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

Report of Inspection

Embassy Banjul,
The Gambia

Report Number ISP-I-09-15A, March 2009

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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 for the U.S. Department of State (Department) and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).

PURPOSE

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the BBG, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and the BBG. 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 economy 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; as appropriate, circulated, reviewed, and compiled the results of survey instruments; conducted on-site interviews; and reviewed the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, organizations, and activities affected by this review.



**United States Department of State
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors**

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, and Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended. It is one of a series of audit, inspection, investigative, and special reports prepared by OIG periodically as part of its responsibility to promote effective management, accountability and positive change in the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

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, as appropriate, 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 "H. W. Geisel".

Harold W. Geisel
Acting Inspector General

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- The Embassy has a strong record of unusually effective public diplomacy success in The Gambia, a moderate and peaceful West African nation.
- A modest resumption of U.S. assistance would help promote continued democratization, human rights, and pro-Western attitudes in The Gambia. This would also help counter efforts by radical states, including Iran, Venezuela, and Cuba, who seek to increase their influence in a large Moslem society that is currently relatively tolerant of diverse religious views.
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- Embassy Banjul's consular section provides good service to American citizens but has problems with visa referral issues and sometimes strays from Departmental guidelines and processes regarding nonimmigrant visas.
- The DCM fills a combined DCM/management officer position and is responsible for the day-to-day administrative operations of the Embassy. In the 2010 Mission Strategic Plan (MSP), the Embassy requested that the general services officer (GSO) position be converted to a management officer position and that the Embassy retain a local-hire GSO. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) supports this request.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between September 15 and October 3, 2008, and in Banjul, The Gambia, between October 8 and 16, 2008. Ambassador Michael Senko (team leader), Brian Mohler (deputy team leader), Kathryn Berck, William Booth, Richard Jones, Christopher Mack, and Patrick Whalen conducted the inspection.

CONTEXT

The Gambia is a tiny sliver of a country stretching along the banks of the Gambia River and surrounded by Senegal on all sides except for a short Atlantic coastline.



Less than half the size of Delaware, it is among Africa's smallest nations. The country's odd shape and existence reflects British-French colonial rivalries in the 19th century. It achieved independence from Great Britain in 1965 and became a republic with an elected president five years later.

The Gambia's first president, Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, was freely elected five times. Over his tenure, The Gambia became one of the longest surviving multiparty democracies in Africa. However, Jawara was overthrown in 1994 in a military coup led by the current president, then a 27-year old Army lieutenant. Since then Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh has consolidated his grip on power through the restoration of democratic elections, although these have not usually been regarded by outside observers as being completely free, fair, or transparent. President Jammeh was most recently elected to a third 5-year term in September 2006.

Human rights groups and democratic watchdogs were disturbed when, in 2005, a prominent journalist was assassinated after he opposed a controversial new media law. In March 2006 a failed coup further exacerbated tensions between the current government and the democratic opposition. Since then Jammeh has become increasingly autocratic and taken far-reaching steps to stay in power.

Under President Jawara, The Gambia followed a formal policy of nonalignment, while maintaining close ties with the United Kingdom, Senegal, and other African states. The July 1994 coup that brought Jammeh to power strained the country's relations with Western powers, particularly the United States, which suspended most nonhumanitarian assistance in accordance with Section 508 of the Foreign Assistance Act. Since 1995, Jammeh has established diplomatic relations with several nations, including Libya and Cuba. There has been increased involvement by Iran and Libya in security, economic, and religious affairs in recent years.

The Gambia is a poor country with few natural resources. Its mostly Moslem population of less than two million people increases by 2.5 percent a year, while the Gambian economy grows at over 6 percent annually, albeit from a limited economic base. The Gambia is succeeding in getting many of the economic fundamentals right, and the dalasi floats freely with relative stability. The government is carrying out reforms suggested by international financial institutions.

The Gambia's population is threatened by disease, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, avian influenza, and gastrointestinal illness. Malaria remains a significant killer, and HIV/AIDS rates, while low by African standards, continue to grow. Illiteracy and infant mortality rates remain high, while life expectancy and per capita income are quite low.

Agriculture, principally peanut production, together with fishing and tourism, largely from Western European countries, dominate the economy. The Gambia is a net food importer of basic food stuffs, especially rice. While there have not been food shortages yet, the Gambian Government is working with international agencies and food donors to try to contain price rises.

Gambian-U.S. trade is small. The United States granted The Gambia special trade treatment under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), but it has so far made little use of this preferential access to the U.S. market. U.S. investment in the country is minimal. The Gambia received eligibility for the Millennium Challenge Account in November 2005, but this was suspended in June 2006 following the Jammeh government's crackdown on civil liberties and press freedoms in response to the failed coup of March 2006. The Gambia has not been reselected for the Millennium Challenge Account.

Embassy Banjul is staffed by 12 direct-hire Americans (nine from the Department and three from the Peace Corps) and 92 locally employed (LE) staff. There are 99 Peace Corps volunteers in The Gambia, although this number is expected to

decline in coming years. The Embassy's budget is almost \$3.3 million a year. Although Section 508 of the Foreign Assistance Act bans direct U.S. aid, The Gambia does receive limited indirect aid. The embassy political/economic section manages several grant programs, such as the Taft Fund for Refugees, the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund as well as programs funded by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor in areas such as trafficking in persons funds, democracy, and human rights. In addition, the section facilitates with Department of Defense programs such as its HIV/AIDS Prevention Program and humanitarian assistance. The Gambia receives \$120,000 in International Military Education and Training funding to encourage counterterrorism and peacekeeping efforts.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Embassy Banjul is doing an exemplary job in policy implementation, and it has well-reasoned and realistic plans to improve resource management. However, this report makes some recommendations on strengthening management controls.

The Ambassador arrived at the post in January 2008. Building on groundwork laid by the DCM, who served for 5 months as chargé, the Ambassador has improved the chilly bilateral relationship that developed following the cutoff of U.S. assistance to protest a crackdown on civil rights and press freedom after a 2006 coup attempt against the Gambian Government. The Ambassador's access to Gambian President Jammeh and other high officials has become the envy of the local diplomatic corps. The Embassy has successfully resumed promoting democracy and cooperation with the West. The Gambian Government has relaxed restrictions on civil rights, although much more needs to be done; opposition to the government is manifest in opposition political parties and in a lively press. The Gambia also participated in regional peacekeeping efforts and has just offered troops for service in Darfur.

Perhaps most importantly, the people of this largely Moslem country remain favorably inclined toward the United States. The Ambassador is very active in public diplomacy, and the United States gets favorable weekly front page coverage even in the generally anti-Western press that often reports admiringly on President Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

The Embassy has crafted a very realistic plan to keep the momentum going. It includes suggestions for a modest resumption of assistance and a vigorous public diplomacy strategy. This is laid out in the Embassy's cogent MSP, which won kudos in both the Department and from inspectors.

OIG inspectors are sympathetic to the Embassy's argument that the resumption of a modest assistance program would provide the needed leverage to continue promoting democracy and human rights in The Gambia. The Iranians, Venezuelans,

and Cubans are all active in The Gambia, where Western influence on the ground is basically limited to the U.S. Embassy and a small and downsizing British High Commission. The British report that their small assistance mission in-country will soon be relocated to London, and further aid will be channeled through the United Nations.

Not only is The Gambia relaxing restrictions on political dissent, the Embassy reports that the country is making progress in complying with economic reforms suggested by international financial institutions. This Moslem nation would seem to be an example of the type of country that former Secretary of State Rice hoped to target with the foreign assistance component of transformational diplomacy. Without the availability of foreign assistance, Embassy Banjul misses the opportunity to make a difference in improving the U.S. image in The Gambia.

Recommendation 1: The Office of the Under Secretary for Foreign Assistance, in coordination with the Bureau of African Affairs, should work with the U.S. Agency for International Development to review the foreign assistance strategy as laid out in Embassy Banjul’s Mission Strategic Plan and produce a short assistance strategy for the Embassy’s review and comment. (Action: F, in coordination with AF)

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The DCM, until recently, managed three important portfolios. He served simultaneously as DCM, management officer, and public diplomacy officer. This is too much responsibility for one person in a post of Embassy Banjul’s size and location. The Ambassador has correctly, and with good results, transferred the public diplomacy portfolio to the political-economic officer. The Embassy has also requested permission to make the U.S. direct-hire GSO position a management officer position, and to try to hire a GSO locally. The OIG team supports this request.

The Peace Corps is the only other U.S. Government agency stationed in The Gambia. Relations with the Embassy are excellent. International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) works well, and the Embassy and the Peace Corps have a large, colocated, well-run medical unit. A Peace Corps representative attends country team meetings. Peace Corps morale is reportedly high.

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The emergency action plan was recently completed after an estimated 300 staff hours of work. The plan software reportedly caused many problems and was not viewed as user-friendly. The band-width of communications channels is also reportedly a problem in West Africa.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REPORTING AND ANALYSIS

Washington readers interested in The Gambia give Embassy Banjul reporting and analysis generally high marks in terms of both quality and quantity. Cables on internal developments, such as local elections and cabinet reshuffles, were read with interest by the desk officer and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research analyst and met their needs. Cables on external political events, such as The Gambia's relations with Cuba and Iran, attracted a wider audience, and there is a desire for more. A recent message on President Jammeh's concern about growing local Shia proselyting efforts being a threat to the harmonious relations within the nation's large Moslem community received special attention. The Ambassador's reports on his meetings with the enigmatic and often erratic leader, with whom he has periodic access envied by his British counterpart, are yielding useful insights into the president's governing style and motivations. An embassy report on food security in The Gambia, where higher prices for basic foodstuffs such as rice could trigger shortages and unrest as has already occurred elsewhere in West Africa, was praised in Washington.

There are several areas on which Embassy Banjul could turn its admittedly limited reporting resources. There is continuing Washington interest in the efforts of radical states, such as Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela, to increase local influence through expanded aid and other programs. The Gambia lost potentially sizable U.S. economic assistance when its eligibility under the Millennium Challenge Account was withdrawn in June 2006 due to a deteriorating human rights situation. The post should continue to monitor local political developments for signs of improved performance by the Jammeh government that could justify restoring its eligibility. In the 1980s, The Gambia and Senegal formed a confederation through which the two nations' military forces, economies, and currencies would be eventually unified. This effort collapsed by 1989. The Embassy should be alert to any moves by The Gambia to better coordinate its economic activities with Senegal and other neighboring African states. There is seismic evidence of possible oil resources within Gambian waters. The post should monitor exploration efforts closely since such a discovery in The Gambia would greatly affect the nation's economic prospects. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the Embassy amend its reporting plan to focus

resources, as far as practicable, on the activities of radical states in The Gambia; review of the country's eligibility under the Millennium Challenge Account; greater Gambian economic coordination with its neighbors; and the development of possible off-shore oil resources.

At post for only three months, the political-economic officer is off to a good start on reporting. She is supported by two capable and knowledgeable full-time LE staff. An energetic officer, she is eager to step up commercial reporting now that a second political-economic assistant started work just before the inspection. She and the senior political-economic assistant feel there should be a better balance between political and economic work. In fact, the experienced assistant left Banjul during the time of the inspection to take economic tradecraft training at FSI.

The newly hired political-economic assistant will also help the political-economic officer undertake her public diplomacy responsibilities. Formerly a prominent local journalist, he has the contacts and the knowledge to expand the Embassy's public outreach. He should have appropriate FSI political and public diplomacy training at an early opportunity. The OIG team made an informal recommendation.

Often, embassies with small reporting staffs complain of being "overburdened" by reporting mandated by the Department or Congress. The OIG team found that Embassy Banjul has organized itself sufficiently well so that the researching and drafting of these reports do not compromise completing other significant reporting objectives.

The section's coordination with the desk officer and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research analyst via e-mail is good; both visited post recently and praised the excellent orientation programs organized for them by the Embassy. There is good feedback on reporting from the working level; the lack of significant feedback from more senior officials, however, gives the impression that the Department and other agencies accord The Gambia a very low priority.

Trade Promotion

As pointed out during the 2002 inspection, trade promotion is a challenge in The Gambia. While U.S. exports have improved over the past 6 years, reaching \$45 million in 2007, the United States continues to rank behind China, Brazil, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, among others. Embassy trade promotion efforts have been hampered by the difficulties encountered by Gambian businessmen in getting visas to visit the United States to attend Department of Commerce-sponsored trade shows. Visa issuance is discussed in more detail in the consular part of this re-

port. On the other hand, a prominent Gambian businessman recently contacted the Ambassador to express interest in buying used U.S. commercial aircraft. The senior political-economic assistant immediately passed this request to the Department of Commerce for inclusion on its Buy USA Web site. As a result, the businessman has received numerous expressions of interest.

There is little U.S. investment in The Gambia, largely because current political and economic conditions discourage it. However, the Embassy will brief a private investment mission coming to The Gambia late this year. The regional commercial offices in Dakar and Accra have not been very responsive to Embassy Banjul's requests for assistance.

Now that a second LE employee has been hired for the political-economic section, the Embassy plans to increase the amount of information it makes available to interested businessmen on its Web site. It will supplement the annual investment climate statement by preparing the Embassy's first Commercial Guide to The Gambia next year. The Embassy is also stepping up its efforts to educate Gambian Government officials and the local business community on how to take advantage of the increased export opportunities in the United States through the AGOA. Last year, The Gambia exported only \$37,000 worth of tomato paste to the United States, using AGOA trade preferences, but there is potential for more trade. The Embassy believes that there is considerable scope for greater Gambian exports to the United States, especially in garments and fish products.

Law Enforcement, Narcotics Control, and Counterterrorism

There appears to be little domestic terrorist activity in The Gambia. There are Hezbollah supporters in the local Lebanese community, but their support has been confined to financial contributions. The Gambian Government is cooperative on most law enforcement issues. The Embassy believes that they would like to be more cooperative on narcotics, but lack capability. There have been sporadic visits by Federal Bureau of Investigation and Drug Enforcement Administration personnel, but The Gambia appears to be a low priority country from their standpoint. The International Military Education and Training funds mentioned in the context section of this report are designed, among other goals, to maintain and improve The Gambia's counterterrorism activities.

Environment, Science, Technology, and Health Affairs

Embassy Banjul undertakes no environmental activities except those directed by Departmental demarche. The Gambia is the responsibility of the regional environmental hub located at Embassy Gabon.

Health is a major concern in The Gambia as discussed in the context section of this report. The Embassy has made it the third priority in its FY 2010 MSP. The post will continue programming from the Ambassador's Fund for HIV/AIDS and the Department of Defense's Humanitarian Assistance and HIV/AIDS prevention programs, which enables the post to reach different target audiences. Embassy Banjul also monitors Global Fund projects in The Gambia, mindful of the U.S. Government's position as the largest contributor to the Fund. There is also growing National Institute of Health cooperation with the British-run Medical Research Council in The Gambia, among the top research facilities for tropical diseases in the world.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The public diplomacy section in Banjul has no budget of its own beyond the salary of LE staff, hampering its ability to plan events and activities; nevertheless it has made a substantial and wholly positive contribution to America's image in The Gambia.

Public diplomacy in The Gambia is handled by a single full-time LE staff, with part-time attention from the political-economic officer. The section has no budget beyond the LE staff member's salary. Every proposal that involves funding must be individually submitted to the Bureau of African Affairs (AF) public diplomacy office in Washington for review and approval; all representational expenses come from the post's representational fund.

The nearest full-service public diplomacy section at Embassy Dakar sometimes refers programs and speakers to The Gambia but is not obliged to support Banjul. Because The Gambia is not Francophone, it does not receive the program and funding support from the AF regional support office in Paris as some of its neighboring countries do. The Fulbright program has sent a few scholars to The Gambia, but no Gambian scholar has gone to the United States. The LE staff member and the political-economic officer, nevertheless, have done much to spread a positive image of the United States to the utmost using the limited resources available to them, and their ingenuity should be recognized.

The Embassy Banjul public diplomacy team recently traveled to Embassy Dakar to meet with that Embassy's public affairs officer and to encourage him to remember Banjul, only 45 minutes away by air from Dakar, when suitable programs come to Senegal. They submitted some modest project ideas to AF and received approval and funding: the local appearance of a member of the Democratic National Committee was arranged in conjunction with that person's travel through several other countries in the area, at minimal cost. The Banjul public affairs team then sent a long-term plan to AF for 2009, only to be chided for submitting it too far in advance of the deadline. Then, when they resubmitted it at the proper time, they were told that they must ask for and get approval for every event separately. This bureaucratic layering hampers Banjul's ability to put together a coherent program in a country that is already somewhat favorably disposed toward the United States, but where other countries are outspending them a hundred fold.

Nevertheless this energetic public affairs team persists and succeeds. At no cost beyond transportation, they introduced debate to the University of The Gambia and trained a team; they have provided rides for journalists and scholars to public diplomacy-sponsored and other events that the Gambians would otherwise have been unable to attend or report on. They often place op-ed pieces in local newspapers and see to it that the Ambassador appears regularly, prominently, and positively. They invited a group of journalists to the Embassy and taught them to use the Internet; now government workers are asking if the program could be repeated for them. Gambian trainees were both puzzled and delighted by the fact that this training was so useful and was free. The Embassy's American employees took up a collection and gave away enough rice — suitably decorated with American flags — to feed 75 poor families in the Embassy's immediate neighborhood during the month of Ramadan, when charity is most encouraged. This was reported very positively in the local press. The Ambassador also invited over 50 religious leaders from the Moslem and Christian communities to an Iftar dinner at the residence, underlining for them the religious tolerance of the United States, a virtue that the Gambians are proud to share.

While the political-economic officer and the LE staff member are learning how best to leverage the resources that they need to build a comprehensive program, the embassy front office has been open to and supports their ideas and plans. The Ambassador and DCM have taken active roles in sharing ideas and negotiating and collaborating on ways to continue the forward momentum of successful events.

The OIG team has no recommendation for public diplomacy, except to encourage this resourceful and productive team to keep doing what it is doing.

CONSULAR

Embassy Banjul's consular section provides good service to American citizens but has problems with visa referral issues and sometimes strays from Departmental guidelines and processes regarding nonimmigrant visas.

Embassy Banjul's consular section occupies a very small space on the ground floor of the chancery. The consular officer's office is spacious so is also used as a staff meeting room. There is no line of sight between the officer's desk and the LE staff work area. Customers seeking passport, notarial, and similar services use the Embassy's main entrance. Nonimmigrant visa applicants, and visas 92 and 93 applicants, use a separate entrance at the rear of the compound where a raised, covered walkway leads to a fully enclosed, air conditioned waiting room that is clean and freshly painted. The room has a television set which entertains waiting applicants and makes it more difficult to listen in on visa interviews. Visas viper meetings are held monthly, chaired by the Ambassador or the deputy chief of mission.

Following the example of other posts, the consular officer has ordered business-size cards with information on how to apply for nonimmigrant visas, to be made available to all embassy employees for distribution to contacts and casual inquirers, allowing staff to gracefully avoid visa-related questions. The consular section has recently begun a program of cross-training, including involving all consular employees in the fraud prevention work that previously was handled by the American local hire who performs American citizen services duties. Employees enjoy this work and appreciate the fact that their judgment is valued.

The Gambia is affected by consular fraud issues that include false claims to U.S. citizenship; bogus applications for reports of birth; more than 85 percent relationship fraud in follow-to-join refugee and asylee cases; legal permanent residents who overstay and fall out of status, then "lose" their green cards and request travel letters; counterfeit and forged documents in support of nonimmigrant visa applications; and diplomatic and official passports and diplomatic notes claiming official travel for individuals who are not, in fact, members of the Gambian Government and have no intention of traveling to the United States for the purposes stated in those notes.

While most consular systems functions are used as required, there are a few that are not. First, the American citizen services applications require that certain kinds of cases be formally closed in the computer system. This has not been done habitually, but the assistant agreed to close cases as they are completed from now on. Second, the consular section has not used the check boxes in the nonimmigrant visa system

Although nonimmigrant visa referrals have not been correctly entered in the consular system and so cannot be checked by the inspection team, it is clear that the referral program has not been used as often as it could be, and is not used according to regulations. For example, none of the American officers currently at post are listed in the consular shared tables as able to make visa referrals. American officers do not clearly understand the referral A and B processes,

The consular officer does not follow the specified procedure for submitting and handling referrals. Rather, the officer requires that all applicants appear for interviews and that referral forms be sent separately to the consular section. The officer also requires referrals for individuals who have already presented applications and sometimes even diplomatic notes for official travel. The most recent written referral policy memo is incorrect, and the consular section has not accurately explained referral regulations to other embassy staff members.

This is a critical issue. Visa referrals were established to facilitate visas for embassy contacts whose travel is in the U.S. Government's interest (9 FAM Appendix K). A smoothly functioning referral system is a powerful tool for strengthening the U.S. relations with the host country and advancing American interests overseas.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Banjul should issue a correct, written nonimmigrant visa referral policy under the chief of mission's signature and hold an all-hands meeting to explain the policy and the submission procedure, encourage its use by embassy officers for qualified applicants, and assure the officers that the consular section will adjudicate the visas promptly. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

Regional consular officers provide comprehensive support for small, isolated consular sections, serving as information resources, mentors, and management consultants, and assisting officers and LE staff to improve consular section performance. The Bureau of Consular Affairs requires that embassies with officers at the FS-03 level and above be visited on an annual cycle "unless there are ongoing issues

requiring RCO intervention.” The regional consular officer for Banjul last visited post in October 2007, and it is clear that Banjul would benefit from a visit now to help it work through its troubled interoffice relationships and guide the consular section back into standard consular practices.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Banjul, in coordination with Consulate General Frankfurt, should arrange a visit from the regional consular officer as soon as possible to work with the consular staff to bring processes into line with standard visa procedures and to improve staff and interoffice relationships. (Action: Embassy Banjul, in coordination with ConGen Frankfurt)

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Embassy Banjul Resources – FY 2008

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding (000s)
State	9		70	79	\$ 3,261
Peace Corps	3	1	24	28	1,407
Totals	12	1	94	107	\$ 4,668

- Staff counts include number of authorized positions.
- Source: Embassy Banjul

RIGHTSIZING REVIEW

The embassy staffing profile has remained fairly stable since the 2002 inspection report. The addition of an information management officer (IMO) and an eligible family member (EFM) assistant, GSO increased the number of Americans from seven to nine. The number of LE staff increased from 63 to 70 during the same period. The Ambassador conducts the bilateral relationship with a political officer who is assigned political, economic, and public diplomacy functions. The DCM fills a combined DCM/management officer position and is responsible for the day-to-day administrative operations of the Embassy. The OIG team believes the current staffing structure at Embassy Banjul is adequate to support U.S. interests.

MANAGEMENT SECTION

The DCM/management officer directly manages financial and human resources (HR) functions and supervises the general services and information management functions. The local staff in HR and the financial management office are especially strong, but both the senior HR and financial management specialists have applied for special immigrant visas and expect to leave The Gambia next summer.

In the Embassy's 2010 MSP, the post requested that the GSO position be converted to a management officer position and that a new GSO position be established. In making this request, the DCM envisioned that a new local hire American could be hired to take on GSO duties. The current GSO has an EFM GSO assistant who is responsible for property and maintenance. The OIG team supports this request with the understanding that a local hire GSO can be hired, once the current EFM departs in FY 2010, in order to maintain the separation of duties between contracting and certifying.

The general services office faces very difficult challenges in The Gambia with the constant need to generate electricity, provide air conditioning, and maintain vehicles. Much of the staff is trained and experienced.

Regional administrative support from Embassy Dakar is good, especially in the area of financial management. The DCM/management officer would like to see more visits from the American regional financial management officer based in Dakar. The regional senior Foreign Service national financial specialist visits each quarter and is very helpful and does good work; however, it would be good to have the American financial management officer visit more often. In the 14 months the DCM has been at the post, the regional financial management officer only visited once. It is particularly important that the officer visit the Embassy in the near future because the post is in the process of recruiting a replacement for the senior Foreign Service national financial specialist who will be leaving in the summer of 2009.

Visits from the regional HR officer have been infrequent. The last visit by the officer occurred in February 2008. There is a memorandum of understanding with Embassy Dakar stipulating the regional HR officer would make quarterly visits to posts to provide HR oversight and assistance. The regional HR officer told the DCM that she would not be traveling to Banjul because of limitation on travel for family reasons. The Department has since advised that it will provide support from Washington.

Facilities and Real Property

All real property including 10 residences occupied by Embassy Banjul is leased, and all except the Ambassador's residence are short-term agreements. An experienced maintenance supervisor and a team of 21 maintain the spacious chancery and warehouse very well. During the inspection, the Ambassador's residence was undergoing a major bathroom repair, which appeared to be on track. The Embassy replaced three residences during the past year and does not plan on adding more units in the near future. The OIG team found the make ready for an incoming

officer to be inadequate. Clearly the management and general services offices did not make handling a newcomer's residence a priority. As a result, the Embassy lowered an employee's morale before he began work.

A competent written housing policy was updated this year. A housing board is not required because the post has only two agencies. The DCM is the single real property manager. Housing is held in high regard by embassy employees, and most describe their residential units as excellent. Buildings require steady maintenance. Housing maintenance is affected by construction standards and quality of work, which are well below U.S. standards. The regional facilities maintenance manager in Dakar has made two trips during 2008. The Embassy had an expectation, but no formal agreement, of one facilities consultation per quarter and would benefit from such assistance. The OIG team recommended informally that a memorandum of understanding be made with the Dakar facilities maintenance manager to make one assistance visit per quarter.

International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

The Department and Peace Corps are the two agencies serviced by ICASS at the Embassy. Embassy Banjul uses the ICASS Lite version of the cost distribution software. The Embassy has an ICASS council, with representatives from the Peace Corps and the Department. The DCM/management officer is the ICASS council chairperson, but that will change with the designation of the recently arrived regional security officer. The council meets on an ad hoc basis to discuss specific issues; it does not hold regular meetings. The OIG team made an informal recommendation to address this issue.

The Department is the service provider for all but the medical unit, where Peace Corps and the Department are colocated. The Peace Corps pays the rent for the medical unit; ICASS funds the electricity and water. Each agency pays the salary for one of two nurses.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The embassy structure has little depth; therefore, the Department should assign skilled, experienced officers to each position. At the time of the inspection all work requirements statements for Americans were current except for the newly arrived regional security officer and IMO.

controls. The WebPASS application for procurement and property is used; however, the office does not use WebPASS for its motor pool operation. The OIG team made an informal recommendation to implement this useful management tool. The Embassy has an effective work order processing system, but the principal challenge in general services is in maintaining the facilities, equipment, and appliances, and vehicles.

Spot checks of expendable supplies by the inspectors indicated exceptions for all items in the sample. Although not severe, the errors suggest that the next inventory's exceptions will exceed the Department's 1-percent of value standard. Procedures and processes for receiving, custody, and record keeping appear reasonable. OIG recommended informally that the general services office perform a management control review of the expendable supply operation.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The financial management office consists of an LE staff financial management specialist who supervises an account technician and a Class B cashier. The staff is well-trained, and the section generally functions well. The Embassy is satisfied with the services provided by the section, as evidenced by the above-average scores it received on the OIG's workplace and quality of life questionnaire. The section makes wide use of Department applications to perform its work more efficiently, including automated cashiering and electronic certification systems. However, due to insufficient band width in The Gambia, the Embassy is not a candidate for the regional financial management system direct connect program.

Embassy Dakar's regional financial management office provides good financial management support to Embassy Banjul. The two embassies have a memorandum of understanding that includes the number and duration of visits, the areas of focus, and a matrix of shared responsibilities. The regional financial management office prepares trip reports, with recommendations, following visits. Embassy Banjul has implemented most of the recommendations from the last visit.

Costs that should be appropriately borne by the representation appropriation are being charged to official residence expenses (ORE). Official residence expenses are those unusual expenses that a principal representative is obliged to incur in the operation and maintenance of a suitable official residence (SR 411c and d and SR 454). Overtime costs incurred when a household employee performs duties related to representation functions are costs that must be charged to the representation account with a separate receipt for services rendered. Also, transportation charges for representation functions should be charged to representation, not ORE. There were several ORE expense vouchers listing blanket transportation charges without any explanation as well as other questionable items that should not be reimbursed. ORE regulations prohibit payment for transportation expenses for household staff unless it is an allowance in accordance with the contract and prevailing practice. In addition, ORE regulations state that the contracts with ORE employees should not specify that overtime will be paid.

Recommendation 5: Embassy Banjul should stop charging servants time and transportation while working on representation functions to official residence expenses and amend the official residence expense servants' contracts to exclude overtime. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

The Embassy is not using electronic funds transfers for some payments to American employees. There were a couple of cases noted where officers received a cash advance for representation functions. Also, there is no consistent procedure for ensuring that U.S. dollar reimbursements for representation functions and other payments to American employees are made via electronic funds transfers to their bank accounts in lieu of cash payments. The Debt Collection Act of 1986 and sound cash management principles mandate that U.S. dollar payments be made electronically to individual bank accounts.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Banjul should establish and implement a policy requiring that U.S. dollar payments for reimbursement of representation, travel claims, and travel advances be made by electronic funds transfers to employees' bank accounts. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Embassy Banjul's information management (IM) staff supports the needs of 79 customers. 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 (DIN), unclassified and classified pouch, and mailroom operations. The OpenNet network consists of 57 workstations and nine servers; the classified local area network includes 10 workstations and five servers.

Embassy Banjul's IM section consists of an American IMO and an IM specialist who supervises five LE staff: a systems manager, computer operator, mail supervisor, mail clerk, and receptionist. The Ambassador's office management specialist performs backup communications responsibilities, primarily cable retrieval. The IM specialist had been acting for 8 months to cover the gap in the assignment of the information management officer and only received temporary duty personnel support for 3 months. The new IMO arrived during the inspection. The IM section is talented and capable, and the embassy staff rated the level of services provided as average on the workplace and quality of life questionnaire. The Embassy receives regional unclassified systems support from Embassy Dakar, the regional information management center in Cairo, as well as communications support from the Frankfurt regional support center.

The acting IMO had implemented a number of initiatives to improve overall operations in the section during the 8 months she was in charge. These projects included conducting computer security audits; establishing the contact data base on MS Access; implementing the regional IMO's recommendation; and maintenance of communications equipment and telephone system problems at the Embassy.

A great deal still remains to be done to recover as a result of the gap in the IMO position and the IM section is well on its way to implementing improvements.

Embassy Banjul is not using a standard automated work order system for responding to customer requests for computer support, general services, or other services. The information systems specialist is ready to implement the Web Post Administrative Suite work order module, which will help to improve processes and to provide better customer service.

Embassy Banjul has serious power issues that affect communications systems. There are frequent brownouts when power slowly fades or ceases altogether. Occasionally both the uninterruptible power supply and generator do not come on for several hours or power is out for an entire weekend before anyone is notified.

. There have also been problems when the power went off in the information program center, which caused the air conditioning to stop operating. Another air conditioner has been installed, but it runs off an extension cord. The post has lost five power supplies on the classified servers in the last 8 months and continually loses circuits.

The Embassy contacted the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations regional facility maintenance manager based in Dakar to request a visit to conduct a site survey to deal with the power problems and back up systems to control the damage. The visit was due to take place in late October 2008.

The embassy also asked that the regional engineering officer in Dakar send out a Seabee to install additional power outlets for the air conditioning in the information program center. The Seabee can also repair the damaged disintegrator needed for security purposes.

The Embassy has requested support from the Bureau of Information Resource Management to address the lack of band width and is negotiating with the local service provider and the diplomatic telecommunications service program office to try to get a two gigabit circuit to meet increase demands with new systems requirements.

The IM section has plans to set up a training center for staff using a leased building adjacent to the Embassy. However there are no training plans for the IM local staff to ensure they are up to speed on system certifications and other technical training. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that individual training plans should be developed for each member of the IM local staff.

The IM section has made progress on addressing the mission's information security needs as well as systems documentation. However, OIG identified several areas that need improvement to maximize its operations and security. These areas have been addressed by formal and informal recommendations.

Dedicated Internet Networks

The Embassy maintains one DIN, but has not submitted waivers to the Department information technology change control board for approval, as required by 5 FAM 874. The IMO was under the impression that waiver requests were not required because the DIN is not directly linked to OpenNet Plus. The DIN is being used for support for the public diplomacy office. Nonetheless, once OpenNet Plus service has been provided to a bureau or a mission, the post must request authorization from the Department for any DIN connection. According to State 166377, the

Telephone

There is no post policy on charging for long distance calls made by embassy offices through the switchboard. At present there is a manual procedure of reconciling long distance calls from a local telephone company, but the bills received are months late and records are not automated. The Call-Bill system has been installed but does not work. In accordance with 5 FAM 523, employees must use personal calling cards to make personal calls charged as long distance.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Banjul should install the Call-Bill system and automate the process of reconciling telephone bills with the local service. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

QUALITY OF LIFE

MEDICAL UNIT

Embassy Banjul's medical unit provides adequate service, according to discussions with embassy community members and the inspectors' direct observation. A well-qualified, positive, and energetic local-hire contract nurse directs the office, which is colocated with the Peace Corps medical unit. She works 25 hours a week. In addition to basic first-aid treatment for on-the-job injuries, she offers counseling and medical referral services. Embassy employees expressed appreciation for the nurse's accessibility and effective counseling. The unit holds fewer than 10 controlled drugs, all properly documented and safeguarded. The nurse also supervises a current medical supplies inventory and maintains an up-to-date medical services referral handout. The regional medical officer in Dakar schedules quarterly visits but has not visited during the past 9 months.

The Embassy lacks a contract for a medical officer. Currently, some physician services are obtained from the Embassy's former medical officer. Some of these services are performed at the joint medical unit and billed to and reimbursed by the Embassy.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Banjul should secure a local medical officer with a contract meeting Department standards. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

A position exists at Embassy Banjul for a community liaison office (CLO) coordinator, but the position has remained vacant as no EFMs have applied. The Embassy went through an effort to hire a faux CLO coordinator in December of 2007. The person originally selected ended up transferring to another embassy position after 7 months. Embassy units or individuals have taken over some customary CLO

coordinator work, such as orientation and recreational pursuits. Other activities have been discontinued. Personal questionnaires suggest that the embassy community would like to have a CLO coordinator to organize recreational events and to publicize The Gambia's limited recreational offerings. A waiver has been granted to hire a faux CLO coordinator, and interviews of local American citizens are planned.

SCHOOLS

The regional education officer from the Office of Overseas Schools in Washington visited the school in 2007. Although very small, the school's program is considered adequate through the elementary school grades.

and an embassy officer serves on the school board. The Department's Office of Overseas Schools provided a \$75,000 grant in FY 2008.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Embassy Banjul explicitly stated issues with internal controls in its 2010 MSP. This risk of asset loss intensifies in developing countries. However, in the annual chief of mission management controls assurance statement, there was no mention of any internal control weaknesses. According to the executive direction functional questionnaire, there were five allegations of waste, fraud, or mismanagement (including malfeasance) during the last 12 months in Banjul. Also, according to the chief of mission statement prepared for the OIG, there was an ongoing management controls review underway during the last few months. The DCM/management officer admitted that each section did not complete the annual risk assessment questionnaire, which forms the basis for completing the chief of mission statement as required by 2 FAM 020. He took responsibility for submitting the boilerplate response and not listing any specific management control weaknesses.

Recommendation 11: Embassy Banjul should conduct the internal control review, revise the chief of mission annual management controls assurance statement with identified weaknesses, and design and implement a plan to take corrective action. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

One potential internal control weakness area that the DCM/management officer did mention was his concern about medical reimbursements to local staff under the embassy medical program. The cost of medical reimbursements to local employees increased by 40 percent between 2007 and 2008, rising from \$24,800 to \$34,800. The program is administered by the medical unit, but in the OIG's brief review there was no way to verify the billings or the eligibility for the employees making claims. In other embassies this program is administered by the HR section, but given the size of this mission, that is not practical.

Certifying Officer

According to Global Financial Services Charleston, there is only an alternate certifying officer, the FS-04 junior political-economic officer, who received a temporary designation effective August 18, 2008. The DCM/management officer had a desig-

nation as certifying officer from September 2007 to January 2008, but it was revoked. Global Financial Services Charleston has no record of the DCM/management officer completing the certifying officer course or of a designated principal certifying officer.

Recommendation 12:

Embassy Emergency Evacuation Boat

Embassy Banjul uses a 24-foot Boston Whaler boat 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 the boat for recreational purposes per procedures outlined in the post boat policy. There are associated costs for a boat captain and fuel to operate. All costs are currently paid out of program funds except for recreational purposes when the user pays.

The OIG team believes the boat can be a morale builder for this isolated mission, provided recreational use is divided equitably among Department and Peace Corps staff. There is a boat policy on its use that stipulates employee liability and states that the GSO determines whether the boat will be made available based on security maintenance and weather. However, OIG is uncertain about safety and U.S. Government liability concerns.

Recommendation 13: Embassy Banjul, in coordination with 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 embassy boat and issue the results of the review in an embassy administrative notice. (Action: Embassy Banjul, in coordination with AF and L)

Collections

While appropriate collections are being made for use of the embassy boat, this is not the case for many personal telephone calls, either cellular phone or long distance. In FY 2008, the post paid \$71,100 for telephone tolls and recurring charges as compared to \$46,900 in FY 2007, an increase of 52 percent. Employees have unlimited use of the embassy cell phones and office telephones to make calls. The OIG noted some confusion regarding charges for personal calls that needs better coordination between the general services office and the financial management office. The post administrative policy on use of cell phones describes the procedure whereby every month, the general services office sends a notice to each individual with a cell phone bill exceeding 400 dalasis (\$17.50). Each cell phone user will identify personal calls and return the annotated bill to the general services office. The general services office then bills the individual for the personal calls and forwards a copy to the financial management office and cashier. The financial management office maintains a centralized accounts receivable ledger to track all outstanding indebtedness, but OIG identified only one individual had been paying the bill for personal calls. There were no bills shown for LE or American staff personal use of telephones. The general services office recently switched to a new cell phone provider who offers no fee calls within its network, which will mean a significant cost savings

According to 5 FAM 511, telephone services are for official business. However, occasional local calls are permitted as long as they do not result in additional charges to the U.S. Government and do not interfere with work. There is no post policy on charging for long distance calls made from the office. There is a called-bill system, but it is not functional, consequently, there are no records of calls being made. In accordance with 5 FAM 523, employees must use personal calling cards to make personal calls charged as long distance. OIG did not find a post policy on making long distance calls.

Recommendation 14: Embassy Banjul should review its policy on allowing employees to make personal local calls on cellular telephones and establish and implement a viable procedure for collecting reimbursements. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

Recommendation 15: Embassy Banjul should establish and enforce a policy consistent with Department regulations that prohibits making long distance personal calls from government phones. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The Office of the Under Secretary for Foreign Assistance, in coordination with the Bureau of African Affairs, should work with the U.S. Agency for International Development to review the foreign assistance strategy as laid out in Embassy Banjul's Mission Strategic Plan and produce a short assistance strategy for the Embassy's review and comment. (Action: F, in coordination with AF)

Recommendation 2:

Recommendation 3: Embassy Banjul should issue a correct, written nonimmigrant visa referral policy under the chief of mission's signature and hold an all-hands meeting to explain the policy and the submission procedure, encourage its use by embassy officers for qualified applicants, and assure the officers that the consular section will adjudicate the visas promptly. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

Recommendation 4: Embassy Banjul, in coordination with Consulate General Frankfurt, should arrange a visit from the regional consular officer as soon as possible to work with the consular staff to bring processes into line with standard visa procedures and to improve staff and interoffice relationships. (Action: Embassy Banjul, in coordination with ConGen Frankfurt)

Recommendation 5: Embassy Banjul should stop charging servants time and transportation while working on representation functions to official residence expenses and amend the official residence expense servants' contracts to exclude overtime. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

Recommendation 6: Embassy Banjul should establish and implement a policy requiring that U.S. dollar payments for reimbursement of representation, travel claims, and travel advances be made by electronic funds transfers to employees' bank accounts. (Action: Embassy Banjul)

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-Economic Reporting

Embassy Banjul has very limited reporting resources. A survey of Washington users of embassy reporting identified areas of special interest.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Banjul should amend its reporting plan to focus resources, as far as practicable, on the activities of radical states in The Gambia; review of the country's eligibility under the Millennium Challenge Account; greater Gambian economic coordination with its neighbors; and the development of possible off-shore oil resources.

The new political-economic assistant has not had FSI training.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Banjul should arrange for the newly hired political-economic assistant to receive appropriate Foreign Service Institute political and public diplomacy training at an early opportunity.

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Management

The management notice for representation allowances describing procedures for submitting claims for representation expenses is outdated.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Banjul should update the per capita limits for reimbursement of representation claims.

There is no mission policy spelling out the responsibilities of employees for the sale of personal property prior to departure from Embassy Banjul.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Banjul should issue an administrative procedure on the sale of personal property consistent with regulations.

The current post report is dated 2004 and is out of date.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Banjul should update the post report.

The ICASS council meets on an ad hoc basis but does not hold regular meetings.

Informal Recommendation 7: The International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council should hold regularly scheduled meetings.

Embassy Banjul's performance standards for ICASS are outdated.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Banjul should review International Cooperative Administrative Support Services standards for each cost center and update them as necessary.

Human Resources

There is no management notice describing the Embassy Banjul policies and procedures for issuing awards.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Banjul should publicize the awards program and nomination procedures.

The Ambassador's office management specialist is inputting the final time and attendance reporting directly into the Win/T&A system each pay period for all American direct-hire personnel.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Banjul should transfer responsibility to the principal timekeeper for consolidating the final time and attendance submission and employees.

The Embassy does not have a policy on overtime, and overtime is not always approved in advance as required by 3 FAH-1 H-3130

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Banjul should establish a policy on overtime and issue an administrative notice requiring that all overtime be approved in advance in accordance with Department regulations.

Financial Management Services

The suspense deposit abroad account was being used for depositing funds for a community self-help project.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Banjul should develop and implement procedures to ensure that the deposits in the suspense deposit abroad account (19X6809) conform to Department regulations.

Very few payments are made via electronic funds transfer to local vendors.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy Banjul should seek to obtain bank account information from vendors to facilitate more electronic payments.

The voucher for payment of telephone charges does not include a certification that long distance calls are necessary and in the interests of the U.S. Government as required in accordance with 4 FAM 447.7 and 4 FAH-3 H-447.6-2.

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy Banjul should certify official long-distance telephone calls as required by Department regulations.

General Services Operations

Housing maintenance is affected by lower construction standards and quality of work which are well below U.S. standards. The regional facilities maintenance manager provided out of Dakar had made two trips in 2008. The Embassy could benefit from more assistance.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy Banjul should negotiate a memorandum of understanding with the Dakar regional facility maintenance manager for one assistance visit per quarter.

Management Controls

The alternate cashier has not been issued a permanent cash advance as required by 4 FAH-3 H398.1-1.

Informal Recommendation 21: Embassy Banjul should issue a cash advance to the alternate cashier in accordance with Department regulations.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Barry L. Wells	01/08
Deputy Chief of Mission	Brian Bachman	08/07
Chiefs of Sections:		
Management	Brian Bachman	08/07
General Services	Sharon Gordon	01/08
Consular	Wendy A. Kennedy	08/07
Political/Economic/Public Affairs	Tashawna Bethea	07/08
Regional Security	Aaron Wilson, Jr.	09/08
Other Agencies:		
Peace Corps	Michael McConnell	07/08

ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Bureau of African Affairs
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
CLO	community liaison office
DCM	deputy chief of mission
Department	Department of State
DIN	dedicated Internet Network
EFM	eligible family member
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
GSO	general services officer
HR	human resources
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IM	information management
IMO	information management officer
LE	locally employed
MSP	Mission Strategic Plan
OIG	Office of Inspector General
ORE	official residence expenses
RCSO	regional computer security officer

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