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

Report of Inspection

Embassy Paramaribo,
Suriname

Report Number ISP-I-09-38A, May 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.

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- The Ambassador and the deputy chief of mission (DCM) are strong and focused leaders who use an open and collaborative management style to successfully meet U.S. strategic objectives in Suriname. The Ambassador carefully oversees the interagency team to maximize the impact of limited foreign assistance funds.
- Despite an aging chancery with (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2), poor quality health service, and less-experienced staff, the Ambassador ensures high staff morale through mentoring, listening to staff, and visiting all sections of the Embassy regularly.
- The new embassy compound (NEC) replacement will be postponed from 2013 to 2018 or later. Maintaining a safe, secure, functional chancery compound in the interim will require commitment from the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO).
- Embassy Paramaribo, despite aging facilities stretched to capacity, carries out a security program that meets the challenges of its environment in Suriname. The Ambassador and DCM strongly support the security program and exercise good oversight.
- Embassy Paramaribo carries out an active public diplomacy agenda despite limited resources. However, American officers carrying out this agenda are trained primarily in political and economic reporting, rather than in public diplomacy.
- The political-economic section submits well-written required annual reports (e.g., Human Rights, Investment Climate Statement, Trafficking in Persons, Counterterrorism, Counternarcotics, and Child Labor reports), but other reporting remains sparse.
- The medical insurance coverage of the locally employed (LE) staff is not in line with that of the mission's comparators. Most comparators provide medical insurance to retirees.
- The viability of the pension plan provider of the LE staff is in doubt.
- The local standard of health care is a major concern of American direct-hire employees.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between January 4 and 30, 2009; and in Paramaribo, Suriname, between February 28 and March 13, 2009. Ambassador Pamela E. Bridgewater (team leader), Tom Carmichael (deputy team leader), Anne Carson, Joseph Catalano, Joseph Dias, Marta Fikru, Michael Lynch, Carl Troy, and Tim Wildy conducted the inspection.

CONTEXT



Suriname and the United States have correct, cordial relations and partner primarily in defense, health, and law enforcement initiatives. An underdeveloped, South American country in an isolated area with limited air connections, Suriname's population is an estimated 493,000 people, 242,000 of whom live in Paramaribo, the capital. Suriname borders Brazil, Guyana, and French Guiana, and its vast, unprotected land mass makes it a prime loca-

tion for drug trafficking and general lawlessness. The United States has some popular support among the Surinamese people. The Government of Suriname is a member of the Caribbean Community. In international organizations, the Government of Suriname generally votes with the Caribbean Community, which often aligns with Cuba and Venezuela.

Embassy Paramaribo and the other mission component agencies; the Department of Defense, the Peace Corps, and the Department of Justice's Drug Enforcement Administration, work collaboratively to help effect a positive image of the United States, to strengthen the police and the judiciary, and to improve economic and social development by fostering a more conducive trade environment.

Working with scant resources, less-experienced Department staff and heads of agencies with first time embassy assignments, Embassy Paramaribo successfully meets Department strategic goals for which it has resources. The military liaison office (MLO) implemented assistance through International Military Education and Training, Foreign Military Funding, and Traditional Commanders Activities. Consequently, the Ministry of Defense and the Suriname Defense Forces have robust relations with the Embassy and the U.S. military.

The successful State Partnership Program with the South Dakota National Guard is buttressed with support from the Defense Department. This relationship has expanded from military-to-military activities to include wide participation from South Dakota's private business sector and voluntary service organizations.

Embassy Paramaribo has 25 direct-hire American and 50 LE staff positions. Humanitarian assistance programs augmented by the various military assistance programs comprise the bulk of foreign assistance. (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2) (b) (2)(b) (2) . Paramaribo is scheduled for a NEC in 2018.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Focused executive direction, collaboration, and openness characterize the leadership and management style of the Ambassador and the DCM in effectively meeting U.S. strategic objectives in Suriname. The Ambassador arrived in September 2006, and the DCM arrived in September 2008. Both are experienced officers suited for their positions.

The Ambassador is proactive and guides the interagency team well. The working relationship is generally good. The Ambassador and the DCM successfully encouraged agency heads to share information with each other. The Ambassador is working hard to clarify and refine the relationships among the interagency members, some of whom are serving at an embassy for the first time, and is trying to instill in them a “mission first” attitude. The agency heads give the Ambassador high marks for her excellent support.

The Ambassador understands chief of mission authorities and the National Security Decision Directive-38 process; National Security Decision Directive 38 processes are current.

The Ambassador oversees coordination of foreign assistance programs. They include various projects and activities under the rubric of the MLO and an active State Partnership Program with South Dakota in which all mission sections play a role. The DCM coordinated a participatory Mission Strategic Plan (MSP) process. She provided substantial guidance to the entry-level officer (ELO) point of contact on the process to ensure that every element provided meaningful input.

The Ambassador and the DCM are attentive to security and assist the regional security officer in ensuring that personnel adhere to established procedures. They remind staff verbally and through updated security directives to comply with after hour and log book policies and to perform radio checks. They participate in safety drills and reinforce travel safety measures.

With a strong concern for morale and desire to promote accessibility and inclusivity, the Ambassador and the DCM lead by example. The Ambassador visits each embassy section twice per week and knows U.S. and LE staff by name. She invites all staff to appropriate representational events. The Ambassador hosts welcome

luncheons for every newly arrived section chief, enabling them to meet host nation counterparts and other interlocutors. The Ambassador and the DCM fully support Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), articulate their support to U.S. and LE staff, and provide EEO training opportunities for all staff.

The DCM and the Ambassador generously open their residences and facilities for embassy social events. The Ambassador encourages physical fitness and she participates in regular fitness activities with the embassy community. (b) (2)(b) (2) (b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2) the executive office worked with the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) council, which recently approved the hire of a part time physician.

ELOs meet formally and informally with the Ambassador and the DCM for mentoring. Two interns receive excellent guidance from the Ambassador and the DCM. They rotate among the sections, attend substantive meetings, and perform a variety of Foreign Service work as integral, welcomed members of the embassy community.

Public diplomacy (PD) is the mission's primary goal and is integrated in all mission activities. The Ambassador's residence is frequently the venue for events such as the post U.S. election night breakfast. The Ambassador is comfortable addressing the media in fluent Dutch on light matters and more substantial policy issues.

The Ambassador seeks and respects advice from her staff. When an LE staffer noted the insufficiency of a venue for a U.S. inaugural event, the Ambassador welcomed the suggestion and the venue location was changed. The Ambassador expects good performance from her staff, but is gracious with shortcomings. Embassy staff embraces her enthusiasm and works to her expectations.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

POLITICAL-ECONOMIC SECTION

Political and Economic Advocacy and Reporting

Embassy Paramaribo's political-economic section consists of an FS-O3 political officer in a stretch position as the FS-02 section chief, an ELO economic officer, an eligible family member (EFM) office management specialist, an LE economic assistant, and an LE commercial assistant/business educational resource center advisor. The section also includes a full-time LE public diplomacy assistant funded by the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Public Diplomacy Office. The LE political/labor assistant position has remained vacant for several months as the embassy discusses revision of the position. The Embassy is advertising another position, an outreach coordinator and protocol assistant for the executive office, whose duties will mesh with the political, economic, and public diplomacy section's activities.

The section carries out traditional political-economic functions as well as takes the lead for the Embassy's MSP's overriding priority, public diplomacy. Public diplomacy, however, makes up the bulk of the section's work. During the Office of Inspector General (OIG) inspection, the section devoted its time chiefly to support the visit of a 14-person South Dakotan delegation. In February, the section held several events connected with Black History Month. These events were well-designed and resonated with history and experience of the Surinamese.

Update FSBid Descriptions

A mismatch exists between the section officers' core strengths, training and experience in political and economic reporting and its primary mission-public diplomacy. The section chief has no PD training and the economic ELO has only minimal PD tradecraft training. The availability of more accurate FSBid job descriptions for career development officers might have allowed for arrangement of necessary training prior to arrival.

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Human Resources, should rewrite the FSBid position description for the ELO to highlight public diplomacy responsibilities, while also including political and economic reporting and consular back-up. (Action: WHA, in coordination with HR)

Improved Language Skills Needed

The ELO received Foreign Service Institute language training and tested at the 3/3 level in Dutch. The section chief position is language-designated also, but the incumbent, like her predecessor, received a language waiver and does not speak Dutch. The chief therefore depends too heavily on LE staffers, and policy advocacy is less effective without a fully language-qualified officer.

The OIG team ascertained through informal e-mail exchanges that the Department is considering adding Dutch language-designated positions in Paramaribo to the list of Out Year World Language Post positions. If the positions were given this designation, future officers in the positions would have sufficient time to receive Dutch language training before arrival in Paramaribo. The OIG team endorses this approach.

Staffing Shortage

Staffing shortages have worsened matters. In 2008, staffing gaps required that the section chief and the ELO serve several weeks as consular officer. Moreover, the absence of an outreach/protocol officer and political assistant means the Embassy's institutional memory is short and that additional time is required to identify counterparts in the Surinamese Government and to ensure correct spelling of their titles and name, etc. There has been a delay of several months in advertising the political assistant position. The section chief plans to finish consultations on the position description with the Ambassador and ask the human resources office to advertise the position before the chief's April vacation.

Adding an ELO rotational consular/political economic reporting slot could provide more consular backup, a greater opportunity for orderly ELO career development, and a stronger political-economic section. The OIG team discussed with the Embassy the value of reviewing the section's staffing needs after the LE vacancies were filled.

Economic and Political Reporting

In the current circumstances, the section chief has focused on reporting basics and the required annual reports (e.g., Human Rights, Investment Climate Statement, Trafficking in Persons, Counterterrorism, Counternarcotics, and Child Labor reports). These are up-to-date, well-written, and correctly sourced. In addition, Washington agencies praised the section's occasional cables on political and economic developments.

The section is attentive to political and economic developments, but reporting other than the required annual reporting remains sparse. Opportunities were lost due to short-staffing. For example, the annual counternarcotics report notes Suriname's extradition of FARC criminals to Colombia; but no time remained for a more detailed follow-up cable. Likewise, the section chief did not have time to report on a 2008 money-laundering seminar held in Suriname.

There was an overall section plan for political and economic reporting for 2008, but no plan for 2009. A plan would help the overtaxed section keep track of its goals and help it engage Washington agencies on subjects of interest. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the Embassy create a formal reporting plan for 2009.

Public Diplomacy Functions

The political-economic section chief's distribution of public diplomacy program responsibilities among the political-economic section's direct-hire American and LE staff and the PD LE staff assistant requires tight coordination among elements. However, formal coordination mechanisms have not been put into place. The section chief has not organized the section's PD work clearly enough. The section has not developed a written institutional analysis defining the embassy's target audiences in Suriname and the means of conveying U.S. messages. It also has not established an organizational chart with program responsibilities and a set of standard operating procedures (SOP). The section can update both these tools as the embassy team learns and develops greater coordination.

The section does not have a public diplomacy activities calendar listing events from all mission elements to better organize work and to better coordinate mission events.

During the inspection, the Embassy advertised for a part-time protocol assistant and outreach coordinator for the executive office. The Embassy does not have a computerized database for protocol and outreach activities, including sending of invitations and distribution of materials by thematic designation.

The section's ELO has a grants warrant; however, the Embassy has no written SOPs in place for managing grants. As the officer begins to use grants to fund public diplomacy and other activities, established procedures will ensure proper accounting.

The OIG inspection team counseled section staff and made informal recommendations to provide coordination mechanisms to improve the section's work.

The political-economic section chief is in charge of overall management of the public diplomacy program and should have a firm grasp of expenditures and available budget to plan her agenda. The officer has had no training or budget experience. The embassy financial management office plans to meet with the section chief monthly to provide updates on funds use and availability for PD and other programs.

Embassy Paramaribo's American Corner is located in the Cultural Center of Suriname, a recently renovated nongovernmental organization facility with a library, computer training facilities, and an ample auditorium. The center is spacious and its management is seeking to attract nongovernment organizations as renters, which will enhance the flow of visitors the American Corner may target. The OIG team agreed with the embassy that the American Corner has great potential for embassy outreach, and dedicating additional resources to the American Corner would reap significant benefits.

The LE commercial specialist carries out commercial activities and educational advising. She has been an advisor for 5 years and has attended an educational advisors' regional conference with Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' support. The LE staffer carries out modest outreach events. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' regional education advising coordinator, however, has not visited Suriname. Although the coordinator maintains nearly daily contact through phone calls and e-mail with the educational advisor, a visit by the coordinator to reinforce the LE specialist's advising skills through observation and consultations on outreach would enhance her effectiveness.

Recommendation 2: The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs should send a regional educational advisor coordinator to visit Suriname for consultations on the Embassy's educational advising activities. (Action: ECA)

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Embassy Paramaribo crafted an assistance program that provides a sturdy platform for engagement with the Government of Suriname, despite the lack of a U.S. Agency for International Development component. The Ambassador and the DCM ensure that these programs are fully coordinated within the Embassy.

The mission nurtures a broad partnership between the South Dakota National Guard and the Surinamese military, to enrich military-to-military relationships. This partnership proves helpful to develop business, social, and cultural ties. During the OIG inspection, a 14-person South Dakotan delegation visited Suriname and participated in a conference on “Building Business and Cultural Relations.” The Minister of Defense hosted a reception for the delegation. \$110,000 in U.S. Government programming supports the partnership. In addition, the state of South Dakota funds visits of South Dakota business and professional persons, who give advice and support to Surinamese organizations, such as the Suriname American Chamber of Commerce.

In a more traditional vein, Surinamese border and military agencies are slated to receive technical equipment, weapons maintenance supplies and medical supplies to build up their counternarcotics and border control capabilities (\$1.6 million in section 1206 funding). The MLO works with the Ambassador to obtain the necessary end use agreements so that delivery may begin.

In FY 2008, United States Southern Command-sponsored humanitarian assistance totaled \$2.5 million. The bulk (\$1.91 million) supported the visit of a medical services ship, the USNS Comfort. School refurbishment and supplies account for the remainder. International Military Education Training funds (\$200,000) supported training and an additional \$104,000 from the United States Southern Command’s Traditional Commander’s Activities underwrote the costs of Surinamese military representatives’ participation in regional events.

Embassy Paramaribo ensures that Suriname is represented in U.S. Government-supported anti-HIV/AIDS programs. An experienced political-economic section LE assistant capably manages embassy’s participation in U.S. government HIV/AIDS programs. The mission is now implementing two programs (approximately \$28,000) funded under the Ambassador’s HIV/AIDS Prevention Initiative. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention staff in Port of Spain intend to increase funding under the Ambassadors’ Fund for the Prevention of HIV/AIDS to Embassy Paramaribo, based on the Embassy’s unusually good work in designing and implementing

previously funded programs. Embassy Paramaribo also participates fully in planning for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief II regional programming. In addition, the Surinamese military was selected to receive approximately \$100,000 in Department of Defense programming to help prevent HIV/AIDS in the military.

In another assistance-related matter, the section chief cut through a welter of confusing administrative matters in Washington to make sure that the Embassy's anti-trafficking funding was secure.

The Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs will supplement local law enforcement's anti-trafficking and victim protection efforts (\$102,000) and develop a computerized fingerprint file (\$42,000). Noticeable improvements in these areas should buttress the bilateral working relationship and thereby lay the ground for more comprehensive programming to address the larger counternarcotics and border control issues.

The Bureaus of Educational and Cultural Affairs and International Information Programs provided funding in FY 2008 for three Surinamese on International Visitor Leadership programs and underwrote the costs of two U.S. Speaker programs in FY 2008 and one thus far in FY 2009 in Suriname. This and other cost-sharing augmented the approximately \$30,000 for programs that Embassy Paramaribo's PD budget contains.

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

A Civil Service employee on an excursion, well-versed in nonimmigrant visa and fraud prevention functions, capably supervises one LE visa assistant plus a half-time LE visa clerk. Since 2006, a consular associate position remains vacant due to a lack of qualified candidates. Services to American citizens and visa services are noted appropriately in the MSP. The consular section provides a full range of assistance to an estimated 500 resident and 350 American tourists at any given time in Suriname, plus a smaller number of American residents and tourists in neighboring French Guiana. The section regularly updates its e-mail-based warden system and uses 16 wardens to relay security and other information to private Americans in both countries.

Last year, the section processed just over 4,000 nonimmigrant visa applications from residents of both countries, an increase of over 30 percent from 2007 and over 60 percent from 2005. Clients request visa appointments and complete their applications online, but all fee collections and returns of visaed passports are conducted at the interview windows. The immigrant visa workload is steady at about 120 applica-

tions annually for the past several years. Although the visa and American services workloads are low, individual cases are time-consuming due to fraudulent documentation and linguistic and transport challenges.

Since arriving in late 2008, the consular manager works to update and streamline the workflow and to strengthen required management controls. Many procedures were neglected during a lengthy staffing gap that was filled by temporary officers provided by the Bureau of Consular Affairs and other sections of the Embassy. All of the management controls highlighted by the regional consular officer during a November 2008 visit are established with the exception of the Annual Certification of Management Controls and Visa Lookout Accountability, which was due in November 2008. The OIG team made informal recommendations that this report and the F-77 report on potential evacuees in the event of an emergency be completed and forwarded to Washington as soon as possible.

The consular workspace is generally adequate, but its configuration is insufficient for current and projected needs and must be addressed before the Embassy moves to new quarters in 10 years. The outer public entrance to the Embassy hosts a message board, but it does not list the consular services provided, public hours, or telephone numbers for use during the business day or for after hours emergencies. The OIG team made an informal recommendation to develop and post signage to address this issue.

Inside the consular waiting room, there are only two windows with document trays, intercoms, and systems connectivity to handle the full range of consular services and inquiries. An LE staff member accepts nonimmigrant visa applications, visa fees, photographs, and supporting documents at one window, while the consular officer takes applicants' fingerprints and conducts interviews at the other window. Backlogs and inefficient use of staff time result from the need to conduct multiple functions at the same time at each window. There is, however, an unused interview window in the telephone and receptionist area that faces the consular waiting room. If used by a third consular employee to take visa applicants' fingerprints prior to their interviews, this window will significantly reduce waiting periods and inefficiencies.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Paramaribo, in coordination with the Bureaus of Consular Affairs and Diplomatic Security, should reconfigure one window in its telephone receptionist area with a microphone system and automated equipment to take visa applicants' fingerprints and perform ancillary consular duties. (Action: Embassy Paramaribo, in coordination with CA and DS)

The LE consular clerk is a half-time program funded position, with the other 20 hours per week devoted to duties in the human resources section. In its most recent annual Consular Package, Embassy Paramaribo stated its need to convert the consular clerk to a full-time position, given the increased workload in all consular services, and particularly those relating to visas including fraud prevention work. It would also provide full-time LE staff coverage during absence of the consular assistant and during peak visa periods.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Paramaribo should request and the Department should approve and fund locally employed consular clerk position C311415213 on a full-time basis. (Action: Embassy Paramaribo, in coordination WHA and CA)

The inability to find and hire a qualified EFM consular associate to perform nonadjudicating functions reserved for American citizens, such as fingerprinting visa applicants, has hindered the section's efficiency. The existing consular associate position has remained vacant for over 2 years. It would be easier for the Embassy to hire a qualified EFM consular assistant or visa biometrics clerk, because these positions do not demand the advanced training in Washington that a consular associate requires. They could not perform all the functions of an EFM consular associate; however, they could take fingerprints and perform other time-consuming duties such as outreach, updating of information sheets and SOPs, and conducting validation surveys. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the Embassy reclassify this position to make finding a qualified candidate more likely.

Regional Support

The Washington-based regional consular office visits Paramaribo annually. The consular manager praised the regional consular office for providing timely, good advice through frequent telephone and e-mail contacts. The consular manager also obtains frequent guidance from regional offices of Citizenship and Immigration Services and of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, although no representatives from those offices made visits in recent years. The OIG team made an informal recommendation that the Embassy ask the Department of Homeland Security to send regional representatives for periodic familiarization visits and training activities with local counterparts.

Visa Referral System

During the inspection, the Bureau of Consular Affairs provided its edits to Embassy Paramaribo's updated visa referral policy, which the embassy circulated as the inspection ended.

Counterterrorism Efforts – Visas Viper

Embassy Paramaribo adheres to current Visas Viper guidelines in identifying and submitting names of suspected terrorists to the Department for inclusion in all appropriate databases. The required monthly meetings are chaired by the DCM with participation by the consular officer and all appropriate offices with law enforcement concerns. One such meeting was held during the OIG inspection.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource Table

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Locally Employed Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding
State – Program	8	2	7	17	\$773,033
State – ICASS	2	1	37	40	1,744,500
State – Public Diplomacy			1	1	60,700
State – Diplomatic Security	1		1	2	1,081,464
State – Representation					19,100
State – OBO					536,552
Military Liaison Office	3		1	4	
Drug Enforcement Administration	5			5	
Peace Corps	3*		3	6	
Totals	22	3	50	75	\$4,215,349

Source: Embassy Paramaribo

* Does not include 15 local-hire contractors.

Overview

Overall Embassy Paramaribo is managed effectively. The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA), OBO, and the Florida Regional Center (FRC) provide good support.

Historically, Embassy Paramaribo proves difficult to staff. It has experienced staffing gaps and less than optimal assignments in recent years. Finding experienced, at grade, language-qualified officers is a challenge. For example, an eligible family member served as a former management officer.

Program and ICASS budgets remain barely sufficient. LE staffing is at appropriate levels in most areas. The financial viability of the LE staff pension provider is a concern. Unlike their comparators, retired LE staff does not receive medical insurance coverage. The overriding embassy concern remains health care.

The current chancery building will not be replaced until 2018 or later, so OBO's continued support for the existing chancery compound is essential.

MANAGEMENT

The management officer assumed the position 4 months ago. Early indications are that the management officer will be a good steward of mission resources. She is assisted by a general services officer. She handles human resources and financial management portfolios with assistance of FRC support personnel and oversees the community liaison office and health unit.

Mission personnel gave management services high marks on the ICASS Customer Services Survey. They gave the services high marks on one series of OIG questionnaires and voiced only a few complaints on the other series completed for the inspection.

With only a few exceptions, management operations are effective. Procurement activities and controls over bulk fuel were weak. Several LE staff human resource issues require resolution.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The FRC provides effective regional human resources support. ICASS and OIG survey scores show that clients are satisfied with customer service and technical knowledge. The regional human resources officer visits the embassy every 2 months and provides daily virtual online support. This arrangement works well and requires no changes.

One LE human resources specialist and a part-time human resources clerk effectively handle the needs of 75 clients. The regional human resources officer and management officer handle personnel issues specific to American direct hires. The section follows 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and 3 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH) regulations. The only exception found during the inspection was that the post differential, retail price, and education allowance reports were not current. OIG made an informal recommendation to correct this deficiency.

The LE staff complained about the lack of medical benefits for retirees and possible changes to their medical insurance coverage. The human resources specialist voiced concern about the lack of information about the pension system and the

need for a pension plan audit. During the inspection, the OIG team made inquiries about these issues and discussed them with the Department and the embassy management team. The DCM meets with all locally employed staff once a month about their concerns.

Pension Plan

Although retirees receive monthly pension benefits, the LE staff is concerned about the financial viability of their pension provider. A Dubai-based insurance and financial services company provides pension plan coverage for Embassy Paramaribo and other embassies in the Caribbean.

This issue is not unique to Embassy Paramaribo. Other embassies that used off shore pension providers have similar concerns. Locals staffs are concerned that their pension funds could be underfunded thereby leaving them with no retirement payments.

Embassy Paramaribo cannot fund the estimated \$85,000 needed for an audit. It is unknown if Embassy Paramaribo's pension plan is also underfunded and if a recommendation to switch their retirement plan to a different type is necessary. Department guidance states that it is the embassy's responsibility to follow up with their benefit plan provider and to monitor services provided. However, most embassies lack the internal expertise to monitor their pension providers and lack funding to perform pension actuarial evaluations. The OIG team discussed this matter with WHA and learned that this issue affects a number of posts in their geographical region.

Realizing the significance of this issue, WHA recently proposed to the Under Secretary for Management that the Department hire professional actuaries and auditors to ensure that existing pension plans receive adequate funding and receive maximum return on investments. The Department did not make any decision on the proposal. The OIG team believes this type of assistance is needed to assist embassies with this complex and costly issue.

The OIG team informally recommended that the Embassy contact its pension provider and request a copy of the external audit report and other financial information. The OIG team also informally recommended the Embassy develop and implement procedures for monitoring its pension benefit provider.

Financial Management

The FRC provides good regional financial management support. Embassy officials and LE staff say that regional support is very good and responsive. The regional financial management officer (RFMO) visits the Embassy every 2 months and provides daily virtual online support.

Embassy Paramaribo outsourced its local guard voucher processing responsibility to the Charleston Financial Services Center's Post Support Unit. This arrangement works well and costs \$880 annually to process 80 strip codes.

ICASS and OIG survey scores show that customers are highly satisfied with financial services. Three LE staff, including a financial specialist, voucher examiner, and cashier, support 75 clients. The RFMO recommends hiring a part-time budget analyst. The OIG team concurs with this recommendation.

Financial audits show that the LE staff does not always follow financial procedures. The RFMO discussed with them the importance of adhering to financial procedures. The RFMO plans to monitor and perform financial audits until staff achieves an acceptable compliance level. The OIG team advised the staff of the importance of following financial procedures.

The legacy accounting system, LanSPFM, will be taken out of service at the end of the fiscal year. Bandwidth limitations prevent the installation of the Department's preferred accounting system. Until bandwidth issues are resolved, the embassy has two options: to retrain the staff to use Win Datel or outsource all voucher processing. The Embassy is assessing the cost and feasibility of these options.

International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

ICASS functions adequately. The ICASS council meets once a month and as needed. Each agency has an elected representative on the council. Relationships among these representatives are cordial and professional. The annual ICASS survey shows that users are satisfied with administrative services. The mission plans to adopt the uniform ICASS standards found on the Department's ICASS Web site.

The OIG team informally recommended that the ICASS council take minutes of its meetings. In many cases, the DCM attends and acts as the Ambassador's representative or ombudsman. The OIG team also informally recommended that ICASS elect a Department representative other than the DCM.

Rightsizing - Management Services

Upon completion of the 2007 rightsizing review, plans for completion of the NEC in 2013 were factored into the projected staffing levels. The review forecast increases of four facilities maintenance section positions and one warehousemen position. The planned completion of the NEC is now 2018. At this time, the facilities maintenance section is well-staffed. However, the addition of a warehouseman position need not wait. There are currently no warehousemen working at the chancery. One of three property clerks, facilities maintenance personnel or contract employees does the heavy lifting.

Real Property

The government-owned, five-story chancery building requires upkeep for 9 or more years and additional offices may have to be added. The Ambassador seeks OBO's commitment to ensure a healthy, functional, and safe workplace. OBO, WHA's executive office, and the Embassy will develop plans to respond to this request. The 2011 MSP suggests that additional office space may be necessary to accommodate anticipated growth in personnel. National Security Decision Directive -38 requests have been approved for four positions that do not have designated office space. OBO has until October 30, 2009, to determine whether or not to purchase the proposed NEC site. It could extend the option period until January 29, 2010, for an additional fee.

GENERAL SERVICES

The general services section is managed by an ELO, who has been in the position for approximately 1 year. Mentoring and oversight of the general services officer was not effective before the current management officer's arrival and some mistakes resulted, primarily in contracting and procurement. The general services officer, assisted by the facilities manager at Embassy Georgetown, is responsible for facilities maintenance. There are 24 LE staffers in general services.

Procurement

The two-person procurement office provides inadequate services. The procurement office currently has bridge contracts for local guard services and LE staff health insurance. The Office of Acquisition Management handles contracting for

dise. BPAs for vehicle maintenance and fuel are other possibilities. Unfortunately, business conditions in Suriname and the Embassy's tight budgets have made BPAs less relevant. Vendors prefer cash over checks or electronic funds transfers and bulk funding of BPAs is not always feasible.

Property Management

The four-person property office satisfactorily carries out its property management responsibilities. It will request an extension to the March 15 deadline for submitting its Property Management Report. The Embassy must prepare the report every other year. The 2007 report identified a nonexpendable inventory shortage of \$3,943. The office did not prepare a required Property Disposal Authorization and Survey Report. The OIG team made an informal recommendation on this issue.

The property office has no warehouseman positions. The three property clerks are required to perform warehouseman duties along side of the facilities maintenance staff and hired laborers. The contract laborers are not expensive; however, tasking and security clearance procedures can cause delays in their arrival at the chancery. The 2007 rightsizing review projected the need for a warehouseman position. Hiring a warehouseman now may be appropriate. It will allow the property clerks and facilities maintenance staff to perform their primary responsibilities. The ICASS council will have to determine whether funding is available.

Customs and Shipping

The one-person customs and shipping office manages its portfolios well. The Suriname Government helps facilitate the customs clearance process. The customs and shipping office assists newcomers acquire third party liability insurance for their vehicles. The responsible LE staff member collects funds for insurance premiums and acquires insurance policies. By doing so, the shipping and customs assistant and the general services officer assume full responsibility for third party insurance coverage. Neither one of them should assume such a position. Newcomers must participate in obtaining third party insurance, and the general services office may assist them. The inspection team made an informal recommendation to address this issue.

Motor Pool

The motor pool provides adequate services. A vacant driver position was recently filled to bring the number of drivers to four. The added driver provides required relief to the Ambassador's driver, who often worked more than 10-hour shifts. The

motor pool delivers all of the Embassy's local correspondence. (b)(2)(b)(6)
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Embassy's motor vehicle policy.

Facilities Maintenance

The 11-person facilities maintenance staff effectively maintains all government-owned buildings on the chancery compound, the DCM's residence, and the leased Ambassador's residence. The chancery's one elevator has problems. Members of the facilities maintenance work to keep it operational. The Embassy continues to look for a qualified elevator service company in the region to assume this requirement.

Embassy Paramaribo is attentive to fire and life safety issues, but it has not established a safety, health, and environmental management committee. The inspection team informally recommended that the Embassy do so and convene a meeting soon thereafter. The mission has already taken some corrective measures to address safety, health, and environmental management concerns reported by OBO in 2008. Other corrective measures are planned.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SECURITY

Most Embassy Paramaribo's information management (IM) programs adhere to Department guidelines and the OIG team found the programs to be adequate.
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The information management officer (IMO) oversees the classified information programs center and the unclassified information systems center, unclassified and classified pouch, telephone/radio operations, and cellular phone program. The IM staff consists of the IMO, one information management specialist (IMS), and four LE staff. The IMS position is vacant. The IMS is usually responsible for the day-to-

day operations of the information systems center, telephone/radio operations, and cellular phone program, as well as performing information security duties. Since December 2008, the IMO operates all information management programs with intermittent support provided by temporary duty rovers. Embassy Paramaribo's unclassified OpenNet network consists of 90 users, 65 workstations, and six servers.

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Network Bandwidth

Unclassified network users often experience slow performance when accessing the Department's network resources and digital videoconferencing. The Embassy uses ParboNet, a local Internet service provider, for its Internet connectivity. The service is for a 2 Mbps dedicated microwave circuit connection. The 2 Mbps bandwidth is sufficient to accommodate the Embassy's size and business needs. During the inspection, the FRC team conducted network speed tests at various times during business hours and identified deficiencies in bandwidth availability. On average, the Embassy uses only 30 percent of the available bandwidth the Embassy purchases, indicating that connections are not established at the highest available bandwidth speed of 2 Mbps. Embassy Paramaribo plans to work with ParboNet to ensure that the committed 2 Mbps is available. Although there are other Internet service providers in the country, ParboNet is the only viable broadband provider. If the provider cannot make the committed 2 Mbps bandwidth available, the Embassy will work with the Department to explore an alternate solution. One viable option is the use of Department provided VSAT (very small aperture terminal) for satellite bandwidth, thus eliminating the dependency on the local Internet service provider.

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QUALITY OF LIFE

Community Liaison Office

The community liaison office coordinator arrived in September 2008. A native of Suriname, married for 13 years to an American, she understands how important her position is in a high differential post. She has a keen sense of the American families' needs and good ideas for marshalling embassy and Surinamese resources to meet the needs. She maintains a calendar of events and casts events for all groups at post. She organizes events with the goal of involving both Surinamese staff and Americans. Under the DCM's guidance, the coordinator sponsored a brown bag lunch to discuss the medical care at post after two children were hospitalized and parents were dismayed at the hospital conditions. She also organizes weekly community lunches at the Embassy that are important to morale, because there are few restaurant within walking distance of the Embassy.

Medical Unit

An LE nurse heads a small, but well-kept medical unit on the embassy compound. The unit follows all appropriate management control procedures for medications and patient records. Twelve medical evacuations were authorized in the past year for various conditions, including pregnancies, infections, diagnostic services, and dental surgeries that Suriname's rudimentary medical infrastructure could not perform. The medical unit, in conjunction with the regional medical technician, tests and uses water filters and distillers in the workplace and in homes more frequently to minimize the possibility of water-borne illnesses. It is also in the process of restocking workplace medical kits and safe haven medical supplies. The regional medical officer in Bogota and the Lima-based regional psychiatrist make semiannual visits.

Although generally satisfied with the quality of first-responder care provided by the LE nurse, the embassy community remains concerned by the lack of appropriate hospital and emergency care facilities in Suriname and by the inability of the regional medical officer to visit more frequently. The Embassy's ICASS council recently approved \$13,000 annually to hire a local physician to staff the medical unit on a part-time basis and asked WHA to provide additional one-time funding of \$10,000 to supply the medical unit with additional equipment for the doctor's use. The OIG team supports this request. The OIG team learned unofficially that the Department of Medical Services decided to transfer regional coverage of Paramaribo to the FRC in the summer of 2009 to further ameliorate the Embassy's concerns.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The chief of mission's certification of management controls for Embassy Paramaribo dated July 30, 2008, reported no material weakness. The OIG team found two less significant management control weaknesses discussed below.

Bulk Fuel

The property staff relinquished their responsibility for controlling bulk fuel assets at the chancery. The mission purchases diesel and gasoline for its tanks at the chancery compound. The motor pool monitors fuel levels, places orders, and handles deliveries. The property office plays no role. It should play a prominent role. An SOP for controlling bulk fuel is required. The SOP should delineate responsibilities of the property office, the procurement office, and the motor pool. The OIG team made informal recommendations to address this issue.

Self-Service Fuel Pumps

The chancery diesel and gasoline pumps are available five days a week for motor pool and privately-owned vehicles. Fill-ups are self-service and on the honor system. Drivers are required to fill out a log, which captures pertinent information. Drivers are advised to alert the motor pool if pump meter readings do not correspond to entries made by the previous user. The motor pool, which monitors the pumps, reports no discrepancies. Nevertheless, there is some risk inherent in the procedures. There is no SOP to cover pump procedures. The inspection team informally recommended that an SOP be prepared to include management control steps.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Human Resources, should rewrite the FSBid position description for the ELO to highlight public diplomacy responsibilities, while also including political and economic reporting and consular back-up. (Action: WHA, in coordination with HR)
- Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs should send a regional educational advisor coordinator to visit Suriname for consultations on the Embassy's educational advising activities. (Action: ECA)
- Recommendation 3:** Embassy Paramaribo, in coordination with the Bureaus of Consular Affairs and Diplomatic Security, should reconfigure one window in its telephone receptionist area with a microphone system and automated equipment to take visa applicants' fingerprints and perform ancillary consular duties. (Action: Embassy Paramaribo, in coordination with CA and DS)
- Recommendation 4:** Embassy Paramaribo should request and the Department should approve and fund locally employed consular clerk position C311415213 on a full-time basis. (Action: Embassy Paramaribo, in coordination WHA and CA)
- Recommendation 5:** Embassy Paramaribo should request funding, and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should fund, the cost of performing an audit of Embassy Paramaribo's pension plan. (Actions: Embassy Paramaribo, in coordination with WHA)
- Recommendation 6:** Embassy Paramaribo, in coordination with the Office of Procurement Executive, should require the Joint Combined Exchange Training to seek ratification from its procurement executive for three unauthorized commitments. (Action: Embassy Paramaribo, in coordination with A/OPE)
- Recommendation 7:** Embassy Paramaribo should design procedures to ensure that appropriate officials complete and sign a justification and approval for other than full and open competition for applicable sole-source acquisitions. (Action: Embassy Paramaribo)
- Recommendation 8:** Embassy Paramaribo should establish controls to ensure that only its grants officers authorize grants. (Action: Embassy Paramaribo)

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Recommendation 12: Embassy Paramaribo should dispose of excess information management equipment. (Action: Embassy Paramaribo)

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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 SECTION

There was no overall section plan for political and economic reporting for 2009.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Paramaribo should create a formal reporting plan for 2009.

The political-economic section does not have an institutional analysis to target the correct audiences with its activities.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Paramaribo should develop an institutional analysis to guide its public diplomacy activities.

The political-economic section does not have SOPs for its public diplomacy programs.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Paramaribo should develop standard operating procedures for its public diplomacy programs.

The Embassy does not have a computerized contact database in which all contacts can be included.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Paramaribo should develop a computerized database combining contact databases for all sections.

An ELO is the grants warrant officer. The Embassy is expecting an increase in the use of grants to implement programs, but there are no procedures established.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Paramaribo should develop procedures for managing program grants.

CONSULAR SECTION

The annual consular certification of management controls and visa lookout accountability, due by telegram on November 10, 2008, has not been submitted.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Paramaribo should submit the annual consular certification expeditiously, following guidance provided by 2008 State AL-DAC 114455 dated October 27, 2008.

The F-77 report of potential evacuees in event of emergency, normally submitted to the Department annually, was last submitted in 2005.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Paramaribo should submit an updated F-77 report as soon as possible.

There was no signage at the Embassy's public entrance describing consular services provided, service hours, and daytime or after-hours telephone numbers.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Paramaribo should develop and install appropriate informational signs describing consular services at its public entrance.

The inability to hire a qualified, previously trained eligible family member as a consular associate adversely impacts the consular section's ability to provide timely services.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Paramaribo should amend its request for a consular associate to either a lesser graded eligible family member consular assistant or visa biometrics clerk.

Regional representatives of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or Immigration and Customs Enforcement have not visited recently.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Paramaribo should ask regional representatives of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and Immigration and Customs Enforcement to schedule periodic visits to Suriname for familiarization and training activities.

MANAGEMENT

The post differential, living quarters, and education allowances remain in need of updating in accordance with schedules outlined in the Department' Standardized Regulations.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Paramaribo should update its post differential, living quarters, and educational allowances.

Embassy Paramaribo does not receive updates on the financial status of its pension fund or monitor its pension benefit provider.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Paramaribo should contact their pension provider and request a copy of the pension provider's external audit report and other financial information and develop and implement procedures for monitoring its pension benefit provider.

Embassy Paramaribo does not know what impact a new requirement for medical coverage benefits for its retirees will have on its ongoing contract negotiations for medical services.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy Paramaribo should contact the Department's Office of the Procurement Executive and Office of Overseas Employment for guidance on how to proceed, and how to include a new requirement for retiree medical coverage in its contract negotiations for medical services.

The ICASS council does not take minutes of its ICASS council meetings.

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy Paramaribo should take minutes of its International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council meetings.

The DCM is the Department's ICASS representative.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy Paramaribo should select a candidate for the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council who is not part of the management team or responsible for administrative services.

The property section did not complete a Property Disposal Authorization and Survey Report , as required, for an inventory shortage of nonexpendable property found during the 2007 inventory and reconciliation process.

Informal Recommendation 16: Embassy Paramaribo should prepare a Property Disposal Authorization and Survey Report for the 2007 nonexpendable property shortage.

The property section is not responsible for receipt of bulk fuel deliveries at the chancery. The general services office lacks any SOPS for controlling bulk fuels.

Informal Recommendation 17: Embassy Paramaribo should prepare a standard operating procedure for controlling bulk fuels at the chancery that includes responsibilities for the property section, the procurement section, and the motor pool.

The chancery diesel and gasoline pumps are self-service. Drivers are required to fill out a log and report any discrepancies that might indicate misreporting. There is no SOP for controlling the diesel and gasoline pumps.

Informal Recommendation 18: Embassy Paramaribo should prepare a standard operating procedure for controlling the diesel and gasoline pumps.

The customs and shipping office collects funds from newcomers to pay for their third-party insurance and acquires the policies.

Informal Recommendation 19: Embassy Paramaribo should cease collecting funds from newcomers for their third-party insurance and interacting with insurance brokers on their behalf.

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PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	Lisa Bobbie Schreiber Hughes	09/06
Deputy Chief of Mission	Susan T. Bell	08/08
Chiefs of Section:		
Admin/Management	Jennifer L. Christenson	10/08
Consular Officer	Liza Ybarra	08/08
Political/Economic Affairs	Geneve E. Menscher	09/07
Public Diplomacy	Geneve E. Menscher	09/07
Regional Security Office	Douglas C. Marvin	07/07
Other Agencies:		
Drug Enforcement Administration	Susan Nave	03/06
Military Liaison Office	LCDR Waymon J. Jackson	12/08
Technical Assessment Team	Gerald P. McIntyre	03/09
Peace Corps	Ann Conway	01/07

ABBREVIATIONS

BPA	blanket purchase agreement
DCM	deputy chief of mission
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EFM	eligible family member
ELO	entry-level officer
FAH	Foreign Affairs Handbook
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
FRC	Florida Regional Center
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IM	information management
IMO	information management officer
IMS	information management specialist
JCET	Joint Combined Exchange Training
LE	locally employed
MLO	military liaison office
MSP	Mission Strategic Plan
NEC	new embassy compound
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PD	public diplomacy
RFMO	regional financial management officer
SOP	standard operating procedure
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

FRAUD, WASTE, ABUSE, OR MISMANAGEMENT
of Federal programs
and resources hurts everyone.

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