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

Report of Inspection

Embassy Bogotá, Colombia

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- The U.S. mission in Colombia is one of the largest in the world and has more law enforcement and intelligence agencies than any other U.S. mission. In all, there are 25 agencies present, representing 42 cost centers involved in International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS). The Ambassador has an exceptionally cohesive and productive “one-mission-one-team” operation and is fostering a constructive U.S.-Colombian relationship.
- The success of Embassy Bogotá, and its multifaceted support to the government of Colombia’s “Plan Colombia,” can be attributed to the highly effective interagency cooperation created by the Ambassador and the day-to-day coordination of his deputy chief of mission (DCM).
- The embassy’s narcotics affairs section (NAS) works with Department of Justice elements, the public affairs section (PAS) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to promote rule of law through programs funded by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). These programs extend beyond traditional training of police, prosecutors, and judges to successfully promoting integrated, coordinated, institutional democracy-building throughout Colombia.
- A secure chancery was built in 1995 at a cost of \$65 million, and funding was approved in 2005 for a new \$30.6 million office annex. Nonetheless, the embassy is under severe pressure from staffing growth that has doubled the size of this mission in ten years. The mission’s security and administrative operations cannot support continued growth in staffing. The mission must reduce personnel, streamline operations, and consolidate services, and should conduct a top-to-bottom, interagency, rightsizing review as a first step in this process.
- The PAS has integrated public diplomacy into five of the six performance-related goals of the Mission Performance Plan (MPP). The PAS is a dynamic member of the country team and stays connected with the professional Colombian media community and conducts nationwide mutual-understanding programs.

- Colombia has nine U.S.-Colombian binational cultural centers, which teach English and host cultural programs. They also are excellent platforms for expanding English language programs for education and meeting the MPP goals of promoting democratic values and mutual understanding. A regional English language officer is needed to expand this valuable program.
- The political and economic sections focus well on major issues of bilateral interest and afford reporting officers an opportunity to develop portfolios on important topics such as human rights, displaced persons, extradition, demining, and the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- In one of the largest consular sections worldwide, four of the five American supervisors are stretched into positions that are a grade or two higher than their ranks, and a sixth supervisory position remains vacant. Despite the lack of appropriate mid-level management, the section provides good service while paying considerable attention to detecting applicants who are narcotics traffickers or terrorists.
- The management office generally provides good services, but the ICASS ratio of staff to customers serviced is one of the lowest by worldwide standards and those of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA). The office's staffing gaps further hamper productivity.
- Embassy Bogotá, with one of the largest security programs in the world, works hard to provide quality security for all mission personnel. However, staffing gaps have adversely affected the security program. (These are discussed in this report's classified annex on security management.)

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between September 14 and 30, 2005, and in Bogotá, Colombia, between October 4 and 28, 2005. Ambassador Eileen A. Malloy (team leader), James Dandridge, II (deputy team leader), Arne Baker, Renate Coleshill, Leslie Gerson, Vickie Huss, John Jones, Marjorie Lynch, Jennifer Noisette, Janis Scorpio, and Robert Torres conducted the inspection.

CONTEXT



Colombia, with its population of 44 million people and an area of 440,000 square miles, is one of South America's largest countries. The nation has the third-highest population in Latin America and a landmass equal to that of California and Texas combined. The capital and largest city is Bogotá, with a population of about six million. Other large cities include Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, and Cartagena.

Until 1998, Colombia had the longest record of continuous economic growth (40 years) in the Western Hemisphere. In 2003, Colombia had an estimated gross domestic product of \$79.2 billion, a growth rate of 3.4 percent, and a per capita gross domestic product of approximately \$1,852. Principal products include petroleum, coffee, coal, bananas, cut flowers, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, and printed material. The United States is its chief trading partner.

Under the nation's constitution of 1991, the president is chief of state and head of the government and is elected to a four-year term and may not be re-elected. At the time of the inspection, the Colombian Constitutional Court ruled on an amendment to the Constitution that would provide President Alvaro Uribe with a legal means of seeking a second term in office. President Uribe, a lifelong Liberal, ran on an independent ticket and won the August 2002 election with 51 percent of the vote in the first round. His current popularity ratings are around 70 percent, with the majority of Colombians supporting his strong stance against narcotics trafficking and the nation's indigenous terrorist movements.

Key issues facing the Uribe government at the time of the inspection included the proposed demobilization plan, which would integrate former right-wing paramilitary members into lawful society; the 40-year-old battle and extant peace processes with domestic guerrillas; and the proposed Free Trade Agreement with

the United States. At the same time, the Uribe government is working closely with the United States on a wide range of rule-of-law initiatives designed to improve governance, reduce corruption, and improve civilian control over the military.

Colombia is the source of 90 percent of the cocaine and 50 percent of the heroin entering the U.S. market. U.S. bilateral assistance to Colombia aims to reduce the flow of narcotics to the United States, enhance regional stability, and improve good governance. The links between narcotics trafficking and narcoterrorism make the mission's work even more vital to U.S. security.

The embassy has over 1,100 employees, making it the largest in South America. It also has a number of temporary duty positions that are filled continually by U.S. staff members and as many as 58 American employees working under personal services contracts. Approximately 800 temporary duty personnel may also be in Colombia on any given day. The embassy is undergoing a rapid expansion. A consular agency in Barranquilla employs a U.S. consular agent and a Foreign Service national (FSN). The resident office of the Drug Enforcement Administration in Cartagena has 30 American staff members and six FSNs. (The Drug Enforcement Administration wanted to double the size of this office in 2005.) A total of 42 ICASS customers and 25 U.S. agencies are in Colombia.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

COUNTRY TEAM AND INTERAGENCY RELATIONS

Each head of agency and separate ICASS customer, of the more than 25 that the Office of Inspector General (OIG) interviewed, said there is a positive and transparent information flow between the agencies on the country team. Agencies, whose headquarters staffs in Washington do not traditionally share information, much less conduct joint operations, share fluidly and productively at the embassy. Credit for this goes to the Ambassador, who has made clear to each agency head that Embassy Bogotá is a “one team, one mission” post, and to the day-to-day coordination of his DCM. The sheer number of U.S. agencies at this post makes interagency cooperation essential. This post management team goes beyond simple information sharing and fosters an environment conducive to joint interagency law enforcement and counter narcoterrorism operations. The mission’s success and its multifaceted support to the Colombian government’s Plan Colombia can be attributed in no small measure to the highly effective interagency cooperation created and maintained by the Ambassador and DCM.

THE MISSION PERFORMANCE PLAN PROCESS

The MPP articulates this post’s key substantive goals and objectives. Public diplomacy tools are enmeshed throughout the MPP goals, demonstrating recognition of the importance of an agile and proactive public diplomacy stance. Each section head of a Department of State (Department) operation, and each of the other agency managers interviewed, said they were full participants in the development of the MPP. The MPP is used by section heads in their ongoing, substantive work, but, as in many large posts undergoing rapid expansion of other-agency positions, the MPP process is not suitably flexible for capturing the resources needed in the current fiscal year to accommodate the new burden on Department resources arising from other-agency staffing increases. In the case of Bogotá, post management has approved a number of National Security Defense Directive

(NSDD) 38 requests to add law enforcement staff. These were approved on the assumption that the other agency would cover all costs generated by the new positions through the ICASS program. The fact that the Department pays the majority of all assessed ICASS costs means that its annual ICASS costs have soared with this growth of other-agency staffing. There have also been significant workload and budgetary increases arising from outside of ICASS. These include the regional security office and the cost of expanding office space, matters discussed later in this report.

MANAGEMENT ATTENTION TO SECURITY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Embassy Bogotá operates in a *high*-threat environment. As a result, the American direct-hire staff is paid a hardship differential and a danger-pay allowance. The Ambassador and DCM highly value the work of the regional security office, which protects employees, visiting U.S. official delegations, and the local American business community. They also value the consular staff's effort to ensure that resident and visiting U.S. citizens are kept informed of security threats in the region. Serious staffing gaps in the regional security office and in the position of management counselor have reduced the attention paid to some emergency preparedness activities, such as emergency drills, but the newly arrived regional security officer (RSO) and management counselor are engaged in these issues and have post management's full support.

SUPPORT OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY OBJECTIVES

The Department's mechanisms to protect employees from discrimination on the basis of race, religion, or creed are all functioning at Embassy Bogotá. No serious Equal Employment Opportunity issues were raised during OIG's extensive interviews nor were there documented problems raised on OIG's questionnaires. Both the Ambassador and DCM fully support the objectives of the Equal Employment Opportunity program.

LEADERSHIP

The mission community gives the Ambassador high marks for his single-minded pursuit of the key goals and objectives of U.S. policy toward Colombia. He can express succinctly and compellingly why the United States has invested so much in this bilateral relationship. As a result, the staff is highly motivated and proud of its contributions. Staff members with less-direct interaction with the Ambassador, such as those in the consular and management sections, have not benefited to the same degree from the force of his leadership, however.

MORALE ISSUES

For a hardship/danger-pay post, morale at Embassy Bogotá is surprisingly good. The majority of staff members, including first-tour consular officers on the visa line, see their work as important to U.S. security and express pride in their contributions. The employees whose morale is less rosy include embassy family members, consular staff other than entry-level officers (ELO), single female officers, and the Marine security guard detachment. The new community liaison office (CLO) coordinator is committed to identifying activities that could help improve morale among these groups.

Management Attention to Public Diplomacy and Inclusion in Mission Performance Plan Process

Public diplomacy is integrated into five of the six MPP performance goals. The public affairs officer (PAO) is one of the key staff members who meet with the Ambassador most often. The Ambassador recognizes the importance of public diplomacy in general and the role of the public affairs staff in particular. He uses his public diplomacy tools to educate the Colombian public on the support provided by the United States and allows the Colombian government to get public credit for joint law enforcement and antiterrorism operations, enhancing the perception of the government's effectiveness. Public diplomacy programs are key to the outreach that sustains U.S. policy through long-range, mutual understanding exchange programs.

ENTRY-LEVEL OFFICER PROGRAM

The DCM is particularly responsible for ensuring that ELOs, generalists and specialists, receive proper mentoring and training. He meets with this group regularly, occasionally hosting pizza dinners at his residence. ELOs went out of their way to note their satisfaction with the DCM's assistance and guidance. One issue that clouds an otherwise excellent ELO program is the fact that all representational events at Embassy Bogotá are stag, per the Ambassador's direction. After a long workday away from their spouses, some ELOs were not participating in representational and ELO programs after work because their spouses were not included. Apprised of this, the DCM quickly made ELOs able to bring their spouses to the entry-level events held at his residence. In light of the DCM's substantive workload, his commitment to career development is commendable.

COUNTERINTELLIGENCE WORKING GROUP

The post is not conducting formal counterintelligence working group meetings, nor is it submitting the mandatory, yearly cable report. The post does cover these issues in other meetings, so this matter is more of a formality. Nonetheless, OIG suggested that the post inaugurate a counterintelligence working group when it finishes with other similar issue meetings, such as those of the Visas Viper group. It should also submit the yearly cable. Responding, the post scheduled a counterintelligence working group meeting for November 2005.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Overview

The PAS has an experienced PAO and a FY 2005 budget of approximately \$1.4 million. The PAO has led the PAS to surpass all expectations in covering a myriad of programs, and five of the six MPP performance goals have a public diplomacy component. Public diplomacy programs embrace the younger, broader, and special audiences, using effective mutual-understanding programs. The PAS is involved in the human rights agenda through a series of public diplomacy programs addressing Afro-Colombian and other indigenous groups that have been affected by Colombia's regional conflicts.

The PAS has six sections and a total of 32 employees, including seven Foreign Service officers and 25 locally employed staff (LES) who are professional and of high quality. The Foreign Service staff has suffered extended staffing gaps as a result of the "Iraq tax" and the small pool of bidders willing to serve in Bogotá. WHA's executive office has provided some relief by extending the tour of an ELO, an outstanding press attaché, allowing the officer to remain until the recent arrival of the new information officer. The PAO has carried the section in the absence of a full complement of assigned officers. She is one of the most dynamic members of the country team, a counselor to the Ambassador, and an active participant in practically all interagency thematic committees.

English Language Programs

In Colombia's urban centers there are binational cultural centers known as "Centros Colombo Americano." The nine binational centers are primarily English teaching institutions. American cultural program institutions have been established in Colombia for over 40 years. There are 23,405 students enrolled in English

language classes and over 778 English language teachers in the binational centers, which are largely supported by the mission under the auspices of the PAS. The Colombian Association of English Teachers, at its fortieth annual conference, gave the Ambassador an award for the mission's support to English teaching in Colombia. The Colombian Minister of Education told the conference of a plan to expand curriculum development for English teaching in Colombia's public schools, and the Department's Central America regional English language officer (RELO) was at the conference, along with the directors of the nine binational centers, by invitation of the PAS. The directors hope to participate with the Colombian Ministry of Education in developing regional English language teaching centers for the public schools and the Central America RELO suggested engaging the Department's English language specialists, who could work with the centers. OIG discussed with the RELO the possibility of an English language fellow to work with the ministry on developing a standardized English language curriculum.

One problem is that there is no RELO available to Embassy Bogotá. There is an interest and a need in Colombia and neighboring Andean countries for a resident RELO who could expand on this valuable program that promotes education and MPP goals.

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, should designate and assign an Andean regional English language officer to work with the Colombian Ministry of Education, the binational centers, and educational institutions in Colombia and neighboring Andean countries. (Action: WHA, in coordination with ECA)

Fulbright Exchange Programs

The Commission for Educational Exchange and Financing of Programs (Fulbright Commission) was established in Bogotá on January 9, 1957. The program's agreement has been affected by exchanges of notes that occurred on June 12, 1967, and March 8, 1971. The terms of the agreement cause it to fall short of a binational commission administratively, although its operational exchange programs are binational. The Ambassador appoints all of the executive members of the board of directors and serves as the board's honorary chairman and tiebreaker of votes. The Department contributes more than three quarters of the commission's annual operating budget. The board is limited to three American

citizens (two of them members of the Foreign Service) and three Colombian citizens. Board members are appointed annually, serve through December 31, and may be reappointed without limit.

Audits are conducted in accordance with the Manual of Scholarship Exchanges and generally accepted auditing standards. Since the Fulbright program is funded by U.S. appropriations, the provisions of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-110 and the Inspector General Act of 1978 apply. These rules provide fiscal oversight to Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) funds and funds under the control of commissions. Nevertheless, OIG found that ECA was apparently unaware of the Fulbright Manual requirement that it forward a copy of the annual audits to OIG. A review of the annual audits in Bogotá found them to have been conducted in accordance with guidance, but also found they were close to their time limits, which call for changing audit companies within a prescribed number of years.

The Fulbright Commission's board has only six members, which meets the terms of the agreement but restricts flexibility in the continuity of commission operations. If board members are excused or absent, the board may have to cease operations - it would lack a quorum. Also, because the reappointments are without limits, continuity of operations could be hindered. There is little room for the use of staggered appointments for the same reasons, and this goes against good management practices. OIG suggested that the mission consider discussing a new exchange of notes that would lead to modification of the agreement and increase the number of board members. This could be done without renegotiating the basic terms of the agreement, obviating the need to ratify a new international agreement.

In spite of these structural anomalies, the Fulbright Commission manages a reasonably robust exchange program within a limited budget. Its candidates represent the national educational spectrum. The PAO, who is president of the Fulbright Commission board, supports using the binational centers as points of contact for the commission's programs in Colombia. The PAO finds the time, in spite of her busy schedule, to participate in exchange candidates' interviews and garners the participation of other board members, former Fulbright scholars, and educational specialists.

Broadcast Board of Governors and Voice of America

The PAS works with national, regional, and local broadcast networks to transmit Voice of America programming. Colombia has 11 Voice of America affiliates (broadcasters receiving the transmission through their own antennae) and 60 Voice of America users (broadcasters receiving biweekly deliveries of Voice of America and locally produced programming). The PAS maintains excellent relations with Washington entities. In March 2005, it hosted Broadcasting Board of Governors and Voice of America executives, who met with the leading Colombian broadcast journalists and news directors to present Voice of America programming and discuss possible partnerships with Colombian broadcasters.

POLITICAL REPORTING

Embassy Bogotá's political section focuses on three major policy issues: narcotics, terrorism, and regional security. It also focuses on such related issues as human rights, displaced persons, extradition, and demining. In 2004, the combined political and economic section was split to provide more concentrated coverage of developing political and economic issues. The political section has successfully developed reporting portfolios that address current and potential political issues and allow officers to coordinate missionwide responses. The counselor for political affairs is an FS-1 officer in an FE-OC position. There are three FS-2 positions, and the other positions in the section range from FS-3 to FP-6.

Embassy Bogotá's political reporting focuses on the big picture. The mission effectively addresses domestic and regional security issues. Most reporting and analysis comprehensively deals with the Colombian government's effort to consolidate territory and disarm illegal groups, and ongoing internal political changes. Reporting and analysis have been hampered somewhat by budget cuts that limit the section's ability to cover events all over the country. However, when events do occur, a quick spot report is sent to Washington by informing the desk officer and other interested parties via e-mails and telephone calls. The embassy also reports well on Colombian government successes but does not balance its political reporting with minority and opposition positions that would help Washington users understand other political factors at work in Colombia. OIG addressed these matters with informal recommendations.

Actions to combat illegal drug trafficking and drug production color the reporting on almost all political issues in Colombia. An estimated 90 percent of the

cocaine and 50 percent of the heroin entering the U.S. market comes from Colombia. Joint U.S.-Colombian efforts have put pressure on the drug cartels and terrorist and paramilitary organizations that use drugs to finance their operations. The section does effective reporting on these activities, which cut across the portfolios of the reporting officers responsible for political/military issues, human rights, extradition, and demining.

A strong, stable, democratic Colombia is the linchpin for political stability in the region. Potential problems, however, are developing along the nation's borders with Venezuela and Ecuador. Cross-border tensions are expected to rise dramatically as the Colombian government retakes territory from terrorists, pushing them into neighboring countries. As this occurs, the political section will focus increasingly on reporting and analyzing regional issues. Colombia has a large domestic demining program that ties directly into its program of retaking territory from terrorist groups. Colombia has the fourth largest mine fatality rate in the world, but does not qualify for U.S. demining assistance because it is involved in an active conflict. One political section officer reports on demining issues and coordinates all of the embassy's reporting on the subject. Based on its analysis of recent reporting, OIG informally recommended that the political section expand its reporting on ethnic and indigenous minorities and on opposition political issues in Colombia. OIG also informally recommended transferring a position to the economic section.

Human Rights

Human rights is another thorny bilateral issue. The political section has a full-time human rights officer and an entry-level labor officer, whose issues intersect with the broader human rights portfolio. End-users in the Department find the embassy responsive on human rights inquiries and in its follow-up on reported incidents of abuse. The government of Colombia pays close attention to the annual human rights report and raises concerns over its language and statistics with the WHA executive office, making the regular collection of reliable information and the timely reporting and investigation of abuses a top priority for the political section. The human rights officer also coordinates with a three-person unit that does the human rights vetting that was established in response to the Leahy Amendment. Before any agency can propose Colombian officials, military or civilian, for U.S.-financed training, the officials' names must be vetted to ensure that they are not human rights offenders. Bogotá's vetting unit is headed by an American LES and has considerable in-country experience. The unit processes 70,000 to 80,000 candidates per year, checking their names with Colombian

agencies and with other embassy sections and Washington. The vetting office is culling a locally designed database to remove inappropriate entries, permitting that list of confirmed human rights abusers to be integrated into the Department's new Abuse Case Evaluation System.

Displaced Persons

The political section has a full-time, mid-level officer serving as the regional refugee coordinator, responsible for emergency assistance to and resettlement of Colombia's displaced persons. This officer oversees over \$10 million in emergency assistance per year, works closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and partners with the International Organization for Migration to resettle displaced persons outside Colombia. The refugee coordinator also works closely with USAID, which funds long-term assistance to the displaced. The officer and USAID representative attend quarterly, joint-partner meetings and visit each other's programs in the field.

Extraditions

Bogotá has a full-time political officer covering extraditions, which are a highly sensitive bilateral issue for the embassy. In countries with mutual legal assistance treaties, the consular section normally coordinates the exchange of diplomatic notes with the host government, and reams of supporting documents are exchanged between the respective judicial officials directly. Since there is no mutual legal assistance treaty between the United States and Colombia, a political officer, assisted by a full-time LES and working with the judicial attaché and any other relevant agency, prepares the exchange of diplomatic notes, facilitates the transmission of the extradition documents, and monitors the process as it advances through the Colombian system. The interagency team concept, and the automated program that tracks extradition cases, seem to work well. However, there are differing interpretations of the existing extradition treaty and concerns over the length of punishments levied on Colombians extradited to the United States. This means this issue will continue to demand full-time, high-level attention from embassy staff.

ECONOMIC SECTION

The economic section works well and has sufficient staffing to cover essential portfolios, but not necessarily to cover longer-term economic development issues.

The section is headed by an FS-1 economic counselor and includes three rotational officers, two of these positions having come to the embassy in 2004 as part of the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative (DRI). Because the DRI positions do reporting on the environment, terrorism financing, civil aviation, natural resources, and telecommunications, the section management believes losing these positions would severely hamper its reporting. In addition, the section is currently faced with overseeing the Environmental Cooperation Agreement under the proposed FTA, involvement in Open Skies negotiations regarding cargo and passenger service, and with working on natural resources and energy issues. The latter issue was added recently after Colombia's president requested U.S. assistance and President Bush instructed the Department of Energy to work closely with the Colombian government. If the proposed FTA is signed in early 2006, implementation is expected to take place throughout FY 2007 and FY 2008, increasing the section's workload dramatically. The embassy expects economic issues to become more central to the bilateral relationship as security issues are resolved and American commercial investments in Colombia increase.

OIG found that current staffing in the economic section is insufficient to address long-term economic development. In addition, the portfolios of several officers are split between the political and economic sections. Macroeconomic issues such as terrorist financing, demobilization, and human rights cut across the responsibilities of both sections. Other issues distort the nation's economic picture, including unemployment in the Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, displaced persons, banking, and the informal economic sector. These issues are underreported and must be addressed if a true economic picture of Colombia is to be known. OIG informally recommended that Embassy Bogotá examine its staffing of the economic and political sections as a part of its rightsizing exercise. Doing so would allow the embassy to see whether it can move one or two underutilized reporting functions from the political section into the economic section to cover the loss of the two DRI positions.

Trade Promotion

Trade promotion is an important embassy function. The large number of American companies doing business in Colombia, and the prospects for more American investment after the security situation improves, will require the attention of the responsible embassy offices such as the economic section, Commercial Service, and USAID. These offices will also continue to be involved in the ongoing FTA negotiations. The Ambassador has delegated trade negotiations to his experienced DCM, who also oversees trade promotion and economic activities and

has been personally involved in maintaining an excellent working relationship with the American and local business community. The embassy has a positive trade promotion image, and organizations, such as the American Chamber of Commerce, say they are willing to continue to assist the embassy. Trade promotion activities will likely continue to grow as an embassy economic function.

CONSULAR SECTION

The consular section is well designed and run, and its morale has been steadily improving over the past six months. The section's dedicated ELOs, drawn from all of the Department's career cones, unanimously say their work is interesting and important to U.S. border security and counternarcotics efforts. The section's successes are even more significant given the dearth of mid-level management.

One of the largest consular sections in the world, with 37 officer positions, the consular section at Embassy Bogotá was designed to be staffed by one Minister Counselor, one FS-1, two FS-2s, and three FS-3s, as well as several ELOs. Due to the traditional difficulty of attracting candidates for this danger-pay post, the section's consul general and its acting chief of nonimmigrant visa (NIV) processing are stretched into jobs that are two grades higher than their ranks. Other than the consul general, there is no officer above the FS-3 grade serving in or managing a unit in the consular section.

The consular section is well integrated into the mission's broad policy goals, and the consul general actively participates in several interagency forums. For example, the political section coordinates extraditions in Colombia, but the consular section minimizes the resulting public backlash on the Uribe government. It does so by ensuring that family members of those extradited can keep in touch with their relatives by traveling to the United States, either on visas or through public benefit paroles that the consular officers coordinate with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The section works closely with the economic and commercial sections on the business visa program, which ensures a visa interview for business travelers within 24 hours of application. The section's expeditious service for Colombian business travelers has helped the economic section deflect Colombian government pressure for inclusion of a special visa provision in the FTA negotiations.

During the spring of 2005, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) undertook a \$1.2 million Consular Improvement Initiative project in the Bogotá consular section. This project relocated the American citizens services (ACS) unit and the consul general's office, created a fraud prevention unit (FPU) that is accessible to other mission elements, and added six interview windows to the NIV unit. Despite the unhealthy conditions created by the weeks of dust and noise, the consular section worked on a significant backlog of NIV appointments and addressed a near doubling of its immigrant visa (IV) workload. Some finishing touches remain, particularly to an annex for the intake and data entry of NIV and IV cases, but the resulting design and the addition of new entry-level positions, produced a more professional workplace that is open to additional management improvements over time.

Public Access Control

The public access control for consular clients needs urgent attention. Although American citizen and visa clients enter through separate perimeter turnstiles and have separate entrances to their respective waiting areas, both types of client share one metal-detection machine for screening their bags, and the machine is in an extremely cramped space that hardly permits bags to be placed or removed from the conveyor belt. In addition, over 1,500 persons per day pass through just one metal detector into the combined visa waiting area. This creates a bottleneck that wastes approximately 10 work hours of processing time each day as contract guards attempt to move early morning applicants to the document intake windows in sufficiently large numbers to permit 20 interviewing officers to begin work at the opening of business. Two metal detectors and a longer metal-detection machine and conveyor belt are essential at this third-largest NIV operation in the world. This equipment must be housed in space that allows people pushing strollers and elderly persons with walkers or accompanying family members to easily pass through the public access control.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Bogotá should request, and the Department should approve, funding for public access control improvements that will facilitate the secure entry of 500 clients per hour and the screening of all American citizens requiring service. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with DS and OBO)

Consular Management

For the 29 ELOs at post,¹ most on their first consular tours, training, oversight, and mentoring are essential to performance and morale. The only officer in the section who has had more than two full consular tours is the consul general, so responsibility for the ELOs' professional development begins with him. The May 2005 Consular Management Assistance Team's visit to Embassy Bogotá found a lack of ELO training had led to inefficient interviewing techniques and a lack of understanding of adjudication standards. As a result, a training officer for ELOs has developed a more systematic, seven-day, new officers' training program that includes the post's two-day check-in process and five days of post-specific NIV training.² This training includes observation of interview techniques and is supplemented by an expanding body of reference materials about educational institutions, businesses, banks, fraudulent documents, and post-specific processing of security advisory opinions. The ELOs who compiled the training materials and designed the program created a credible introduction to NIV processing in Bogotá, but their program now needs to include a schedule and integrate its diverse materials into a handbook that has a table of contents and standard operating procedures, to allow it to be their reference during their two-year tours. Other units also need written training materials and, as ELOs rotate into other units of the consular section, standard operating procedures and training materials should be added to their handbooks. OIG, therefore, made an informal recommendation on this. The consul general has designated one day each month, beginning in November, for a section-wide training day, an initiative that will permit more systematic reviews of procedures and regulations in each unit.

The consular section has a robust rotational program, plus several rotational opportunities outside the section. Seven of the section's ELOs spend one year on consular work and then rotate into another embassy section for a second year. Those officers serving two-year consular tours may be able to spend three to four months as the Ambassador's staff aide, in addition to their guaranteed rotations into the FPU, IV, or ACS units or to assist the consul general on broader consular issues and congressional correspondence. ELOs also undertake prison visits and consular outreach in Colombia's hinterlands and the consul general volunteers Bogotá's ELOs for temporary stints of two to four weeks at regional posts with urgent needs. Consular ELOs are also tapped as control officers for congressional delegations and other visits. All of these opportunities go far toward meeting ELO

¹Seven ELO positions remain unfilled.

²All ELOs in the consular section begin in the NIV unit.

training goals and building morale, but maintaining an equitable rotational program is a challenge at a post where all but five ELOs are in the NIV section at any one time. OIG informally recommended ways to make the rotation process, and the selection of ELOs for TDYs, more transparent.

Each ELO manages one or more portfolios in addition to his or her processing responsibilities. Portfolios include Accountable Officer responsibilities, outreach to the business community, security advisory opinion processing, and the coordination of administrative issues, among others. Not all the ELOs have portfolios of equivalent complexity or relevance. Neither are there standard operating procedures for most of the portfolios, which means new officers assume portfolios without well-defined guidance. Some incumbents have begun to codify their portfolios for their successors, but OIG recommended informally that each portfolio have an approved standard operating procedure before the next handover of duties, to ensure continuity.

The most notable weakness in the consular operation stems from the dearth of mid-level managers. Although the NIV chief's job is classified at the FS-1 level, that position will be filled on an acting basis for at least one more year by the deputy, who is a third-tour FS-3 in an FS-2 slot. Similarly, an FS-3 officer holds the position of the FS-2 ACS chief, and the position of the FS-3 IV position is filled by a second-tour FS-4 officer. This situation means that the consul general has to pick up most of the hands-on training and daily oversight of his unit chiefs and is also the best person to serve as a role model and mentor for ELOs. The consul general's office is physically separate from the rest of the consular section, except the FPU. The consul general is well integrated into the post's daily interagency meeting schedule and is often required to be absent from his office and the section during the key morning hours of visa processing. OIG informally recommended that, until the NIV chief's position is filled and the IV chief (who has no previous IV experience) is fully trained, the consul general make substantial efforts to spend more time in the two visa units as a resource to the ELOs and to ensure that IV and NIV processes are as streamlined, nonduplicative, and customer-service-oriented as possible.

Nonimmigrant Visas

Embassy Bogotá has the third largest NIV operation in the world, with an average of 1,400 appointments daily. Its large exterior, covered waiting area is fully occupied for the better part of the day and even has an outlet of the embassy cafeteria providing snacks for those who spend several hours onsite. Not only do the ELOs and the acting unit chief (an FS-3) operate in a high-fraud environment,

but also the NIV work is further complicated by the need to identify and refuse visas for narcotraffickers, money launderers, and paramilitaries and their families. In fact, Bogotá has dedicated an officer to interview persons suspected of these ineligibilities and to revoke existing visas, if appropriate, and ensure that the names of all family members are included in the Visa Lookout System. Additionally, Bogotá requires that all applicants complete the supplementary DS-157 Form, although this is required worldwide only of males over the age of 16. The form's information about spouses, education, and employment is extremely useful in determining appropriate lines of questioning or highlighting patterns that might indicate serious visa ineligibilities. Using the information developed during the initial interview or provided to the consular section by law enforcement, the line officers refer potential cases to the dedicated officer for a careful interview and an eventual in-person determination of visa entitlement or ineligibility. This process results in an average of 30 visa revocations per month, with many more visas being denied during the interview.

The NIV unit makes good use of three of OIG's best practices for consular operations. It has a call center to book visa interviews and answer general visa inquiries, a local bank for off-site fee collections and data entry, and a courier service to process the secure return of passports for approved visa applicants. The providers of each of the services are professional, and consular management works closely with the bank, in particular, to improve the accuracy of data entry. The call center also provides contract employees to work as facilitators at the visa entrance, as assistants for persons being fingerprinted, and as "people movers" in the large waiting area. The NIV unit has maintained a low LES/officer ratio, thanks to the use of these three pay-per-use contracts.

As part of the Consular Improvement Initiative project, the visa units now have a 10-window annex at the far side of the large, covered, exterior waiting area. Those windows are currently used solely for NIV document intake and an initial cursory review, to ensure that applications are completely filled out. The annex is not yet equipped with a public address system, and the counter space at some windows is insufficient. When the windows are fully operational, management intends to use them for as much intake, data review, photo capture, and fingerprinting as possible, to prepare cases for interviewing more promptly. This should facilitate a more seamless flow of applicants and minimize the number of times a passport is handled.

Embassy Bogotá uses a very successful cascade system for its appointments to ensure that the high priority cases have ready access to next-day interviews. The call center reserves a certain number of appointments for emergency, work, stu-

dent, and renewal cases. If those appointments are not taken by a certain time, the untapped numbers are released to supplement the available numbers for first-time visitor visa applicants. This process has enabled the unit to reduce its several-month backlog and cut the number of time-consuming appeals for exceptions to the appointment system. Certain consular officers specialize in certain types of processing, notably work, student, or renewal cases. Although other officers may handle these visa categories during the day, the bulk of such applications are handled by the specialists, who often also provide processing tips or guidance on fraud indicators to their colleagues. This technique has worked very effectively at the embassy.

The officer handling renewals must process a higher volume of applications per day, an expectation based on the assumption that appropriate use of a previous visa makes adjudication easier. The post has not undertaken a recent validation study to evaluate this assumption, and OIG informally recommended that the consular section undertake a targeted validation study of its renewal cases. Renewal officers do interview certain applicants on the spot, but many applications are reviewed after the applicant leaves the waiting room, to permit careful scrutiny of travel patterns and review the names of spouses for potential narco trafficking or terrorist ties. When ineligibilities surface during this scrutiny, applicants are asked to return for a detailed interview by the designated officer discussed above.

Other embassy offices make heavy use of the referral program. During the previous six months, the consular section processed about 1,500 referrals. Consular management reissues the referral guidelines regularly. The consul general adjudicates all Type A referrals personally, as required, and reviews all Type B referrals to ensure that they comply with the guidelines before passing them to the NIV chief for interviewing. About ten percent of the submissions are returned to the referring officers because they do not meet the referral criteria. Of the remainder, only about five percent are found ineligible for visas. Validation studies of both types of referrals indicated that referral travelers generally respected their visas. Some mission personnel have a tendency to intervene personally and forcefully on referral cases. In such cases, the consul general addresses the problem directly with appropriate section and agency heads. He also advises the executive office when warranted.

Immigrant Visas

Bogotá's IV workload increased by approximately 60 percent in FY 2005 as the DHS Citizenship and Immigration Services operation in the United States worked through its backlog of petitions. The IV unit's four officers and nine LES also

handle a significant volume of work for that DHS unit and for the DHS's Customs and Border Protection unit, plus their IV responsibilities. Although the case/officer ratio in Bogotá is low, compared to other posts with similar volume of visa applications, the complexity of the unit's cases, the number of single applicants compared to families, and the amount of time required to process services that might be handled elsewhere by a DHS representative make this a very busy IV unit. In FY 2005, the IV unit handled over 1,300 cases for DHS, including time-consuming and sensitive applications for transportation letters involving convicted criminals or wanted persons.

At the time of the inspection, there was no experienced IV officer in the unit. Three first-tour ELOs were doing an admirable job, and a second-tour unit chief was just learning the IV business after an initial tour as an ACS officer. The senior LES was recruited from outside the embassy only three years ago, and, although she oversees a productive and collegial LES contingent, she cannot provide the long-term institutional memory usually found at other posts. During the inspection, ELOs were attempting to adjudicate difficult cases with no experienced consular officer to provide guidance. For example, there were cases involving obscure regulations on children of deceased petitioners who are following to join a principal alien parent years after the initial issuance. The consul general, the acting NIV chief, and the ACS chief all have IV experience and should make themselves available to the IV officers until the IV unit chief becomes conversant with the process and regulations. Although the unit is fully occupied all day, it intends to take advantage of the monthly training days mentioned earlier to study the more esoteric IV regulations, to minimize the time spent during the interview process reviewing the Foreign Affairs Manual or consulting with each other.

The limited number of interview windows hampers the IV unit's workflow. When the consular annex is equipped with a public address system and counter space is enlarged to accommodate the volume of IV documents, there will be sufficient space for officers and LES to deal with the applicants, and workflow should improve. OIG informally recommended ways to minimize the number of persons who return to the consular section merely to submit updated or missing documents or to get copies of appointment packets that went astray in the mail. Staffing appears sufficient to handle the existing workload, but if numbers grow at the same pace seen in FY 2005, the LES staffing may need review.

During the past year, consular managers curtailed phone and e-mail inquiries to the IV unit so that staff could address the increased workload. The call center has a 22-page script that addresses the most frequent IV inquiries, and the embassy website also contains useful general information. Although inquiries to the IV staff

have virtually ceased, inquiries from desperate American citizen petitioners and others whose questions cannot be addressed by the call center flood the embassy operators and the e-mail boxes of the other consular units. In response, OIG offered ways that important inquiries outside the purview of the call center could be referred for the IV unit to, in a nondisruptive way, serve a client, reduce the number of appointments for walk-in questions, and ensure better prepared applicants.

American Citizens Services

Two officers staff the ACS unit, one an ELO who rotates into the unit for a six-month stint. There are four LES positions, three of which are currently filled with extremely experienced staff. Both the officers and LES have excellent contacts in the relevant judicial and social ministries and within the prison system. The ACS chief, an FS-3 officer on his second consular tour and filling an FS-2 position, has regular one-on-one weekly meetings with the consul general and meets three times a week with the unit chief. This ensures that child custody, arrest, and death cases get appropriate high-level attention. For example, although there is no prisoner transfer treaty with Colombia, the consul general himself requested the government of Colombia provide the exceptional return to the United States of a mentally unstable female prisoner. The unit also monitors child custody cases carefully and was preparing a demarche on one during the inspection.

Access to the ACS unit and restrictions on the number of clients admitted to the unit's small waiting room at any time present problems. The RSO permits only 24 adults or older children into the waiting room at one time. ACS clients have to leave the ACS area and cross the compound into the visa unit to pay their fees, and, although they are no longer in the waiting room, they are counted against the waiting room limit. As many as 20 American citizens may end up outside the compound on busier mornings, waiting for space in the waiting room and left vulnerable to security incidents and exposed to the elements. OIG offered ways to address this problem. A second automated cash register is already on hand, and as soon as the new LES is on board, the cash register will be put into use in the ACS unit, speeding fee paying and reducing time on-compound for ACS services. The unit also intends to set up appointments in the afternoons for families completing consular reports of birth and for federal benefits inquiries. This will not only redirect the most time-consuming cases away from the public morning hours but will permit cross-training on those issues in the afternoons, when those will be the only clients requiring service.

The post uses the Internet-based registration system for Americans resident or temporarily in Colombia. There are a number of wardens, but the entire warden system needs review now that the consular section can e-mail many registrants. The ACS chief intends to review the warden instructions for natural disasters, conduct warden training, and reach out to hotels, universities, and companies with American employees to incorporate them in the e-mail notification chain. With over 10,000 names in the Internet-based registration system, and hundreds of names having deactivated e-mail addresses, the small ACS unit faces the huge task of updating its warden program. Warden outreach may be appropriate grist for the portfolios of officers serving in the NIV and IV units as well, and OIG recommended informally that more priority be given to this effort.

The ACS unit pays careful attention to its U.S. citizen prisoner population. There are essentially three tiers of prisoners: those awaiting trial who are visited monthly, convicted prisoners who have no social or family ties to Colombia, and long-term dual-national prisoners with family members living nearby. Although the latter two groups are usually visited quarterly, consular management is aware that they can be visited semiannually if resources do not permit more frequent visits.

Fraud Prevention Unit

There are two officers and three LES in the FPU. The newly arrived unit chief is serving at grade in an FS-3 position. The second position in the unit is an ELO serving in an internal consular section rotation. An assistant RSO for investigations arrived during the inspection. Like his predecessor, he is located in the FPU and will work closely with the unit staff and local authorities on fraud cases that could lead to prosecutions.

Under its new leadership, the FPU is embarked on an ambitious agenda, which will better define its direction. The unit has started to work more closely with law enforcement and military agencies at post. Law enforcement agencies now provide FPU with information on the arrests of narcotic smugglers and the investigations of persons involved in drug trafficking. The FPU then cross-references names from those law enforcement databases with its NIV records, leading to a spike in the revocation of visas long held by known criminals. Colombian law enforcement agencies and airline security personnel also feed the FPU with reports of captured narcotic smugglers, doing so in real time. The FPU has also implemented procedures to reach out to the airlines via e-mail to alert them to new NIV revocations. In only a matter of weeks, the FPU has taken on a new focus that is paying dividends directly related to MPP priorities.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OVERVIEW

Embassy Bogotá has a large collection of law enforcement, intelligence, and military agencies and organizations working with their Colombian counterparts to defeat narcoterrorism. There is extraordinary coordination and camaraderie between these law enforcement agencies, many of which have overlapping responsibilities. Not only are these agencies providing operational support to their Colombian counterparts, they are also working to expand and strengthen rule of law and its related institutions in Colombia. The results of their support and training operations are manifested in professional and democratic Colombian law enforcement institutions. Beyond that, the spirit of rule of law is becoming the basis of democratic institutions throughout Colombia.

OIG interviewed representatives of all mission law enforcement agencies to learn why the country team works so well, given that law enforcement agencies traditionally compete in their “gray areas” of turf. They all said it was because there is a one-team-one-mission view at Embassy Bogotá, and the Ambassador does not play agencies against each other. This coordination is exceptional and is manifested in daily country team meetings that are followed by thematic, law-enforcement-focused committee meetings, all chaired by the Ambassador.

An additional stellar example of law enforcement and intelligence coordination is the existence of an Embassy Intelligence Fusion Center. The center was founded in 2002 to improve the embassy’s ability to support the antidrug and anticrime efforts of Colombian military and law enforcement agencies. The Embassy Intelligence Fusion Center aims to provide timely, tailored, and accurate all-source analysis to the Ambassador and country team, the government of Colombia, and U.S. intelligence and law enforcement communities to promote implementation of U.S. policy in Colombia. The Embassy Intelligence Fusion Center is staffed by personnel from U.S. law enforcement, military, and intelligence agencies, who overcome institutional barriers to information sharing. They analyze information acquired within the center and share it with Colombian officials, who can decide whether to carry out operations to interdict the illegal activity.

NARCOTICS AFFAIRS SECTION

The NAS is making demonstrable progress toward eliminating drug production and trafficking in Colombia. The staff displays a strong sense of mission and has high morale, which is evident in its team spirit of mutual cooperation and support.

NAS goals and objectives are fully integrated into the MPP. The program objectives include disrupting the cultivation of coca and the opium poppy, dismantling drug trafficking organizations, and halting diversion of precursor chemicals. Complementary MPP objectives include developing greater respect for rule of law throughout Colombia, increasing access to justice, and providing legal economic opportunities via alternative development and social infrastructure projects.

The NAS goal for spraying coca fields in 2005 was 130,000 hectares. By October 2005, 125,000 were already sprayed, and NAS was on target to meet its goal. The comparable goal for spraying opium poppies was 3,000 hectares; by October 2005, 1,500 hectares had been sprayed. NAS had notified INL that it would not meet the goal for 2005 because it could not locate enough fields; opium poppy cultivation is declining.

Embassy Bogotá's NAS is the largest U.S. operational counternarcotics assistance program in the world with FY 2005 funding of about \$463 million and an authorized staff of 574. The NAS consists of 10 Foreign Service direct-hire positions, four eligible family member appointments, 460 American employees on personal services contracts, and 100 FSNs.

Progress

A record 178 metric tons of cocaine were captured through the efforts of Colombia's police and military during 2004, and the U.S.-supported Anti-Narcotics Police Directorate sprayed a record 136,555 hectares of coca during 2004. Manual eradication accounted for the destruction of an additional 10,991 hectares of coca. Widespread replanting increased cultivation by a negligible 250 hectares, but overall potential cocaine production declined by seven percent to 430 metric tons because farmers had to wait for replacement fields to reach maturity before harvesting. Moreover, newer fields do not yield as much as mature ones.

Colombia has experienced a dramatic decline in opium poppy cultivation, from 4,400 hectares in 2003 to 2,100 hectares in 2004, leaving potential production at 30 metric tons of heroin, most of which was destined for the U.S. market. The 2004 figures represented the third consecutive year of declining cultivation, bringing total cultivation to its lowest level since estimates of the Colombian poppy crop began in 1995.

NAS Foreign Service officers say they have made continuing, significant progress towards eliminating narcotics activities in Colombia, but they hesitate to say when that goal will be reached. NAS American personal services contract

employees, many of them retired U.S. military personnel who manage NAS programs, say the fight against narcotics in Colombia is moving in the right direction. Both groups estimate that success in Colombia can be reached with sustained efforts and approximately the current resource levels. The FY 2006 budget request is for flat funding at FY 2005 levels, which appears appropriate.

Programs

The Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) is the cornerstone of the U.S. international counternarcotics effort. The ACI began as support for Plan Colombia, and its funding began in FY 2003. Since it became operational, the program has pursued a long-term goal of enabling countries in the program to assume full control over their counternarcotics programs. INL's Office of Latin American and Caribbean Programs, in coordination with WHA, plans and oversees eradication and interdiction assistance in Colombia.

The Anti-Narcotics Police Directorate and the Colombian military receive support from INL programs. In accordance with the Leahy Amendment, NAS vets each Colombian involved in a U.S.-sponsored program to ensure that he or she has never been involved in human rights, narcotics, or terrorist activities. The INL programs support 202 aircraft in Colombia, including 150 rotary and 52 fixed-wing aircraft. INL's Office of Aviation provides aviation advisors and is headquartered at Patrick Air Force Base, in Melbourne, Florida. INL's Office of Aviation has an employee in Colombia who works with the INL contractor Dyncorp, which has about 250 staff in Colombia. There is a close and cooperative relationship between Dyncorp employees and those of NAS. In 2004, INL-funded aircraft flew over 36,000 missions in Colombia. The aircraft and related assets are divided among four programs. The Colombian National Police and Air Bridge Denial Programs are managed primarily by NAS and the Eradication and Colombian Army Programs are managed primarily by INL's Office of Aviation, in consultation with NAS.

Chief among these operations is the aerial spraying of coca fields with glyphosate and surfactant. When identifying areas for eradication, NAS considers factors such as the size of the fields, the potential yield based on soil conditions and maturity of crops, host-nation assets in the area, and the security situation of the location. Colombian government or contractor aircrews fly the aircraft. The Colombian media have published allegations that the chemicals used in aerial spraying are toxic, destroy legal crops, or create health issues such as birth defects. NAS has an environmental office, which investigates the spray complaints and

works with the embassy's PAS to publicize the facts. It also conducts verification trips, sometimes accompanied by representatives from the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy. Regarding health concerns, during the past ten years there has been no such case verified by the Colombian National Institute of Health. A complaints tracking program began in 2001 and has processed approximately 5,500 complaints of crop damage. The Organization of American States independently assessed the chemicals used in the spray program in 2004 and found no significant adverse effects on human health or the environment.

Colombian National Police helicopters accompany the spray aircraft to provide security. NAS assists the national police with training, maintenance, logistics, and operational support. There are 62 rotary-wing and 24 fixed-wing aircraft in the national police program. The United States provided about \$171 million during FY 2005 for police air service operations, including eradication. NAS considers the program to be effective. Eradication programs use manual eradication wherever aerial eradication is not feasible, but the location and size of areas cultivated with illegal crops are limiting factors.

The Air Bridge Denial program provides logistical and technical assistance to the Colombian Air Force in interdiction and surveillance operations against unauthorized aircraft flights. During 2004, the program destroyed 14 aircraft, ten of them outside Colombia. In addition, 3.85 metric tons of cocaine were impounded, and there were three arrests. Colombian Air Force pilots fly all missions, using five INL Citation aircraft and two Colombian-owned C-26 aircraft.

Colombian Army Aviation Programs enhance Colombia's interdiction and eradication operations. INL funding provides fuel, spare parts, and repair and maintenance costs for the 82 helicopters. These programs also support aggressive, small, mobile units that go after long-standing and newly developing narco-trafficking organizations. The program requires high levels of helicopter airlift support and involves training the crews and technicians. Funds are also used to train and equip Colombian Navy and maritime units to interdict narcotics on Colombian rivers and along the coast, focusing on fast-boat operations.

NAS is transferring its programs entirely to the Colombian government. The primary, long-term U.S. objective of this is transformational diplomacy. The NAS' interim goal is to help the government of Colombia build the internal capabilities to successfully and safely operate the existing programs with minimal U.S. oversight and increasing Colombian budgetary support. This will allow U.S. assistance to be reduced and applied to other needs. This nationalization effort is complicated by

demands to show immediate and sustained counternarcotics successes and by the addition of new programs and multiple types of aircraft. Nonetheless, NAS has made considerable progress in “nationalizing” its core programs. The indications of this progress are:

- The Colombian National Police Aerial Eradication Program has nearly all Colombian personnel.
- Colombian National Police helicopters are manned by their own aircrews, and all search and rescue, medical, and security personnel are provided by the Colombian National Police.
- Spray aircraft are maintained by Colombian National Police mechanics.
- NAS is converting personal services contract positions with the Colombian National Police Aviation Program to Colombian-national staff positions. In 2005, the conversion of two of seven advisor positions (safety and fuels advisors) saved an estimated \$200,000 in current-year program costs and will save approximately \$130,000 in subsequent years.
- The just-completed Hangar III at the city of Guaymaral dramatically increases the Colombian National Police’s ability to do in-depth maintenance of their aircraft. Hangar III will permit it to perform depot-level maintenance work in-house, rather than undergo the greater time and expense of shipping planes and engines out of Colombia.
- The government of Colombia is assuming more costs for Colombia National Police interdiction efforts, and the result is NAS has reduced its FY 2007 budget request to \$17 million, compared to the over \$40 million expended in 2004.
- During 2006, NAS will eliminate over 100 contractor pilot and mechanic positions as the Colombian Army Helicopter Program assumes more responsibility for flying and maintaining helicopters.
- Starting in January 2006, the training of Citation tracker pilots for the Air Bridge Denial Program (now conducted entirely by U.S. contractors) will be done by Colombian instructors. The exception is a yearly flight-simulator refresher course to be done in the United States and paid for by the U.S. government.
- Ground training for mission directors and weapons controllers of the Air Bridge Denial Program, once done at the U.S. Air Force InterAmerican Air Forces Academy in San Antonio, Texas, is now done entirely by the Colombian Air Force in-country. In January 2006, Colombians, not U.S. contractors, will also do flight training.

- In the past three years, the government of Colombia has doubled the percentage of funding devoted to the police and military, from 2.5 percent to 5 percent of gross income.

NAS has received other authorizations from Congress, including medical evacuations and air assaults against terrorists and narcotics traffickers (“high-value targets”). As NAS has a limited number of aircraft, choosing its high-value targets requires the balancing of competing requests. There is good cooperation with the law enforcement and defense agencies on this matter, and the Ambassador makes final decisions within hours on the prioritization of the use of aircraft.

USAID programs address social and economic progress and involve funds apportioned from the INL budget in Washington. During FY 2005, about \$125 million was budgeted for these activities, which included encouraging small producers of illicit crops to join the legal economy through licit economic activities, undertaking infrastructure projects, promoting democracy, and working to relieve the plight of Colombia’s displaced persons.

NAS works with Department of Justice elements to promote the rule of law through NAS funding for a variety of programs, such as training judicial authorities. NAS has made end-use monitoring a priority and has initiated training for program officers, to ensure that equipment made available to foreign governments is used in accordance with U.S. regulations. The training also helps ensure that defense articles and services are used in compliance with the agreements under which they were provided.

Management

INL funds NAS programs, and, for the most part, the two organizations coordinate closely. An exception is the INL development of the Local Financial Management System described below. NAS programs in Colombia grew in ten years from about \$16 million in FY 1996 to approximately \$463 million in FY 2005. The section is housed in a temporary annex building on the embassy grounds. The annex provides adequate space, but does not meet Department forced-entry/ballistics-resistance requirements. The section hopes to move into a to-be-constructed annex that meets Department standards and will need approximately the same space it currently occupies. (The classified security annex to this report discusses this matter further.)

The size of NAS’ authorized staff is appropriate except for one LES position, a vacant procurement agent position (number A60049) that is no longer needed.

OIG informally recommended that the embassy reprogram or abolish this position. Some of the 574 authorized positions are not usually filled. NAS has a contract with a U.S./Colombian company that supplies up to 123 local workers on an as-needed basis to provide maximum flexibility in staffing. In October 2005, 91 of these slots were filled, and 32 were vacant.

The NAS management section is headed by a Foreign Service management officer and two eligible family member deputies, who supervise about 100 LES. NAS managers must comply with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which contains authorities for international counternarcotics control programs, and with Department management procedures. The section performs financial management (except certification), procurement (except contracting), inventory control, and motor pool functions. It also provides customs and shipping services for the Colombian National Police Aviation Program. The ICASS program handles all other administrative services.

There are weaknesses in inventory tracking and reporting, chiefly regarding program equipment. An OIG audit team conducted fieldwork simultaneously with this inspection and addressed issues concerning inventories and ownership of aircraft and spare parts for aircraft that were not included as assets in the Department's FY 2004 financial statements. The team planned to issue a report, and therefore OIG's inspection team did not conduct work in this area.

NAS program officers who are responsible for projects that involve contracts made and paid for by INL in Washington do not always have copies of the relevant documents. INL in Washington often maintains the only copies, but the program officers must determine whether the contractors are meeting the contracts' terms and conditions. (The management control section of this report discusses this further.)

Due to the size of the NAS budget, the section has an internal audit unit under its management officer to strengthen internal controls and monitor processes and procedures. The audit unit has four auditors and two support staff and, since 2001, has issued 16 reports.

INL's financial recording and reporting requirements differ from those of the rest of the Department. The Department's core financial systems, the Regional Financial Management System and the Central Financial Management System, do not provide full support to address these needs. Therefore, INL maintains separate "cuff records" that it uses to track program expenses and the status of funds for each of these separate appropriations. These cuff records must be reconciled continuously with the Department's core financial systems.

INL routinely obligates funds using letters of agreement between the Department and host countries. It also uses interagency agreements between the Department and other government agencies during the fiscal year when the funds are provided. When these agreements are signed and the funds (normally no-year funds) are provided, INL performs a bulk obligation for the total amount of the agreement. As parts of the program are executed, INL must deobligate and subobligate funds, as needed, to provide goods and services required under the different agreements. Neither of the Department's core financial systems can link the original obligation with subsequent subobligations.

The NAS has a subsidiary financial system, the local accounting system, for enhanced financial recording. INL was sufficiently impressed by the system's capabilities to base a worldwide local financial management system (LFMS) on the local accounting system. The NAS system is working well and has automated project accounting, from funding through obligation to payment. The system saves time, and NAS has discussed with a contractor integrating the procurement process into its system.

INL said LFMS has been completed and is undergoing the Department's approval process. NAS Bogotá was consulted at the beginning of the INL process, to adapt and improve its system, but was not consulted or informed as work on LFMS continued and was completed. In fact, NAS officials were unaware it had been completed. OIG informally recommended that, prior to making a commitment with a contractor to update its local accounting system, NAS should consult with INL and request and review the LFMS to see whether the LFMS meets its needs.

POLITICAL/MILITARY

U.S. Southern Command provides invaluable support to counternarcotics and counterterrorism activities of the Colombian government. The relations between the Ambassador and the commander of the Southern Command are very good, and they have regular contact. The U.S. military service members operating in Colombia with the exception of the Defense attaché office staff, military group, and Marine security guard detachment are not under chief of mission authority. Operational control for the military assigned to work on projects supporting Plan Colombia reverts to the U.S. domestic combatant commanders when the military service member leaves Colombia.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Overview

Bogotá is a 15-percent danger-pay post with a five-percent hardship allowance. The management office provides good customer service across the range of administrative issues. The mission grew nearly 40 percent between 2002 and 2005, but the ICASS staff grew less than 20 percent. There was also tremendous growth in the number of institutional contractors, especially in the NAS, and in the temporary duty staff, which numbers approximately 800 on any given day. These also draw significantly on the post’s administrative services. The growth and the limitations of secure office space are major management challenges.

Table 1: Staffing and Funding at Embassy Bogota

Agency	U.S. Direct-hire Staff	Personal Services Contractors	Locally Employed Staff ³	Total Funding (\$ in thousands)
State Department	178	34	413	
ACI				462,767
Foreign Military Financing Program				99,200
International Military Education and Training Program				1,700
Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program				3,920
ICASS				8,513
Diplomatic Security				1,728
OBO				4,498
Public Diplomacy Program				1,586
Machine-Readable Visa Program				4,891
				1,996
USAID	16	11	53	122,200
U.S. Treasury	4	2	4	not available
DHS	12	1	8	not available
Department of Justice	113	25	31	not available
Department of Agriculture	2	4	5	1,050
Department of Defense	30	0	9	1,138

³ Includes family member appointments.

Military Group ⁴	154	0	20	not available
Army Corps of Engineers	2	0	9	not available
Totals	511	77	552	715,187

Source: Embassy Bogotá

Responses to OIG’s questionnaire show the management section is marginally below average, compared to the scores of the last 34 posts OIG inspected. However, some of this may have been due to the large summer staff-turnover, when many new employees were responding to the questionnaire after having been at post only a month or two. Overall morale is good, but spouses, especially those who are newly arrived, sometimes feel isolated and feel a lack of sense of community. Spouses are not invited to representational activities, and some who were interviewed said they had never met the Ambassador or DCM, even after having been at post several months. The summer turnover also left several critical ICASS positions, including the management counselor, vacant for several months or longer. The arrival of a very senior and experienced management counselor should help the post face the challenges of a busy, highly stressed, large, demanding embassy.

The management counselor has four general services officers (GSO), a facilities maintenance manager, two financial management officers, two human resource officers (HRO), an office management specialist, a full-time community liaison office (CLO) coordinator, and one assistant CLO coordinator (a job-shared position), plus an information management officer with five American subordinates. The highly competent local staff of 191 includes 13 eligible family members or other resident Americans, 58 gardeners and trade workers, and 34 drivers. The motor pool regularly provides service up to 10 p.m. and has a driver on 24-hour duty. American employees may not use public transportation and cannot hail taxis from the street. Embassy direct-hire employees are provided armed-guard, armored-vehicle transportation from home to work that they may use if they choose. Employees can also use their own vehicles for home-to-work transportation.

RIGHTSIZING

Embassy Bogotá has experienced rapid growth in staffing in the past ten years, largely because of the expansion of counternarcotics assistance programs funded

⁴ Includes all active duty, civilian, permanent TDY, and personnel-exchange employees under chief of mission authority.

under the ACI. Since OIG's last inspection in 2000, staffing has more than doubled, from 221 direct-hire American and personal services contract employees to 569 authorized positions in these categories in 2005. Foreign assistance funding during the same period increased more than tenfold. As a result, mission personnel now occupy a chancery designed for a mission less than half its present size. (Security vulnerabilities of the facilities are discussed in the classified annex to this report.)

OIG found little evidence that the ICASS and security consequences of growth were systematically considered when making NSDD-38 decisions. There is no formal consultative process between the post's ICASS council, the management section, the RSO, and the Ambassador to assess the administrative and security ramifications of NSDD-38 decisions. ICASS resources have not kept pace with growth, leading to intense pressure in some service areas, notably information technology, human resources, and security. Presently, ICASS funding alone is inadequate to support the operational requirements of the agencies in Bogotá. Without the operational assistance provided by NAS, USAID, and other agencies, administrative support services would have collapsed under the weight of staffing growth.

The rightsizing goals in the embassy's FY 2007 MPP limit future staffing increases to not more than seven percent from 2007 to 2012. Though laudable, this goal still envisions the possibility of adding another 35 direct-hire Americans and does not limit the growth in local-hire staffing. Thus, there are likely to be further strains on the security and administrative infrastructure. Without a congressional commitment to expand Embassy Bogotá's physical plant beyond the \$30.6 million annex currently in the construction process, post management must be prepared to make tough decisions to balance future NSDD-38 approvals with reductions in existing personnel. The embassy also must rationally reallocate space in the chancery, giving priority to those agencies with bona fide needs for controlled access space and assigning personnel to the new office space annex in proportion to these requirements. The rightsizing of Embassy Bogotá's operations must begin with a formal review of all positions under the Ambassador's authority, to determine the continued requirements for all agency staff resident at the mission.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Office of Rightsizing the U.S. Government Presence Overseas, should conduct a comprehensive interagency rightsizing review of all positions under the Ambassador's authority. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with M/R)

REGIONALIZATION

Although Embassy Bogotá is a large mission, few Department operations there can readily be done by regional centers through the process of regionalization. Nearly all Department positions are focused exclusively on bilateral issues in Colombia. However, other agency personnel at the mission have regional responsibilities and might best be stationed elsewhere. Moreover, other-agency business processes, such as contracting, could be performed outside of Bogotá. Because other agency business decisions apply to worldwide operations, further review of this at the Washington level may be needed to identify opportunities for regionalization and rightsizing of the U.S. presence as a whole.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

Embassy Bogotá's ICASS operation is among the most cost-efficient in the world, with support costs of less than \$13,000 per direct-hire American. The ICASS budget for FY 2005 totaled \$8.5 million. The post has commendably maintained quality services under serious resource constraints, particularly in view of an ongoing influx of temporary duty personnel. The ICASS council is preparing to adopt procedures for recovering the costs of long-term temporary duty visitors. New ICASS service standards were adopted in the spring of 2005, and annual ICASS services survey results indicate general satisfaction with ICASS services.

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, the ICASS council has not realized opportunities to reduce duplication of services between agencies. There are 14 separate agencies with motor pool/driver operations, employing a total of 105 drivers. Consolidating motor pool services would almost certainly result in a lower overall cost to the U.S. government. ICASS, USAID, and the Department each maintains separate warehouses and warehouse staffs. Procurement and contracting services could also be consolidated. NAS, USAID, and ICASS each employ procurement staff whose responsibilities for local procurements are broadly similar. NAS has 14 LES doing procurement and contracting, USAID has five, and ICASS has seven employees doing procurement. These totals do not include the minimum of six direct-hire Americans at the embassy who are authorized to act as U.S. government contracting officers.

Consolidation of services could lead to improved service quality, reduced costs, and more efficient resources.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Bogotá should develop and implement a plan to consolidate the warehouse, motor pool, procurement, and financial operations of the U.S. agencies in Colombia. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Best Practice: Consolidation of Countrywide Fuel Procurements

Issue: Embassy Bogotá expends approximately \$25 million a year in fuel procurements to support counternarcotics programs. Fuel is procured under labor-intensive blanket purchase agreements and contracts - 31 separate documents in all. The contracts are difficult to manage efficiently and have widely varying levels of management controls.

Response: Embassy Bogotá entered into discussions with the Defense Logistics Agency to secure countrywide fuel agreements, under which the latter organization provides fuel at centralized locations and offers computerized recordkeeping.

Result: The U.S. government may dramatically streamline contract processes, save hundreds of thousands of dollars in direct fuel costs, and improve management controls over fuel.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Embassy Bogotá's financial management unit functions efficiently and effectively. It has two direct-hire Americans and 20 LES, and manages an operating budget of \$24.6 million in FY 2005 funds. The unit is proactively negotiating a new banking agreement that will allow electronic funds transfer payments for local salary and vendor payments. Bogotá is one of only a handful of posts where the ICASS service provider is not responsible for all Department accounting services. In Bogotá, the NAS maintains a separate accounting section responsible for NAS accounts and a separate vouchering section. OIG left an informal recommendation that the embassy issue an administrative notice reminding employees of limitations on use of long-distance telephone calls per 5 FAM 523.1d.

VALUE-ADDED TAX

The government of Colombia imposes a value-added tax (VAT) of up to 16 percent on purchases of most goods and services. This tax extends to U.S. purchases made in Colombia and purchases made by contractors and grantees. Section 506 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005⁵ requires that the United States seek reimbursement of applicable VATs and provides for withholding of assistance under limited circumstances. The embassy does a good job of carrying out the laborious process of collecting VAT refunds for invoices processed in Bogotá. A total of \$4 million in VAT refunds was recovered in FY 2005. However, there is no mechanism for identifying and recapturing VAT charges paid by contractors, grantees, and other government agencies. The government of Colombia neither grants point-of-sale VAT exemptions nor allows refunds for invoices that are not submitted in the name of the U.S. government.

The total amount of contractor funds subject to the VAT is uncertain. One embassy officer believes at least \$30 million in funds expended in Colombia may be eligible for VAT refunds. The potential U.S. savings to be derived through improved VAT refund procedures could total \$3 million or significantly more. Devising a workable solution to this issue requires coordination between the embassy, the government of Colombia, and the contracting offices in the United States. Potential cost recoveries justify the significant investments of time needed to implement procedural changes.

Recommendation 5: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, should develop and implement a process to obtain from the government of Colombia refunds or exemptions from the value-added tax paid by contractors, grantees, and other government agencies. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with DS and INL)

⁵PL. 108-447

CONTRACTS AND GRANTS MANAGEMENT

Contracting

Embassy Bogotá manages an expansive portfolio of high-value contracts. Contracting entities involved in Embassy Bogotá operations include INL, the Bureau of Administration (including the Regional Procurement Support Office in Fort Lauderdale), a contracting officer at the military group, and the ICASS contracting office. Federal Acquisition Regulation 4.201 requires that contracting officers provide copies of contracts and modifications to offices responsible for contract administration and to finance offices responsible for payments. With few exceptions, NAS officers and the embassy's voucher-certifying officers do not have copies of any of these contracts, and the certifying officers are uncertain who is responsible for issuing payments against these contracts, which are not post controlled. Invoices for some Washington-managed contracts have been wrongly sent to Bogotá for payment. When the embassy requests contract modifications for certain contracts, invoices are submitted directly to the post for payment. In one instance in 2003, Embassy Bogotá made a duplicate payment of \$500,000, which was subsequently identified and refunded, on a contract that had already been paid in Washington. Duplicate payments could occur again without better controls.

Recommendation 6: The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should identify all major contracts applicable to Colombia and provide copies of these to the Embassy Bogotá personnel who have contract management and financial management responsibilities. (Action: INL, in coordination with A)

Grants Management

The PAO has a grants warrant for up to \$50,000 per grant, and the cultural affairs officer has a warrant for up to \$20,000 per grant. The regional bureau must approve any grant in excess of \$10,000. Grants management is an OIG area of emphasis, therefore OIG reviewed PAS grants for the past two years. The grants consisted of those for invitational travel and for support to binational centers, PAS programs, and equipment donations, all of which were generally in good order. Some earlier grants had been issued to commercial vendors or for direct services, but the post has discontinued this practice. OIG informally recommended tightening the grant process. The grants officer has signed grants for monies provided

from INL and USAID in support of mission programs that were not necessarily public affairs programs. In these cases, a grants officer representative from the office working with the grantee is designated and works with the grantee to ensure compliance with the grants' terms and conditions. This practice may, however, leave the grants officer liable to committing funds in a manner that does not comply with other agencies' regulations or mandates.

Grants Policy Directive 19 of February 14, 2002, advises posts that Executive Order 13224 blocks all property and prohibits transactions with persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism. Grants officers must not give awards to any of the terrorist entities listed on the Excluded Parties List website (www.epls.gov). All grantees, except those already vetted by ECA and/or the Bureau of International Information Programs, must be checked on this website. The post has not been in compliance.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Bogotá should check each grantee individual or organization against the Excluded Parties List website and confirm that the grantee is not listed and annotate that fact in the appropriate block on Form DS-4012. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

GENERAL SERVICES

The general services section, which includes the facilities maintenance office, provides quality services, as reflected in high scores in the OIG questionnaires. General services operations, such as the maintenance of the chancery and suitability of the housing, received scores well above average. The motor pool's responsiveness received the highest score in 53 rated management areas, a truly exceptional accomplishment. The section is led by an experienced supervisory GSO and supported by three assistant GSOs and 124 LES. At the time of the inspection, one assistant GSO position had been vacant for several months, but it was expected to be filled by February 2006.

The section uses software called the Interactive Administrative Support Package to take requests for services from the motor pool and the facilities, housing, property, and expendable supply operations. American officers in the section approve requests via the software.

The shipping and customs unit functions well, despite the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' delays in clearing shipments of embassy employees' household effects and vehicles. A commercial contractor, working under a General Services Administration contract, provides travel services. The procurement activities of the unit comply with regulations. The property unit is performing satisfactory work. OIG found minor weaknesses in the section and made informal recommendations addressing those issues.

REAL PROPERTY

The U.S.-owned chancery building, constructed in 1995 for \$65 million, is an Inman-standard building located on a 22-acre site. Other government-owned properties include the Ambassador's residence and two apartments located in buildings known as Polegrande and Retiro. Other major buildings in the embassy compound include the temporary USAID/administrative building, the temporary INL building, the motor pool offices, the facilities maintenance building, and the warehouse. OIG found that all government-owned buildings are properly maintained, except for the chancery warehouse, as discussed in the next section.

OIG's 2000 inspection found the lack of appropriate space for embassy staff and equipment was the most important issue for the management section, and this issue continues to be the most significant challenge. OBO plans to construct a new annex building for the embassy in 2006. The \$30.6 million project (number XJ-1D-8054) was first conceived in 2002 and was funded by Congress in OBO's FY 2005 capital security program budget. The annex will be located between the chancery building and the Marine security guard quarters and will consist of three floors, two designed for occupancy and the third designed as a "shell" that cannot be occupied until funding is provided to make it habitable. (One source of funding tentatively identified is USAID's building fund, but that is still subject to negotiation.) A design-build contract for the project was awarded in September 2005 and has an aggressive, 15-month execution schedule that calls for completion in the second quarter of FY 2007.

This new annex would replace the unclassified office space currently provided in two temporary annex buildings on the embassy compound. While the new annex will provide a total of 2,722 square meters of usable unclassified space, it is not large enough to house all of the embassy elements located outside of the main chancery building. The post's management will need to use a rightsizing baseline study to determine which elements should be in the main chancery, which should

be in the new annex, and which should be performed regionally or from the United States.

Several informal OIG recommendations deal with use of the two old annex buildings after the current occupants move into the new annex. Options might include transferring out of the main chancery building some services, such as the contract travel office, the cafeteria, and the commercial banking outlet, all of which do not provide full-time office space for direct hire American staff. This would free space in the main chancery for direct-hire employees who should be working behind a security hardline approved by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. OIG informally recommended that the post explore with OBO possible uses for the two old annex buildings, doing so in a manner consistent with guidelines for protecting direct-hire employees.

Warehouse

The 2000 OIG inspection report recommended replacing the warehouse on the compound, due to its inadequate compliance with safety, health, and environmental standards, and its lack of proper storage. The conditions described in 2000 still exist today. The embassy leases an off-compound warehouse to alleviate the space constraints of the chancery warehouse, and OBO repaired the roof of the chancery warehouse in 2005. However, OIG found other safety issues in the embassy warehouse that require attention.

In the chancery warehouse, there is an unsafe second floor area where cubicle partitions are stored. There is no railing on one side of the stairwells, and the wood flooring on the second floor could not support additional weight. Other ICASS agencies, except for NAS and USAID, have properties stored in cages there. In all, the current space is not being used efficiently. Elsewhere in this report, OIG recommends that the mission consolidate the embassy, NAS, and USAID warehouses.

The post questions the need for a small Department warehouse on the compound, once the warehouses are consolidated off compound, and OIG concurs with the post's assessment.

Property Management

The property management section maintains two warehouses, one on and one off of the compound. At the time of the inspection, the embassy was liquidating excess or obsolete items and preparing to auction them.

The property management section has ensured that property, such as office and residential furniture, computer equipment, and expendable supplies, is readily available when needed. However, the embassy maintains excessive stocks of residential furniture and furnishings. Although the property management section assured OIG that minimum stock levels are observed, OIG could not find a written replacement-cycle program for property. While the embassy has accurate nonexpendable property application records for all furniture and appliances, the excessive amounts impede the maintenance of an efficient and economical warehouse program and add work to the annual inventory. OIG made an informal recommendation on this issue.

Housing

The embassy staff is relatively pleased with its housing. The housing board holds well-attended meetings, doing so monthly and on an as-needed basis. OIG found the short-term leased apartments were appropriately sized and well furnished. Only the military group is on living quarter's allowance, a situation based on the rationale in the memorandum of understanding between the embassy's management section and the military group in June 2005. OIG found new arrivals receive little communication about their assigned housing while they are in temporary housing. OIG left an informal recommendation on this issue.

Facilities Management

The facilities maintenance office has been challenged with fulfilling new Department requirements, upgrading security, and adding office space. The office provides a full range of quality maintenance services to the embassy. However, OIG found that, until recently, Embassy Bogotá's occupational safety and fire prevention programs had not received the attention required to ensure employees' safety. Although some aspects of the occupational Safety, Health, and Environmental Management (SHEM) and Fire programs are in place, others are not. OIG found the embassy SHEM committee has not met on what should be a semiannual basis. Administration of the SHEM and Fire programs must receive appropriate attention. OIG made informal recommendations addressing this and other safety issues.

Motor Pool

Embassy Bogotá manages a large fleet of fully armored and lightly armored vehicles. The motor pool is well run. Its vehicles are well maintained, and drivers'

overtime is kept to a minimum. Embassy employees are properly charged for any other authorized use of official vehicles. The motor pool's responsiveness received the highest score on OIG's questionnaires.

OIG found the mission's transportation policy has the Ambassador's approval but has not been updated since 2003. Although mileage information is recorded on the vehicle's Daily Trip Record (OF-108), embassy personnel do not annotate and sign the forms at the time of use. In addition, some foreign affairs agencies do not follow the post's Use of Official Vehicle policy. OIG made informal recommendations addressing these issues. As noted earlier, OIG has recommended a review of interagency motor pool operations, looking toward possible consolidation.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The human resources office serves over 1,100 direct-hire employees, providing personnel recruitment, selection and placement, spousal employment, counseling, training, compensation and benefits, in- and out-processing, position classification, grievance process, accreditation, and third-country visas. There are two HROs and 12 LES. One LES position is empty, and another is newly established but unfunded.

From April 2003 to May 2005, the Department assigned to the office only one first-tour double-stretch HRO, this at a time of tremendous mission growth. It was unrealistic to expect one person to be able to provide the depth and breadth of services needed by such a large community. Since May 2005, a second first-tour HRO has been at post, which has enabled the office to dedicate time to strategic policies. However, the officer in the senior HRO position is being transferred after only 11 months in that position. (He had been told by the career development advisor that, as an ELO specialist, he could not extend beyond his two-year assignment.) This will negatively affect the post, likely leading to another staffing gap. Extending the HRO's tour by 13 months, so that he can complete a two-year assignment as a senior HRO, could certainly benefit the post. Both HROs are smart, dedicated, and hard working and would benefit from some continuity in the office.

Premium Pay

The 2000 OIG inspection found the mission had no policy covering overtime hours worked by ELOs and specialists. Often, supervisors only approved compen-

satory time off. In January 2001 and again in November 2003, Embassy Bogotá issued a mission policy regarding authorization of overtime or compensatory time off, acting in accordance with 5 CFR 550.111-114. Since then, budget pressures have limited the mission's ability to fund overtime payments. At the same time, the demands of the workload have necessitated overtime. Staff members say they have been informed that the mission cannot pay for their overtime. When employees choose compensatory time off instead, this time off has often been forfeited because of those very same workload pressures.

According to 3 FAM 3133 and Mission Policy 015 of November 7, 2003, employees covered by 5 CFR 550.111-114 must receive premium pay for occasional, irregular overtime worked unless the employee chooses compensatory time off or payment in salary for regularly scheduled overtime.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Bogotá should write and implement a policy covering overtime hours worked. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Danger Pay

Since 1996, all locales in Colombia have qualified for 15-percent danger pay. Standardized Regulation 653.3 requires periodic review of pay at appropriate intervals. The post provided its last Danger Pay Factors Form to the Department in March 2002. However, a review of the post's documents shows the threat environment has been improving.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Department, should submit Danger Pay Factors Form DS-578 to the Office of Allowances at the earliest opportunity. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with A)

Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs Recruitment Pilot

The Office of Overseas Employment, in conjunction with WHA, instituted a Recruitment Pilot program to ensure that qualified eligible family members and veterans became the preferred candidates for all LES positions. Prior to the release of the pilot, however, the Office of Overseas Employment acknowledged that

Bogotá had one of the world's highest rates of family member employment and that the post's former policy did ensure that qualified eligible family members and veterans were referred first and could not be bypassed without the approval of the post employment committee. The pilot program has been a success in Bogotá, but the additional effort required has put even more strain on an already over-burdened human resources operation.

As a result of the WHA Recruitment Pilot program, interview questions and transparency in hiring receive additional scrutiny from the post employment committee. With this, comes an increased workload for the human resources operation, which must participate in every job interview conducted by the 25 agencies at post and in coordination of the post employment committee for every job for which a family member or veteran applies. The office also spends more time counseling supervisors and answering questions and ensuring that all regulations are strictly adhered to. The program has also spawned new clerical tasks, such as copying applications for every member of every post employment committee, preparing background materials for committee members, and reserving meeting rooms. Customer service has deteriorated as the human resources staff has struggled to comply with the requirements of the pilot program.

The pilot program is also drawing complaints from managers. Requiring representatives from the human resources office and CLO to attend every interview is seen by some as showing a lack of confidence in their managerial skills. And some vocal managers view as overly bureaucratic the requirement that a post employment committee meet to confirm every selection, even when the supervisor is proposing to hire a family member. A few supervisors continue to resist the family member preference, although this preference is a long-standing embassy policy.

Family Member Employment

Family member hiring received one of the post's lowest ratings on OIG's questionnaire. Positions requiring a 3/3 or 4/4 level in Spanish effectively eliminate a number of family members as applicants. OIG found some of the language designations artificially high and informally recommended that the post require written justification for language designations. As more positions open and spouses see the transparency of the program, satisfaction levels should improve. However several supervisors worry about work force planning. FSN supervisors often have years of experience and are uniquely qualified for some of the senior positions. They have, over the years, learned the processes and often mastered complex statutory regulations that are integral to performance at a senior grade. OIG

advised the HRO of the mechanisms that supervisors could employ to balance eligible family member hiring priorities with the need to ensure continuity of experience in certain critical areas.

Locally Employed Staff

The LES wage scale and benefits are another front-burner issue for the HR staff. The post is actively assessing the comparator companies' practices on supplemental health care, health care for retirees, and supplemental savings plans. The post's current supplement savings program forces employees to join a credit union (Cooperativa Alianza). If the employee does not open a credit union account, he or she does not receive the embassy's contribution. The interest rates offered by the credit union are around seven percent, compared with the at least 12 percent offered by the seven higher-risk "retirement funds administrators" that are recognized and controlled by the Colombian government.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Office of the Legal Adviser and the Bureau of Human Resources, should review the comparator companies' practices, local law, and U.S. laws and regulations and provide locally employed staff with an appropriate savings plan benefit. (Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with L and DGHR)

Entry-level Officer Leadership Training

The ELOs in Bogotá have an informal association called Junior Officer Leadership Training (JOLT) that identifies and encourages opportunities for ELOs to participate in a wider variety of embassy activities. JOLT contacted the chiefs of all Department units at post to encourage mentoring of officers serving in the consular section but having job cones in other areas. JOLT also organized brownbag lunches with the DCM, political counselor, and other officers, and developed a matrix of opportunities for ELOs, including congressional delegations, TDYs, short-term rotations, and speaking engagements. JOLT shared this matrix with decisionmakers and section chiefs, so that the officials could identify the ELOs who have not yet served outside their units and, hopefully, give ELOs broader training opportunities. JOLT also ensures that new ELOs are welcomed and introduced to the embassy community. At an embassy the size of Embassy Bogotá, with over 30 ELOs, most of them in the consular section, this initiative is commendable and beneficial.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

This post has one qualified, fully trained Equal Employment Opportunity counselor, although two more are receiving their training. There is a Federal Women's Program coordinator. The names of each counselor are prominently displayed in various places in the embassy. The post has Equal Employment Opportunity language in the FSN handbook.

Job vacancies are advertised on the Embassy Bogotá intranet and Internet websites, which reach a wide range of applicants. The post targets two professional-level positions to the Afro-Colombian community to gain greater diversity. OIG informally recommended there be greater emphasis on diversity in recruitment and selection.

Consolidation Issues

Six years after Congress passed the Foreign Affairs Restructuring Act, which consolidated the United States Information Agency into the Department, the PAS still has two staff members [Position N70222 (FSN-8) Financial Assistant and Position PAS-0559 (FSN-7) Administrative Financial Clerk] who spend 80 percent of their combined time performing PAS financial management functions. Both have the financial management software on their computer; one assigns fiscal data and enters obligations and the other processes liquidations.

OIG's 2000 inspection made three recommendations regarding Position N70222:

- Recommendation 13. Embassy Bogotá should review the position description of the financial assistant in the public affairs section (position number N70222) and remove any duties inappropriate in the post-consolidation period. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)
- Recommendation 14. Once the financial assistant position has been reviewed, Embassy Bogotá should consider placing the remaining program support administrative functions with the public affairs section's secretary (position number N70221). (Action: Embassy Bogotá)
- Recommendation 15. If the program support functions of position N70222 are transferred to position number N70221, position N70222 should be transferred ("cross walked") to the financial management office. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

The post concurred with Recommendations 13 and 14 but argued against Recommendation 15, stating that the revised duties focused on program activities that ultimately justified retention of position N70222. OIG accepted the post's rationale and closed these three recommendations. Since then, the post transferred some responsibilities to the GSO and the PAO's office management specialist. However, the financial assistant continued to manage the public diplomacy "Point P" allotment, using the financial management software. In March of 2004, due to the tremendous growth in grant funds, the PAS received permission to establish a temporary administrative-financial clerk position in which the employee would work under a personal services agreement for the duration of the Plan Colombia grant programs.

Although employees of the financial management office sign obligations and liquidations prior to those items being entered into software and forwarded to the Department's Charleston, SC, Financial Services Center, the functions appropriately belong under the fiduciary control of the financial management officer. Questions arise over the internal controls, too, because the employee who establishes obligations supervises the employee who enters liquidations. Furthermore, the public affairs section uses cuff records, rather than the Department's Abacus software, to track program management funds.

Recommendation 11: Embassy Bogotá should crosswalk Position PSA-0559, the incumbent employee, and all of the financial management functions from positions PSA-0559 and N70222 to the financial management office. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation 12: Embassy Bogotá should rewrite the job description of Position N70222 and assign the incumbent full-time responsibilities for program management, including grants management, program funding management, VIP invitational travel, print shop management, and other administrative duties that relate specifically to the public affairs section's programs and program budget. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation 13: Embassy Bogotá should discontinue the practice of maintaining cuff accounts in the public affairs section and instead obtain the Abacus software from the Foreign Service Institute to assist in managing program funds. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with FSI)

Dissemination of Information

Bogotá's intranet website provides mission staff with useful information on job vacancies, arrival/departure lists, staff announcements, and mission policies and has useful links to other government websites and other information. OIG informally recommended that a management staff member be assigned responsibility for updating and maintaining the relevance of staff announcements and mission policies on the website.

QUALITY OF LIFE

The high scores received on OIG's questionnaires indicate that the schools, health unit, employee association, and CLO offer good services. Problems include security issues, noise pollution, and traffic, but overall morale at this post is good. However, there are some staff members who require greater attention. With the construction of the new annex building, the embassy will lose its limited recreational facilities, including a tennis court and a basketball court. The fitness center in the Marine house is open for all embassy employees during certain hours. Recreational activities outside the embassy are limited, due to the security risk.

SCHOOLS

The majority of embassy dependents at post attend (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) the Department-assisted school. In Cartagena, U.S. government dependents attend (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6). All the schools have received Department grants to assist in security enhancements and pay for some direct expenses.

In FY 2003 and FY 2004, (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) in Barranquilla received grant assistance of \$12,700 and \$12,200, respectively, from the Department for security upgrades and purchasing of educational materials. Currently, there are no U.S. government dependents attending this school.

Prior to the arrival of the inspection team, the Ambassador's representative to (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) and the CLO coordinator organized a parents' meeting to hear concerns about the school, and presented those concerns to school officials. A similar meeting was held for parents with children in (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)

another educational option for parents in Bogotá. OIG encouraged the post to organize this type of forum more often.

MEDICAL UNIT

The professional staff at the health unit consists of a regional medical officer, a regional psychiatrist, a family nurse practitioner, an American nurse on a personal services contract, and two registered nurses who are eligible family members. The support staff consists of a receptionist-secretary and a medical records clerk.

The health unit provides primary care services to the Department and all other agencies' U.S. direct-hire personnel and their families at the mission, facilitates access to local medical specialists, and processes medical evacuations. The unit is open in the mornings for walk-in patients (first-come-first-served basis), who are seen for common health problems, and by appointment in the afternoons for immunizations, prescriptions, physical examinations, and claim form processing. The unit averages 625-700 patient visits per month, representing a large increase in the last year. More than 10 percent of patient visits come from the temporary duty staff.

The unit's physical space is insufficient. There are only two examination rooms and one vaccination room. Often, there may be a nurse or doctor available to see a patient but no room for the consultation. The receptionist cannot make appointments for patients without risking confidentiality as the waiting area is directly in front of her and within earshot of others. The embassy plans to expand the space in the near future, which should alleviate some of these problems.

The medical unit deals with many employees and family members needing ongoing mental health support due to the heavy workload and security threats.

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

The CLO has a full-time coordinator, two assistants who job-share, and a part-time newsletter editor. Although the CLO coordinator is new in her position, she is proactively reaching out to the community and has interesting ideas, such as providing check-in sheets to family members that detail embassy services. The CLO facility is scheduled to receive a much-needed enhancement, but does not now have a private office where family members can come to discuss personal concerns. The office's configuration is also not particularly customer-service oriented since the newsletter editor is the first person anyone sees when entering.

Schools and spousal employment are the CLO's biggest issues. There simply are not enough jobs or nonclerical positions to meet spousal expectations. OIG informally recommended that the mission be more proactive in helping spouses get information on work outside the mission.

POST EMPLOYEE SERVICES ASSOCIATION

The Post Employee Services Association operates a commissary and a small gift shop in the embassy. The association made a small profit in 2004 on sales of approximately \$300,000. The annual audit of commissary operations by a private auditor found no material issues. Management controls on commissary operations, such as cash counts and inventory controls, are adequate.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Embassy Bogotá has satisfactory management controls for most operations. The embassy completed a Bureau of Resource Management risk assessment questionnaire shortly before the inspection, and all sections received acceptable scores. The Ambassador signed the annual management controls certification on June 22, 2005, verifying that the embassy management control systems provide adequate assurance that management control objectives are achieved. OIG found generally good controls in management and consular operations and correctable weaknesses in funds management and contract management.

Funds provided under the ACI constitute one of the U.S. government's largest foreign assistance programs. OIG did not conduct a full review of all management controls applicable to NAS-funded operations during the inspection. The size and nature of Embassy Bogotá's programs create inherent challenges in maintaining management controls on vehicles, property, aviation equipment, fuel, commodities, and personnel. Fieldwork for an OIG audit of selected NAS management controls was being conducted alongside this inspection and will deal in more detail with issues related to NAS controls.

UNLIQUIDATED OBLIGATIONS: THE NAS PIPELINE

Embassy Bogotá's major program accounts consist primarily of funds that are available until expended (no-year funds). The embassy has a substantial pipeline of unliquidated obligations from prior-year accounts going back to FY 2000. The total amount of unliquidated obligations for the period FY 2000 - FY 2003 exceeds \$106 million and is mostly in NAS accounts. A review of a sample of FY 2000 unliquidated obligations found funds that could be deobligated or put to better uses. For example, one obligation for ammunition purchases would not be fully liquidated until 2011 at current rates of expenditure. Other longstanding obligations reflect difficulties in reconciling "advice of charge" transactions for payments in Washington. OIG could not determine whether the majority of unliquidated obligations reflected legitimate multiyear commitments, accounting inefficiencies, or challenges in expending funds in a timely manner. When fully activated, the new LFMS financial management system should allow for more transparent account management and regular Washington reviews of post-level transactions.

LOCAL GUARD CONTRACT

Embassy Bogotá's five-year, \$13.4 million local guard contract is one of the largest in the world. OIG's review of billing invoices submitted under the contract found that the post does not use the Guards Electronic Monitoring Systems reports to verify actual hours worked by local guards. Consequently, it has no assurance that billings accurately reflect services rendered. Exhibit C of the contract provides a deduction schedule for the nonperformance of responsibilities. Substantial cost savings and better contractor performance may be achieved by closer oversight of the guard contract.

Recommendation 14: Embassy Bogotá should reconcile monthly guard contract invoices with electronic guard monitoring reports to verify delivery of all services rendered and deduct from contract payments when services are not delivered. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Embassy Bogotá's information resource management office adequately supports approximately 1,100 people among the post's 42 ICASS customers. The office's responsibilities include managing and securing a dedicated Internet network and Department classified and Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) networks. The information resource management office is also responsible for embassy switchboard operations, telephone and radio management, the classified and unclassified pouch, and for managing the embassy's Freedom of Information Act requests. OIG found that the office's staff follows most Department policies and guidelines and generally meets customer's needs with its reduced staff. The staff has been reduced by an information management specialist vacancy and the post's inability to fund six LES positions that were approved by the ICASS council. OIG also found several areas regarding information management and information security that require improvement. These are: management of information management LES, security configuration management, and implementation of the Department's information systems security officer (ISSO) program. Additionally, OIG left informal recommendations regarding inventorying Department network connections, systems documentation, and patch management.

Information Management Overview

The information management officer (IMO) oversees the information systems center and information processing center within the information resource management office. The information systems officer manages the information systems center's day-to-day operations and six LES. The information systems center's staff supports the SBU network's approximately 700 users and workstations and 13 servers. The information program officer manages day-to-day operations, two American information management specialists in the information processing center,

and 12 LES who provide operator and switchboard support, telephone and radio support, and pouch operations support. The information processing center's staff supports the classified network, which consists of approximately 180 users, 77 workstations, and 5 servers. The information processing center also manages the embassy's Freedom of Information Act requests.

Management of Information Management Locally Employed Staff

The IMO does not oversee all information technology (IT) operations and information management personnel at post, contrary to 5 FAM 121(6)(a). Currently, two LES in the consular section and two LES in the NAS have administrative rights to support 80-90 users in each office and five servers. The access given to these individuals bypasses the security standards of providing individuals with only access necessary to conduct their duties. This security risk is exacerbated because there is no oversight or management by the IMO or anyone in the information resource management office.

The consul general and the IMO have a memorandum of understanding that outlines basic responsibilities of all consular systems technicians and the role the IMO plays in their supervision. The memorandum requires that technicians work only for the consular section and does not allow them to assist in information systems center operations. The current consular workload does not justify full-time work for both technicians, and the technicians should be available to assist the information systems center staff in other duties at the embassy. OIG also has observed the IMO failing to exercise the management oversight responsibilities outlined in the memorandum.

The two LES with administrative rights in the NAS section are not managed or supervised by anyone in the information resource management office. The NAS and IMO do not have a memorandum of understanding outlining each section's responsibilities. OIG found little coordination between the NAS systems staff and embassy information resource management staff regarding the management and security of the NAS workstations and server. OIG informally discussed the option of reevaluating the need for the NAS information management staff to have full administrative rights on the SBU network. Although the NAS information management staff adheres to most Department guidelines and requirements, there are deficiencies in the NAS server.

Recommendation 15: Embassy Bogotá should draft and implement a memorandum of understanding that outlines the narcotics affairs section's information management staff's responsibilities on the Department's Sensitive But Unclassified network, including the information management officer's oversight responsibilities. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Locally Employed Staff Training

Embassy Bogotá's SBU and classified networks underwent an extensive hardware and software upgrade in May 2005. OIG found the LES who support the SBU network do not have sufficient training to support the new infrastructure. OIG informally recommended that post provide the LES with the fundamental training to support the Department's unclassified network.

Inventory

OIG found the staff is not fully aware of and does not have a record of all Department connections. There are hundreds of Internet, SBU, and classified workstations throughout the chancery and annexes. Many of these workstations are in the offices of other agencies to ensure communication with the embassy community. Some agencies choose to buy their own hardware, with information systems center guidance, to connect to the Department's SBU network, but the embassy may want to reevaluate that decision. During several walkthroughs with the information management staff to identify all Department workstations and connections, OIG found that the information management staff had to seek this information from individuals in the office where the Department equipment or connections were in use. There was no way to identify Department network connections by looking at the hardware or cables. OIG left informal recommendations to address this issue.

System Documentation

Compliance with the documentation requirement, such as the requirement that there be systems logs and coordinating plans, is erratic. The information systems center staff maintains systems operations and the maintenance logs for most servers in the information systems center server room, except for the NAS server, for which no maintenance and operations records have been kept. The information programs center has not maintained any records for the classified servers. Addi-

tionally, the IMO has not ensured that the embassy's IT contingency plan is coordinated with the Emergency Action Plan, despite the requirement in 5 FAM 121.1 (8) (a). OIG informally recommended that the systems documentation be maintained according to Department guidelines.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY

OIG commends the IMO for recognizing the importance of IT security by requesting a visit from the regional computer security officer to review the security of Embassy Bogotá's networks. The ISSO assumed his duties in August 2005 and is working towards meeting Department security standards. However, OIG found deficiencies which require post's attention: ISSO, patch management, security configuration management, and user computer security awareness weaknesses.

Information Systems Security Officer Internal Controls Weakness

ISSO functions are not appropriately separated at Embassy Bogotá. This results in an inadequate separation of duties, an internal control weakness. The August 2005 Management Instruction designates the information security officer, who manages the SBU network, as the network's ISSO and the classified systems administrator as the alternate ISSO. The classified systems administrator is designated as the classified ISSO and the information security officer is the alternate classified ISSO. The individuals that manage the system cannot also be the individuals that police the system. The information security officer can be designated the ISSO for the classified system and the classified network systems administrator can be the ISSO for the SBU network. The other information management specialist in the information programs center can be the alternate ISSO for both networks.

Recommendation 16: Embassy Bogotá should designate the information program officer as the information systems security officer for the Sensitive But Unclassified network, the information systems officer as the information systems security officer for the classified network, and an information management specialist in the information processing center as the alternate information systems security officer for both networks. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

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User Computer Security Awareness

Embassy Bogotá received several computer incident alerts from the Washington-based Computer Incident Response Team because users had installed unapproved software or had accessed inappropriate resources across the network. OIG asked several users if they knew that the embassy did not allow unauthorized software and hardware installations on the SBU network. The users stated that they were unaware of the Department policy. OIG recommended that the embassy issue a notice informing all employees of the Department policy and enforce compliance.

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, should designate and assign an Andean regional English language officer to work with the Colombian Ministry of Education, the binational centers, and educational institutions in Colombia and neighboring Andean countries. (Action: WHA, in coordination with ECA)

Recommendation 2: Embassy Bogotá should request, and the Department should approve, funding for public access control improvements that will facilitate the secure entry of 500 clients per hour and the screening of all American citizens requiring service. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with DS and OBO)

Recommendation 3: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Office of Rightsizing the U.S. Government Presence Overseas, should conduct a comprehensive interagency rightsizing review of all positions under the Ambassador's authority. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with M/R)

Recommendation 4: Embassy Bogotá should develop and implement a plan to consolidate the warehouse, motor pool, procurement, and financial operations of the U.S. agencies in Colombia. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, should develop and implement a process to obtain from the government of Colombia refunds or exemptions from the value-added tax paid by contractors, grantees, and other government agencies. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with DS and INL)

Recommendation 6: The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should identify all major contracts applicable to Colombia and provide copies of these to the Embassy Bogotá personnel who have contract management and financial management responsibilities. (Action: INL, in coordination with A)

Recommendation 7: Embassy Bogotá should check each grantee individual or organization against the Excluded Parties List website and confirm that the grantee is not listed and annotate that fact in the appropriate block on Form DS-4012. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Bogotá should write and implement a policy covering overtime hours worked. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation 9: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Department, should submit Danger Pay Factors Form DS-578 to the Office of Allowances at the earliest opportunity. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with A)

Recommendation 10: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Office of the Legal Adviser and the Bureau of Human Resources, should review the comparator companies' practices, local law, and U.S. laws and regulations and provide locally employed staff with an appropriate savings plan benefit. (Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with L and DGHR)

Recommendation 11: Embassy Bogotá should crosswalk Position PSA-0559, the incumbent employee, and all of the financial management functions from positions PSA-0559 and N70222 to the financial management office. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation 12: Embassy Bogotá should rewrite the job description of Position N70222 and assign the incumbent full-time responsibilities for program management, including grants management, program funding management, VIP invitational travel, print shop management, and other administrative duties that relate specifically to the public affairs section's programs and program budget. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation 13: Embassy Bogotá should discontinue the practice of maintaining cuff accounts in the public affairs section and instead obtain the Abacus software from the Foreign Service Institute to assist in managing program funds. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with FSI)

Recommendation 14: Embassy Bogotá should reconcile monthly guard contract invoices with electronic guard monitoring reports to verify delivery of all services rendered and deduct from contract payments when services are not delivered. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation 15: Embassy Bogotá should draft and implement a memorandum of understanding that outlines the narcotics affairs section's information management staff's responsibilities on the Department's Sensitive But Unclassified network, including the information management officer's oversight responsibilities. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation 16: Embassy Bogotá should designate the information program officer as the information systems security officer for the Sensitive But Unclassified network, the information systems officer as the information systems security officer for the classified network, and an information management specialist in the information processing center as the alternate information systems security officer for both networks. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Informal recommendations cover operational matters not requiring action by organizations outside of the inspected unit and/or 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.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The six member composition of the Fulbright Commission's board restricts continuity of operations. If members are excused or are absent for any reason, the board must cease operations for lack of a quorum.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Bogotá should engage in an exchange of notes with the government of Colombia on the Commission for Educational Exchange and Financing Programs (Fulbright Commission), seeking to increase the number of members on the commission's board of directors.

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

Embassy Bogotá reports well on Colombian government successes but does not balance its political reporting with minority and opposition positions that would help Washington users understand other political factors at work in Colombia. Political reporting is often done via e-mails or telephone calls to the bureau. This type of reporting excludes the full Washington community.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Bogotá should send more widely distributed reporting cables to interested Washington agencies as a follow-up to its phone call and e-mail reporting to the bureau's country affairs office.

The political section has expanded its reporting to include information on the impact of regional conflict on domestic security. A factor in potential political instability are the large groups of displaced ethnic and indigenous minorities in Colombia.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Bogotá should expand its reporting on ethnic and indigenous minorities and political stability vulnerabilities in Colombia.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

The economic section will lose two DRI rotational positions in the next fiscal year but will have additional reporting responsibilities if the proposed FTA is implemented and the economic picture in Colombia improves as a result of improved security. Several reporting positions in the political section cover issues that are closely aligned to economic issues, and some political positions also appear to be underemployed.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Bogotá should examine its current staffing levels in the economic and political sections as a part of its rightsizing exercise, to see if it is possible to move one or two reporting positions from the political section into the economic section to cover the loss of the two rotational positions.

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

The consular section has recently developed an improved seven-day training program for new officers. The program consists of training in post-specific interviewing techniques, supplemented by ad hoc written materials developed by other ELOs.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Bogotá should incorporate a training schedule, a table of contents, existing background materials, and post-specific standard operating procedures into a training handbook that can be retained and augmented as officers rotate through the consular section.

The consular section has a fulsome rotational program and assigns ELOs one or more portfolios in addition to their adjudication responsibilities. Decisions on rotations and portfolio assignments are not always transparent.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Bogotá should inform consular officers early in their assignments about the complexities of managing a rotational program in a post the size of Bogotá and make the assignment process as participative as

possible by meeting periodically with entry-level officers regarding their rotational opportunities.

Each ELO manages one or more portfolios, in addition to his or her adjudication responsibilities. There are no standard operating procedures for most portfolios.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Bogotá should assign each portfolio manager the task of preparing a standard operating procedure for a portfolio before it is handed over to a new manager.

Officers stretched into more senior positions head three of the consular section's four units. An ELO doing IV work for the first time heads the complex IV unit.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Bogotá should ensure that the consul general spends a portion of each day in the processing areas, in particular on the visa side, to lend support to the unit chiefs, provide feedback to the entry-level officers, and attend periodic unit meetings.

One or two officers per day adjudicate applications for NIV renewal. Volume is very high and only a small percentage of the applicants are interviewed, although their applications are scrutinized in desk adjudications after the applicants are fingerprinted.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Bogotá should conduct a validation study of renewal cases to determine if abuse of status or fraud is involved in any significant proportion of these expeditiously processed cases.

The IV unit uses a call center to allocate appointments to persons who were denied an IV pending additional documentation. The unit also receives applicants on one to two afternoons each week solely to give them appointment letters and application forms for their IV interviews when the originals have been lost in the local mail.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Bogotá should implement an alternative method for immigrant visa applicants to provide missing documents resulting from initial visa interviews without requiring the applicant to come to the consular section in person. Personal appointments should be reserved only for urgent or sensitive cases.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Bogotá should resume the practice of sending duplicate appointment packets to the U.S. petitioners and to the local beneficiaries.

When its workload skyrocketed, the IV section stopped accepting telephone or e-mail inquiries from the general public, referring them instead to the call center or the website. The volume of inquiries coming into the embassy switchboard and the e-mail boxes of other sections has increased significantly as a result.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Bogotá should develop a procedure whereby the call center can forward urgent cases or inquiries outside their competence to the immigrant visa unit, which should then establish a mechanism to address some of those inquiries by phone or e-mail.

The embassy has over 10,000 American citizens registered countrywide through the Internet-based registration system, hundreds with invalid e-mail addresses. There has been no revamping of the warden system since the inception of this system, nor has there been any effort to include hotels, universities, or businesses in the e-mail network.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy Bogotá should give priority to overhauling its warden system, drawing on resources outside of the small American citizens services unit, if necessary, to develop contacts at hotels, universities, and businesses.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND NARCOTICS ASSISTANCE

The authorized staff size of the NAS is appropriate, except for the one local-hire position that should be reprogrammed or abolished. The procurement agent position (number A60049) is no longer needed.

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy Bogotá should reprogram or abolish procurement agent position number A60049.

Embassy Bogotá's NAS developed a subsidiary financial system, which it calls the local accounting system, to enhance its financial recording capabilities. INL was sufficiently impressed by the system's capabilities to base its worldwide LFMS upon the Bogotá model.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy Bogotá should, prior to making a commitment with a contractor to update its local accounting system, consult with the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and review the local financial management system to see whether that system meets its needs.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The embassy collects payments for employees' personal use of government long-distance telephones. Under 5 FAM 523, employees must use calling cards for toll calls, except in emergencies.

Informal Recommendation 16: Embassy Bogotá should issue an administrative notice reminding employees of the restrictions on personal use of government telephones for long-distance calls.

GRANTS MANAGEMENT

The grants files do not consistently include a brief narrative report of the accomplishments attributable to the expenditures to the grants office in accordance with Article V of the grant document.

Informal Recommendation 17: Embassy Bogotá should instruct the grants officer or the grants officer representative to follow up with the grantee to receive reports, and it should place them in the grants file.

Some grants were erroneously issued to commercial vendors for direct services to the U.S. government.

Informal Recommendation 18: Embassy Bogotá should instruct the grants officer to review the vendor and type of services provided to determine if a grant document is the correct vehicle, rather than a procurement.

GENERAL SERVICES

Household effects and private-owned vehicles of embassy personnel are flown to and from the post, except for the shipments for law enforcement agencies, which receive air and sea shipments.

Informal Recommendation 19: Embassy Bogotá should revise its shipment policy to determine if a mix of air and sea shipments is feasible and secure.

Embassy Bogotá's purchase card holders in the general services office are not using the cards efficiently.

Informal Recommendation 20: Embassy Bogotá should review the usage of purchase card holders.

The chancery warehouse has some serious safety issues, including an unstable wooden floor on its second floor and no railing on one side of the stairwells.

Informal Recommendation 21: Embassy Bogotá should fix the safety issues of the chancery warehouse.

The chancery warehouse does not have metal storage shelves at the offsite warehouse to maximize the space.

Informal Recommendation 22: Embassy Bogotá should purchase metal storage shelves and install them in the offsite warehouse.

Embassy Bogotá does not have a written replacement-cycle program for residential property such as furniture and appliances.

Informal Recommendation 23: Embassy Bogotá should develop a plan for the management of all nonexpendable items, including an acquisition plan, a replacement-cycle program for furniture and appliances, and a justification for the quantities of items to be stored in the warehouses.

The information management staff relocates information management property, but it does not always notify the property section when items have been moved and where they have been placed. Doing so would allow the property's location to be updated in the nonexpendable property software application.

Informal Recommendation 24: Embassy Bogotá's information management and property sections should prepare a memorandum of understanding to establish accountability and strengthen inventory controls, including the movements of all information management equipment.

Embassy Bogotá does not have any record of having conducted periodic spot checks of expendable and nonexpendable inventories.

Informal Recommendation 25: Embassy Bogotá should ensure that the accountable property officer personally conducts periodic spot checks of nonexpendable and expendable inventories.

Embassy staff, while in temporary housing, gets little advance information about the status of their permanently assigned housing.

Informal Recommendation 26: Embassy Bogotá should create a status report folder in the embassy's shared drive or in the computer software Interactive Administrative Support Package and use it to update newcomers about their assigned housing while they are in temporary housing.

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE

Embassy Bogotá does not have an active SHEM program. The SHEM committee has not met since 2002, and minutes were not kept of previous SHEM committee meetings.

Informal Recommendation 27: Embassy Bogotá should reestablish an active occupational Safety, Health, And Environmental Management program that meets at least semiannually and keep minutes of such meetings.

There were some outstanding recommendations in the 2003 SHEM and Fire and Safety reports.

Informal Recommendation 28: Embassy Bogotá should implement corrective action for the remaining recommendations in the January 2003 Safety, Health, and Environmental Management report and the May 2003 fire and safety report.

Some of the fire extinguishers at the chancery, warehouse, and some residential apartments have not been checked. Some fire extinguishers are missing their "checked" tags.

Informal Recommendation 29: Embassy Bogotá should establish a schedule to check all fire extinguishers in the embassy buildings and residential apartments in accordance with Department regulations.

MOTOR POOL

The Daily Vehicle Use Record Forms (OF-108) have not been signed by embassy personnel who use motor pool vehicles.

Informal Recommendation 30: Embassy Bogotá should require all motor pool passengers, including the deputy chief of mission, to sign the Daily Vehicle Use Record Form (OF-108) in accordance with Department regulations.

The motor pool section has not established maximum and minimum stock levels for the official automobiles' stock of spare parts and lubricants.

Informal Recommendation 31: Embassy Bogotá should keep stock levels according to the post's needs in accordance with Department regulations.

Embassy Bogotá does not have an up to date and comprehensive administrative notice on the use of official vehicles. Motor pool shuttle vans do have an administrative notice on the use of official vehicles that is dated 2003. In 2004, Embassy Bogotá issued an administrative notice explaining the fees for other authorized use of official vehicles.

Informal Recommendation 32: Embassy Bogotá should review and reissue a comprehensive administrative notice on the use and fees for official and other authorized use of U.S. government vehicles.

Some foreign affairs agencies and other agencies at post do not follow the mission vehicle policy.

Informal Recommendation 33: Embassy Bogotá should ensure that all agencies at post follow the mission vehicle policy. Any circumstances that preclude agencies from adhering to the policy should be documented.

The 2003 motor transportation policy has the signature of the former Ambassador authorizing the use of government official vehicles for home-to-office transportation of the DCM and other mission employees and waiving charges for home-to-office transportation. However, the policy has not been updated with the current Ambassador's authorization.

Informal Recommendation 34: Embassy Bogotá should update the motor transportation policy document with the signature of the current Ambassador, authorizing the use of the government official vehicles for home-to-office transportation for the deputy chief of mission and other mission employees and waiving charges for home-to-office transportation, if appropriate.

Fuel information is not recorded on the Monthly Fuel Consumption Record, Form DS-1775.

Informal Recommendation 35: Embassy Bogotá should record monthly fuel consumption on the Monthly Fuel Consumption Record, Form DS-1775, in accordance with Department regulations.

FAMILY MEMBER EMPLOYMENT

Position descriptions and qualifications are determined by the position's supervisor. Some supervisors have requested Spanish-language capability at a higher level than may actually be needed for a position's duties and responsibilities.

Informal Recommendation 36: Embassy Bogotá should require supervisors to justify in writing the level of language qualifications required.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Embassy Bogotá advertises LES vacancies through the Bogotá intranet and Internet websites and therefore may not be reaching a sufficiently wide range of applicants such as those who lack Internet connectivity. The embassy needs to engage in practices that foster diversity in recruitment.

Informal Recommendation 37: Embassy Bogotá should work with the Bureau of Human Resources to establish practices that foster diversity in local recruitment.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

Embassy Bogotá's intranet website provides useful information for mission staff members, but mission policies are only complete for 2005, and staff announcements are not purged for relevancy.

Informal Recommendation 38: Embassy Bogotá should assign a management office staff member to regularly update and keep current the mission policies and staff announcements.

COMMUNITY LIAISON

Despite the fact that Embassy Bogotá has a bilateral work agreement with the Colombian government, most family member employment is within the mission.

The embassy does not have information on U.S. companies or other institutions that may be able to use English speakers, nor does it have an employment and education officer.

Informal Recommendation 39: Embassy Bogotá should dedicate resources in the community liaison office to gather employment information within the American or multinational community so that family members can take advantage of the bilateral work agreement.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Embassy Bogotá's information management resources staff is not fully aware of all of the Department SBU and classified network connections in other agency offices.

Informal Recommendation 40: Embassy Bogotá should label all Department Internet, Sensitive But Unclassified, and classified cable connections, and create and maintain a list of all such locations.

The information processing center staff and information management staff of the NAS do not maintain the required systems maintenance and operations logs, despite the requirements of 12 FAM 622.5 and 632.5.

Informal Recommendation 41: Embassy Bogotá should create and maintain systems operations and maintenance logs for all servers on the Sensitive But Unclassified and classified networks.

The IT contingency plan is not integrated into the embassy Emergency Action Plan as required by 5 FAM 121.8 (a).

Informal Recommendation 42: Embassy Bogotá should include the information technology contingency plan in the Emergency Action Plan.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY

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PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	William B. Wood	8/2003
Deputy Chief of Mission	Milton K. Drucker	12/2003
Chiefs of Sections:		
Consular	Raymond G. McGrath	7/2004
Economic	Francisco J. Fernandez	7/2002
Management	Kathleen V. Hodai	10/2005
Narcotics Affairs	Julie G. Connor	7/2005
Political	Jeffrey Delaurentis	10/2004
Public Affairs	Anne T. Callaghan	8/2004
Regional Security	Robert A. Hartung	9/2005
Regional Affairs	Craig P. Osth	9/2004
Other Agencies:		
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service	Vacant	
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives	Vacant	
Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Stephen Hayward	10/2003
Department of Defense	Col. Kevin D. Saderup	8/2005
Department of Justice	Carmen Colon	8/2001
Defense Intelligence Agency	Col. Brian Butcher	
Foreign Agricultural Service	David Mergen	7/2002
Commercial Service	Robert L. Farris	8/2004
Drug Enforcement Administration	David L. Gaddis	1/2004

Federal Bureau of Investigation	Wilfrid W. Meyer	8/2004
Commercial Service	Robert L. Farris	8/2004
International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program	Gary T. Sheridan	3/2003
Internal Revenue Service	Olga E. Acevedo	3/2004
Justice Sector Reform Program	Paul S. Vaky	8/2004
Office of Foreign Assets Control	Michael D. Swanson	9/2003
Overseas Prosecutorial Development and Training	Vacant	
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Maj. Humberto B. Ramirez	7/2003
U.S. Agency for International Development	Liliana Ayalde	8/2005
U.S. Secret Service	Edwin Lugo	7/2003

ABBREVIATIONS

ACI	Andean Counterdrug Initiative
ACO	Accountable consular officer
ACS	American citizens services
CLO	Community liaison office
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DRI	Diplomatic Readiness Initiative
ECA	Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
ELO	Entry-level officer
FPU	Fraud prevention unit
FSN	Foreign Service national
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GSO	General services officer
HRO	Human resources officer
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IMO	Information management officer
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
ISO	Information systems officer
ISSO	Information systems security officer
IT	Information technology
IV	Immigrant visa
JOLT	Junior Officer Leadership Training
LES	Locally employed staff

LFMS	Local Financial Management System
MPP	Mission Performance Plan
NAS	Narcotics affairs section
NIV	Nonimmigrant visa
NSDD 38	National Security Defense Directive 38
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PAO	Public affairs officer
PAS	Public affairs section
RELO	Regional English language officer
RSO	Regional security officer
SBU	Sensitive But Unclassified
SHEM	Safety Health and Environment Management
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VAT	Value-added tax
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~