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

Report of Inspection

Embassy Monrovia, Liberia

Report Number ISP-I-08-20A, March 2008

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PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections, as issued by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of State.

PURPOSE

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department of State, its posts abroad, and related activities. Inspections cover three broad areas, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980:

- **Policy Implementation:** whether policy goals and objectives are being effectively achieved; whether U.S. interests are being accurately and effectively represented; and whether all elements of an office or mission are being adequately coordinated.
- **Resource Management:** whether resources are being used and managed with maximum efficiency, effectiveness, and being accurately and effectively represented; and whether financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- **Management Controls:** whether the administration of activities and operations meets the requirements of applicable laws and regulations; whether internal management controls have been instituted to ensure quality of performance and reduce the likelihood of mismanagement; whether instance of fraud, waste, or abuse exist: and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

METHODOLOGY

In conducting this inspection, the inspectors: reviewed pertinent records in the Department and elsewhere; as appropriate, circulated, reviewed, and compiled the results of survey instruments; conducted on site interviews with personnel at the overseas missions, in the Department, and elsewhere; and reviewed the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations with office, individuals, organizations, and activities affected by this review.



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Office of Inspector General

PREFACE

This report was prepared by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, the Arms Control and Disarmament Amendments Act of 1987, and the Department of State and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 1996. It is one of a series of audit, inspection, investigative, and special reports prepared by OIG periodically as part of its oversight responsibility with respect to the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors to identify and prevent fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement.

This report is the result of an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the office, post, or function under review. It is based on interviews with employees and officials of relevant agencies and institutions, direct observation, and a review of applicable documents.

The recommendations therein have been developed on the basis of the best knowledge available to the OIG, and have been discussed in draft with those responsible for implementation. It is my hope that these recommendations will result in more effective, efficient, and/or economical operations.

I express my appreciation to all of those who contributed to the preparation of this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Todd", written in a cursive style.

William E. Todd
Acting Inspector General

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- The United States has moved aggressively to take advantage of the end of Liberia's 14-year civil war by providing major support for efforts to assure peace and stability to Liberia's democratically elected government and the region. Embassy Monrovia functions in a very difficult environment with few public services, inadequate office space and housing, insufficient resources, and precarious security conditions. To effectively accomplish its mission, Embassy Monrovia will need additional resources in a number of specific areas.
- The embassy has carefully and successfully balanced its efforts to assure effective delivery of U.S. support with the need to assure adequate security, and working and living conditions for its employees and their families.
- The United States has doubled the size of its embassy in Monrovia in the last two years in order to carry out a series of major assistance programs to help Liberia's recovery effort. Further growth is necessary but must be managed carefully in light of security and management capacity concerns.
- U.S. government foreign assistance programs are helping to address sources of conflict and to rebuild the nation. Department of State-funded programs are making progress on reforming and rebuilding the security sector and have mechanisms in place, which should be improved, for monitoring their effectiveness.
- Considerable progress has been made in rebuilding embassy management support capacity, but much more needs to be accomplished before the embassy can be described as fully recovered and operational.
- Construction of a badly needed new embassy compound (NEC) is scheduled to begin in FY 2008. The rightsizing exercise conducted in preparation for this project is no longer current, and the embassy and the Department of State (Department) must urgently prepare the best possible estimate of future space needs before the construction plan is finalized.
- Embassy Monrovia is required to consolidate most Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) administrative operations by October 1, 2008. Consolidation has met resistance within the mission, and much remains to be done to ensure that this deadline is met. The process needs to be accelerated.

- Adoption requests have skyrocketed in Monrovia, and there is solid evidence that adoption agencies have submitted falsified documents in order to facilitate adoptions. Embassy resources are insufficient to address this growing problem.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between September 4 and 24, 2007, and in Monrovia, Liberia, between September 27 and October 12, 2007. Ambassador Joseph G. Sullivan (team leader), Paul R. Smith (deputy team leader), Perry Adair, William Belcher, Eric Chavera, Michael Kirby, Matthew Koch, Dennis Matthews, Robert Ripley, and Michael Yoder conducted the inspection.

CONTEXT



In 2004, the small West African country of Liberia emerged in ruin from two decades of civil war and the despotic rule of Charles Taylor. In a nation roughly the size of Tennessee, with a population of nearly 3.4 million, the protracted war took 250,000 lives and displaced over one million people. In the three years since the end of the war, peace has been sustained with the assistance of a UN mission, including military and police elements. Successful democratic elections

produced Africa's first female president to face the daunting task of rebuilding a country left with a devastated physical, social, political, and economic infrastructure.

The United States and Liberia have deep and longstanding ties that date back to the country's founding by freed American slaves. Liberia patterned its flag, constitution, and place names on U.S. models and named its capital, Monrovia, after America's fifth president. The Liberian people feel that they have no closer friend than the United States.

With U.S. assistance in FY 2007 of \$140 million, the United States is the largest single provider of assistance to Liberia. U.S. assistance reflects the policy objectives that Liberia stabilizes internally, improve its governance, improve the lives of its people, and rebuild its economy. However, because of grinding poverty (\$185 per capita gross domestic product), high unemployment (only 15 percent of the work force is formally employed), and lack of reliable and effective security forces or a functioning justice system, stability remains fragile.

U.S. Embassy Monrovia is undergoing significant change. The staff has doubled in size in the past two years alone, and a number of non- Department agencies are in the process of either adding staff, especially USAID, or trying to establish operations (Department of Justice, U.S. African Development Foundation) within the embassy. The embassy currently has 59 direct-hire American employees. Its agencies include the Department of State, the Department of Defense, USAID, the U.S. Forestry Service, Department of Treasury, and the African Development Fund. Construction of a NEC is scheduled to begin during FY 2008.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

The Ambassador has overseen a tremendous growth in the depth and breadth of U.S. relations with Liberia and in the size and scope of the U.S. embassy since his arrival in July 2005. Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected as the first woman president in Africa in November 2005 and was inaugurated as President in January 2006. She has great support and outreach in the U. S. government, Congress, and private sector. However, her government faces enormous challenges in maintaining peace and stability, instituting good governance, and improving the lives and welfare of the Liberian people, so devastated by the civil war and years of corruption and misrule.

In a country where everything needs to be done, the Ambassador plays a major role in determining and prioritizing U.S. policy responses. He has easy and frequent access to, and significant influence with, President Johnson Sirleaf and her government. He works very closely with the UN military, police, political and humanitarian representations in Liberia, and with other international organizations and donors to coordinate U.S. and international efforts to assure peace and stability and to promote good governance and economic recovery.

The Ambassador, a career Foreign Service officer, served as Country Director for West African Affairs before being nominated Ambassador to Liberia and has held numerous positions in Washington and overseas, including a previous assignment in Monrovia. When he arrived in Liberia in June 2005, the embassy was half of its current size of 59 American employees, and the overwhelming priorities were maintenance of peace in Liberia, security of the mission and its personnel, and the conduct of free and fair elections for president and the legislature in October and November 2005. Since the inauguration of the democratically elected president, the United States has increased its contributions to Liberia's peace, stability, improved governance, and economic development through increased bilateral assistance and continuing contributions to UN peacekeeping, peace building, and reconstruction efforts.

Mission Strategic Plan

The embassy did a major revamping of its Mission Performance Plan in 2006 following the election and inauguration of a democratic government. The Ambassa-

dor and deputy chief of mission (DCM) prepared the strategic goals and the priorities and worked with the country team to draft Mission Performance Plan sections. The Mission Strategic Plan (MSP) prepared in 2007 followed similar lines as the Mission Performance Plan of the previous year, and made strong arguments for additional funding of security sector reform in order to train Liberian armed forces and police to provide the security now afforded only by UN military and police forces. Embassy Monrovia's MSP for FY 2009 was selected for formal review and was chosen as the second best MSP from those submitted worldwide. The embassy's principal goals are to strengthen regional peace and stability, improve the education and health care of Liberians, improve the quality and access to justice, promote sustained economic growth that generates employment, strengthen democratic values and institutions, and build the diplomatic platform necessary to pursue the preceding goals.

Leadership

The Ambassador plays a strong lead role within the international community and in the embassy. As a member of the International Contact Group on Liberia, the United States plays major roles in committees on economic governance, security, economic revitalization, and other issues. The United States has the lead role in training a new Liberian Army and strengthening the president's protective service and a major role in assisting the United Nations to strengthen the leadership of the Liberian National Police by providing civilian police mentors and training a quick reaction unit. The United States carries out these critical functions from a number of different funding sources and through a number of different contractors and grantees monitored by several different agencies and offices within the embassy and in Washington. The Ambassador plays a critical role overseeing the entire structure of U.S. assistance and coordinating with the most senior level of the Liberian government and the international community to assure that our assistance is well coordinated and utilized.

Management Style

For a long period, the embassy was understaffed and programs were underfunded to accomplish the enormous challenges of helping to put a country back together. The formidable management challenges of making the embassy platform functional again after more than a decade of civil war and devastated infrastructure made these tasks that much more difficult. In these circumstances, the Ambassador took a very hands-on and direct management role in almost every area of U.S. activities, including management and consular issues. In addition to weekly country team meetings,

he holds daily coordination or senior staff meetings to assure that all elements of U.S. activities in Liberia function in a well-coordinated fashion. He also meets weekly with his management and military teams.

The current DCM arrived in late August 2007, and has been sitting in jointly with the Ambassador on most meetings, as she learns the key issues facing the embassy. She has previous regional and public diplomacy experience, and is working closely with the Ambassador on the full range of issues. The Ambassador indicated his intention to delegate more responsibilities to the DCM as she becomes comfortable with substantive and management issues facing the embassy. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) team encourages the Ambassador to delegate more functions to the DCM, including most of the weekly meetings with sections whose section chiefs she supervises. The OIG team also encourages the Ambassador and DCM to assess, carefully, whether near daily coordination meetings are a productive use of staff time, or whether more embassy-wide meetings might be organized around MSP goals. The embassy already holds a regularly scheduled meeting of the various mission elements involved in the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program. A similar meeting of those engaged in the various elements of security sector reform assistance would appear useful. Where multiple agencies are involved in executing mission goals, such meetings should normally be chaired by the Ambassador or the DCM. An informal recommendation was made.

Security

The Ambassador and the DCM attribute high priority to security in Liberia's still dangerous environment. They meet regularly with the regional security officers and reinforce their security program continuously in the embassy. The Ambassador is very conscious of his responsibility for the security of mission staff and family members and weighs very carefully National Security Decision Directive-38 (NSDD-38)¹ agency requests to increase staff to manage the important and growing programs in Liberia with the need to assure the security of embassy staff and family members. (For more detailed discussion of security issues, please consult the classified annex to this report.)

¹ National Security Decision Directive-38, Staffing at Diplomatic Missions and Their Constituent Posts, issued on June 2, 1982, assigns ambassadors the authority and responsibility to determine the appropriate size, composition, and mandate of all staffing operating under their authority.

New Embassy Compound and Rightsizing

The construction of Embassy Monrovia's NEC is scheduled to begin in FY 2008. In preparation for that project, a rightsizing exercise was previously conducted which is no longer current. Predicting the future staffing size is complicated by the very dynamic and growing nature of the relationship with Liberia. For example, Liberia, as a Presidential Malaria Initiative country, will host a Department of Health and Human Services representative to manage that program. Liberia is also receiving increased funding under the Presidential Emergency Program for AIDS Relief and an additional \$20 million in education funding as a Presidential Education Initiative country. All these programs, even when executed by grantees or contractors, require proper management and complicate efforts to estimate future staff levels. Notwithstanding the uncertainties, the embassy is working closely with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) to advance plans for beginning construction of the NEC. The OIG team agrees that replacement of the current embassy facilities is urgent from a security and management perspective.

The Ambassador recognizes the importance of having an embassy which is sized correctly to carry out its responsibilities, secure its personnel and property, and support its personnel with adequate management services in Monrovia's difficult circumstances. He weighs NSDD-38 requests to increase staff very carefully and has turned down a recent Department of Defense request to add an additional position in the Defense Attaché Office. USAID has also grown substantially in the past year and has submitted NSDD-38 requests for additional staff increases. The Ambassador is weighing these requests carefully against the need to assure the security of all mission personnel and adequate management services.

Another possible factor affecting the mission is the future location of the new U.S. Africa Command, AFRICOM, which the government of Liberia has invited to base its military headquarters or a sub-regional headquarters in Liberia. If the U.S. government decides to place AFRICOM in Liberia, this would increase, substantially, the number of official Americans in Liberia and would affect embassy operations significantly, even if AFRICOM were to locate in a separate structure.

Morale

Morale among embassy employees is mixed. Working and living conditions are difficult, and opportunities for diversion and travel are limited in number due to security concerns. Minor family members are still not permitted in Monrovia because of security and housing conditions as well as the absence of adequate schooling opportunities. A major turnover in embassy staff has resulted in a greater

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

Embassy political officers are actively engaged in implementing programs aimed at reforming Liberia's security and justice sectors. The OIG team identified a need for officers with responsibility for these and other programs to receive training in program management. The team also recommended that the process for establishing embassy reporting priorities be strengthened, that vetting procedures for members of security forces receiving foreign assistance be tightened, and that responsibility within the embassy for refugee affairs pass from the DCM to a political officer.

The political/economic (P/E) section consists of five officers; a sixth will arrive next month. When fully staffed, four officers will cover political issues, and two will cover economic affairs. There are also two LE staff assistants, one each for political and economic affairs. Monrovia's two global repositioning positions, one political and one economic, attracted no bidders in 2006, although one slot was filled by extending an officer already in country. Both positions were filled in the 2007 assignments cycle. The section has experienced near total turnover since May 2007 after an extended period of staffing shortages and gaps. However, the P/E section will finally be fully staffed by November 2007. Embassy Monrovia is to be commended for making use of a long-term temporary duty assignment of an officer from the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. This creative solution enabled the embassy to ensure that the key issue of security sector reform (SSR) was covered, despite staffing shortages.

Much of the political work in Monrovia centers on security issues. Under a three-year program funded by the Department of State, with a Department of Defense representative in Liberia designated as the contracting officer's technical representative/government technical monitor, the goals of the SSR program are to create a high quality, professional security apparatus that is apolitical, ethnically and religiously mixed, that respects human rights, and is capable of defending the nation's borders and internal regions from foreign and domestic threats. The OIG team notes favorably, the recent visit of an interagency team to examine the broad spectrum of security sector issues in Liberia. Continued close cooperation between Washington agencies and Embassy Monrovia will be important to advancing embassy objectives in this area.

In addition to efforts on SSR implementation, embassy political officers serve as the contracting officer's eyes and ears on the ground for implementation of Washington-administered programs implemented in Liberia. Two Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) projects are currently ongoing in Liberia: Justice Sector Support Liberia and the Civilian Police Program. Both programs are administered by INL, but are contracted out to a U.S. company. The company's in-country project manager for these projects sends weekly reports on program activities and developments to INL, the Ambassador, and the P/E counselor. INL has made regular visits, sets benchmarks and conditions, and relies on the embassy for feedback. Additionally, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor currently operates substantial grant programs to U.S. organizations to implement projects in Liberia in support of the rule of law and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The bureau welcomes the embassy's input and assistance in informally monitoring projects. Given the large number of U.S. foreign assistance programs underway in Liberia, and the greater role that political and economic officers are being required to play in the monitoring of such programs, the team identified a need for the embassy to ensure that all Department officers with responsibility for such programs have sufficient formal training in program management.

Given the special U.S.-Liberian relationship, and the strong interest in Liberia within the various branches of the U.S. government, Embassy Monrovia has a relatively high visitor workload, particularly given the difficulty and danger of life in Liberia. Much of the workload for these visitors falls on the P/E section.

Washington consumers appear to be generally satisfied with the amount and quality of political reporting from Embassy Monrovia. Noting its excellent cooperation with the embassy, one office stated that the embassy has made promotion of human rights and democracy one of its highest priorities and actively reports on ongoing human rights issues. Washington consumers have also expressed satisfaction with post reporting on corruption, security sector reform, and judicial incapacity.

The Leahy Amendment, and policies developed to implement the amendment, prohibit the use of foreign assistance funds to support foreign security forces where there is credible evidence such forces have committed gross human rights violations. The Department's Leahy vetting process is used to determine whether there is such evidence prior to providing assistance. The OIG team determined that post has not designated an officer with responsibility for Leahy vetting oversight, nor developed an appropriate checklist for vetting requests, as instructed in the April 2007 report, "Compliance with the State and Department of Defense Leahy Amendments: A Guide to the Vetting Process." An informal recommendation was made.

The previous DCM assumed responsibility for refugee affairs in the embassy. Staffing within the P/E section has expanded, and an officer in that section should assume that responsibility. That officer should establish close contact with the regional refugee coordinator in Abidjan to ensure full understanding of Department grants to international and nongovernmental organizations in support of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugee Returnees in Liberia. An informal recommendation was made.

The embassy's Human Rights Report and Supporting Human Rights and Democracy Report were well received in Washington. Consumers have described the Ambassador's television and radio spots on refugee issues as very helpful and consider Embassy Monrovia to be responsive and supportive. While one consumer indicated they would like to see more reporting from outside the capital, the OIG team found the volume of post reporting to be adequate, particularly given section turnover and staffing shortages. The P/E section has an active representational plan, with events keyed to MSP goals.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

The international effort to rebuild Liberia's economy and economic infrastructure is a high priority for embassy economic officers who play a leadership role in discussions with the international partners, and for the mission as a whole. Given the expanded opportunities for U.S. business which will arise as Liberia's economy improves, economic officers in Monrovia would benefit from commercial training and the designation of a terrorism finance coordination officer. Informal recommendations were made. In addition, the team noted the embassy's effective management and use of an economic officer position received under global repositioning.

Liberia's abundant natural resources make it a country with great potential for investment, though civil unrest and insecurity has stymied this potential. The death of an estimated 250,000 Liberians during the years of conflict, lack of educational opportunities, and emigration has created a shortage of skilled manpower. Agriculture, mining, and local manufacturing activities came to a virtual halt. Liberia's infrastructure was destroyed, leaving it with a limited transportation network, scores of broken-down buildings, no central electric power, no piped water system, and no landline phone system. Fifteen percent of Liberia's work force is formally employed, while literacy is estimated to be 15-20 percent. Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita gross domestic product of \$185.

Since intervention by the United Nations, Liberia's economic indicators, including real gross domestic product, inflation, and exchange rates have shown positive signs. The government embarked on an interim poverty reduction strategy in January 2007, and is in the process of finalizing a long-term poverty reduction strategy as part of its strategy to promote economic development.

The Liberian legislature passed forestry legislation in September 2006, an action that resulted in the lifting of UN sanctions on the export of timber, which provides the legal framework for the development of this sector of the economy. The United Nations also lifted sanctions on diamond exports in April 2007 when Liberia secured membership in the Kimberley Process certification scheme. The high price of rubber is encouraging the development of that sector after years of neglect, and the country's largest exporter and employer, Firestone, is pursuing a multi-year investment and replanting program.

Much of the work of the economic side of the P/E section is devoted to assisting the government of Liberia to create sustainable institutions, infrastructure, and economic activity. U.S. support for the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program has helped Liberia curb corruption so that government resources will be available to promote economic development. U.S.-funded advisors are working in 11 ministries and state-owned enterprises. An embassy economic officer represents the U.S. government as chair of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program's technical team (attended by the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, European Commission, and Liberian government ministries), while the Ambassador serves as vice-chair to the Liberian president of the cabinet-level Economic and Governance Steering Committee.

Washington consumers have expressed satisfaction with the embassy's economic reporting. A recent series of cables on the gold, iron, diamond, fisheries, and timber sectors provided insightful analysis. One Washington office praised the embassy's leadership and initiative on implementing a Liberian diamond program through an agreement between the Department of State and the U.S. Geological Survey, as an excellent example of transformational diplomacy in practice.

The amount of commercial work (Monrovia is a non-Foreign Commercial Service presence post) in Liberia, while manageable so far, is expected to grow in the coming years as optimism about Liberia's future continues to build. While the LE staff economic assistant recently attended a regional Foreign Commercial Service conference in Senegal, none of the economic officers in Monrovia has received commercial training. The OIG team urges that future economic officers receive such training. An informal recommendation was made.

An examination of the embassy's current Designated Responsibilities Memorandum indicates that no officer has been designated as the terrorism finance coordination officer. Per State 181096 (2006), embassies should designate an individual with this responsibility. An informal recommendation was made.

An economic officer who served as a member of the government of Liberia International Partner Steering Committee was deeply involved in the planning for the meetings of the Liberia Partners Forum, held in Washington in February 2007. Of the two global repositioning positions filled in the 2007 bidding cycle, only one -- the economic position -- is currently filled; a political officer will arrive in November 2007 to fill the remaining slot. Embassy Monrovia has made good use of the economic slot, creatively filling it with an experienced mid-level officer already in country, enabling the embassy to be proactive on key economic issues, as well as to increase the quantity of economic reporting.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

U.S. government foreign assistance programs are helping to address sources of conflict in Liberia and to rebuild the nation. In its foreign assistance efforts, Embassy Monrovia coordinates closely with the government of Liberia across four areas: peace and security (\$17.2 million in FY 2007, plus a \$45 million supplemental appropriation); governing justly and democratically (\$26.2 million); investing in people (\$20.5 million); and economic growth (\$27.4 million). U.S. government assistance seeks to accomplish the following: rebuild the military and police forces; foster opportunities for more Liberians to participate in political decision making; build a justice system that can resolve disputes efficiently and effectively; strengthen public sector entities; implement anticorruption reforms; revitalize health and education service delivery; expand employment opportunities; rehabilitate the agricultural sector, and; commercialize Liberia's rich natural resources. Moreover, U.S. efforts in Liberia support several Presidential Initiatives, including the Africa Education Initiative, the President's Malaria Initiative, and the President's Initiative Against Illegal Logging.

As part of the foreign assistance process, Embassy Monrovia prepared a FY 2007 operational plan for foreign assistance programs. In accordance with Washington guidance, the embassy has already begun an interagency process -- involving the Department, USAID, Department of Defense, and other involved elements in Liberia -- to prepare a performance report for FY 2007 and budget for preliminary FY 2008 levels.

For the SSR program, the Office of Acquisition Management is the contracting officer. The Bureau of African Affairs Office of Regional and Security Affairs (AF/RSA) is the contracting officer's representative and administers the contract. A Department of Defense representative, a U.S. Army lieutenant colonel in the embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation serves as contracting officer's technical representative/government technical monitor (COTR/GTM); he was appointed by the Office of Acquisitions Management to this position. In this capacity, the COTR/GTM receives invoices forwarded by AF/RSA, reviews those invoices, and then responds to AF/RSA with comments as appropriate. COTR/GTM has, on occasion, received invoices with vague descriptions, which covered work prior to his arrival in Liberia, or with questionable work descriptions. The contracting officer and contracting officer's representative have visited Embassy Monrovia irregularly. The OIG team does not believe that such irregular visits assure adequate project oversight for this substantial program which spent \$127 million through FY 2007.

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of Administration in its role as contracting officer, in coordination with the Bureau of African Affairs in its role as contracting officer's representative, should conduct regular visits to Embassy Monrovia to ensure effective oversight and administration of the Security Sector Reform Program. (Action: A, in coordination with AF)

Embassy personnel are often asked to assume some oversight responsibility for individual elements of these large and complex assistance programs. This responsibility can also go to P/E officers with no prior experience working with foreign assistance programs. Most Embassy Monrovia personnel with involvement in foreign assistance programs have received no training in managing or evaluating foreign assistance programs.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Monrovia should develop and implement a plan for Department personnel with responsibility for foreign assistance/grant programs to complete the Foreign Service Institute's course PP-223, Managing Foreign Assistance Awards. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

The embassy's Ambassador Self Help and Democracy and Human Rights Fund is currently managed by a political officer with the assistance of an LE staff member in public affairs section (PAS) who monitors grant compliance. Contracts for select-

ed grants are processed through the USAID mission in Monrovia, with a legal review conducted by USAID Ghana. The Ambassador and DCM review project proposals and select those to be funded. The OIG team believes that the embassy should establish a panel chaired by the Ambassador or DCM but also including representatives of embassy elements with knowledge of the institutions submitting grant proposals. An informal recommendation was made.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The PAS pursues a broad and active portfolio of public diplomacy programs that support the embassy's priority themes. The public affairs officer (PAO) is on her second Civil Service excursion assignment, first in public diplomacy, and supervises eight LE staff. The PAO has ready access to and the confidence of the Ambassador and participates in all embassy country team and cross-cutting program coordination meetings. The PAO also serves as the embassy Equal Employment Opportunity officer.

PAS offices are in the American library, which is located directly across the street from the embassy and provides ready access to embassy contacts. After years of closure during the civil war, the facility reopened in 2004. In a country where libraries, bookstores and Internet access are still rare, the library attracts large numbers of students, educators, government officials, and nongovernmental organization staff. The library's collection of approximately 4000 books, 60 journal subscriptions, and 1800 full-text online journals is designed to serve audiences involved with the key MSP themes of access to quality education, law enforcement and judicial systems, democracy and human rights, economic growth, and resolution of regional conflicts. The collection has been tailored to also address the development of the basic skills that a rebuilding society must acquire in such areas as law enforcement and economic development.

The library accommodates a program room that will seat approximately 50, a video screening room, a small room providing educational advising materials, and 12 public access Internet workstations. PAS conducts a series of basic computer literacy courses at the facility for Liberian contacts as well as the embassy LE staff. Most PAS staff offices and a conference room with digital videoconferencing (DVC) capacity are located on the second floor.

Outreach Programming

PAS maintains active speaker, DVC, and web-cast programs at the library. Thursday evening speaker, film and book discussion programs have become a tradition among embassy contacts. Most institutions in Monrovia lack adequate facilities for group meetings, and the library provides functional space where the embassy meets a broad spectrum of target audiences. PAS has a very small annual speaker budget, and relies heavily on the sizeable and highly skilled resident international corps of specialists who are involved in the Liberian recovery effort. Most of the DVC programs are not organized through the Bureau of International Information Programs but arranged via direct contact with academic and professional specialists in the United States who are involved in the embassy's priority assistance programs. Two recent successes illustrate the diversity of PAS programming. A series of speaker and DVC programs engaging Liberian women managing small businesses resulted in the formation of the country's first Liberian Women Chamber of Commerce. PAS has also placed a high priority on reaching out to Liberia's diverse Christian and Muslim communities, particularly student groups. During the inspection, PAS brought together 50 representatives of the two leading Christian and Muslim student organizations to mark the International Day of Nonviolence with a day-long discussion on the role of youth in nonviolent conflict resolution.

American Corners

In 2005, before the arrival of the current PAO, the embassy opened its first American Corner in Monrovia. It was established and supported by embassy funding without assistance from, or communication with, the Bureau of International Information Programs. PAS did not produce a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the American Corner, and PAS recently decided to discontinue support for the facility. The embassy is now in the process of establishing three new American Corners at libraries or educational institutes in cities some distance from Monrovia. During the next two to three years, the embassy plans to establish a total of 10 American Corners throughout Liberia. Although PAS has prepared MOUs to define the responsibilities of the partner organizations involved in the new centers, they have not communicated with, or sought the advice of, the Bureau of International Information Programs in this new expansion. The regional information resource officer in Dakar has visited Monrovia twice in the past two years and provided valuable guidance and training. The OIG team believes that one visit a year is insufficient to support this ambitious expansion. Informal recommendations were made.

Information Outreach

PAS provides a daily information outreach service of the Washington File and embassy press statements to approximately 15 newspapers, eight radio stations, and three television stations in Monrovia. Although Internet access is beginning to slowly expand within the media community, it is not reliable and distribution must be made for the most part by hard copy. A number of Liberian media outlets draw directly from Washington File material in their own reporting, and at least three Monrovia newspapers include a special Washington File section. In addition to the media, PAS serves a number of government institutions with information products.

The embassy does not have a unified database of contacts for the development of guest lists, management of programs, or information outreach. A protocol assistant supervised by the Ambassador's office management specialist maintains two databases of contacts – one done in Excel and another in Outlook. The PAS office across the street does not currently have access to either of the databases maintained by the protocol assistant but has its own Outlook contact database.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Monrovia should integrate its existing contact databases into a single database and make it available for input by all elements of the mission. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Embassy Media Coordination

Publicizing U.S. assistance and achieving better public appreciation of the role the United States is playing in rebuilding Liberia is the number one priority goal in the current embassy public diplomacy strategic plan. The PAO works collegially and effectively with most elements of the embassy in developing an effective public diplomacy message to achieve this goal. However, there have been recent exceptions that have detracted from the overall effort. One example of this occurred during the OIG inspection when USAID signed a FY 2008 assistance agreement with Liberia encompassing programs worth more than \$65 million. This was a major event that should have, and could have, been represented at the highest levels of both the embassy and the government of Liberia. The signing would have generated significant positive media coverage but did not because key embassy elements, including the PAO, were not informed of the signing or provided a draft press release until after the signing event took place. Media treatment of the event was disappointing.

Although the Ambassador has designated the PAO as the embassy's coordinator for media coverage of all assistance related events, this policy is not being satisfactorily implemented by all embassy elements.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Monrovia should fully implement its mission-wide policy for achieving timely and effective public affairs treatment of the U.S. assistance effort in Liberia. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

The consular section is attempting to normalize consular services in Liberia. After a two-year hiatus, the section resumed processing a full range of nonimmigrant visas in January, 2007. It also processes immigrant visas, including diversity visas, a small number of federal benefit cases, and provides a full range of American citizens services. Despite several staffing gaps, the section has managed well in most areas, and the new consular section chief has correctly identified, and is addressing the priority issues. However, a surge in adoption cases overwhelmed the section's antifraud resources and is forcing a more deliberate approach to adjudicating adoption cases. Fortunately, the consular section chief has strong backing from the embassy's executive office. She will need it, because as visa refusal rates rise, and as adoption cases slow in order to prevent child trafficking, pressure from the Liberian community on the embassy to approve more visas and more adoptions will increase.

Arrival of an ELO has been delayed until December, but a temporary duty Foreign Service officer has just arrived and is in place to fill the gap. The section also just filled an eligible family member consular associate position. Once all personnel are in place, the current American and Liberian staff complement should be adequate,

One of the greatest challenges facing consular operations is putting in place proper safeguards against fraud. Consular work in Liberia is made exceptionally difficult by a lack of reliable official documents. Birth certificates, school records, and Liberian passports are all suspect. Relationship fraud makes immigrant visas, diversity visas, and adoption cases more complex. With extremely high unemployment and low wage levels for most of those who find work, the consular section is now refusing about 80 percent of nonimmigrant visa applicants, up from less than 30 percent a year ago, when the section accepted only embassy referrals and A and G visa cases.

The work requirements statements for all American staff in the consular section include reference to management controls as an ongoing responsibility.

Nonimmigrant Visas

The consular section interviews nonimmigrant visa applicants on Monday and Wednesday mornings, 60 cases each day. Applicants receive appointments through a call center and arrive at 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. The current waiting time for a non-immigrant visa appointment is 21 business days. The consular section also receives referrals from UN agencies and the government of Liberia. These referrals are interviewed afternoons on the day they are received. All applicants must use the electronic visa application form. There is no off-site collection site for machine readable visa fees. The fees are collected in cash and only in American currency. Credit cards are not accepted. Liberia's only automated teller machine is located in the lobby of the consular section and functions only sporadically. The Embassy's LE staff often use the machine to collect their wages.

Consular section LE staff do not have a formal training program. Several said that they have tried to register for long-distance training for consular courses, but the registration "didn't go through." There is no training/mentoring program for newly-arrived ELOs. Informal recommendations were made.

The section has not conducted validation studies but recognizes the need to determine whether applicants from the UN Mission in Liberia and the government of Liberia are using their visas properly. An informal recommendation was made.

Immigrant Visas

Immigrant visa interviews take place Tuesday and Thursday mornings – about 40 interviews each day. There is no backlog for immigrant visa appointments. Liberia receives about 1000 diversity visa numbers each year, but only about 600 to 700 of those selected actually apply, presumably because they cannot afford the \$750 dollar application fee.

Family based immigrant visa interviews are time-consuming because the applicants rarely have proper birth or marriage certificates, and school records after elementary school are often lost or suspect. For applicants, traditional West African extended family ties blur the distinction between father and uncle, son or nephew, and even mother or grandmother, adding to the interviewer's challenge.

Adoption requests have skyrocketed in Monrovia. In FY 2004, Monrovia adjudicated 86 adoptions. In FY 2007, the consular section adjudicated more than 400. Liberia is considered the cheapest place in the world to adopt a child (about \$8,000) and seems to have a limitless supply of children to adopt. The embassy and the Bureau of Consular Affairs have expressed concern about managing the sudden increase, and there is solid evidence that adoption agencies, including American adoption agencies have submitted falsified birth records and passports in order to facilitate adoptions. The line between legitimate adoption and child trafficking has become blurred.

To address this issue, the consular section chief insists that a child's birth parents appear personally at the embassy. Estimates are that 80 percent of children adopted from Liberia have one or both parents still living. In several cases, adoption agencies have presented "parents" who turned out not to be the child's real parents. As a result, the embassy relies more often on DNA testing. The embassy is offering to adoptive parents the option to request a child's orphan status be determined before the adoption is concluded.

Of added concern, adoption agencies provide birth parents with contact information for the adoptive parents. One prominent agency requires the adoptive parents to send quarterly reports of a child's progress, along with photographs. These photos and reports are then given to the birth parents, fueling their belief that their children are still their own, that through the adoption process (often referred to as "The Program") they have managed to get a visa for their children to live in the United States, and that one day the adopted child will be in position to aid his or her birth family. The Department is concerned that more Liberian birth parents are contacting adoptive parents in the United States.

Fraud Concerns

One of the two consular section LE staff investigator positions is vacant. Approximately two months ago, the incumbent traveled to the United States on a visitor's visa and remained there illegally. At the time, the regional security officer was investigating whether this employee had solicited bribes to give a positive finding on an I-604 Request for and Report on Overseas Orphan Investigation.

Current staffing cannot meet the need for field investigations for adoptions, education requirements for diversity visas, and familial relationships for immigrant and diversity visas. Many of these investigations would take place outside of Monrovia, where travel conditions are difficult.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Monrovia should develop a warden message system that serves the needs of American citizens in Liberia. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

In April 2007, at the request of the embassy, the Department agreed to cancel a travel warning for Liberia. At the same time, it strengthened the language in the consular information sheet, advising Americans to be cautious when traveling in Liberia. It should be noted, the Department of State prohibits minors from accompanying U.S. government employees assigned to Monrovia.

The annual F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees, used to evaluate how many people would be evacuated in a time of crisis, has not been completed since 2004. As a result, the consular section's contribution to the Emergency Action Plan is unreliable. An informal recommendation was made.

Consular Facilities

The consular section has four interviewing windows available for intake and interviews. At present, this is sufficient. The waiting room holds 60 applicants. One air conditioner blows hot air, making the room uncomfortable. Restrooms for both men and women are dirty and in disrepair. A leak above the guard/reception area needs to be fixed. An informal recommendation was made.

Some visa applicants are truly desperate and react with anguish if denied. In one instance, a man refused a diversity visa because he was HIV positive collapsed on the waiting room floor, began crying, and became ill. Security guards, unaware that the man was HIV positive, rushed to his aid and began cleaning up with paper towels until the consular section chief intervened and told the guards to stop. Procedures need to be in place to deal with such emergencies and fully understood by all employees. An informal recommendation was made.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

AGENCY	US DH	US LE Staff	LE Staff	FY 07 Funding	Remarks
State - D&CP Program	13	1	12	\$1,489,100	
State - D&CP Representation Fund				\$37,900	
PD - Public Diplomacy	0	0	8	\$223,000	
PD – Representation Fund				\$4,674	
ICASS	5	1	185	\$7,643,000	
State – Diplomatic Security	8	0	2	\$55,844	2-DS-RSO & ARSO, 6 Marines & MSG
OBO- Office of Bldg Operations	1	0	0	\$3,403,162	
DIA – Defense Intel. Agency	3	0	1	\$132,090	
FAS - Foreign Agric. Service	1	0	1	\$1,510,000	
ODC-Office of Defense Cooperation	3	0	0	\$213,000	
DS/ATA - Anti-Terrorism Assist.	5	0	0	\$2,500,000	
AID –(Operating Exp.), Missions	9	0	14	\$3,925,000	
AID Development Assistance	6	0	9	\$71,399,000	
AID-PL. 480 Program	1	0	1	\$109,906	

AID-OTI	2	0	5	\$409,729
AID-Int'l Disaster Assist.	1	0	3	\$321,176
ADF-African Development Foundation	1	0	0	\$294,914
Total	59	2	241	\$93,671,496

*Note: This table does not include approximately \$68 million in assistance -- the bulk of which is peacekeeping operations (security sector reform of military/police), foreign military financing and international narcotics control and law enforcement (justice sector support) -- managed in Washington.

MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

The management section is facing a number of challenges, such as reestablishing normal operations after the protracted civil war, accommodating recent and continuing embassy staffing growth, consolidating administrative operations with USAID, and preparing for the NEC construction and relocation. However, the section currently lacks the personnel and resources to accomplish these objectives. Considering the increased importance of Liberia to U.S. interests in Africa, Embassy Monrovia will require an increasing level of attention and resources to meet these management challenges.

The management section is under the direction of an experienced management officer who is serving his second tour of duty in Embassy Monrovia. His management team is capable but relatively inexperienced, with entry-level personnel serving in both the facilities management and financial management positions. Other direct-hire Americans in the management section include a general services officer, a Foreign Service nurse practitioner, an information management officer (IMO), and an information management specialist. There is no American human resources officer or community liaison office coordinator.

The long-term conflict in Liberia was devastating for LE staff, and the impact on mission staffing has been profound. There was a "brain drain" as many educated Liberians left the country, and the conflict prevented most young Liberians from receiving full formal education. Embassy Monrovia has, therefore, found it difficult to recruit new staff with basic literacy and analytical skills, and many of these employees are unable to perform their duties in an acceptable manner.

Diplomatic Readiness

With the end of the civil war, the embassy has been able to begin the process of restoring normalcy in most operations. Considerable progress has been made, but it is also clear that much more needs to be accomplished before the embassy can be described as fully recovered and operational. This is particularly true in the management section, where the American and LE staffs still face enormous challenges in all elements of the operation. The general services and facilities management staff is under acute pressure to meet the housing, maintenance, and transportation demands of the growing mission population. Other functions such as travel, procurement and contracting, and property management are similarly taxed.

There is a need for additional staff, training, supplies, and equipment throughout the entire management operation. Even with a significant infusion of resources, it will still be a lengthy process to restore all management services to the level required and expected to support expanding diplomatic activity. The NEC will provide a much more functional platform, but will also present new challenges to operate and maintain features such as elevators and a more complex heating/cooling system.

The management section will still need to provide the mission community with basic services that will not be available in the country for some time. These include reliable utilities such as power, water, telecommunications, and commercial sources of goods and services. Poor roads will continue to impede the ability of staff to travel through the city and country, and limited airline service will mean that foreign travel will remain an expensive and difficult prospect. Adequate secondary and emergency medical care for American staff will not be readily available for the foreseeable future, a fact which the Department must carefully consider before authorizing the return of eligible family member children.

Human Resources Office

Some dissatisfaction with human resources operations was expressed by American employees in both the OIG's workplace and quality of life questionnaires and in their personal questionnaires. The dissatisfaction with human resources operations was also echoed in the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) customer satisfaction survey where American personnel services received the lowest score in all of the ICASS cost centers.

The human resources office is staffed by three LE staff, including one human resource specialist and two human resource assistants. Oversight of the office is provided by the management counselor who estimates that 40 percent of his time is

devoted to human resources issues. With the construction of a NEC on the immediate horizon and the attendant consolidation of the Department and USAID management support and the rapid growth of the mission, the management counselor will have little if no time to devote to human resources in the very near future. The Office of Rightsizing's (M/R) 2006 review of Mission Liberia projected a human resources officer position. This position was also requested in Monrovia's FY 2008 Mission Performance Plan and FY 2009 MSP. Unless or until the Department approves a direct-hire human resources officer for Monrovia, the embassy should consider employing an appointment eligible family member, hiring a resident American or converting the current financial management officer position to a combined financial management officer/human resources officer position. Informal recommendations were made.

Additional oversight is provided by the regional human resources officer assigned to Embassy Abidjan who last visited post in December 2006. To ensure the level and frequency of regional support an MOU should be drafted by Embassy Monrovia and Abidjan. An informal recommendation was made.

In its review of American personal questionnaires and from comments elicited during interviews, the OIG team noted that resolving of American payroll issues was highlighted time and again. Even though all three of the LE staff have attended the Foreign Service Institute's Human Resources Management (PA231) course, one human resource assistant should be enrolled in American pay and allowances training. An informal recommendation was made.

Embassy Monrovia LE staff seek special immigration visas, but the human resource assistant who is assigned to provide guidance and information has little knowledge of the program or the qualifications required to apply. An informal recommendation was made.

In its review of human resource office operations, the OIG team learned that LE staff performance evaluations were not being done annually, and that there was disgruntlement among the LE staff with the amount of the transportation allowance received. Informal recommendations were made.

Monrovia lost its service need differential (SND) in 2005 when the Bureau of African Affairs' Executive Office "traded" it for Freetown as they were not adding SND posts at that time. Even though Monrovia currently meets all the criteria for SND (including historically difficult to staff) and was on the list of suggested new SND posts, the Bureau of Human Resources' Office of Career Development and Assignments did not include it on its 2008 list of SND posts. As Monrovia's danger

pay has dropped to a level below the cap (the combination of post differential, danger pay, and SND may not exceed 50 percent of basic salary), designating Monrovia a SND post will help maintain morale at post and help in recruitment. An informal recommendation was made.

Rightsizing

As part of the NEC planning process, post has prepared a rightsizing review that was reviewed by the Bureau of African Affairs and approved by the Undersecretary for Management's Office of Rightsizing (M/R) in March 2006. Total mission staffing at that time was 276, which includes desk spaces for 46 American staff and 101 LE staff. The projected staffing level approved by the Department was 347, which includes desk spaces for 68 American staff and 146 LE staff. This equates to an overall increase of 48 percent. There have been some additional staffing increases proposed since that time, and post is engaging OBO in an effort to incorporate these new positions into the NEC design.

International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

Embassy Monrovia has an ICASS council consisting of representatives from the Department, USAID, the Defense Attaché Office, the Office of Defense Cooperation, and the U.S. Forestry Service. This representation is not in conformity with the August 24, 2006 change in policy (06 State 139716) from the ICASS executive board. Specifically, this guidance restricts membership on post ICASS councils to cabinet-level and independent agency representatives and limits each agency to a single representative. An informal recommendation was made.

Embassy Monrovia's ICASS council is chaired by USAID's executive officer. Although 6 FAH-5 H-222.3-1 a. states that a designee of an agency's senior representative can be a member, the consensus of the ICASS executive board is that local councils should consist of senior-level agency representatives. An informal recommendation was made.

Contracting

Under the current contract the Department is responsible for providing two housing units, complete with utilities (electricity, water, sewage, local phone service), to the local guard force contractor. One is to be used as a residence by the project manager and deputy project manager and the second is to be used as the local guard

force management office, guard force radio dispatch office as well as the local guard force training center. At the onset of the local guard force contract, 100 percent of the guard force was dedicated to providing security to the U.S. government, but over the years, the local guard force contractor has branched out and is now providing guard services to other U.S. government and nongovernmental clients. An informal recommendation was made.

General Services

The general services office is staffed by a management officer and a family member hired to manage the housing program. The GSO faces the formidable task of reestablishing internal controls that were neglected during the years of conflict, while meeting the ongoing support requirements of an expanding mission. Several elements of office operations received below average ratings and comments from mission staff, particularly travel and motor pool operations.

The management officer and GSO recognize that much improvement is required, and both are taking active measures to address the deficiencies. The embassy has requested a second direct-hire GSO in the FY 2009 MSP, but the Bureau of African Affairs has not yet determined whether the position will be filled. The section is currently overworked and understaffed, and the workload will soon increase with the planned addition of more American staff in the embassy. The span of management control will be further stretched as the general services office adds more LE staff as part of the consolidation of Department and USAID management. Without additional American supervision in the section, it will become increasingly difficult to support mission requirements and maintain effective internal controls.

Recommendation 7: The Bureau of African Affairs should propose, and the Bureau of Human Resources should approve, the assistant general services position requested by Embassy Monrovia. (Action: AF, in coordination with DGHR)

Motor Pool

The motor pool inventory is in deplorable condition and barely adequate for current mission needs. Many of the vehicles are beyond their intended life-cycle and in poor condition due to the terrible quality of the roads and marginal mechanical care

available in country. Because the fleet is garaged outside, the extreme heat, humidity, and salt air inflict further damage to metal surfaces. Direct sunlight is damaging to the laminated windows of the armored vehicles.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Monrovia should request, and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations should provide, special maintenance and repair funding to construct covered shelters to protect motor pool vehicles from rain and direct sunlight. (Action: Embassy Monrovia, in coordination with OBO)

With the planned expansion of embassy staffing, and the likely merger of motor pool operations with USAID, the additional demands for transportation will be difficult to support unless the vehicle fleet is upgraded. Post does not have sufficient ICASS funding to replace the aging vehicles and will require supplemental funding from the Department.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Monrovia should develop a phased plan for replacing the oldest vehicles in the motor pool fleet, as well as for expanding the fleet to accommodate additional transportation requirements resulting from mission growth and consolidation with the U.S. Agency for International Development. Embassy Monrovia should request Department funding that is available for posts undergoing consolidation. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

The consolidated Department-USAID motor pool will contain vehicles manufactured by Ford, Chevrolet, and Toyota. There is insufficient space to stock necessary parts for all of these different vehicles, and motor pool maintenance would be more efficient if the fleet contained vehicles from the same manufacturer.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Monrovia, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should standardize its fleet by determining which manufacturer produces the vehicles that are most appropriate for Liberia, considering the needs of all mission users, local driving conditions, and the relative availability of parts. (Action: Embassy Monrovia in coordination with A)

Housing

Embassy personnel rate the overall suitability of housing at Embassy Monrovia as below average. The embassy housing pool consists of a few single-family houses on the compound, but most personnel reside in apartment buildings just outside the chancery grounds. The embassy provides all utilities to these housing units, including power and water, plus access to Internet and Armed Forces Network television from the chancery. Facilities management either oversees or performs all residential maintenance in these short-term leased buildings, because the quality of contractor maintenance is not acceptable.

With the continuing expansion of mission staffing, the general services office has recently been required to lease more housing in the city. The first such lease was for a new 10-unit apartment building known as the Oceanview apartments, located five miles from the chancery. The landlord is responsible for providing utilities to this building, but there are already problems with water quality and power reliability. Furthermore, residents must pay for commercial Internet and television services, unlike those staff members who live on or near the chancery. Such disparity in housing and infrastructure could result in morale problems for residents of the remote units.

Considering the weak infrastructure and other problems with leased apartments in Monrovia, the embassy has suggested to OBO that the more appropriate long-term solution would be to provide more staff housing on the current chancery compound, for which the embassy currently holds a long-term lease that expires in 2040. The OIG team concurs with the embassy proposal. Some existing office buildings can be renovated for living quarters, but it may be necessary to construct new apartments to accommodate all mission staff on the compound. An informal recommendation was made.

There are other facts about post housing that incoming personnel should be aware of before arrival. None of the apartment buildings have elevators, and the upper units may require residents to climb four or five flights of stairs. Some units have perennial problems with water leakage, mold, and mildew, a hazard to both health and personal property. Those who commute from the Oceanview apartments face heavy traffic and bad roads. Information provided newly assigned personnel before their arrival is incomplete.

Recommendation 11: Embassy Monrovia should develop and send complete information regarding staff housing options to incoming staff. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 12: Embassy Monrovia should obtain information from newly-assigned personnel regarding special housing needs and should, to the extent possible, incorporate this information into the housing assignment process. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Warehousing

The warehouse facility on the chancery compound is not large enough to store the inventory of furniture and furnishings maintained for all agencies. The contents of the warehouse are stacked to the ceiling and stored in the aisles. Post does not have appropriate equipment to move items to and from upper shelves, and workers must instead use forklifts and other dangerous procedures to access the upper shelves. The warehouse is not climate-controlled, exposing the contents to extreme heat, humidity, and salt air that result in mold, mildew, and corrosion. The embassy currently has neither an appliance pool nor a furniture pool.

Recommendation 13: Embassy Monrovia should purchase a lift and other appropriate equipment to provide warehouse personnel safe access to the upper shelves of the warehouse without risk of personal injury or damage to the items. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 14: Embassy Monrovia should implement appliance and furniture pools in order to minimize the amount of U.S. government property requiring long-term warehouse storage. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Shared Services

In preparation for the relocation into a new chancery, the Department has directed Embassy Monrovia to plan and implement the consolidation of management services by the beginning of FY 2009. This consolidation date is less than one year away, and there are myriad decisions and associated details that the Department and USAID management must deal with well in advance of the merger.

However, the essential joint planning between the two agencies at Embassy Monrovia is not yet underway, and there are strong indications that the process will be difficult and contentious. In fact, key USAID staff members have suggested that the embassy must articulate why consolidation should take place at all. USAID has held some internal discussions, focused mainly on the areas that should not be consolidated, such as human resources, information technology, and procurement for program activities. USAID believes that consolidated operations in these areas would be incompatible with their unique requirements and procedures. USAID also has misgivings regarding the quality of Department services such as travel and motor pool maintenance.

Recommendation 15: Embassy Monrovia should designate a joint Department of State/U.S. Agency for International Development planning committee, under the direction of the deputy chief of mission, to develop specific timelines for consolidating administrative services. (Action: Embassy Monrovia, in coordination with AF)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Embassy Monrovia's information management (IM) staff adequately meets the needs of its customers and addresses Department IM and information security requirements. The staff follows most Department IM and security policies and guidelines and provides sufficient support to their customers. To improve IM and security operations, there are several areas that require improvement.

The IM staff is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and security of the Department's unclassified network (OpenNet), classified local area network, dedicated Internet network, pouch, and mailroom. The OpenNet network consists of 156 workstations and 10 servers; the classified local area network consists of 17 workstations and three servers. The section largely adheres to Department IM guidelines and the industry's common practices. The IM staff consists of an IMO, one vacant information management specialist position, four systems-support LE staff, two mailroom LE staff, two radio technicians, three switchboard operators, and one telephone technician.

The post does not have the current systems documentation, as required by 5 FAM and 12 FAM. (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)

Recommendation 18: Embassy Monrovia should separate the public diplomacy portion of the Internet from the private Internet access to public residences. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 19: Embassy Monrovia should bring the dedicated Internet connection into compliance as stated in Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

The IM staff, including the IMO, is currently addressing problems with personal television, satellite, and Internet services for both Department and USAID staff. The situation has resulted due to accretion of duties over time and the general lack of qualified personnel in country to perform such functions. The duties have increased over time, and with the new embassy compound project underway, the workload at the embassy is likely to increase. Demands of this nature are likely to continue until post establishes guidance regarding official use of IM support. Because the IM staff is being used for duties external to Department business during the day, work is not being performed completely, and overtime is being incurred.

Recommendation 20: Embassy Monrovia should not require information management staff to perform duties outside of their area of operations, and should identify alternative providers for personal television and Internet services and support. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

The IMO is currently acting as pouch control officer and is assuming all of post's pouch escort duties. The embassy's unclassified pouch escort duties, which average six hours per week, are performed solely by IM staff. According to 12 FAM 151, the pouch escort duty is a shared responsibility of all agencies that use the pouch. The IMO's weekly pouch duty hinders his ability to effectively support the information technology needs of posts' users. This vulnerability is compounded by the fact that the IMO is currently the sole provider of information technology support in the chancery.

Recommendation 21: Embassy Monrovia should implement shared responsibility for pouch services among all participating agencies in accordance with Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

QUALITY OF LIFE

HEALTH UNIT

The embassy health unit is staffed by an experienced Foreign Service nurse practitioner and an LE nurse, and receives regional support from both a regional medical officer and a regional medical officer psychiatrist based in Embassy Accra. The unit provides primary care to American staff as well as LE staff suffering from work-related injuries or illnesses. There are no adequate medical care facilities on the local economy that could provide secondary care for more serious conditions.

The OIG team noted that Embassy Monrovia is providing medical care to LE staff that is not authorized under Department regulations and guidance from Office of Medical Services and Office of the Legal Adviser. As authorized in 3 FAM 1911, embassy medical personnel may provide only “occupational health care” to LE staff. This includes emergency response, treatment of job-related injuries and illnesses, risk prevention, and health education. Motivated by humanitarian and administrative concerns, and the lack of quality medical care outside the mission, post management approved treatment of LE staff beyond the occupational health care the Department authorizes. Post has been providing unauthorized health care to LE staff, a practice that the OIG team recommends be discontinued. Instead, post should explore other options for providing health care to LE staff and family members outside the mission, as part of the embassy’s LE staff compensation package. This could be accomplished either through a health care insurance program or a contractual health care clinic arrangement. Post management should collaborate with the board of the locally employed staff association to determine the best available means for providing LE staff health care.

Recommendation 22: Embassy Monrovia should discontinue the practice of providing medical care to Foreign Service national staff for any condition that does not fall within the definition of occupational health care. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

Embassy Monrovia does not have a community liaison office (CLO) coordinator to provide basic services such as an embassy newsletter, welcoming and orientation programs for newcomers, recreational and cultural programs, and other activities to enhance morale of the official community. The CLO is an important position in any embassy, particularly at one such as Monrovia where isolation, lack of entertainment opportunities, and basic hardship profoundly influence staff and family morale. At a post where employment opportunities for family members are extremely limited, the CLO position can be one of the most rewarding positions available.

Recommendation 23: Embassy Monrovia should immediately recruit and hire a community liaison office coordinator to provide services to the embassy community. If the embassy is unable to find someone within the mission who is willing to accept the position, other alternatives such as job-sharing or the hiring of a nonofficial American citizen should be pursued. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 24: Embassy Monrovia should provide funding to provide training for the new community liaison office coordinator as soon as possible. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

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(b) (2)(b) (2) and serves 34 registered students, ranging from pre-Kindergarten to eighth grade. There are currently no embassy eligible family member children at the school. The Department has contributed \$135,000 dollars in soft target funds, and two grants totaling \$130,000 dollars for ongoing operations. In addition, (b) (2) received \$450,000 dollars, which had been held in trust since the previous school's closing.

Four of the school board's nine members are Americans assigned to the embassy or their spouses. The embassy's financial management officer serves as (b) (2) treasurer. (b) (2) has strong support from the Ambassador, who views reopening of the school as an essential step for eligible family member minors to eventually be allowed at post.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Internal Controls

As with other management responsibilities, some of the basic elements of internal controls were neglected during the civil war. For example, vehicle usage logs were not maintained, and property inventory reconciliation was not completed. Malfeasance occurred in several mission elements, including the consular section, the human resources office, and in the recreation association. The embassy terminated those personnel who were involved in the malfeasance and disbanded the recreation association. Embassy management said that many of these standard internal control procedures that were not in place for several years have recently been reinstated.

Accordingly, the embassy has recently submitted the Chief of Mission certification that adequate systems of internal controls are in place. The work requirements statements for all American staff in the management section include reference to management controls as an ongoing responsibility. However, the economic environment and high crime rate in Monrovia will require continued vigilance from all elements of the mission.

Recommendation 25: Embassy Monrovia should establish an International Cooperative Administrative Support Services working group to evaluate internal controls, identify best practices, and develop recommendations for mission-wide internal control policies and procedures. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of Administration in its role as contracting officer, in coordination with the Bureau of African Affairs in its role as contracting officer's representative, should conduct regular visits to Embassy Monrovia to ensure effective oversight and administration of the Security Sector Reform Program. (Action: A, in coordination with AF)

Recommendation 2: Embassy Monrovia should develop and implement a plan for Department personnel with responsibility for foreign assistance/grant programs to complete the Foreign Service Institute's course PP-223, Managing Foreign Assistance Awards. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 3: Embassy Monrovia should integrate its existing contact databases into a single database and make it available for input by all elements of the mission. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 4: Embassy Monrovia should fully implement its mission-wide policy for achieving timely and effective public affairs treatment of the U.S. assistance effort in Liberia. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Monrovia, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should develop both short term and longer term strategies for dealing with the growing visa and adoption fraud problems in Liberia (Action: Embassy Monrovia, in coordination with the CA and DS)

Recommendation 6: Embassy Monrovia should develop a warden message system that serves the needs of American citizens in Liberia. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 7: The Bureau of African Affairs should propose, and the Bureau of Human Resources should approve, the assistant general services position requested by Embassy Monrovia. (Action: AF, in coordination with DGHR)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Monrovia should request, and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations should provide, special maintenance and repair funding to construct covered shelters to protect motor pool vehicles from rain and direct sunlight. (Action: Embassy Monrovia, in coordination with OBO)

Recommendation 17: Embassy Monrovia should request that the regional computer security office conduct a site audit on Embassy Monrovia's computer infrastructure. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 18: Embassy Monrovia should separate the public diplomacy portion of the Internet from the private Internet access to public residences. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 19: Embassy Monrovia should bring the dedicated Internet connection into compliance as stated in Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 20: Embassy Monrovia should not require information management staff to perform duties outside of their area of operations, and should identify alternative providers for personal television and Internet services and support. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 21: Embassy Monrovia should implement shared responsibility for pouch services among all participating agencies in accordance with Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 22: Embassy Monrovia should discontinue the practice of providing medical care to Foreign Service national staff for any condition that does not fall within the definition of occupational health care. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 23: Embassy Monrovia should immediately recruit and hire a community liaison office coordinator to provide services to the embassy community. If the embassy is unable to find someone within the mission who is willing to accept the position, other alternatives such as job-sharing or the hiring of a nonofficial American citizen should be pursued. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 24: Embassy Monrovia should provide funding to provide training for the new community liaison office coordinator as soon as possible. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

Recommendation 25: Embassy Monrovia should establish an International Co-operative Administrative Support Services working group to evaluate internal controls, identify best practices, and develop recommendations for mission-wide internal control policies and procedures. (Action: Embassy Monrovia)

INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Informal recommendations cover matters not requiring action by organizations outside of the inspected unit and/or the parent regional bureau and are not 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.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Embassy Monrovia does not currently have a regular meeting of all those in the mission who are engaged in various elements of security sector reform.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Monrovia should organize a regular meeting of all those in the mission who are engaged in various elements of security sector reform, possibly in place of one of the regular coordination meetings.

Embassy Monrovia does not currently have an organized ELO program.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Monrovia should create a formal entry-level officer program under the leadership of the deputy chief of mission and with participation of entry-level generalists and specialists.

POLITICAL/ECONOMIC

Embassy Monrovia has not established vetting procedures as required by the Leahy Amendment.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Monrovia should establish written vetting procedures as prescribed by the Leahy Amendment.

The previous DCM had responsibility for refugee affairs issues at Embassy Monrovia. The current level of staffing within the P/E section should allow transfer of this responsibility to an officer within that section.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Monrovia should designate an officer in the political/economic section to assume responsibility for refugee affairs issues.

Monrovia is a non-Foreign Commercial Service presence post, and all commercial issues are covered by economic officers. The commercial portfolio is expected to grow in the coming years, and none of the economic officers in Monrovia have received commercial training.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Monrovia should request that future economic officers receive commercial training before beginning their assignments.

Embassy Monrovia does not have a designated terrorism finance coordination officer.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Monrovia should designate a terrorism finance coordination officer.

The Ambassador and DCM currently review all Self-Help and Democracy and Human Rights Fund grant proposals and select those to be funded. The OIG team believes that the review of grant proposals would benefit from broader mission representation.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Monrovia should establish a panel chaired by the Ambassador or deputy chief of mission, but including representatives of relevant sections and agencies, to review and approve proposals for Self-Help and Democracy and Human Rights Fund grants.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Embassy Monrovia is embarking on a program to establish three new American Corners in Liberia during the next several months and up to nine during the next three years. Although PAS is in frequent contact by e-mail with the regional information resource officer in Dakar, his visits to Monrovia are infrequent. Moreover, communication has been infrequent with the office responsible for coordinating American Corners within the Department.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Monrovia should coordinate its American Corners expansion plan with the Bureau of International Information Programs.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Monrovia should arrange for more frequent visits by the regional information resource officer to assist in the implementation of the American Corner expansion plan.

CONSULAR SECTION

The consular section has not established databases to track its workload and is not sure how much time is devoted to field investigations for adoptions and immigrant and diversity visas and Congressional and other correspondence.

Informal Recommendation 10: The consular section should establish databases to better track its workload, including tracking field investigations for adoption cases, investigations of diversity visa cases, Congressional inquiries, and other consular correspondence

Without a reliable telephone or postal system, the consular section remains open on Thursday afternoons to persons without appointments who want information about specific visa cases. Hundreds of Liberians line up outside and enter to ask questions that should normally be answered through the call center or by correspondence. The consular section does not have a program in place to disseminate general consular information to the public via newspaper or radio.

Informal Recommendation 11: The consular section should work with the public affairs section to develop a public affairs strategy for informing the general public about embassy consular policy.

Consular section LE staff do not have a formal training program. Several said that they have tried to register for long-distance training for consular courses, but the registration “didn’t go through.”

Informal Recommendation 12: The consular section should establish an on-line training schedule for locally employed staff as part of an individual development plan, making sure staff understands how to sign on and operate the system.

There is no training/mentoring program for newly-arrived ELOs.

Informal Recommendation 13: The consular section chief should establish training and mentoring programs for newly-arrived entry-level officers.

The consular section has not conducted validation studies, but recognizes a need to find out whether applicants from the UN mission in Liberia and the government of Liberia are using their visas properly.

Informal Recommendation 14: The consular section should conduct validation studies to determine whether visas issued based on referrals from the UN mission in Liberia, the government of Liberia, and the embassy staff have been used correctly.

The annual F-77 Report of Potential Evacuees, used to evaluate how many people would be evacuated in a time of crisis, has not been completed since 2004. As a result, the consular section's contribution to the emergency action plan is unreliable.

Informal Recommendation 15: The consular section should complete an updated F-77 report and include the results in the embassy's emergency action plan.

The consular section has four interviewing windows available for intake and interviews. At present, this is sufficient. The waiting room holds 60 applicants. One air conditioner blows hot air, making the room uncomfortable. The men's and women's bathrooms are dirty and in disrepair. A leak above the guard/reception area needs to be fixed.

Informal Recommendation 16: The consular section should work with management to assure that air conditioning equipment and facilities are in good repair and clean.

Some visa applicants react with anguish when denied a visa. In one instance, a man refused a diversity visa because he was HIV positive collapsed on the waiting room floor, began crying, and became ill. Security guards, unaware the man was HIV positive, rushed to his aid and began cleaning up with paper towels until the consular section chief intervened and told the guards to stop.

Informal Recommendation 17: The consular section should work with the regional security officer and the medical unit to provide guards in the consular section proper training and equipment to deal with visa applicants who may be HIV positive.

MANAGEMENT

The Office of Rightsizing projected a direct-hire human resources officer position for Monrovia in 2006, the position is needed, but not yet approved.

Informal Recommendation 18: Until the Department approves a direct-hire human resources officer position, Embassy Monrovia should consider employing an eligible family member, hiring a resident American, or converting the current financial management officer position to a combined financial management officer/human resources officer position.

Informal Recommendation 19: Should the financial management officer position be converted, the Bureau of African Affairs should provide temporary duty financial management officer support to Embassy Monrovia to enable its current financial management officer to attend the human resources management (PA231) course at the Foreign Service Institute.

Embassy Monrovia receives human resources support from Embassy Abidjan with the last visit of the regional human resource officer being December 2006.

Informal Recommendation 20: Embassy Monrovia, in coordination with Embassy Abidjan, should draft a memorandum of understanding detailing the level of human resources officer support to be provided and the frequency of visits, e.g., quarterly.

Embassy Monrovia American employees are dissatisfied with the level of support received by the human resources section.

Informal Recommendation 21: Embassy Monrovia should enroll the human resources assistant in the American pay and allowances training course scheduled for April 2008 at the Financial Support and Training Office in Paris.

Embassy Monrovia's LE staff seek special immigrant visas, but the human resources assistant who usually provides that guidance and information only has superficial knowledge of the qualifications required or the program as it is administered in the Department.

Informal Recommendation 22: Embassy Monrovia should provide the human resources assistant with training on the special immigrant visa process, including training by the consular officer.

Embassy Monrovia does not fully comply with the Department's instructions regarding completion of LE staff performance evaluations.

Informal Recommendation 23: Embassy Monrovia should ensure that locally employed staff supervisors complete performance evaluations annually.

Embassy Monrovia LE staff have expressed concern about the local compensation plan's transportation allowance which was last amended on July 11, 1993.

Informal Recommendation 24: Embassy Monrovia, in coordination with the Bureau of Human Resources, should survey mission comparator firms to ensure adequacy of post's transportation allowance.

Embassy Monrovia's danger pay was reduced from 25 percent to 15 percent effective September 2, 2007, which resulted in post dropping below the service needs differential cap.

Informal Recommendation 25: Embassy Monrovia, in coordination with the Bureau of African Affairs, should press the case with the Bureau of Human Resources for Monrovia's designation as a 2008 service needs differential post.

The membership of the ICASS council at Embassy Monrovia does not conform to the revised guidance that the ICASS executive board issued in 2006. Specifically, this guidance restricts membership on post ICASS councils to cabinet-level and independent agency representatives, and limits each cabinet-level agency to a single representative.

Informal Recommendation 26: Embassy Monrovia should reconstitute its International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council to mirror the representation on the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services executive board. A single representative of the Department of Defense should represent both the Defense Attaché Office and the Office of Defense Cooperation. Because the U.S. Forest Service does not have a presence on the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services executive board, the council chair should represent the interests of this agency on the post International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council.

Embassy Monrovia's ICASS council is chaired by USAID's executive officer. Even though 6 FAH-5 H-222.3-1 a. states that a designee of an agency's senior representative can be a member, the OIG team recommends that USAID's membership be at the more senior-level.

Informal Recommendation 27: Embassy Monrovia's International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council should be composed of senior-level representatives of each agency. Accordingly, the U.S. Agency for International Development should designate either the mission director or deputy to represent the agency on the council.

Embassy Monrovia provides 100 percent of the local guard force contractor's administrative support costs even though security is also being provided to non-U.S. government agencies

Informal Recommendation 28: Embassy Monrovia, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should negotiate a contract modification to the local guard force contract to ensure that administrative support costs are equitably distributed to all entities receiving security.

To accommodate recent staff growth, post leased 10 apartments in a building about five miles from the chancery. Unlike those who live on or near the chancery compound, residents of this building face a difficult commute and chronic water and power problems and must pay for commercial Internet and television services. Post would prefer to house all staff on the current chancery compound, which is under lease through 2040.

Informal Recommendation 29: After the new embassy compound is relocated from the current chancery compound, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations should retain the property for use as a staff housing compound. Current office buildings could be renovated for living quarters, but it may also be necessary to construct new apartments to accommodate all mission staff on the compound.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

Position	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Donald E. Booth	07/05
Deputy Chief of Mission	Brooks A. Robinson	08/07

Chiefs of Sections:

Administrative	Michael L. Bajek	01/06
Consular	Alma R. Gurski	07/07
Political	Steven C. Koutsis	09/07
Economic	Lucy K. Abbott	07/07
Public Affairs	Megan E. Riggs	12/05
Regional Security	Peter N. Velazquez	08/06

Other Agencies:

USDA Forest Service	Robert D. Simpson	11/04
Defense Attaché Office	LTC Michael Phillips	09/07
Office of Defense Cooperation	LTC William M. Wyatt	06/07
U.S. Agency for International Development	Lucretia Taylor (TDY)	07/07

ABBREVIATIONS

AFRICOM	Africa Command
CA	Consular Affairs
CLO	Community liaison office (coordinator)
COTR/GTM	Contracting Officers Technical Representative/ Government Technical Monitor
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
DVC	Digital Video Conference
ELO	Entry-level officer
GSO	General services officer
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IM	Information management
IMO	Information management officer
IRO	Information Resource Officer
LE	Locally employed
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSP	Mission Strategic Plan
NEC	New embassy compound
NSDD-38	National Security Decision Directive 38
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
P/E	Political/Economic section
PAO	Public affairs officer
PAS	Public affairs section
RCSO	Regional computer security officer
SSR	Security Sector Reform
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

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