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

# Report of Inspection

## Embassy Conakry, Guinea

Report Number ISP-I-06-22, February 2006

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

- Guinea, with a wealth of natural resources, should be self-sustaining and prosperous. Instead it is poor and ill governed and faces a problematic future. The embassy is properly focused on strengthening civil society and existing institutions to maximize the chances for a peaceful political transition when the long reign of Guinea's current president ends. It is rightsized to accomplish its goals.
- Embassy reporting on political and economic developments is excellent. Opportunities for additional major investments in the mineral extraction industries are present.
- The Ambassador brought strong analytical and organizational skills to Conakry and in his first year has paid appropriate attention to, and helped improve, important security and management issues. Interagency coordination is exceptional. However, his top-down management style has alienated some of his staff.
- Internal communication at post is strained. A new deputy chief of mission (DCM) has already demonstrated the skills necessary to create a new, healthy channel for productive, two-way information flow and good teamwork.
- While the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) council and the housing committee are working well, many mission personnel fault management section leadership for inattention to customer concerns.
- The single largest infrastructure challenge is electrical power. Frequent power outages, energy spikes, and the lack of grounded connections are not only irritants but also pose health and safety concerns.

- Despite several past reviews highlighting the problem, the mission has not resolved long-standing discrepancies in its property inventory.
- Mission planning for the move to a new embassy compound (NEC) is well advanced and appropriate.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between September 14 and 30, 2005, and in Conakry, Guinea, between October 20 and 31, 2005. Ambassador Morris Hughes (team leader), Cheryl Martin (deputy team leader), Frances Jones, Katherine Schultz, and Michelle Wood conducted the inspection.

## CONTEXT

President Lansana Conté's chronic, life-threatening illnesses, his inability to govern full time, and his inevitable demise cast a long shadow over Guinea's near-term future. Already prostrate economically, Guinea is facing an uncertain presidential transition and the likelihood of a military or mixed military-civilian government when Conté departs the scene.



If political stability is maintained, economic and budgetary reform will have the next highest priority. Mining and fishing could provide a healthy tax base for Guinea, but a significant portion of these revenues remains "off budget." As a result the central bank is broke, the infrastructure of the country is in ruins, and the vast majority of the population live with open sewers, no clean water, and little electricity. The

literacy rate in Guinea is only 20 percent. Life expectancy for men is 55 and 54 for women. Inflation was running at 60 percent in the first nine months of 2005.

The situation would seem untenable, yet the people remain patient. The explanation given is that the population is afraid and exhausted. The first republic under Sekou Touré was a brutal regime that abused the population, and there were large-scale migrations out of Guinea. Those who remained or returned remember that era and will put up with a great deal to avoid the risk of a return to a more physically abusive regime. Even the youth wish to avoid confrontation with the army and the risk of descending into the bloodshed and mayhem witnessed in neighboring countries. Patience, however, may have its limits. Guineans are so poor that at some point instability could lead to pilfering followed by excessive repression by the army. This could lead to a humanitarian disaster with huge consequences and costs for donor nations.

Western analysts in Conakry generally agree that the country is on the brink of ruin. President Conté's selection of a reformist Prime Minister in December 2004 may be a response to donor country demand for reform, but Conté has done this

before - selected a reformist minister only to dismiss him later when things improve, but it does not appear that things can get better this time without genuine reform. Should President Conté die before reforms take hold, stability will be maintained by the army, but only if the army itself holds together. There are deep generational and ethnic divides in the army.

Conakry is without question one of the most challenging hardship posts in Africa. Urban squalor, canalized traffic, daily power outages, seasonal water shortages, and isolation all make life difficult in the capital. The lack of acceptable health facilities outside the embassy and lack of recreational facilities create a level of concern that, conscious or not, wears on the American community. On the plus side, Guineans like Americans and are friendly. If there was serious unrest in Guinea, Americans would not probably be targeted. Radical Islam appears to have made little headway in Guinea.

The U.S. mission in Conakry, Guinea is growing. There were 44 direct-hire Americans in 2000. Presently, there are now 53 including eight U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) employees, two in the Office of the Defense attaché, seven Marines in the detachment, and four Peace Corps employees. In addition, there are 105 Peace Corps volunteers in Guinea. There are approximately 1,200 American citizens resident in Guinea. The construction of a new embassy compound is planned for completion in spring 2006. Most mission elements will be in the new facility.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

The Ambassador arrived at the embassy in September 2004. The embassy was not operating effectively when he arrived. Internal controls were not in place, support operations were poor, and mission direction was vague. The Ambassador did a top to bottom review of mission operations. One year before a post inspection was scheduled, the Ambassador used Office of Inspector General (OIG) internal control questionnaires to identify vulnerabilities and to make changes in procedures. In spite of protracted staffing gaps and an embassy team that included many inexperienced officers, his insistence on a higher standard of performance brought results. Reporting and analysis now receive high ratings from the Bureau of African Affairs (AF) and from analysts in Washington. Interagency cooperation has gone from poor to excellent, and the ICASS council and housing boards function smoothly for the first time in years. Administrative and security procedures have for the most part been updated and brought into line with applicable regulations.

These changes have challenged the American and locally hired employees at every level. Many have responded well, but too many have been put off by the Ambassador's leadership style. As a result, internal communication is not good. This was clearly documented in OIG's workplace and quality of life questionnaires and confirmed in individual OIG interviews with American and local employees of the mission. The top down style of leadership, while effective at bringing about rapid change, has done little to create a sense of community and needlessly alienated some staff. Some Americans will not approach the Ambassador voluntarily, and many of the Foreign Service nationals (FSNs) OIG spoke with felt intimidated and out-of-touch with American managers at almost every level. Conakry is an extremely difficult environment in which to work, and it will always be a challenge to maintain morale at the mission. What concerns OIG is the lack of effective communications upward within the embassy and disaffection among the locally employed staff. This is particularly unfortunate and could be dangerous at a post in such an unstable part of the world. Although the mission's Emergency Action Plan is up to date and by the book, should a crisis develop, trust, individual initiative, and good communications would be essential.



The Ambassador has engaged the government at the highest levels with a simple and effective message: open up the political space to allow for dialogue and change. Simultaneously, he has engaged opposition leaders with another simple message: participate in the political process. An inclusive process of national debate followed by democratic elections is the only way to achieve a peaceful transition to democracy and economic development, and all mission elements promote this view.

The mission has used Economic Support Fund resources to support local elections in late 2005. The Ambassador works effectively with United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund representatives, and donor nations to support political reform and to provide the financial support and monitoring to make the elections effective. The Ambassador's engagement with opposition groups in Guinea has contributed to their decision to participate in the next round of elections. This is a positive step. If local elections go well, they could build confidence and lead to the first free and fair presidential elections in Guinea's history.

The Mission Performance Plan (MPP) will be completely rewritten in 2006. The current edition appears accurate and inclusive, but with management's reform nearly completed, the Ambassador will lead the effort to completely rewrite the document next year. Given the Ambassador's extensive knowledge of Guinea and his skill at articulating U.S. policy, the new MPP should be a particularly useful document.

The DCM arrived in August 2005 and has had a positive influence on the mission. The Ambassador asked her to take charge of the internal functions of the embassy to allow him to focus on external matters. This appears to be a sound division of labor. There are five first- and second-tour officers newly arrived at post. OIG is impressed with these officers. They are enthusiastic, skilled, and happy to be in Conakry, and will be part of the team that will move to the NEC that is scheduled for completion in 2006. The DCM is the right person to help the Ambassador shape and lead this new team.

## INTERAGENCY RELATIONS

Interagency relations are excellent. The Ambassador is admired for his policy formulation, vision, and advocacy both in Guinea and in Washington. All agency heads except one told OIG that they receive good support from the embassy. The exception is an officer new to service abroad.

It is an unfortunate time for USAID to be eliminating democracy and governance assistance to Guinea. In FY 2004 these funds amounted to \$1.9 million. They have been reduced to zero in FY 2005. USAID program funds for Guinea are approximately \$15.7 million with an additional \$4 million in Public Law 480 funding. USAID programs focus on public health, education, and natural resource management.

The Peace Corps operates a large program in Guinea involving four U.S. staff, 36 local staff, and 105 volunteers who focus on health, education, and the environment. USAID provides the Peace Corps with grants (in FY 2005, they totaled \$50,000) and technical assistance for health projects throughout the country. The Peace Corps also cooperates closely with the embassy on small projects funded by the Ambassador's self-help fund and public diplomacy grants.

Budgetary reform in the government of Guinea has begun with the help of a U.S. Department of Treasury employee embedded in the Ministry of Finance. This American initiative is working well and should lay the groundwork for more effective government if reforms are supported by Guinea's leadership.

## U.S. COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

The United States has a major commercial stake in Guinea, which possesses the world's largest reserves of high-grade bauxite. ALCOA has mined and exported Guinean bauxite since 1963. It plans to invest \$1.5 billion in a refinery to transform raw bauxite into alumina, an intermediate product that will be exported and then smelted into aluminum. Global Alumina, a Canadian firm with major U.S. partners, is pursuing a similar alumina refinery project worth approximately \$2 billion.

American petroleum companies are also interested in exploring the potential of Guinea's presumed, but thus far untapped, offshore oil and gas reserves. The embassy's focus on commercial reporting is appropriate and well done.

## MISSION SECURITY

For Americans serving in Guinea this is a time of watchfulness and preparation for an unpredictable presidential transition. The embassy has an up-to-date Emergency Action Plan and has run a crisis management exercise in the past year. The new Emergency Action Plan needs to be practiced with a critical eye to communications. The local telephone network is dysfunctional, and even cell phones are unreliable. All American employees have hand-held radios. In a crisis this radio network could become saturated. Emergency procedures and radio discipline need to be discussed with all embassy employees, especially the FSNs and American family members. OIG believes it would be prudent for the mission to practice emergency procedures.

Security incidents at post are minimal. The eight infractions during the calendar year have all been adjudicated as infractions, but given the possible negative effects of these infractions on employees' future assignments, OIG encouraged senior management to raise security awareness even higher in accordance with 12 FAM 550.

The local guard program in Conakry employs over 300 people and continues to be a management challenge. The regional security officer (RSO) has made many improvements, and the local guard force appears to be well run. Crime is the main problem in the city. Based on the threat level, the local guards provide adequate security at mission office buildings and residential properties. Security is exceptionally strong at the Peace Corps compound, which is prudent given that four permanent Peace Corps Americans work and live there. Backup communications are available at Peace Corps thanks to a new high frequency antenna installed recently by the embassy.

FSN recertification is up to date. There is no backlog of background investigations requested by Washington. The RSO enforces the requirements of 3 FAM 4100 for reporting continuing relations with foreign nationals.

## POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

### POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REPORTING

Conakry's two political/economic reporting officers, along with an Ambassador with formidable analytic and diplomatic skills, are a team that ably and effectively advances U.S. interests in Guinea. The previous political officer departed the embassy in December 2004; although two temporary duty (TDY) officers covered the portfolio for brief periods, the Ambassador served as the main political reporting officer through August 2005 when the new political officer arrived. The first-tour economic officer joined the staff in June 2005. The political/economic team also includes an eligible family member (EFM) office management specialist (OMS) and four FSNs.

The political officer is on her second Foreign Service tour. She serves as head of the combined political/economic section, and in her first two months has paid particular and needed attention to bringing coherent management to the section. Thanks in part to the long staffing gap in her position, and the coincidental absence of the section's OMS, many of the section's operational arrangements were in disarray. There was little evidence that the experienced FSNs had been either directed or motivated to continue basic information gathering; for example, in relation to the annual Department report on human rights.

Thanks to the political officer's efforts, the section now has structure: scheduled meetings to coordinate reporting and information gathering, ways of tracking action requests, and closer monitoring of how the section's FSN assistants use their time to ensure that their work is more than merely reactive. She also immediately, and correctly, saw the importance of emphasizing that this small section could not afford narrow interpretations of their responsibilities, the need for cross training, and the importance of keeping all seven on the staff equally well informed of priorities and new taskings. Although management has been a focus, she has also been able to produce quality reporting, provide on-time responses to several major Washington action requests, and begun to make the political and social contacts necessary to report with greater authority on political developments in Guinea.

The first tour economic officer has made a similarly promising start, reporting on a wide range of economic issues ranging from the possibility of significant new U.S. commercial investment in the mineral extraction industry, to the effects of Guinea's current high inflation rate on daily life and the country's efforts to meet International Monetary Fund guidelines. His succinct and targeted reporting adds an additional dimension to the embassy's efforts to understand the dynamics of a poor country that has been directly challenged and affected by regional instability and the remains of continuing strategic importance in West Africa.

## Grants

Grants from the Ambassador's self-help fund, as well as those of the democracy and human rights fund, are of particular importance in Guinea: schools exist because of the former program, and badly-needed basic civic education has been a thrust of the latter. Both are handled administratively by the section's senior FSN, who has long experience with the programs and wide contacts throughout Guinea. He travels extensively to visit and evaluate possible sites for self-help projects; some are accessible only by days of land travel, and most propose the construction of schools and clinics. He adds his informed judgments to the information provided to the interagency committee that awards the grants and also monitors the execution of the grants and the accounting for funds.

While the FSN has a sound reason to measure how much demonstrable community support there is for the proposal and for doing the preselection site visits, such travel, particularly by a single individual, is unusual. The embassy would be better served if responsibility for these preselection visits were on occasion shared with other section employees, or even with other post employees, so that a variety of opinions could be represented. Such visits could be paired with other activities (e.g., a public diplomacy event or reporting opportunity) and executed by other officers or FSNs in place of, or in addition to, this FSN. Doing so would help address the possible vulnerabilities that exist whenever one person has major input into and responsibility for the accounting of grant selection and execution.

## CONSULAR OPERATIONS

The two-officer consular section is well run. The regional consular officer visited Conakry two months before OIG's inspection and recommended a variety of actions to improve operations, almost all of which the mission has taken or is in the process of completing. Aside from the urgent need to move into adequate

quarters in the NEC, the consular section's major preoccupations are high nonimmigrant visa (NIV) and Visas 92/93 (i.e., refugee and asylee processing) demand and a high incidence of fraud. The consular staff works hard to keep up and has little time for in-house training. The especially heavy workload in summer, along with staffing gaps, makes it difficult to cover other consular responsibilities adequately. The pressure consular officers are subjected to from visa applicants has included angry scenes with government employees at the visa window, punctured tires, and some stalking. The newly arrived DCM is providing close oversight of the section and reviews the section chief's visa decisions.

## Staffing

When fully staffed, the consular section has two full-time consular officers, four FSNs, and an EFM. With the current workload, this level is barely sufficient to meet the section's responsibilities. The embassy fired an FSN visa clerk for malfeasance one week before OIG's arrival. The EFM position has been vacant for six months. This reduction in staff cannot continue for long without negatively affecting the quality of service. The FSN position has been advertised. The EFM position, defined as a fraud prevention manager, cannot be filled if there is no willing family member. The NIV workload from Sierra Leone (20 percent) and Liberia (five percent) should disappear once those two posts resume normal operations, but this might not happen for at least another year or more. The mission should add an FSN position to the consular section to ensure consistently adequate staffing and more opportunities for cross training and the completion of tasks.

**Recommendation 1:** Embassy Conakry, in coordination with the Bureau of African Affairs and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should document the need and provide funding for a fifth locally employed staff member for the consular section. (Action: Embassy Conakry, in coordination with AF and CA)

The consular section chief (CSC) is a second-tour officer who will complete a two-year assignment in December 2005. The CSC supervises a first-tour vice consul on a one-year rotation with the political/economic section. A first-tour officer will replace the CSC in April 2006. To fill the gap for three months, the Bureau of Consular Affairs is assigning another first tour officer to Conakry on TDY. As stated in the 2000 OIG inspection report, there is no substitute for experience when it comes to conducting consular operations in difficult environments such as those found in West African countries. The Frankfurt-based regional

consular officer is key to maintaining some level of consular professionalism in the area. Assigning experienced TDY officers to fill staffing gaps would also keep the section running well.

## Training

The FSNs need additional training in fraud prevention, NIVs, and in their specialty areas. The most important is to train at least one FSN other than the fraud investigator in fraud prevention. With the probable loss in the next few months of the senior FSN covering NIV and cashiering (he has been approved for a Special Immigrant Visa) the next effort should be to train someone in NIVs. Another FSN needs to be cross-trained in American citizens services. The consular section submitted three training requests last year, one of which was accepted by the Department of State (Department) and resulted in a consular assistant going to Cape Town for crime victim assistance training. The two consular officers also need fraud training, ideally after spending three to six months at post. A weakness in the post's consular operations continues to be the lack of strong French language capability among Americans at the interview windows. The consular officers have difficulty finding the time to use the post's French language program. They accepted OIG's suggestion to translate into French their list of Visas 92/93 interview questions and to create and translate lists of questions pertinent to NIV interviews.

## Space

The consular section is cramped, and the waiting room seats only six people. The speaker system is poor. The antifraud FSN sits in an office across the hall from the consular section. All of these inadequacies will be corrected when the embassy moves to the NEC. With a constant source of power in the NEC, consular operating systems should no longer break down under frequent power outages and surges.

## Management

All three FSNs told OIG that they felt part of a unified consular team. The CSC holds weekly staff meetings, and one afternoon a week, plus the last Wednesday and Thursday of each month, is used to catch up on administrative tasks. After the OIG visit, the political/economic rotational officer will begin to spend one half day a week doing NIV interviews. OIG advised the CSC to maintain an

up-to-date and prioritized consular contact list. The section maintains mission-specific standard operating procedures.

## Visas

The consular section conducts NIV interviews Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings. The consular section has recently reduced the waiting time for an interview appointment from three to two months. Student visas applications are accepted on Tuesday mornings.

Runners from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries drop off applications for government employees on Thursday afternoons, and interviews are scheduled for the following Tuesday. Reflecting unease over the country's future, the number of Guinean government employees seeking A, G, and B1/B2 visas has grown. The Guinean government regularly demands official visas for unqualified Guineans to whom they have issued diplomatic and service passports and for whom they submit diplomatic notes describing unspecified "official missions." The visa requests frequently include demands for the inclusion of minors with false birth certificates. The RSO and consular section have cooperated in cases involving trafficking in persons and a suspected sex ring with minors. Refusing a visa request that has been submitted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs often results in Guinean officials soliciting the Ambassador to reverse the decision. OIG suggested that the consular section e-mail the Ambassador and DCM once a week about consular section issues, particularly visa cases/refusals that might come to their attention. Government of Guinea visa runners sometimes arrive with visa applications at an unscheduled time saying that the Ambassador has authorized them to do so. Instead of trying to verify this, OIG advised the CSC to decide whether the section's workload would permit accepting these out-of-turn applications, and to e-mail the DCM and DCM's OMS outlining what happened and what action she took.

Embassy Conakry uses a local bank to schedule visa appointments, distribute visa information, and collect machine-readable visa fees. Since September 2005, when the bank began providing information on electronic visa application forms, 10 percent of visa applicants have used it. All visa applications submitted by the government are on electronic visa application forms.



## American Citizens Services

American citizens stop by or contact the consular section by telephone or e-mail to question the refusal of an NIV application. Consular staff spends four to five hours a week responding to American citizens inquiries and explaining visa requirements. OIG suggested developing a taped telephone message to provide information for telephone callers. The consular section tested the warden system via e-mail in July 2005, and only five of 18 wardens responded. Some wardens rarely read their e-mails, have changed addresses, or have no e-mail. All have cell phones and will likely be responsive to text messages that go through more easily than telephone calls. The consular section is waiting for a response from the Bureau of Consular Affairs regarding hardware and software requirements for developing a text-based messaging warden system. OIG advised the CSC to document the locations, affiliations, and contact information of all the wardens and their back-ups to add to the section's list of mission-specific standard operating procedures. The consular section needs to better prepare for handling disasters such as an airplane crash. OIG found that while the Emergency Action Plan covers the subject generally, the consular section has not prepared a specific consular plan of action as recommended in CA's Disaster Assistance Handbook.

## Antifraud and Border Security

The embassy is conducting a validation study on B1/B2 visa applicants. Embassy Conakry processes a high volume of family members of refugees and asylees (follow-to-join derivatives or Visas 92/93). Verifying the identity of a Visas 92 or 93 beneficiary and the qualifying relationship between the petitioner and the beneficiary requires considerable time. The consular staff estimates total Foreign Service officer and FSN time spent per family averages six hours, and there were 414 such families in FY 2005. The potential for fraud is high but DNA testing acts as a constraint. With the war ended, Sierra Leoneans can no longer claim asylum, and this has resulted in a declining number of Guineans making fraudulent claims to Sierra Leonean citizenship to gain refugee status. Liberian citizens are able to claim asylum, and Guinean citizens claim asylum based on fear of persecution because of membership in an opposition political party.

Consular staff is frustrated because the unverifiable petitions they send back to the Nebraska Service Center are reaffirmed and returned for processing. They are frustrated because they frequently suspect the petitioner's claim to refugee or asylum status is fraudulent, but have no say in the matter. Because the Human Rights Report on Guinea is an indispensable tool for determining if a claim to

persecution is consistent with Guinea's political environment, OIG advised consular officers to contribute to its preparation. OIG gave the CSC a copy of State 063110, April 2005, on handling relationship and fraud issues in Visas 92/93 cases and advised her to be guided by its instructions on reporting cases of suspected fraud in the underlying asylum/refugee claim and by standard operating procedure 61 in sending back I-730 petitions. OIG also advised the consular staff to keep more accurate records of the time spent on Visas 92/93 cases, the number of unverifiable petitions they send back to the Nebraska Service Center, and the number reaffirmed and returned to post for processing. The Bureau of Consular Affairs is pleased with Embassy Conakry's fraud reporting by e-mail, but OIG advised the consular section to send front channel cables, particularly on Guinean government visa fraud.

## PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Guinea's metrics - an 80 percent illiteracy rate, inadequate schools, extreme poverty, a populace unaccustomed to participation in civic life or discourse, and primarily government-controlled media - pose formidable challenges to public diplomacy. Nevertheless, there are many Guineans who hunger for information and tools to use to improve themselves (and, at least indirectly, their country), and are comfortable in looking toward the embassy for assistance. Conakry's public affairs section (PAS) uses this receptive environment well and focuses on those programs and efforts that are in line with the post's MPP goals, that meet real needs, and have real effects.

The PAS is located in an American Center about a 15-minute drive from the chancery and is currently staffed by an experienced public affairs officer on her second extended tour in Guinea. She brings both in-depth knowledge of the country and enthusiasm - tempered by experience and seasoned with perseverance - to the job. Her staff of seven FSNs included several veterans and a couple of new employees whose own self-motivation provides models for other youth who face similar obstacles of background and opportunity. Relations between the employees, who represent all of Guinea's ethnic groups, are good. Although there are a few gaps, most of the staff have had formal training appropriate to their responsibilities.

## Outreach Programming

The major focus of PAS efforts include promoting democratic and civic skills, including training for journalists and community leaders; encouraging dialogue and interaction with religious leaders and members of the dominant Muslim majority; and exposing Guineans to American values and mores through English language instruction, U.S. speakers, educational exchanges, and cultural programming.

Guinea has an extremely undeveloped civil society, part of the lingering legacy of the repressive Sekou Touré years, which, even more than 20 years after his death, linger in the national consciousness. For instance, only in recent months has legislation allowed the potential establishment of private broadcast media, and, although there are at present no operating rivals to the government-controlled stations, a number of applications for radio licenses have been made. There are several private weekly publications of varying quality printed in Conakry, but professional journalism in both the print and broadcast media is in its infancy. The PAS has sponsored workshops and U.S. speakers on journalist ethics and basic skills; it has sponsored journalists on International Visitor Program visits to the United States; and continues to support journalist research by providing reference materials and advice in the information resource center. Journalists figure prominently among the users of the center's English language laboratory facilities and often take part in the book discussions and programs there.

A particularly important and successful PAS initiative was its support for writing the *Guide de l'Education Civique* (Guide to Civic Education). It has been recognized by the Department as a model publication that could be used throughout the region, if not the world, to teach the basic tenets of democracy and civic action. PAS has also sponsored round tables, discussions, and workshops on conflict resolution, corruption, and elections to further engage Guineans on democratization and the construction of an active civil society.

Radical Islamic thought appears to have made little impact to date among Guinea's overwhelmingly Muslim population, but the PAS nevertheless has an active program of engagement with the Muslim community to help strengthen cultural bridges, rather than wait until they require repair. Several Muslim leaders have returned from International Visitor Program trips to the United States with, in their own words, a positive appreciation for U.S. religious diversity and a more positive view of the United States in general, an opinion that they have shared with their coreligionists. A PAS public discussion on the September 11, 2001, attacks morphed into a useful exchange on religious differences and the appeal of strict varieties of Islam in this generally tolerant country. Only the small number of

copies received and the relatively limited number of Guineans who can read Arabic limits the section distribution of *Hi* magazine throughout the country. Publication of the magazine in French, with at least some articles focusing on sub-Saharan Africa, would multiply the appeal of this already popular publication, particularly in locations outside of the capital where there is real hunger for information.

The PAS also transmits American values and teaches about its society through interactive programs with U.S. experts, cultural ambassadors, and English language training using U.S. curricula. Although it has proven difficult to find Guineans with enough English language ability and educational achievement to compete for Fulbright scholarships, several American academics have had successful tours teaching at the regional university in Kankan. PAS has sponsored several U.S. musical groups whose contact with local audiences enriched listeners and artists alike. Many young Guineans fully realize the importance of learning English for their own professional advancement, and PAS has set up a small language laboratory with English language tapes and materials that is in almost continual use by journalists, military officers, and government officials. The public affairs officer hopes in the future to be able to build on the fine work done over a 10 year period, ending in the 1990s, by several British English curriculum specialists who worked in Guinea and to begin outreach to the many English teachers whose active development ended at that time.

## Information Resource Center

The American Center has a small but well-used lending library of 3,000 volumes on the United States in both French and English, which over the years has functioned as a neutral meeting place for leaders of many levels of Guinean society, from journalists to students to civil servants. The PAS-sponsored periodic lectures and book discussions held there, while important on substantive grounds, have also been the occasion for Guineans to meet each other and begin to knit the kinds of civic ties that are critical for any developing society. The American Center will close when the NEC is completed, and, unfortunately, the PAS will have no appropriate space to host these kinds of meetings. It will have to develop new venues for its own programming. However, the information resource center will continue to function and will continue to draw readers and researchers anxious to learn about the United States and learn from its development.



# RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Embassy Conakry Resource Chart as of October 20, 2005

Agency	U. S. Direct-Hire Staff	U. S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding	Notes
State-DC&P	14	1	9	24	2,340,100	1
State-ICASS	4	6	121	131	3,446,600	
State-PD	1		7	8	180,100	
State-DS	1	1	31	33	723,431	2
State-MSG	7		5	12	271,840	
State-MRV	2		1	3	83,247	
State-REP					14,400	
State-REP-PD					5,000	
State-OBO	3		7	10	2,403,282	3
Treasury	1			1	62,300	
DAO	2		1	3	242,210	
Peace Corps	4		36	40	1,660,965	4
USAID	8	2	83	93	18,442,200	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>29,875,675</b>	

1. Includes \$97,675 in position start-up costs, \$15,900 in one time training costs, \$487,000 in NEC funding, and \$450,000 year-end funding.
2. Includes WSU funds.
3. Combines NEC and facility maintenance funding (7901, 7902, 7666 etc.). Positions do not include three U.S. long-term contractors.
4. Peace Corp currently has 103 volunteers.
5. Includes \$2,660,200 in operating expenses and \$15,782,000 in program funds. Positions do not include six American personal services contractors.

The embassy has not had a management officer from the management cone since 2000. The previous incumbent was a Civil Service excursionist with no overseas management experience. The current incumbent is a mid-level information management officer. He learned quickly and has brought most operations back in line with the regulations. As a result of the management officer's hard work, the ICASS council is effective and collegial. The housing board functions well, and suitability of housing received good marks on an OIG questionnaire. Financial services received the highest rating in Conakry on the OIG questionnaire. General services received high marks as well.

The management officer, on the other hand, received much lower marks for overall running of the management section. There is a "disconnect" between all that has been accomplished in Conakry and the way the management officer is viewed at post by the Americans and FSNs. In a hardship post such as Conakry employees, including the management officer, are under considerable stress, and because of this it is particularly important that the management officer have strong interpersonal skills.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

The embassy needs better support from the regional human resources officer in Bamako. Visits once a quarter would help correct deficiencies found by OIG in Conakry's FSN retirement program, the FSN compensation plan, and the way American employee evaluation reports are handled at post.

The human resources office in Conakry is run by a knowledgeable FSN. (b) (6) (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)

(b) (6) The lack of a supplemental retirement program is of great concern to FSNs in Conakry. The Guinean government has been inconsistent in the extreme in disbursing retirement pay to former FSNs in spite of embassy demarches on the subject. Embassy Conakry has three proposals for a supplemental retirement program, and they are being translated. That translation needs to be completed quickly and the regional human resources officer needs to review the proposals and forward them to Washington for review, approval, and funding. Embassy management needs to communicate with the FSN community that this effort is underway.

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy Conakry should complete the translation for the supplemental retirement program proposals and forward them to Embassy Bamako for review and submission to the Department. (Action: Embassy Conakry, in coordination with Embassy Bamako)

Devaluation of the national currency and inflation led to the adjustment of FSN salaries in July 2005. A new adjustment is due, and the regional human resources officer can help institute a procedure for more rapid response to hyperinflation in the future. OIG made an informal recommendation on the need to adjust FSN salaries for inflation.

The collection, review, correction, and mailing of American direct-hire employee evaluation reports to Washington have been coordinated by the Ambassador's OMS. This function needs to be shifted to the regional human resources office in Bamako.

## NEW EMBASSY COMPOUND

The NEC for Embassy Conakry is an \$85 million complex on a 10-acre site that will include the chancery, USAID, Marine security guard, and warehouse facilities. The new embassy is scheduled for completion in May 2006, and the USAID building in July 2006. The NEC has two distinct management challenges for Embassy Conakry. The first is the consolidation of administrative services between the Department and USAID. The second is to ensure that there is appropriately trained maintenance staff, systems, and funding to maintain a complex of modern office buildings.

The warehouse on the site will require the consolidation of present warehouses used by USAID and the embassy. In due course, embassy and USAID motor pools and maintenance staffs can be consolidated at the NEC. The embassy does not have a specific plan with a timetable for such consolidation, but OIG believes embassy management is dedicated to consolidation following Department rightsizing policies.

OIG reviewed the list of initial staff the embassy believes is essential to adequately maintain operations and found the post proactive on this critical issue. There is a working partnership with the embassy, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO), the new facility manager (FM), and the ICASS council to



identify the need for new staff. The first position, a senior engineer, has been approved, and the position description is currently under review by the ICASS council. The FM believes that two mechanical engineers, two heating and air conditioning technicians, and two pipe fitters will be necessary to complete the maintenance requirements of the NEC.

OIG noted that the cooperation of OBO and embassy staff has resulted in several positive yet low cost changes that will rearrange office space and allow the use of the atrium for large group meetings. The employee cafeteria was eliminated from the embassy building but added to the USAID building. This was a necessary change as the NEC is not located near any eating establishments.

The embassy is concerned about how to provide a consistent source of power at the NEC and how to fund the cost of running generators most of the working day. There will be three generators, one for the controlled area, one for essential services, and one called a utility generator. All three are necessary to run the new embassy at full capacity. The embassy has expressed concern that another generator will be needed to serve as backup.

OIG was told the NEC receives power six to eight hours a day. The term intermittent local power does not describe the on and off roller coaster of public power in Conakry. Guinea's power problems mean the NEC will likely be on the mission generators most of the working day. The cost of providing fuel, in the embassy's estimate, will triple from current cost to nearly a million dollars per year. The Bureau of African Affairs (AF) has allocated \$250,000 to assist with FY 2006 costs. Once the building is functioning, the embassy will have a better estimate of fuel costs and may almost certainly have to request additional funds.

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES COUNCIL

In FY 2004 the post requested and received ICASS training from the Department. Follow-up training is planned for January 2006. The training and commitment by post management to ICASS has resulted in a well-organized, collegial ICASS council led by the USAID executive officer. The council has developed service standards that are realistic for the embassy. It has set up a working group to review staffing required for the NEC and staffing that might be needed due to the

recent increases in the number of American officers and family members. Direct charging has been implemented for the cost of fuel oil to operate housing generators. The council is commended for functioning as a unit that is proactive in the management of embassy resources.

The challenge for the ICASS council will be to consolidate administrative services once the move to the NEC has been completed.

## HOUSING BOARD

A dedicated chairperson from the regional affairs office ably runs the housing board. Mid-term moves were well documented in the board's minutes. Moves were authorized in the interest of fairness and good morale. USAID has its own housing pool that is not controlled by the embassy housing board. This is not in keeping with Department guidelines in State 44737 of March 14, 2005, or the recommendation of the 2000 OIG inspection report (ISP-I-01-01, issued October 25, 2000). OIG made an informal recommendation that the Department and USAID combine housing pools and that all agency leases are maintained on the real property application.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The financial management officer is capable, mature, and performing all elements of the position beyond what should be expected of a first-tour officer. Deobligations were regularly completed, and end of the year spending was appropriate. Other financial control reviews are listed in the Management Controls section of this report. The finance office scored in three of the four top categories in OIG's workplace and quality of life questionnaires. The Paris-based AF rovers have reviewed the finance office and also complimented the leadership provided by the finance officer.

One area that management and the finance officer have worked diligently to correct is value added tax (VAT) refunds. One of the difficulties in obtaining VAT reimbursements has been that the government of Guinea is broke. As a result, the government of Guinea has been slow to honor VAT reimbursement requests for embassy operating expenses such as fuel and items related to the NEC. The Ambassador intervened with the Prime Minister, and in FY 2005 the embassy

collected \$274,359 in VAT refunds for fuel. To date in FY 2006, \$81,449 has been collected. The embassy is still waiting for a response from the Guinean government on the VAT related to the NEC.

## GENERAL SERVICES OPERATIONS

The section is well managed by a first tour officer and two EFMs. Given the lack of infrastructure, the general services officer (GSO) has been proactive in addressing procurement needs, the motor pool, and warehouse. Good communication skills, as well as technical skills, and a practical approach to difficult situations, set this first tour officer apart. Procurement, motor pool, and customs and shipping are well managed and were highly rated on the OIG survey. OBO has been very satisfied with the assistance of customs and shipping for the NEC. A sample of end-of-year procurement files was reviewed and no problems found. The nonexpendable property inventory is discussed under management controls, and the GSO has been instrumental in identifying key discrepancies in the nonexpendable inventory.

OIG reviewed the motor pool policy and suggested two additions. Department safety, health and environmental management (SHEM) guidelines require drivers to have an annual physical examination and limit their workday to 10 hours. The embassy will add these recommendations to embassy policy. GSO should continue to provide training for motor pool drivers. Because embassy motor vehicles have been involved in accidents every other month, defensive driving is important.

OIG did not sample any of the inventories, but in discussions with embassy staff learned that the expendable inventory may not accurately reflect present usage. An informal recommendation was made to review expendable inventory with the facility maintenance staff to verify that the type and numbers of items meet current usage levels.

## THE BOAT

Embassy Conakry has a 25-foot Boston Whaler for emergency evacuation. The boat is also used for representational events. When not used for either of these purposes U.S. direct-hire employees may use it for recreation. This is governed by procedures outlined in an embassy management notice dated October 29, 2004,

which is currently being updated. The boat has not been used since the fall of 2004 due to maintenance issues. At the end of FY 2005, AF provided program funds for a new boat and engine. There are other associated costs to running a boat that include salary for a captain and fuel. All costs are currently paid out of program funds. The embassy collects fees for recreational use of the boat.

OIG believes the boat can be a morale builder for this isolated mission. However, OIG has concerns about safety issues and liability if the boat is used for personal and recreational use as stated in 6 FAM 611.

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Conakry, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, the Bureau of African Affairs, and the Office of the Legal Adviser, should review the life safety and liability issues associated with the use of the emergency and evacuation boat for recreational purposes and correct any deficiencies. (Action: Embassy Conakry, in coordination with OBO, AF, and L)

## FACILITY MANAGEMENT

The FM is an enthusiastic first tour officer thrown into a tough housing environment. He was well briefed by OBO prior to arriving at post and has used that information to plan his section's work schedule. The result is a definitive plan of action for resolving long-term safety issues in housing and the move into the new NEC. Working with management, he prepared a staffing plan for presentation to the ICASS council for new maintenance positions necessary to maintain the NEC. His engineering background and ability to interact with all levels of staff will serve him well. A facility manager with his skill sets, both interpersonal and technical, reflects OBO's commitment to staffing FM positions at overseas missions with well qualified people. An EFM who is serving for a third year and has experience with the staff and life in Conakry supports him.

The FM has managed the wellness project that OBO funded at \$996,000 to renovate government-owned property. Wellness funds are usually awarded annually to only two posts based on need. Conakry has used the funds to upgrade eight houses. The interior of the Ambassador's residence was renovated, and the kitchen will be renovated. An outdoor covered pavilion was also constructed so that outdoor representational events will have cover during the rainy season. The embassy has used the funds appropriately and improved the livability of residences.

## Fire and Safety

In the area of fire and safety for mission housing, the FM has taken the initiative to have maintenance staff conduct a post-wide review of all housing maintenance. Fire and safety issues are a first priority. At the same time, other maintenance concerns are being noted and corrected on the spot, if possible, by the maintenance team. There has been one reported fire each year for the past three years. However, the embassy and OIG believe the actual number of incidents is higher as the embassy has not been diligent in filing reports of such events. The SHEM committee has been reconstituted and meets quarterly with an agenda that includes comprehensive documentation of all incidents.

## Electrical Power

Electrical power in Guinea is a luxury, not a basic service. The country is not able to provide a steady source of power, and the embassy and residences must rely on generators. Intermittent power in Conakry means the power may flash on and off several times in a few minutes and then be out for hours. At the time of the inspection, embassy generators as well as the generators at employees' houses were switched on almost full-time.

Power fluctuations reduce the life expectancy of generators, uninterrupted power supplies, computers, and printers, and become a safety nightmare for staff in their residences. One resident had four air conditioning units blow out on four successive weekends. A fire from a transformer and one smoldering fire from an unknown source also occurred in a residence. Smoldering fires, blown-out appliances, and electrical shocks are a way of life. OIG discovered the extent to which employees live with these safety issues through interviews. There is a need for better grounding and a quicker replacement of residential generators in all residences. In short term lease properties the landlord should be held responsible for safe and dependable electrical power.

Normally, grounding is accomplished by permanently connecting metal components to provide a permanent electrical path to the ground. Metal water pipes are regularly used as well as two to three foot ground rods. However, in Guinea this is a problem. The rocky soil, which has a high ferrous content, is not a base that provides grounding, and the country uses plastic pipes, not metal. The safety implications for residents cannot be underestimated. The NEC is also experiencing challenges with grounding.



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The IM office does not have a complete and accurate inventory of information technology assets. The only inventory available is dated 1995 and is only for the classified equipment. No inventory exists for the unclassified equipment. The lack of an accurate inventory leaves the post susceptible to theft and misappropriation of assets.

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Conakry's information management office should prepare an inventory for all information technology assets. (Action: Embassy Conakry)

Operational productivity at the embassy has decreased because of the support required to maintain the wireless Internet access at the residences. All direct-hire employees (Department, USAID, Defense attaché office, and Department of Treasury) have Internet access at their residences; problems with this network require significant support. There are three FSNs who maintain the official unclassified network at the embassy, but with one working virtually full time on the residence Internet access, the staff available for regular work is reduced to two. OIG could not determine the impact that this diminution of resources has had on post operations because there is no effective task tracking system. The embassy plans to hand over maintenance and operation of the home Internet system to the American Embassy Employees Association, and OIG concurs with this decision.

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Conakry should remove the operations and maintenance responsibility for the residential wireless Internet service from the information management office. (Action: Embassy Conakry)

Employee use of computer resources is sometimes inappropriate. OIG conducted a search for non-work-related digital media and identified 81,111 files of digital media on the server. Although some items were official (e.g., pictures of representational events), there were also many personal files. Personal use of U.S. government computers is prohibited if the use results in additional charges to the government as stated in 5 FAM 723(6) (a). Without enforcement of appropriate

use of government resources, the cost of storing and backing up data, including personal files, can become expensive.

Mandatory information management documentation is outdated or does not exist. All posts are required to have contingency plans, systems security plans, and risk analyses as stated in 5 FAM 867. There is no contingency plan for the classified network, and the systems security plans for the unclassified and classified networks are outdated.

The IM office needs to manage help desk functions effectively and efficiently. There is no main telephone number to call, and computer issues are not tracked. Embassy personnel contact IM personnel individually by telephone or the central systems mailbox. By not having an organized method for tracking information, the information program officer cannot determine how much work has been completed daily, monthly, or yearly by IM personnel.

. A ticket tracking system could assist with the creation/revision of work requirements, provide input to annual reviews and awards, and provide input to senior management regarding office productivity.

The embassy has provided hand-held radios to American employees of one non-Department U.S agency but until now has not sought the required reimbursement for these radios. The embassy has an unwritten policy that all Americans in the mission have radios. Because of inadequate recordkeeping, OIG could not determine how many radios have been issued to non-Department personnel who are not members of the emergency action committee. OIG made an informal recommendation to address these findings.

## Information Security

An American staff member's lack of technical competence resulted in a security incident that is under review by the RSO. The embassy needs to implement a robust and viable information systems security program. For example, embassy procedures do not require supervisors to document approval of requests for system access for subordinates. Cleared Americans complete the form, the information systems security officer approves it, and then an individual may then receive access to the appropriate network. According to 12 FAM 622.1-2 (b) supervisors must complete a system access request form for each staff member who requires access to automated information system.





## QUALITY OF LIFE

### HEALTH UNIT

One Foreign Service nurse practitioner currently staffs the health unit. She is interviewing candidates to fill the recently vacated positions of nurse and administrative assistant. The nurse practitioner is introducing new office systems and procedures and ordering much needed supplies. Her principle concern is that poor health, medical, and other infrastructure conditions in Guinea make the risk high for Americans in a medical emergency. The office averages 60 office visits per month from American clientele. In her four months at the mission, the nurse practitioner has assisted in five medical evacuations. There is no intensive care unit in Conakry, and the one good laboratory is rumored to be closing, which may necessitate the establishment of a laboratory within the health unit itself. The regional medical officer from Dakar visited for three days in late August, and the mentor nurse practitioner from Abidjan was in Conakry during OIG's visit.

### INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF CONAKRY

In the past several years, the (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) - an institution essential for the education of children of U.S. government personnel - has undergone several changes of leadership and experienced declining teaching standards, administrative neglect, and possible malfeasance. The last director was dismissed by the school board in June. The new director has made some positive changes to reverse these trends, is preparing the school for reaccreditation, and wishes to initiate the international baccalaureate program. The Ambassador's representative to the school is an architect and has created and overseen modifications and improvements to the school compound.

## COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

At the time of OIG's visit, Embassy Conakry's new full-time community liaison office coordinator had just returned from training. She has been in Guinea for two years and knows the challenges as well as opportunities for meeting the needs of the community. She is incorporating activities initiated by the embassy's energetic new employees, focusing immediately on security training, and wants to begin organizing after-school activities for children. The coordinator recognizes the need to include single employees in community activities, citing an example last year of a single person left alone on Christmas day.

## THE AMERICAN EMBASSY EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATION

The small American Embassy Employee Association runs a video lending library and provides Armed Forces Radio and Television satellite services. There has been no operating loss in the past two years, and the latest audit report was issued in September 2005.

To start the new fiscal year with a new baseline, the new board chairperson intended to follow-up on all audit recommendations by December 31, 2005. Embassy management supports the new board that includes eight members of the community. The combination of new-member enthusiasm and management's encouragement is spurring the association to develop more activities for mission staff. Plans include expanding the video club, hosting monthly community events in coordination with the community liaison office, and contacting companies to import perishable food items.

## MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The annual certification in June 2005 for Embassy Conakry listed one material weakness and two reportable weaknesses, discussed below with corrective action plans. Housing was certified in accordance with 15 FAM 212.1. OIG rarely sees such a frank and detailed evaluation on the annual certification. This is an indication of the seriousness with which embassy management is addressing internal control issues.

The material weakness was in the lack of property management controls. There is a \$250,000 discrepancy, over five percent of the total inventory, that has not been located. Details are discussed below in the nonexpendable property section. The GSO is the principal contact for resolving property discrepancies.

The SHEM program and the American Embassy Employee Association were reportable conditions. SHEM issues were corrected by August 2005, and a committee will meet quarterly to address issues. The embassy will incorporate residential properties into post housing inspections. Make ready procedures will include maintenance reviews of life safety issues.

The American Embassy Employee Association is small, and its major focus is providing Armed Forces Radio and Television Network satellite service. The mission has neither a commissary nor a recreational center. From September 2004 to August 2005 there had not been an active board chairman or treasurer.

Bookkeeping was lax, and the mission's contract for repair and maintenance services for the network expired. The previous annual audit report was dated December 31, 2003. A new chairman and board have been appointed, and an annual audit was completed on September 15, 2005. At the time of the inspection this reportable condition was corrected.

## Financial Services

The Class B cashier's monthly reconciliation was reviewed without issue. Monthly cash counts had been conducted in the past year. Though no discrepancies were noted, OIG made one informal recommendation to provide WINACS training for the alternate cashier. The embassy was provided a useful report by the AF rovers based in Paris. Other internal control procedures were reviewed to include the use of blanket purchase agreements, travel vouchers, payment of overtime, and selected obligations from the RFMS viewer, including verification that funds were available and documentation for the obligations were correct.

## Nonexpendable Property Inventory

Since 1994, only one inventory reconciliation for nonexpendable property estimated at about \$4.5 million has been completed. Problems have been identified by efforts of embassy staff, TDY staff from AF, the Bureau of Administration, and OIG's audit and inspection divisions, but no inventory has been produced. In April 2005, the embassy's property survey board disposed of \$1.8 million in inventory. With this adjustment, the embassy hoped that an accurate inventory baseline could be established for future reconciliations.

In June FY 2005, with reconciliation in process, the GSO discovered there were multiple databases being used to reconcile the inventory. Now one database is in use, but the shortages in actual inventory still exceed the one percent variation acceptable limit with the inventory on the nonexpendable property application system. The current variation is believed to be approximately five percent, or over \$250,000 in items not located.

With a lack of recordkeeping, as well as a floating baseline, there is no way to accurately determine if the shortages between the physical count and the inventory record on nonexpendable property applications are due to theft, improper receiving procedures, multiple counting, or lack of deletions when property was sold. Over the last three years two nonexpendable property application clerks were terminated for cause, and the manager of the warehouse disappeared at the start of the current OIG inspection.

OIG believes the embassy is doing what it can to resolve this long-standing issue and plug this large internal control vulnerability. With TDY help from the Department, the embassy planned to complete all residential inventories in November 2005. Another disposal sale will be held to reduce inventories to what post believes will be an inventory that can be reconciled to meet Department standards.

Staff turnover in the position of the nonexpendable property application clerk position requires the new employee to receive formal training. An informal recommendation was made for such training. Continued training is critical because until another inventory is conducted there is no assurance the inventory issues have been resolved.

If the inventory reconciliation in FY 2006 is not within the one percent standard, OIG believes the embassy should stop trying to balance it from the current database and conduct an inventory from an actual count of all nonexpendable inventory items. Discussions with management indicated the embassy plans to physically place an American employee at the warehouse until the May move to the NEC. Once all receiving functions have been consolidated at the NEC, the issue of multiple receiving locations as well as perimeter security will be improved.

## Fuel Shortages

GSO identified over 25,000 liters of fuel missing in FY 2005. The fuel was worth approximately \$26,000. The embassy identified several ways theft could be taking place. For example, when post delivers fuel to a residence, unknown persons, guards, neighbors, or thieves siphon the gas. A vulnerability of the generators is the use of soft copper tubing, not the more sturdy galvanized tubing that is harder to tap into. Maintenance is in the process of replacing all the copper tubing on the generators at residences and physically securing all fuel containers at the residences. Management must remain alert to theft as Conakry is a high threat crime post.



## FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** Embassy Conakry, in coordination with the Bureau of African Affairs and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should document the need and provide funding for a fifth locally employed staff member for the consular section. (Action: Embassy Conakry, in coordination with AF and CA)

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy Conakry should complete the translation for the supplemental retirement program proposals and forward them to Embassy Bamako for review and submission to the Department. (Action: Embassy Conakry, in coordination with Embassy Bamako)

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Conakry, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, the Bureau of African Affairs, and the Office of the Legal Adviser, should review the life safety and liability issues associated with the use of the emergency and evacuation boat for recreational purposes and correct any deficiencies. (Action: Embassy Conakry, in coordination with OBO, AF, and L)

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Conakry, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should develop a generator replacement plan that takes into account specific conditions in Guinea. (Action: Embassy Conakry, in coordination with OBO)

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Conakry's information management office should prepare an inventory for all information technology assets. (Action: Embassy Conakry)

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Conakry should remove the operations and maintenance responsibility for the residential wireless Internet service from the information management office. (Action: Embassy Conakry)





## INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

### *Political and Economic Reporting*

Biographic reporting has received scant recent attention.

**Informal Recommendation 1:** Embassy Conakry should update its current biographic files and actively seek to add to reporting in this area, particularly on individuals who could be prominent players in any major change of government.

A single FSN plays the major role in the collection and evaluation of self-help and democracy grant proposals and in monitoring their execution.

**Informal Recommendation 2:** Embassy Conakry should, whenever practicable, work to widen the pool of staff that evaluate and monitor grant proposals.

### *Consular Operations*

The consular officers see many visa applications from relatives and functionaries of government of Guinea ministers but are unsure of which ministers are still in place.

**Informal Recommendation 3:** Embassy Conakry should ensure that the consular section has an up-to-date list of government ministers at all times.

Without adequate fraud prevention training, consular staff cannot cope with the high incidence of fraud in Guinea.

**Informal Recommendation 4:** Embassy Conakry should arrange for enough time for the Foreign Service nationals to complete on-line fraud-prevention training and initiate a request for the back-up Foreign Service national fraud investigator to get further training at the Foreign Service Institute.

The senior FSN who handles NIVs has been approved for a special immigrant visa and will probably leave Guinea soon. A replacement needs to be trained.

**Informal Recommendation 5:** Embassy Conakry should initiate a request for a Foreign Service national to receive nonimmigrant visa training at the Foreign Service Institute.

Consular FSNs are not cross-trained, and when any one of them is absent the work suffers.

**Informal Recommendation 6:** Embassy Conakry should develop and execute a plan for cross training consular Foreign Service nationals.

Americans at the visa interview windows will not be able to be effective or efficient if they do not conduct their interviews in good French.

**Informal Recommendation 7:** Embassy Conakry should translate lists of nonimmigrant visas and Visas 92/93 questions for consular officers into French for use during interviews, and consular officers should attend French language instruction as time permits.

The consular section does not have an up-to-date contact list.

**Informal Recommendation 8:** Embassy Conakry should maintain an up-to-date and prioritized consular contact list.

The embassy front office needs to be informed of consular issues that might come to its attention such as sensitive visa cases or an accident or other difficulty affecting an American citizen.

**Informal Recommendation 9:** Embassy Conakry should ensure that the consular section sends the Ambassador and deputy chief of mission an e-mail at least once a week about noteworthy consular issues.

Employees of government of Guinea ministries request unscheduled nonemergency NIV services from the consular section, claiming they have authorization to do so from the Ambassador. Absent advance notification from the Ambassador, this is unlikely. It is time consuming and unnecessary for the consular officers to try to verify the claim.

**Informal Recommendation 10:** Embassy Conakry should have the consular section chief decide whether the section's workload permits accepting unscheduled routine nonimmigrant visa applications and inform the deputy chief of mission and his office management specialist via e-mail of the action taken.

The consular section is burdened by the time spent responding to public inquiries about refused NIV applications. Inquiries by phone that interrupt time at the visa interview window are especially burdensome.

**Informal Recommendation 11:** Embassy Conakry should develop a taped telephone message for use in the consular section that explains U.S. law and reapplication procedures.

The consular section has not prepared a plan for handling major accidents or disasters involving Americans. Although the mission's Emergency Action Plan lists hospitals, morgues, and doctors, the consular officers do not have sufficient understanding of how the local authorities and airlines would manage an event such as an airplane crash.

**Informal Recommendation 12:** Embassy Conakry should have its consular section prepare a disaster plan and meet with those local and host-government officials who would be involved in responding to a major accident.

The Department of Homeland Security, Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services, finds the Human Rights Report on Guinea an indispensable tool for determining if a claim to persecution is consistent with Guinea's political environment.

**Informal Recommendation 13:** Embassy Conakry should include officers from the consular section in the process of drafting and clearing the Human Rights Report.

Consular officers sometimes suspect fraud in the underlying asylum/refugee claims while processing family members who are following to join asylum seekers or refugees who have been admitted to the United States.

**Informal Recommendation 14:** Embassy Conakry should send a reporting cable to the appropriate Department of State and Department of Homeland Security offices whenever it finds overwhelming evidence that a petitioner's claim to refugee or asylum status appears to be fraudulent.

The consular officers were concerned about, but vague, on the amount of time they spend on processing such a high volume of cases of family members who are following to join asylum seekers or refugees who have been admitted to the United States (Visas92/93).

**Informal Recommendation 15:** Embassy Conakry should keep accurate records of the time spent on Visas 92/93 cases.

The consular section writes good reports on visa and passport fraud but does so informally via e-mail.

**Informal Recommendation 16:** Embassy Conakry should send front channel cables cleared by the regional security officer on fraud, particularly Guinean government visa fraud, human smuggling and trafficking patterns, and liaison with government officials.

The 18 wardens and their back-ups are different in their level of reliability and accessibility depending on their affiliation, location, and the time of year during which the embassy contacts them.

**Informal Recommendation 17:** Embassy Conakry should create a standard operating procedure to document the idiosyncrasies of the wardens as well as their locations, affiliations, and contact information.

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

**Informal Recommendation 18:** Embassy Conakry should redistribute the mission's visa referral policy and hold a meeting for all of the mission's American employees to discuss that policy and other visa procedures at least once a year. The Foreign Service nationals should be given the same information on visas given to the general public.

### ***Public Diplomacy***

Neither of the two FSNs with responsibility for the management and maintenance of the information resource center collection have had formal technical library training in such areas as classification.

**Informal Recommendation 19:** Embassy Conakry information resource center employees should have appropriate training in technical and reference services as soon as practicable.

**Management**

The interagency housing board agreed in October 2004 to let USAID manage its own housing pool, which is not in compliance with State 044737 of March 2005.

**Informal Recommendation 20:** Embassy Conakry should maintain a single housing pool in accordance with Department regulations.

Expendable inventories have not been tied to the actual level of use or adjusted for growth at the post.

**Informal Recommendation 21:** Embassy Conakry should review the expendable inventory and determine levels and products required for current usage levels.

The clerk in the maintenance office responsible for managing the work orders has not been trained in Work Orders for Windows software.

**Informal Recommendation 22:** Embassy Conakry should have the work order clerk attend formal software training for managing the work orders at the earliest possible date.

The alternate cashier has not received training on the automated cashier program, WINACS.

**Informal Recommendation 23:** Embassy Conakry should have the alternate cashier receive software training on the automated cashier program at the earliest possible date.

The embassy is in the process of recruiting for a new nonexpendable property clerk.

**Informal Recommendation 24:** Embassy Conakry should have the new nonexpendable inventory clerk receive formal training at the earliest possible date.

Guinea is experiencing rapidly increasing inflation - some 60 percent in the first nine months of 2005.

**Informal Recommendation 25:** Embassy Conakry should inform the Department of Guinea's inflation levels and, if necessary, request a funding increase.

There is no direct-hire American human resources officer in Conakry, and the Ambassador's OMS has coordinated the correction and submission of all efficiency reports for Department direct-hire positions.

**Informal Recommendation 26:** Embassy Conakry should shift responsibility for coordinating the clearance and submission of efficiency reports for Department personnel to the regional human resources officer in Bamako.

The FSN community is upset because there is no supplemental retirement program in Conakry.

**Informal Recommendation 27:** Embassy Conakry should inform the Foreign Service national executive committee of the steps that are being taken to initiate a supplemental retirement program.

FSN training is uneven, and more training will be needed to support the NEC.

**Informal Recommendation 28:** Embassy Conakry should develop a training profile for all Foreign Service national staff and set aside sufficient funds in its travel plans to ensure that all Foreign Service nationals have the basic training needed to perform their assigned duties.

Some short-term lease apartments have dangerous electrical wiring that is causing shocks when residents touch electrical fixtures and is not in compliance with 6 FAM 611.

**Informal Recommendation 29:** Embassy Conakry should insist that dangerous wiring be corrected at the expense of landlords as required by Department regulations.

***Information Management and Information Security***

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**Informal Recommendation 30:** Embassy Conakry should address administrative and managerial issues in the information management office.

Embassy employees' personal use of U.S. government computer resources is not in compliance with Department guidance. OIG identified 81,111 digital media files on the server, many of them with personal material.

**Informal Recommendation 31:** Embassy Conakry should enforce policy on personal use of government computers and perform a clean up of the digital media on the servers.

The embassy has no classified network contingency plan, and the security plans for the unclassified and classified network are outdated.

**Informal Recommendation 32:** Embassy Conakry should develop a contingency plan for the classified network and update the security plans for the unclassified and classified network.

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

**Informal Recommendation 33:** Embassy Conakry should create a logging system to record all computer-related issues and their resolution.

The embassy provides all Americans with radios (including non-Department, nonemergency action committee personnel) and does not require reimbursement. U.S. employees of other agencies may be members of this network using radios provided by their agency as stated in 5 FAH-2 H-713.4. The embassy needs a clear policy to cover issuance, use, and reimbursement for radios.

**Informal Recommendation 34:** Embassy Conakry should develop a written radio policy in accordance with Department guidelines.

The embassy's information security program has several problems concerning systems access, security awareness training, and labeling.

**Informal Recommendation 35:** Embassy Conakry should perform information systems security responsibilities, including requiring supervisors to document computer access requests for their subordinates, ensuring all personnel have completed their annual computer security awareness training, and labeling all appropriate technological hardware with the appropriate security level.



*Quality of Life*

There is one acceptable medical laboratory in Conakry. It may close because of financial problems.

**Informal Recommendation 36:** Embassy Conakry should request Department support and funding to establish a medical laboratory within the new embassy compound if the local medical lab closes.

## PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Arrival Date</b>
Ambassador	Jackson McDonald	09/04
Deputy Chief of Mission	Julie Winn	08/05

### **Chiefs of Sections:**

Administrative	Christopher Dye	01/03
Consular	Barbara Bartsch-Allen	02/04
Political and Economic	Jessica Davis Ba	08/05
Public Affairs	Louise Bedichek	04/02
Regional Security	John Aybar	08/03

### **Other Agencies:**

Department of Defense	Maj. Christian Ramthun	11/04
Peace Corps	Steve Peterson	02/05
Treasury	Cheryl Hayes	01/04
U.S. Agency for International Development	Jack Winn	10/05



## ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Bureau of African Affairs
CSC	Consular section chief
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
EFM	Eligible family member
FM	Facility manager
FSN	Foreign Service national
GSO	General services officer
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IM	Information management
MPP	Mission Performance Plan
NEC	New embassy compound
NIV	Nonimmigrant visa
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OMS	Office management specialist
PAS	Public affairs section
RSO	Regional security officer
SHEM	Safety, health and environmental management
TDY	Temporary duty
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VAT	Value added tax

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~