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

Report of Inspection

Embassy Chisinau, Moldova

Report Number ISP-I-05-12A, February 2005

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- Embassy Chisinau is well managed. This is an impressive achievement given its limitations. Buildings are outmoded. Remodeling has alleviated some hazards, and completion of current projects for a Marine post one and a small controlled access area will also help. Long-term resolution will only come with the construction of a new embassy compound.
- Embassy Chisinau's Mission Performance Plan (MPP) is, by and large, a clear and accurate document that post management uses effectively as an ongoing tool. Post management accepted an Office of Inspector General (OIG) suggestion that it institute two additional interagency groups to deal with key goals.
- A two-year tour of duty policy and the frequent assignment of officers to important reporting and administrative positions for which they have no prior experience pose major mentoring and management issues almost every fall. During the inspection, Embassy Chisinau was particularly focused on bringing its political/economic section up to the necessary level of performance.
- Public affairs is a success story with a dynamic section chief, strong Foreign Service nationals (FSNs) and enthusiastic post management as the key ingredients. Getting most American officers involved in the public speaking effort and a careful system for tracking and staying close to Moldovan alumni of embassy programs are particular achievements.
- Noteworthy management and functional performance yield skillful, knowledgeable consular services, especially given the staff's relatively limited professional experience.
- Overall, Embassy Chisinau's administrative operation provides good services within acceptable standards. American and FSN morale is high. Post executive leadership and the management officer are highly regarded and trusted by the FSN committee.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between September 13 and October 8, 2004, and in Chisinau, Moldova, between October 13 and 22, 2004. Ambassador John McCarthy (team leader), Paul Smith (deputy team leader), Anthony Carbone, Bohdan Dmytrewycz, Ernest Fischer, Vickie Huss, Richard Jones, Michael Lynch, and Sharon Mercurio conducted the inspection.

CONTEXT

Moldova is a small, landlocked former Soviet republic bordered by Ukraine on



the east and Romania on the west. Moldova's proximity to the Black Sea gives it a mild and sunny climate; the agricultural sector is responsible for 40 percent of the country's gross domestic product. The collapse of the Soviet collective farm system, the election of a communist majority in parliament and communist president in 2001, subsequent attempts to reverse earlier economic reforms, and the prolonged Transnistria secessionist movement have combined to hinder the country's economic develop-

ment to the point that Moldova is the poorest country in Europe. Dire economic conditions - incomes remain at less than 60 percent of their Soviet-era levels - have encouraged an estimated 600,000 to 1 million of the total 4.3 million population to leave the country, usually through illegal migration. The country's extreme poverty makes it a major source country for persons trafficked to the Balkans, Western Europe, and the Middle East. Although the HIV/AIDS problem is not as widespread in Moldova as in some neighboring countries, the conditions exist for this to become a major problem.

Modern Moldova consists of part of historically non-Slavic Bessarabia, south of the Dniester River, and the historically Slavic Transnistria region north of the Dniester bordering Ukraine. The country's current population is approximately 65 percent Moldovan, 30 percent Slavic (Russian and Ukrainian) and four percent Christian Turk. In part reflecting this centuries-old division, for more than a decade Moldova has struggled with an armed, resolute, and well-financed secessionist movement within its borders. The predominantly Russian and Ukrainian population on the eastern side of the Dniester along the border with Ukraine declared

independence from the rest of Moldova in 1990. Fighting between Moldova and the self-proclaimed "Moldovan Dniester Republic" (i.e. Transnistria) flared in 1992, and, although a ceasefire was declared the same year, the two sides have remained separate and hostile toward each other ever since. Transnistria controls nearly 12 percent of Moldovan territory and 40 percent of the country's industrial capacity, including most of its electricity production. Several thousand Russian soldiers and 40,000 tons of ammunition were in Transnistria at the time of the ceasefire, and despite a Russian pledge to remove all troops and ammunition by December 2003, if "circumstances allowed," roughly 1,500 Russian troops and 22,000 tons of ammunition remain in place. Negotiations since the ceasefire aimed at reintegrating the country - mediated by Russia, Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe - have not been successful, and the conflict continues to simmer.

POLICY OVERVIEW

U.S. relations with the Republic of Moldova are generally good. Although elections in 2001 produced a landslide victory for the Communist Party, the U.S. government and Embassy Chisinau have remained engaged and retain substantial influence. The Ambassador maintains productive working contacts at the highest levels of the government and the Moldovan President actively seeks U.S. government advice through the embassy. Moldova provides a contingent of munitions disposal specialists and peacekeepers to participate in post-conflict humanitarian assistance operations in Iraq.

Embassy MPP objectives are in line with Moldovan political, social, and economic realities and U.S. interests. The current Moldovan government is less reformist and more Moscow-oriented than its predecessors, and the durability of democratic and economic reforms has become an issue. Press freedoms have deteriorated significantly since the 2001 elections, and there is international concern that the next parliamentary elections in early 2005 may not be fully free and fair. The U.S. Agency for International Development, International Visitor, and Democracy Small Grants Commission efforts contributed to the formation of a centrist electoral bloc (although it remains fragile) and a coalition of nongovernmental organizations active in promoting citizen participation in society and the electoral process.

Moldova's future will not be secure, and the region fully stable, until the conflict in Transnistria is resolved. Embassy Chisinau actively engages the government of Moldova, the European Union, and the three mediators charged with helping the two sides resolve the conflict - Russia, Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe - to this end. A related objective is for Russia to withdraw its troops and munitions from Transnistria in accordance with a 1999 agreement. The embassy coordinates a robust program of military, customs, and antiterrorism assistance that has positively affected a number of areas related to regional and global security, including improved capacity to prevent the smuggling of drugs, arms (including weapons of mass destruction) and other contraband.

Moldova is a major source country for the smuggling of women for exploitation (trafficking), but the Moldovan government lacks the capacity to fully address this problem. Embassy law enforcement, prosecution, training, public awareness, and rehabilitation programs have led to improved Moldovan government efforts in this area. The recent allocation of \$5.25 million from President Bush's antitrafficking initiative will allow intensification of this effort.

The embassy continues to encourage further economic reforms and protect those that have been put into place. While progress in this area has been generally positive, the lack of a broad and deep commitment by the Moldovan government to further market reforms is an impediment to stronger economic growth.

Embassy Chisinau is staffed by 32 direct-hire American employees and 197 locally employed staff (LES). Total American staff will increase to 37 with the addition of a Marine security guard detachment during the next few months.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

The Ambassador and deputy chief of mission (DCM) provide clear guidance and leadership to the staff of Embassy Chisinau. The Ambassador is a talented, energetic, and well-organized officer. She uses a weekly country team meeting, near daily sessions with a core group of officers, and weekly meetings with others such as the U.S. Agency for International Development and public affairs, to inform others of her thinking and of input from Washington, to hear their views, and to coordinate activities and programs. She has been extremely effective in empowering her new DCM; Americans and FSNs at post see them as a seamless, competent whole and are comfortable in discussing ideas and problems with them both. This is a real achievement in the case of an officer only at post for three months at the time of the inspection.

The DCM chairs a weekly interagency meeting tied to one goal of the MPP, law enforcement, and trafficking. These meetings are lively with active participation by the numerous mission elements with a stake in this goal. Two other MPP goals, democracy and economic reform, have to date been dealt with well but in a less coordinated way. Post management accepted an OIG suggestion to institute two additional interagency committees, modeled along the lines of the one that already exists.

MISSION PERFORMANCE PLAN

The MPP is clear, well written, and focuses on four key goals: democratic systems and practices, resolution of regional conflicts, secure and stable markets, and overseas and domestic facilities. Moreover, MPP goals are adjusted to reflect current U.S. government policy priorities in Moldova. For example, last year's number three democratic systems goal moved up to number one this year to reflect the importance of the upcoming parliamentary elections. Most performance indicators are precise and measurable. However, the MPP does not address the objective of safeguarding American citizens or related U.S. border protection issues. OIG made an informal recommendation to include these items in future MPPs.

Although a regularly scheduled interagency working group meets to discuss the law enforcement and antitrafficking elements of the resolution of regional conflicts MPP goal, other goals do not benefit from the same coordination. OIG suggested the creation of additional working groups on democracy initiatives and economic reform, both of which involve significant U.S. government resources.

ENTRY-LEVEL OFFICERS

The DCM takes seriously his role as mentor to entry-level officers and defines the mandate broadly to include first-tour specialists. He has hosted them as a group on occasion but prefers one-on-one sessions as more likely to provide meaningful discussion. Monthly brown-bag lunches are planned to cover specific topics of interest to entry-level officers. Like other Americans, the entry-level officers confirm that he is accessible, visible all around the embassy compound, and open to frank discussion.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

POLITICAL/ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Embassy Chisinau's political/economic section consists of two Foreign Service officers - one mid-level and one entry-level - and a national security language fellow. Both officers are newly arrived and both are new to political/economic work. On the job for only six weeks, the mid-level head of section has instituted a number of improvements to the basic structure of the section. He developed reporting, travel, and representation plans, which did not exist before his arrival and developed a system of electronic files to facilitate access to frequently needed information. In consultation with the DCM, the political/economic chief has revised work requirements statements within the section to reflect current specific needs. He is proposing a systematic plan for FSN use of representational funds.

OIG observed some uncertainty and concern within the new political/economic team regarding priorities and expectations, a result in large part of its lack of experience. The new and inexperienced section chief should have regular one-on-one time with the DCM, an experienced political officer, in order to develop his reporting and management skills. OIG also believes a carefully prepared offsite involving the entire political/economic section, the DCM, and the Ambassador would help clarify expectations, address concerns, and provide the basis for ongoing communication.

Washington's current political interest in Moldova is focused mainly on the Transnistria conflict. Embassy reporting, largely of the Ambassador's interactions with the President and other top Moldovan officials, has been superb and appreciated in Washington for its timeliness, balance, and analysis. However, a number of Washington readers requested more reporting on political and economic conditions outside the capital, preparations for the 2005 national elections, defense reform, ethnic minority issues, leadership analysis, and analytical pieces with a focus on

regional problems such as trafficking in persons and the future effects of HIV/AIDS. There has been very little economic reporting for the current calendar year and, as noted earlier, reporting, travel, and representation plans did not exist. The new reporting, travel, and representation plans are ambitious and should broaden the scope of embassy reporting.

The political/economic section lacks an office management specialist. The inexperienced section officers would benefit from the guidance of the DCM and his office management specialist in establishing operating procedures for the office and in setting up section files in accordance with department regulations.

Trade Promotion

The FSN devoted to trade promotion is funded by the Business Information Service for the Newly Independent States and has been at the embassy four years. He is supervised by the economic officer and receives quarterly visits from the Foreign Agricultural Service officer in Sofia. He and the economic officer work directly with the Foreign Commercial Service in Washington. The commercial FSN maintains several shelves of reference materials, but refers more complicated inquiries to the information resource center (IRC) or Internet sources.

Trade opportunities in Moldova are limited for all exporters, but transportation cost puts U.S. exporters at an even greater disadvantage. The embassy has organized four catalogue shows in the past three years funded by the Department of State's (Department) Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs Business Facilitation and Incentive Fund, including a recent agricultural equipment show netting 30 leads.

Although Moldova seeks foreign investment, bureaucratic obstacles, corruption, and the fear of possible renationalization cause U.S. companies to hesitate. The prohibition against foreign ownership of land is another impediment to investment in this mainly agricultural country. The embassy maintains contact with the small U.S. business community. The Ambassador supports the formation of an American Chamber of Commerce but her efforts have been unsuccessful.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The public affairs section is a small gem, reflecting competence, efficiency, and initiative. This atmosphere reflects an energetic public affairs officer's (PAO) thoughtful leadership that encourages the staff to assume responsibility and think creatively. The section is fully integrated into embassy activity and enjoys the support and participation of the Ambassador and the DCM. The Ambassador in particular understands the value of public diplomacy and uses it extensively to promote U.S. policy and interests in speeches and public appearances. The PAO coordinates the Ambassador's public schedule and is an integral part of all embassy planning and policy discussions. The Ambassador and DCM meet with the PAO once a week to discuss public diplomacy programming.

The public diplomacy team of one officer and seven FSNs produces an impressive quantity of high quality work, directly addressing all MPP objectives. The Democracy Commission small grants program and exchange programs are targeted to priority MPP objectives. A recent series of Democracy Commission small grants supported nongovernmental organization preparations for the upcoming national elections.

Democracy Building

As the embassy grants officer, the PAO manages approximately \$350,000, including more than \$250,000 for the Democracy Commission. The grants FSN developed a Microsoft Access based program that provides full support for all aspects of grant management, including financial control and tracking. The Department is now considering developing this program for use by other embassies. Department funding provided opportunities for 230 Moldovans to participate in educational and professional development programs in the United States in 2003. All embassy elements, including the Ambassador and DCM, participate in the selection process for Democracy Commission grants as well as International Visitor and other exchange programs. An initiative of the Ambassador to include at least one policy related public speaking event in the work requirements of each Department embassy officer has resulted in a very active public outreach program that OIG has selected as a "best practice."

Best Practice: Public Outreach by Embassy Officers

Issue: Although Moldova provides ample public speaking opportunities for embassy officers on MPP themes, the public affairs officer at Embassy Chisinau has had difficulty recruiting volunteers for public speaking events.

Best Practice: Following discussions with the country team on how best to involve embassy officers in outreach efforts, the Ambassador initiated the inclusion of one public speaking event a year into the work requirements of each Department officer.

Result: The PAO now coordinates an active embassy public speaking program throughout Moldova involving all Department officers. Most officers have requested additional speaking opportunities beyond the one specified in their work requirements.

Information Resource and Alumni Centers

The embassy IRC and alumni center approach best practice status in the efficient and unique way that they share resources to serve overlapping client bases. The two centers are colocated in downtown Chisinau on the second floor of a modern commercial office building. The IRC includes excellent print and electronic reference resources and six Internet terminals for use by target audience members. The adjoining alumni center serves Moldovan participants of all U.S. government-funded exchange programs with meeting space and nine Internet terminals. A well-equipped conference hall is being used nonstop by both centers for informational and training programs and digital videoconferences. A recent career development conference brought both professional and student program alumni together and resulted in 15 internships sponsored by the professional participants for the students.

The IRC maintains the Embassy Chisinau Internet web site, supports the efforts of one American Corner outside of Chisinau (a second is planned), and delivers U.S. policy information in all MPP thematic areas electronically to approximately 200 target audience members. The recipient list for information distribution is currently maintained by the very competent IRC director. OIG recommends that other embassy elements be briefed on the IRC information outreach program and invited to participate in the development of the recipient lists.

CONSULAR OPERATIONS

Defending U.S. citizens, their interests, and safeguarding American borders form prime consular objectives. The MPP contains no policy or functional specific strategy and objectives aimed at safeguarding American citizens and their interests or explicit visa/entry-related U.S. border protection goals. OIG advised these could be incorporated into the MPP. Visa matters consume about 75 percent of Embassy Chisinau's total consular resources. Vigilant assessment of visa applicants protects U.S. borders by identifying and excluding terrorists, stemming illegal immigration, and encouraging bona fide travel to the United States. Embassy-specific written consular standard operating procedures and formal outreach, representation, and reporting programs are in the planning stage. The section receives about 10 print communications and about 40 telephone inquiries per week. Coordination between the consular section and other sections at post is satisfactory. The embassy's Internet site includes a consular information page on Moldova.

The consular section consists of one Foreign Service officer and three FSNs. FSNs average about three years of experience. Position descriptions are current and efficiency reports are completed on time. The vice consul encourages employees to develop professional capabilities through training, including distance-learning consular studies offered by the Foreign Service Institute. The vice consul exercises clear functional and managerial supervision while implementing laws and regulations. The section effectively addresses consular issues while supplying competent and timely services.

American Citizens Services

Nearly 1,000 American citizens visit Moldova annually. About 100 U.S. citizens, including potential dual national retirees and minor children who live in Moldova, have registered with the consular unit. In fiscal year 2004, the consular section adjudicated approximately 200 citizenship/passport requests and performed 200 notarial services. An increasing number of American citizens seek to adopt Moldovan children. This substantially increases time spent in advising prospective adoptive parents and processing related documentation. Americans in Moldova may encounter problems ranging from minor difficulty to serious crises. To help resolve such matters, the consular unit developed excellent working rela-

tionships with Moldovan authorities. Natural disasters, such as earthquakes could affect U.S. citizens in Moldova. The embassy's well-organized warden system meets requirements to provide effective emergency safety and/or evacuation plans for Americans.

Visas

Antiterrorist concerns rank prominently in visa eligibility issues. The consular section highlights antiterrorist efforts and implements related legal/procedural parameters. The section adjudicated nearly 3,500 nonimmigrant visa applications in FY 2004. The embassy in Romania processes immigrant and diversity visa applications originating in Moldova. Estimates for FY 2005 project a slight overall increase. The vice consul emphasizes the need for lawful and fair eligibility screening while improving efficiency.

Visa Fraud

Some 37 percent of first time visitor visa applicants fail to qualify for visa issuance. Many persons not eligible for American immigrant visas apply for nonimmigrant visas as a technique to facilitate their permanent entry to the United States. Some applicants use counterfeit materials and identities in attempts to qualify for American visas. Full name checks for terrorist or criminal histories and other forms of disqualifying behavior must be performed. Requests for reevaluation of failed visitor visa applications add to the workload and psychological pressures on the staff. In this environment, fraud ranks high on the visa unit's concerns. The embassy's tasks include determining identity and citizenship, validating educational records, substantiating work histories, and authenticating family relationships.

One FSN, in a part-time antifraud role, verifies information and investigates suspicious cases but has few opportunities to look into circumstances outside Chisinau. In addition to examining nonimmigrant visa claims, the investigator verifies information for Moldovan immigrant and diversity visa applicants. The consular section works to provide courteous, efficient service, while maintaining the integrity of U.S. laws and regulations by carefully evaluating visa applications. OIG found that the post does not precisely count antifraud work in consular package statistics and suggested ways to improve tracking and reporting it.

Visas Viper Program

The visas viper program requires that information on "people who may threaten the welfare of the United States" held by any mission element be shared with the consular section for submission to the Department. The Department reviews consular reports to identify persons for possible inclusion in the Automated Visa Lookout System. Embassy Chisinau holds monthly visas viper program committee meetings.

Consular Physical Environment and Security

The consular section occupies tight but adequate office and client waiting space (with a contiguous unisex toilet). Wheelchairs may enter the public area. The generally clean and fresh look of both the office and public area enhances the overall appearance. Consular section physical security measures include guards screening clients at the street entry and standard hard-line ballistic windows.

Regional Security Office

The experienced regional security officer (RSO) is a good match for a developing Embassy Chisinau. He is energetic, responsive, is respected by his staff and embassy colleagues, has earned the full confidence of senior embassy management, and has established good relations with local police and Interior Ministry officials. He is also fluent in Romanian - a tremendous asset to Embassy Chisinau. The RSO plays a central role in coordinating embassy "trafficking in persons" efforts in both the areas of law enforcement and program assistance. These efforts will increase dramatically in coming months with the addition of \$5.25 million in new assistance funding. Although he has done a superior job in this regard and obviously enjoys this responsibility, it does take away time from other priorities. Post management should delegate some of this program coordination responsibility to other officers as appropriate.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Contracted PSCs	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	FY04 Total Funding (000s)
Department	25	1	10	123	159	3,835
Foreign Commercial Service	0	0	0	1	1	18
Defense Attaché Office	2	0	0	1	3	158
U.S. Agency for International Development	2	1	0	19	22	24,273
Peace Corps	3	1	0	33	37	1,586
DHS – Customs and Border Protection	0	1	0	3	4	640
Office of Defense Cooperation / Bilateral Affairs Office	4*	0	0	2	4	2,413
DOJ – Resident Legal Advisor	1	0	0	1	2	194
Totals	37**	4	10	183	232	33,117

*Two of these positions are filled with rotating six-month long temporary duty employees.

**Five Marine security guard watch-standers due to arrive by the end of 2004 will bring the number to 37.

Overall, the embassy's administrative operations provide good services within acceptable standards. Weaknesses in personal property management and in swimming pool safety are being addressed. The scores generated by the workplace and quality of life questionnaires ranged from very good to acceptable. Those areas with lower rankings that are under the control of the embassy were being addressed. Areas regarding adequate and secure facilities will not be resolved until completion of a new embassy compound. The previous OIG Report of Inspection (ISP/I-96-13 dated March 1996) indicated a small, well-run embassy of 16 American positions, and "...a smoothly functioning resource management process and structure."

Eight years later, OIG found, in spite of a doubling of the staff of the embassy, the administrative section has managed to keep pace both in quality and quantity. The section has absorbed entirely new initiatives such as International Cooperative Administrative Support Services, the merger with the U.S. Information Agency, changes in information technology, and the computer assisted job evaluation system. However, there is documentary evidence as well as statements by Americans and FSNs that the embassy had gone through some difficult times. From summer 2000 to the fall of 2002, the embassy had seven management officers. Documentation of policies and compliance with regulations prior to the arrival of the current management officer were thin or nonexistent. The management officer has vigorously and successfully addressed deficiencies in operations that have brought the mission into compliance with regulations. The entire administrative section has benefited from visits from the regional center in Frankfurt and members of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs FSN executive corps. The section has effectively applied the guidance provided by regional staff.

Foreign Service National Matters, including Computer Assisted Job Evaluation

The mission has a well-trained and highly motivated FSN staff. The FSNs are receptive to training, and the embassy has had a broad-based training program that contributes to high productivity and morale. The number of FSNs who have received formal training is unusually high, and the embassy plans to continue to fund a robust training program.

OIG met with newly elected members of an FSN executive committee that has existed for two years. Generally satisfied with salaries, they were concerned with deteriorating public social benefits and sought alternatives. At the top of their list were a pension plan and improved health benefits. Local social security is

bankrupt and the FSNs seek a viable pension plan. During the course of the inspection, the embassy received the Department's permission to opt out of the local government plan: This is the first step to convert to an offshore retirement plan to which embassy management is committed and believes could be implemented within weeks of receiving approval.

The embassy has a good health plan that is consistent with local practice. The embassy reimburses 75 percent of the employee's medical costs with a cap of \$1,000 per family member. Acknowledging that the plan covered routine medical problems, the FSNs were concerned that there are no adequate medical facilities in the country with quality diagnostic equipment that can treat serious illnesses. Offshore medical services are extraordinarily expensive, often beyond the ability of FSNs to pay. There is a shortage of World Health Organization recommended vaccines in the country. Embassy management is aware of these issues and both management and the FSNs are taking a proactive approach to find solutions.

Management and the FSNs are eagerly awaiting the results of the review of all FSN positions using the CAJE methodology. The process of evaluating positions under CAJE was not uneventful. Distrust of a new system and attempts to leverage an advantage to achieve a desired result created friction between the human resources staff and some other sections. Strong support from regional human resource officers kept the process balanced and alleviated some of the local friction. At the end of the process, there was general agreement that the CAJE process is more objective and transparent than the previous method.

The embassy has not implemented the CAJE results because the data generated a grade increase in 55 percent of all embassy FSN positions, well beyond the 15 percent threshold set by the Department. The entire package has been sent to the Department for review and approval. The management officer believes that the Department should not have been surprised that small posts would have had significant upgrades given the quantifiable emphasis on flexibility and responsibility in CAJE. FSNs in small posts inherently have broad and often multiple duties, the value of which was not recognized in the old system.

General Services

Two general services officers (GSO), each on his first overseas tour, divide GSO duties and are assisted by a cleared American contract technician who is responsible for the post's maintenance program. The second GSO position was newly created and filled in 2003. The two GSOs rotate duties in a formal program, ensuring that each gets the full experience of a tour in general services. The FSN

staff is generally adequate to perform all GSO functions; many are more qualified than the jobs require. GSO files, indeed all the files in the administrative section, are remarkably well organized, neat, and readable. The motor pool, customs and shipping, and transportation operations are well run. OIG provided some informal recommendations.

Procurement

The embassy community rates the procurement office as a very good service provider. However, the section is using an outdated tracking system that is flawed and labor intensive. The embassy recently received the software for the Webpass system and plans to deploy the new system in late 2004.

The number of unliquidated obligations indicates that the procurement office needs to better interact with the financial management office and with embassy customers. It is difficult to track obligations and the status of procurement actions using the current system. A lack of transparency with customers on the status of orders has led to friction between the busy procurement section and equally busy clients.

The office displayed an effective use of blanket purchase agreements. Currently the office uses these to procure vehicle fuel, express mail, water, taxi services, and shipping. The office is in the process of establishing blanket purchasing agreements for maintenance supplies and make-ready services. The office has the embassy's only government purchase card. This imposes a burden on the office's workload and ultimately the embassy's purchasing cycle efficiency. OIG recommended informally that a member of the public diplomacy office be trained and issued a government purchase card and that the embassy review where other cards can or should be issued.

Property Management

Acceptable property management practices did not exist until early this year. The embassy has been assiduously working to put its property management practices into compliance with regulations, but significant gaps still exist that generated a formal recommendation in the Management Controls section of this report. It is clear that the embassy's inability to reconcile nonexpendable property resulted from years of neglect.

The warehouse has ample storage space with quality shelving and is neatly organized. The receiving area is fenced off and segregated from the rest of the area. Property is easily identifiable. Expendable supplies are stored in the warehouse in a neat, systematic, and orderly manner.

The embassy has taken a number of measures to improve management controls over property. An expert general services FSN rover has provided excellent property management consulting services to the embassy during the past two years. Recently, new LES positions have been staffed for warehouse foreman and nonexpendable property clerk. The arrival of a second American GSO has allowed the embassy to provide the appropriate level of oversight. The management office has implemented more effective property management standard operating procedures. The property section does not have sufficient staff to achieve proper separation of duties and OIG provided guidance on ways to address this problem.

Maintenance, Housing, and Occupational Health and Safety

An American contract technician oversees the maintenance program of the embassy under the overall supervision of a GSO. Maintenance is a real challenge in Chisinau. Modern residences built to western designs often have major construction deficiencies. Use of aluminum for residential electrical wiring is common. Every residence requires a generator because municipal power is unreliable. The cost of making a residence suitable for occupancy ranges from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

The embassy has taken advantage of an improved housing market to lease attractive units at reasonable costs. In 2003, the embassy had 14 units with swimming pools. A 2003 report by experts from the Department's Safety, Health, and Environmental Management office noted serious deficiencies in the lack of residential carbon monoxide detectors and improper pool safety features. Some deficiencies had not been corrected from an earlier 2000 OIG report. The embassy has rectified the lack of detectors but has been less aggressive in addressing the pool safety requirements as required by 6 FAM 616.10.

Recommendation 1: Embassy Chisinau should fully implement the Department's instructions on securing swimming pools. (Action: Embassy Chisinau)

Financial Management

Financial management operations run smoothly. The section had the benefit of outstanding consulting services from the current management officer when he was the Regional Support Center financial management rover. He has continued improving the office since his arrival in late 2002. Four FSNs comprise the financial management staff. Transactions are recorded in a timely manner and accurately, and the office's files and filing systems are neat and orderly. The distribution of workload and the management of records allow for effortless financial research.

Of concern is the embassy's difficulty in clearing its unliquidated obligations. Unliquidated balances for the 2003 program budget approximated 20 percent of the budget. Department policy, 4 FAH-3 H-052.2, requires that obligations be adjusted as changes become known. The following summarizes unliquidated obligations for the diplomatic and consular program allotments for 2002 to 2003:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Program</u>	<u>Security</u>	<u>Public Diplomacy</u>
2002	34,515	2,497	11,400
2003	125,661	5,435	32,067

Although American officers have shown an interest in properly managing funds, the LES do not appear to fully understand the significance and urgency of expending, managing, or returning allotments. As a result of unliquidated obligations, the embassy loses money for itself, as well as the bureau and other posts. The embassy has not created mechanisms for communication between the financial management office, the general services office, and embassy users.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Chisinau should issue an Administrative Notice establishing policies and procedures for the embassy's budget process and designating responsibilities within the embassy and with non-Department agencies to include standards for obligating, liquidating, and deobligating funds. (Action: Embassy Chisinau)

Rightsizing

As the borders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union moved closer and U.S. policy interests shifted, Embassy Chisinau grew from being a special embassy program post in a backwater corner of the former

Soviet Union to an embassy that, upon the activation of a Marine security guard detachment, will reach 37 American staff, thereby graduating from special embassy program status. Even though movement across the special embassy program threshold is largely symbolic, the workload and pressure on limited resources are not. There seems little need at this time for further growth in American staff.

Construction of a new embassy compound, scheduled to start in 2008, will alleviate security and physical space problems. The various ongoing construction projects are "Band-Aid" measures that will suffice to meet short-term functional space needs but will do little to improve physical security until a new embassy compound is completed. Activation of a Marine security guard detachment will produce a 17 percent increase in staff, stretching administrative resources and the time of the RSO.

The embassy's approach to human resources requests has been largely reactive to actual or perceived demands levied from the Department. Clearly, a change in policy emphasis to "reverse the recent backsliding on democratic reform and increase our efforts to develop a viable political center through next year's elections and beyond" calls for robust public diplomacy programs that justify a second public diplomacy officer. Equally, OIG concurs that the combined political/economic section requires three reporting officers to meet current requirements, but the need has largely been met by temporary assignment of interns and academic fellows. Because much of the work is generated by Washington agencies, the Department must decide whether the risk of being unable to find suitable candidates for temporary assignments should be offset by the certainty of having three permanent positions.

OIG does not concur that the demands for an assistant RSO, facilities manager, and Foreign Service health practitioner are worth the investment. It is clear that the activation of the Marine security guard detachment will create additional workload for the RSO, but the heaviest burden will be of short duration, and it is unlikely that an assistant could be assigned until well after the demand has passed. The incumbent RSO has been tasked with the considerable additional responsibilities of supporting the construction of the new Marine security guard post one facility and the secure office annex. These projects will have been completed well before an additional officer could be assigned. If the additional workload threatens to overload the RSO, the best solution would be temporary duty personnel.

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The information management staff is performing reviews of operation and maintenance logs and during September 2004, the information management officer developed a binder for various logs including outage logs. However, the information management staff does not document the results of their various operation

and maintenance log reviews. According to 12 FAM 622.1-12 c and 12 FAM 629.2-11 information management and information system security officers are required to perform and document their monthly reviews of operations and maintenance logs.

The information management officer said that his staff has not had the time to document reviews of operation and maintenance logs because of time and staffing constraints. Review of operation and maintenance logs provides assurance that the system is operating properly and is free of invalid user attempts, while documentation of the review of operation and maintenance logs provides an internal control that the reviews are being adequately performed. Information management staff agreed to document their reviews of operation and maintenance logs.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Chisinau should perform monthly reviews of operation and maintenance logs and documents the results of the reviews. (Action: Embassy Chisinau)

Embassy Chisinau lacks written information systems security incident reporting procedures. Information management employees were not aware of the 12 FAM 622.1-9 (b) and 12 FAM 632.1-7(b) requirements to notify the information system security officer and regional security officer of system security related abnormal operations. The lack of security incident reporting procedures may cause Embassy Chisinau to lose time in recovering from security incidents or to be unprepared if disruption of service occurs, and places the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of its data at risk.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Chisinau should develop written information systems security incident reporting procedures to assure information system security and regional security officers are aware of abnormal systems operations. (Action: Embassy Chisinau)

QUALITY OF LIFE

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

The _____ provides kindergarten through eighth grade instruction to 12 embassy dependants. Department allowances compensate tuition costs. The Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges accredited the school's grades kindergarten through eight in August 2002. The Moldovan Department of Education accepts the school's program.

The physical plant consists of a library, a music room, a computer room, an exercise area, six classrooms, and offices. The building is located within a walled compound. The Department granted the school \$7,000 for FY 2004. A school board member position is reserved for the Ambassador's nominee, and other American citizen embassy employees may be elected to the board. A regional educational officer of the Department's Office of Overseas Schools visited the school in June 2004 to evaluate needs. The regional officer's generally positive report noted the school director's energy and curriculum focus as strong points.

Most embassy parents, whose children currently attend preschool and primary classes, expressed satisfaction with school quality and the staff's attitude. Some parents, however, voiced confusion over articulation of school policies and administration. OIG discussed with embassy management ways to clarify school issues for all concerned American family members.

MEDICAL UNIT

Moldovan medical services do not measure up to U.S. standards. The embassy's health unit provides medical counseling as well as first aid for all embassy staff and primary outpatient care for mission Americans. Health unit doctors oversee any additional medical treatment or procedures requiring use of local facilities. Health unit space, newly renovated and enlarged, hosts recently upgraded equipment and

occupies part of a chancery annex on the embassy compound. A full-time locally hired doctor manages the unit, supervising two half-time registered nurses. A pediatrician works in the unit part time; he and other specialists are available on call. The Department's Office of Medical Services and the regional medical officer in Vienna support the health unit. The unit coordinates an average of one medical evacuation a quarter to help ensure that employees obtain satisfactory medical care.

OIG review confirmed that the unit competently safeguards patient records and correctly administers controlled medical supplies, properly keeping stocks on hand in secure rooms and containers. Some employees expressed concern over the quality of laboratory work performed in Moldova and stated that the doctor should be more empathetic to American expectations for health care. The health unit follows Office of Medical Services guidelines in providing care, which constrain services sometimes expected by clients. The unit coordinates and clears all significant medical decisions with the regional medical officer or the Office of Medical Services.

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

Embassy employees rated the community liaison office coordinator as an effective service provider on their workplace and quality of life questionnaires. The coordinator, normally a shared, part-time position, organizes interesting, morale building events for the staff and their families, including excursions within Moldova and field trips to historic sites outside the capital. The coordinator publishes a newsletter for the community and manages a well-organized lending library. Embassy personnel cited the current coordinator's positive attitude toward living conditions in Moldova and her willingness to lend a sympathetic ear as vital factors in maintaining their morale.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

American employees rated equal employment opportunity (EEO) workplace sensitivities among the top three categories of embassy services in their workplace and quality of life questionnaires. That quality carries over via an embassy program designed to offer a formal EEO type environment for LES staffers. EEO coordinators stated that no employees registered complaints or sought counseling during the past year. OIG endorsed the embassy's plan to secure EEO training for all American EEO counselors.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The Chief of Mission Management Controls Statements of Assurance for 2003 and 2004 cited control weaknesses that the embassy has been vigorously attempting to correct. For example, the 2004 memorandum stated that there was a lack of an automated accounts receivable system. In addition, the embassy disclosed that the warehousing operation did not fully meet all Department standards for managing and controlling nonexpendable property. OIG recognizes the difficulty the embassy faces in light of an inexperienced officer and LES staff. The embassy's risk assessments were submitted on time and scores were high - in the mid-90 percent range.

Management control coordinator responsibilities rest with the management officer. OIG believes the DCM should be the management control coordinator to ensure that all offices with control responsibilities report accurately. OIG made an informal recommendation to add this to the deputy's work requirements.

Although the embassy demonstrated a firm commitment to observing, reporting, and correcting weaknesses, OIG noted shortcomings in documenting its system of management controls. Only recently had the embassy prepared written policies and procedures for many of its administrative processes. At the time of the inspection, the management officer had assembled a comprehensive volume of written policies and procedures and made these available to the mission. However, it is not clear to what extent mission staff understand the principles of management controls. For example, the embassy did not identify risks and control objectives unique to its operations, which is the first step in the Department's approach to assessing management controls. Further, none of the officers responsible for management controls have had the Foreign Service Institute's management controls training. OIG and embassy management agreed that a management controls review would be appropriate for the embassy.

Approaching a management controls program review, prescribed in 2 FAM 021.3j (1), is a systematic method that affords the best and most direct approach to meet Department requirements and to detect program vulnerabilities. During the inspection, the management officer enrolled in the Foreign Service Institute's management controls correspondence course and agreed to ensure that all embassy managers with control responsibilities get appropriate training.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Chisinau should conduct an embassy-wide management controls review in accordance with Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Chisinau)

CONSULAR MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The accountable consular officer complies with Consular Management Handbook standards for managing fees, blank document supplies, and sensitive computer access controls. The nonimmigrant visa referral system meets handbook standards. Consular files and records contain some outdated and extraneous items. The section developed a plan to dispose of such materials during the course of the inspection.

Consular cash and receipt handling methodology satisfies handbook specifications. The accountable consular officer and consular subcashier and alternates correctly perform their duties. Reviews of randomly selected consular accounts revealed no bookkeeping errors. The officer reconciles machine-readable visa receipts against visa issuance.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Acceptable property management practices did not exist until inventories were taken and reported in early 2004. The embassy reported a nonexpendable inventory shortage of \$70,365 (3.6 percent of \$1,929,767) and an expendable inventory with no exceptions. The embassy could not determine when the last previous inventory had taken place. Until the arrival of the current management officer in 2002, the embassy paid little attention to controlling property. FSNs stated that for many years untrained, inexperienced workers were directed to perform property tasks without adequate supervision. Obviously, the embassy's inability to reconcile nonexpendable property results from years of neglect.

Property was observed in the warehouse that had not been recorded in inventory records as required by 6 FAM 224.1-1. Examples included 140 tires and 10 sets of patio furniture. In addition, warehouse space was used for overflow storage of the Department and other agencies. As a result, items could be removed and not be detected through the application of the inventory reconciliation process.

In addition, random testing determined some discrepancies with expendable supplies. This renders questionable the 2004 expendable inventory reporting. An informal recommendation was made to conduct more frequent spot checks of nonexpendable and expendable inventories.

Despite the management section's efforts, basic property management issues remain. Probably the biggest obstacle is the lack of understanding of the Department's regulations and management controls program within the property management section.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Chisinau should implement all property management procedures and requirements in accordance with Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Chisinau)

Recommendation 8: Embassy Chisinau should conduct an embassy-wide management controls review in accordance with Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Chisinau)

Recommendation 9: Embassy Chisinau should implement all property management procedures and requirements in accordance with Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Chisinau)

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.

Management

Embassy Chisinau does not have community-wide information sharing forum.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Chisinau should conduct periodic "town meetings" to discuss quality of life issues.

Political and Economic Section

There is uncertainty and concern within the new and inexperienced political/economic team regarding priorities and expectations.

Informal Recommendation 2: The political/economic section chief should have one-on-one time with the deputy chief of mission in order to develop his reporting and section management skills.

Informal Recommendation 3: The Ambassador, deputy chief of mission, and political/economic section should participate in a carefully prepared offsite with the goal of clarifying expectations, addressing concerns, and providing the basis for ongoing communication.

The political/economic section lacks an office management specialist.

Informal Recommendation 4: The deputy chief of mission and his office management specialist should provide guidance to the political/economic section in setting up operating procedures and section files.

Public Diplomacy

Distribution lists of target audience members who receive embassy policy information materials are determined by IRC staff.

Informal Recommendation 5: The public affairs section should brief other embassy elements on the information reference center outreach program and invite them to participate in the development of information distribution lists.

Consular Section

Embassy Chisinau's MPP does not enunciate a consular policy or functional specific strategy and objectives aimed at safeguarding American citizens and their interests as well as explicit visa-related U.S. border protection goals.

Informal Recommendation 6: The embassy should include U.S. consular-related national policy interests and goals in its Mission Performance Plan.

Embassy Chisinau's consular unit has few standard operating procedures.

Informal Recommendation 7: The consular unit should develop standard operating procedures. To speed preparation of the procedures, the consular unit should consult samples the Office of Inspector General left with consular management, as well as other regional embassies, on consular standard operating procedures they already have prepared.

Embassy Chisinau's consular files are not maintained in compliance with Records Management Handbook standards. Many items are obsolete.

Informal Recommendation 8: The section should review filed materials, properly arrange them, and discard obsolete items.

Regional Security Office

The RSO coordinates both the law enforcement and Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs program assistance elements of the embassy's antitrafficking-in-persons effort.

Informal Recommendation 9: Post management should delegate some of the program responsibilities to other officers as appropriate.

Administrative Section

The embassy-administered FSN medical program requires medically privileged information to be filed with the claim in the financial management section files.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy should establish a procedure that medical information be retained in the health unit.

Property management standard operating procedures do not provide for data entry activities.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Chisinau should issue standard operating procedures for entering data to nonexpendable property application and stock control systems.

The only inventory verifications conducted by the embassy is its annual inventory. The embassy has recent, significant inventory shortages and until this year had not addressed serious property control weaknesses.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Chisinau should conduct periodic spot checks of nonexpendable and expendable inventories.

Property was observed in the warehouse that was not recorded in inventory records as required by 6 FAM 224.1-1. Examples included 140 tires and 10 sets of patio furniture.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy Chisinau should record all property in the warehouse.

The procurement office is the embassy's only source for the government purchase card. This imposes a burden on the office's efficiency and can delay service, especially in the public diplomacy office.

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy Chisinau should train a public diplomacy staff member and issue a government purchase card for the public diplomacy section.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy Chisinau should examine the feasibility of issuing government purchase cards more broadly within the mission.

Motor pool staff members did not always complete the reverse pages of vehicle logs, Form OF-108 as required by Department policy.

Informal Recommendation 16: Embassy Chisinau should ensure completion of Form OF-108 for every trip.

A lighting fixture located in the ceiling of the communication center does not have a light cover and can be hit by personnel of average height.

Informal Recommendation 17: Embassy Chisinau should install adequate lighting in the alternate communication center that will not pose a safety hazard.

Information Management

OIG found that post has not labeled power distribution panels associated with computer systems as required by 12 FAM 629.4-3 (a).

Informal Recommendation 18: Embassy Chisinau should properly label all power distribution panels associated with computer equipment to assure computer equipment can be disabled during an emergency and prevent potential accidents.

Management Controls

Embassy Chisinau has designated the management officer as the management control coordinator.

Informal Recommendation 19: Embassy Chisinau should designate the deputy chief of mission as the management control coordinator.

Embassy Chisinau has formal designation for receiving and recording functions, but staff has been observed taking shortcuts and not following the strict delineation of duties.

Informal Recommendation 20: Embassy Chisinau should remind the property management staff of the necessity to maintain strict differentiation between receiving and recording property data.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

Ambassador	Heather M. Hodges	10/03
Deputy Chief of Mission	John H. Winant	07/04
Chiefs of Sections:		
Management	Charles Eaton	10/02
Consular	Andrew Paul	08/03
Political/Economic	H. Martin McDowell	08/04
Public Affairs	Aleisha Woodward	10/02
Regional Security	Greg A. Sherman	05/02
Other Agencies:		
Department of Defense	Maj. Richard M. Reyno	12/03
U.S. Agency for International Development	John C. Starnes	08/03
Peace Corps	David Reside	02/03

ABBREVIATIONS

CAJE	Computer assisted job evaluation
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
Department	Department of State
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FSN	Foreign Service national
GSO	General services office
IRC	Information Resource Center
LES	Locally employed staff
MPP	Mission Performance Plan
OIG	Office of Inspector General
RSO	Regional security officer

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