government computers. (Action: Embassy Bamako)

The information management office has no method to track trouble calls. There is no main telephone number to call, no shared mailbox to send computer-related issues to, and computer issues are not tracked. Post personnel contact information management personnel individually by telephone and e-mail. By not having an organized method of receiving and tracking information, the information management officer cannot determine how much work is completed daily, monthly, or yearly by information management personnel. The information management officer also cannot determine how long it takes to resolve issues. A ticket tracking system can assist with the creation/revision of work requirements; provide input to annual reviews and awards; and provide input to senior management regarding office productivity.

Information Security

Information systems security duties have been neglected because no one was assigned the information systems security officer responsibilities when the previous information systems security officer and alternate left post. The acting informa-

tion management officer has recently assumed security officer duties. Although he is not knowledgeable about information systems security officer responsibilities, he is scheduled for training in December 2005. Embassy servers are not configured to the Department's configuration guidelines as required by 5 FAM 825. During the review of the servers' and files' security configurations, OIG and information management staff identified three folders (human resources, financial management, and health unit) that allowed all staff full access. The information in these folders includes a great deal of information that must be protected under various statutes such as the Privacy Act. Although this problem was corrected immediately, the information systems security officer needs to review all system access at least annually and verify that personnel only have access to what is necessary.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Bamako should review all individual access permissions to the system and files annually and configure servers and files in accordance with Department security configuration guidelines.
(Action: Embassy Bamako)

Embassy procedures do not require supervisors to document requests for system access for their subordinates. The RSO notifies the information management staff when an individual receives a security briefing. The systems staff then provides the individual with a user ID and access form for their signature. Supervisors must complete a system access request form for each staff member who requires access to the automated information system as required by 12 FAM 622.1-2 (b).

QUALITY OF LIFE

MEDICAL SERVICES

One regional medical officer, one locally hired nurse, a receptionist, and a laboratory technician staff the health unit. The office averages 60 office visits per month from American clientele. Both the regional medical officer, who is new, and the nurse are well thought of, and management of the unit received high marks on OIG questionnaires. The nurse has no back up, and the regional medical officer will locally hire a nurse to work in the unit one day a week and serve as back up. An American expatriate board-certified panel physician backs up the regional medical officer. The regional medical officer advises seven posts in Africa and will travel to each two times per year. Last year there were 10 medical evacuations plus three pregnancy/obstetrics evacuations from Bamako.

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COMMISSARY

The commissary serves a small clientele and as yet does not have any money-generating activities outside of the sale of food and liquor to its members. The turnover rate has been above the Department standard, but there is an ongoing struggle to raise enough cash to place new orders. The manager has a strong background in accounting, and the board of directors takes an active role in inventory management. Annual audits are completed in January of each fiscal year. OIG informally recommended that the manager's contract be implemented.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The annual certification submitted June 29, 2005, stated that the chief of mission had undertaken a review of management systems in accordance with the Department's Internal Control Directive (2 FAM 020) and found the mission to be in compliance. In addition the certification attested that recent risk assessments problems had been corrected and internal controls implemented to identify and prevent future weaknesses. No instances of fraud in financial statements were noted, and the certification provided by the real property manager verified that appropriate procedures for the acquisition and assignment of residential properties are in place in accordance with 15 FAM 212, to include the management of the interagency housing board and any required requests for waivers.

During FY 2005 the embassy followed up on recommendations in an OIG audit report, the *Review of Procurement and Property Operations at Embassy Bamako* (AUD/PPA-05-03 of November 2003). Recommendations for corrective action were made by OIG and corrected by post in leasing payments, leasing contracts, and in the control of personal property. During the inspection a sample of leases and nonexpendable property was reviewed and found to be compliant with Department standards. As stated above, the embassy was in the process of submitting the required annual review of the purchase card program.

General Services Operations

The latest annual inventory for property was completed for 2004. The nonexpendable inventory total was \$10,168,249 and the expendable property inventory \$598,760. Embassy Bamako is in the process of preparing the FY 2005 inventory. OIG randomly selected items from the property management inventory and was able to verify all items were in the warehouse. At the time of the inspection post had 18 blanket purchase orders, some with only one small purchase in the prior year. OIG informally recommended that the GSO review all blanket purchase orders to ensure they are essential to efficient procurements.

Finance

The monthly verification of the Class B cashier was conducted in compliance with Department regulations. OIG found the changes made in the monthly Checklist for Verifying Officer, Exhibit 12 B in chapter 12 of the Cashier User Guide, to be realistic and useful. OIG noted that in the last two years two monthly verifications had not been completed and recommended that the financial management officer include the DCM on his monthly distribution. OIG also noted that subcashiers were often using their entire advance for single vendor payments. An informal recommendation was made to establish a post policy to designate a limit for single cash vendor payments by the subcashiers. Vendor payments are not yet being paid with electronic fund transfers. The banking system has modernized, and OIG informally recommended that post implement electronic funds transfer payments for vendors where possible.

The Win ACS Version 2.3 has a system flaw; the amount entered in the accommodation transaction prints the transaction four times but does not affect the total calculation. The financial services center in Charleston is working toward resolution of the problem. The embassy has also coordinated with the Paris financial services center's Cashier Monitor to install the personal check conversion system that eliminates pouching personal checks and minimizes the time for personal checks to clear in accommodation transactions. The use of the suspense deposit account was in compliance with Department procedures, and subcashier letters of designation had been updated with the arrival of the new financial management officer.

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of African Affairs should request, and the Bureau of Human Resources should approve, the conversion to a permanent position of the expiring diplomatic readiness initiative position for an office management specialist to report to the deputy chief of mission (Position No: 0000-1140). (Action: AF, in coordination with DGHR)
- Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of African Affairs should request, and the Bureau of Human Resources should approve, the conversion of the expiring diplomatic readiness initiative position for an economic officer (Position Number 20110002) to a permanent position. (Action: AF, in coordination with DGHR)
- Recommendation 3:** Embassy Bamako, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should develop and implement a plan that complies with the Department's comprehensive preventative, routine, and special maintenance program for the new embassy compound in accordance with Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Bamako, in coordination with OBO)
- Recommendation 4:** Embassy Bamako should update and distribute its Foreign Service national compensation plan. (Action: Embassy Bamako)
- Recommendation 5:** Embassy Bamako should update and distribute the Foreign Service national handbook. (Action: Embassy Bamako)
- Recommendation 6:** Embassy Bamako should develop standard operating procedures for all information management functions including mail, pouch, and radio procedures. (Action: Embassy Bamako)
- Recommendation 7:** Embassy Bamako should perform random checks of computers assigned to embassy employees to ensure that government resources are used appropriately and periodically send out administrative notices to remind personnel of appropriate use of U.S. government computers. (Action: Embassy Bamako)
- Recommendation 8:** Embassy Bamako should review all individual access permissions to the system and files annually and configure servers and files in accordance with Department security configuration guidelines. (Action: Embassy Bamako)

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Informal recommendations cover operational matters not requiring action by organizations outside the inspected unit and/or the parent regional bureau. Informal recommendations will not be subject to the OIG compliance process. However, any subsequent OIG inspection or on-site compliance review will assess the mission's progress in implementing the informal recommendations.

Policy and Advocacy

The political section FSN who serves as the de facto embassy translator must occasionally translate complex scientific and legal terms but has only basic French-English dictionaries to consult.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Bamako should acquire appropriate dictionaries and reference materials to enable the embassy translator to produce clear and precise translations of diplomatic correspondence.

The embassy awards grants using funds from several program sources. While each of the programs has a specific focus, there is little coordination in the program as a whole.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Bamako should coordinate its grant programs (including those funded by the Ambassador's self-help fund, the Democracy and Human Rights Fund, and public diplomacy funds) to ensure that the overall grants effort reflects Mission Performance Plan priorities and that the several programs complement each other.

Consular Operations

Embassy Bamako's arrangement with the inefficient Call Me Mali visa appointment system is ending, and it is important to immediately find a new way to set up visa appointments.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Bamako should identify and implement a new visa appointment system, such as the Bureau of Consular Affairs Executive Office-administered user-pays visa information and appointment system that can provide information in French and local languages.

The embassy does not have an off-site MRV fee collection program.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Bamako should establish an offsite machine-readable visa collection contract with a local bank or the post office.

The consular section experiences frequent turnover in staff but lacks written standard operating procedures for FSNs and officers that would help maintain procedural consistency.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Bamako should complete the standard operating procedures required by the Consular Management Handbook.

The embassy has a strong visa referral policy in place, but with summer turnover a number of employees need a briefing on the policy and visa process.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Bamako, at least once a year, should redistribute the mission's visa referral policy and hold a meeting for all of the mission's American employees to discuss that policy and other visa procedures.

The consular section's FSNs have had no fraud prevention training.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Bamako should arrange for enough time for the Foreign Service nationals to complete on-line fraud-prevention training and initiate a training request for the Foreign Service national fraud investigator to get further training at the Foreign Service Institute.

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Consular officers and the FSNs do not meet regularly, thereby forfeiting opportunities to build team spirit, report on section activities, set objectives, and enhance awareness of fraudulent local documents.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Bamako should schedule regular staff meetings for the consular section.

The consular section has not prepared a plan for handling major accidents for disasters involving Americans. The consular officer does not have sufficient understanding of how the local authorities and airlines would manage an event such as an airplane crash.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Bamako should have its consular section prepare a disaster plan and meet with those local and host-government officials who would be involved in responding to a major accident.

Embassy Bamako has no emergency warden system procedures in the duty handbook, thereby removing it as a tool for officers from all sections to respond to an emergency, including notifying wardens in the absence of the consular officer.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Bamako should include clearly written emergency warden system procedures in the duty handbook.

Public Diplomacy

PAS grants files are divided between the PAS and the finance section.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Bamako should consolidate the grants files in the public affairs section.

The small collection of commercial and economic reference materials housed in the American Center is dated and of limited use.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy Bamako should clean out the commercial library and acquire, if there is sufficient demand, appropriate current information resources.

Management

There was no acquisition plan to assist in using funds effectively.

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy Bamako should develop a plan in coordination with the finance section, and on a quarterly basis review and update the status of purchases and available funding.

The embassy has not submitted the annual report to the Department regarding the purchase card program.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy Bamako should submit the annual purchase card report in accordance with Department requirements.

There were 18 blanket purchase orders, some with only one small purchase in the prior year.

Informal Recommendation 16: Embassy Bamako should review all blanket purchase agreements to determine which are essential to efficient procurements.

The database for the maintenance work order system is not up to date.

Informal Recommendation 17: Embassy Bamako should provide information from the property files, to include address and occupant, to the maintenance work order clerk to update the system and save time in initiating work orders.

The ICASS service standards have not been reviewed to ensure they are accurate for present operations.

Informal Recommendation 18: Embassy Bamako should review and update the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services standards applicable to the embassy.

Modifications in workload counts should be determined with complete data.

Informal Recommendation 19: Embassy Bamako should approve any modifications in workload counts after all workload counts have been verified and concurred with all agencies.

Embassy Bamako does not have a plan to use the representation allotment that would include all sections.

Informal Recommendation 20: Embassy Bamako should develop a representation plan including all sections and monitor expenditures in the representation budget.

Embassy Bamako does not have a structured training budget or a training plan that is known to all sections and staff.

Informal Recommendation 21: Embassy Bamako should develop a training plan and provide funding as available to ensure training is completed for all sections of the embassy.

The cashier operation and accommodation exchange policy was last updated in 2001.

Informal Recommendation 22: Embassy Bamako should update accommodation exchange policy and specifically amend the section on interns, fellows, and Fulbright scholars to include only traveler's checks or cashier checks.

FY 2003 and FY 2004 have unliquidated balances.

Informal Recommendation 23: Embassy Bamako should ensure that the finance and general services sections review disbursements and deobligate funds from prior fiscal years.

Vendor payments are not made using electronic fund transfers.

Informal Recommendation 24: Embassy Bamako should implement electronic fund transfers for vendor payments whenever possible.

The commissary manager does not have a written contract.

Informal Recommendation 25: Embassy Bamako should create and implement a contract for the commissary manager.

Subcashiers often use their entire cash advance to pay a single vendor payment that should have been a purchase order.

Informal Recommendation 26: Embassy Bamako should establish an embassy policy that designates a limit on single vendor payments for the subcashiers.

FSNs are not aware of the embassy's nonimmigrant visa referral policy.

Informal Recommendation 27: Embassy Bamako should distribute the embassy's nonimmigrant visa policy to all Foreign Service nationals.

Information Management and Security

The information management officer received three printers with defective fusers.

Informal Recommendation 28: Embassy Bamako should order replacement fuser assemblies for its three Hewlett-Packard Laser Jet 4200 printers.

None of the embassy's emergency action committee radios have secure transmission capability.

Informal Recommendation 29: Embassy Bamako should obtain appropriate maintenance support for the emergency radios to ensure that secure transmission is possible.

The information management officer has no tracking method for computer-related issues assistance requests.

Informal Recommendation 30: Embassy Bamako should identify a central location to track trouble calls.

Embassy Bamako's contingency plans and systems security plans are outdated.

Informal Recommendation 31: Embassy Bamako should update its contingency and systems security plans.

Embassy supervisors do not request access for subordinates to obtain computer accounts.

Informal Recommendation 32: Embassy Bamako should require supervisors to document computer access requests for their subordinates.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Terence McCulley	08/05
Deputy Chief of Mission	Steven Kraft	09/04
Chiefs of Sections:		
Management	Dwight Rhoades	10/04
Consular	Aaron Sampson (acting)	09/05
Political/Economic	Matthew Miller (acting)	12/03
Public Affairs	Mary Speer	07/04
Regional Security	Kevin Gilligan	06/03
Other Agencies:		
Centers for Disease Control	Kellie Lartigue	07/04
Department of Defense	Maj. Argyrios Haritos	07/04
National Institutes of Health	Richard Sakai	09/90
Peace Corps	Kateri Clement	04/04
U.S. Agency for International Development	Alex Newton	06/05

ABBREVIATIONS

CDC	Centers for Disease Control
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
Department	Department of State
FSN	Foreign Service national
GSO	General services officer
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
MPP	Mission Performance Plan
NEC	New embassy compound
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PAS	Public affairs section
RSO	Regional security officer
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WQLQ	Workplace and Quality of Life Questionnaire

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

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