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

# Report of Inspection

Embassy Santo Domingo,  
Dominican Republic

Report Number ISP-I-05-32A, September 2005

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

- Through effective leadership and influence, Embassy Santo Domingo keeps U.S.-Dominican bilateral relations on a steady and positive course in the transition to a new government in 2004 and in overcoming other challenges to the relationship over the past several years. The Ambassador and deputy chief of mission (DCM) work together well and have excellent relations with the Dominican government at all levels.
- Because of the mission's creative and very successful transition initiative to bridge the gap between the old and new governments, it has established important, strategic, and helpful contacts in the new government.
- Embassy Santo Domingo has been especially effective in providing oversight for the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) bilateral development programs valued at over 23 million dollars for 2005 in areas from electoral assistance that contributed to the 2004 elections, which were judged to be the freest and fairest elections in Dominican history, to programs in education, anticorruption, economic and judicial reform, health (including AIDs education and eradication), and good governance.
- As a focus country for transshipment of drugs to the United States, the law and drug enforcement components of the mission continue to make significant progress in interdiction and arrests, with an exponential increase in the number of extraditions to the United States over the past several years.
- Embassy Santo Domingo succeeded in advancing negotiations for the Central America Free Trade Agreement, one of the top U.S. foreign policy priorities for the region, by using the entire country team in a concerted and very successful effort in getting the Dominican legislature to remove legal impediments to a free trade agreement.
- The Ambassador and DCM orchestrate the work of participants in inter-agency activities, which are frictionless and carried out in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation in sharing information. There is a need for the Ambassador and DCM to be seen more in the various offices of the mission beyond scheduled meetings with agency heads.
- The public affairs section has taken a very proactive and creative role in advancing U.S. interests in the Dominican Republic. The section has moved to put the Ambassador in the forefront in using the press as an instrument that he can employ in the advocacy of U.S. positions on a full array of issues.

- Although the embassy has a designated Equal Employment Opportunity counselor, some African American employees, who have faced discrimination in some social situations in the Dominican Republic, and some employees with members of household issues, believe that their concerns have not been sufficiently addressed by the embassy management.
- American morale is generally low, in large part due to administrative support issues. With few exceptions, the consistent mission view is that overall the management section has not performed to standard, particularly in housing and maintenance units, although some of its individual units have received high marks and others improving marks for services provided. In an effort to obtain better results, the DCM has had to assume responsibility for many of the functions normally carried out by the management section.
- The security office has done an admirable job in securing U.S. personnel and assets in offices spread over eight locations in Santo Domingo. Under present plans, a new embassy compound (NEC) combining all functions is expected to be completed in 2011 or 2012. With Washington presently scouting for a new embassy site, improvements in this situation could come earlier than the six to seven years now projected.
- The embassy's funding is problematic for this and future fiscal years. If projected requirements are not met, cutbacks in services may be required in areas that could have a negative effect on post morale, particularly for Dominican employees.
- With some officers working in rabbit warrens in a woefully inadequate building, consular officers and their Dominican colleagues soldier on processing over 75,000 nonimmigrant and over 42,000 immigrant visas (third-largest in the world) annually and collecting \$12 million in annual Department of State (Department) revenues. Despite justifiable complaints over poor physical working conditions in the consular section, the employees working there are among the unsung heroes of the mission and the consular service.
- Although Embassy Santo Domingo has made recent efforts to improve its management controls program, OIG found significant management control weaknesses and recommends the embassy conduct a thorough management controls review.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between April 18 and May 13, 2005, and in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, between May 16 and June 8, 2005. Ambassador Johnny Young (team leader), John Moran (deputy team leader),

Kathleen Cayer, Linda Erskine, Richard Jones, Richard Kraighman, Edward Lauer, Gwendolyn Llewellyn, Deborah McRae, Robert Reis, and Michelle Wood conducted the inspection.



## CONTEXT



The Dominican Republic, just 70 miles from the U.S. commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the second-largest Caribbean country after Cuba by population and area, is a U.S. ally in a region of strategic importance to the United States. In the past decades, the Dominican Republic has become the United States' most reliable democratic supporter in the Caribbean. The country joined the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq, criticized Cuba's poor human rights record,

and successfully negotiated a free trade agreement with the United States, its largest trading partner. The United States is the Dominican Republic's strongest supporter, promoting trade, providing aid and military support and strengthening an already close, collaborative relationship. Today, with nearly a million Dominicans in the United States and nearly 900,000 U.S. visitors to the island each year, the two cultures are increasingly influenced by each other.

The embassy runs one of the busiest visa sections in the world, responsible for safeguarding U.S. borders and U.S. homeland security through effective and efficient visa adjudication and detection of visa fraud. The immigrant visa (IV) unit, the third-largest in the world, processed more than 42,022 IVs in FY 2004, while the nonimmigrant visa (NIV) unit adjudicated 72,315 cases. The fraud prevention unit is key to the integrity of both visa adjudication and passport/consular report of birth abroad determinations. The embassy also seeks more effective Dominican cooperation in carrying out better control of movement across its borders. Located astride key Caribbean drug smuggling routes, the Dominican Republic is a critical link in the U.S. war on international crime and drugs and a key partner in achieving U.S. policy goals of the Third Border Initiative. The country's poorly protected ports, airports, borders, and beaches make it and the United States vulnerable to illegal smuggling of both goods and people and illegal transit of criminals and terrorists.



The embassy marshalled domestic and international support in 2004 that ensured that the Dominican Republic conducted its freest and fairest presidential election ever. The embassy actively mediated between administrations to facilitate a smooth presidential transition, including agreement on legislation required to start negotiations on renewing the suspended International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreement. The embassy played a prominent role in conducting negotiations with the Dominican Republic and other countries for the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The embassy promotes broad-based, sustainable growth in the Dominican Republic that contributes to economic prosperity in the United States. The embassy is assisting the Dominican government to complete reforms in banking, the fiscal structure, and the management of the electricity sector agreed to with the IMF, the World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank. Embassy assistance, largely through USAID, is directed toward Dominican health sector reform, better child and maternal health care, and control of the spread of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

The embassy's fundamental goals are to help the Dominican Republic remain on a path to economic recovery and to strengthen its post-dictatorship democratic institutions, especially those dealing with elections, administration of justice, and international trade. Accountable, democratic governance with appropriate checks and balances between branches is still new and fragile in the Dominican Republic. A top embassy priority is providing advice, training, and encouragement for the country to develop mechanisms to ensure transparent and accountable democratic institutions and an effective justice system. The embassy's work resulted in the Dominican Republic's adoption of a more proactive justice system. U.S. cooperation with Dominican law enforcement and judicial authorities resulted in one of the largest cocaine seizures as well as the apprehension of several well-known narcotraffickers. A record number of fugitives were extradited to the United States in the last year. A key challenge to these goals is the resilience of a local culture of corruption. Accomplishment of U.S. goals will facilitate the country's sustainable growth, motivating the country to become an even stronger bilateral and regional partner of the United States. The two countries can increase trade, fight global crime and terrorism, and improve mutual understanding. The embassy is working to improve Dominicans' understanding of U.S. domestic and foreign policies and social and cultural values through personal diplomacy, strategically placed op-ed pieces, speeches by the Ambassador and others, and multiple high level visits.

The embassy has 350 locally employed staff (LES) and 165 American staff (including direct hires, eligible family members, and temporary duty personnel). The embassy's operational budget in FY 2005 will equal 27.4 million dollars, and USAID assistance will be 23.4 million dollars.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

The Ambassador and DCM front office team has worked effectively together in coordinating and implementing a wide range of important U.S. policy objectives. They have scored successes in easing the Dominican Republic's transition to a new government, democratization, reforms in the economy, improving governance, and in law enforcement and drug interdiction, to name just a few. Through a division of labor, they have worked well together.

In this relationship, the noncareer Ambassador has taken the lead in dealing with policy implementation through personal exercise of his influence and leadership in a more public way in his dealings with Dominican government officials and with persons in the private sector. He focuses on the big picture and policy issues and does not involve himself in the details of day-to-day operations of the mission. The DCM has fully accepted this responsibility ceded to her. She thus concentrates on coordinating and shaping the work of the mission's various elements and organizations into an instrument that can implement and advance U.S. policy initiatives. This has worked and has produced excellent results across a range of Mission Performance Plan (MPP) goals and objectives.

Section and agency representatives are pleased with the Ambassador and DCM's oversight of their operations and with their access to both. Nonetheless, overall mission morale is spotty and problematic, in good part as a result of poor management of services and support. Especially low morale is suffered among U.S. personnel below the country team level and among Foreign Service nationals (FSN). All in these two categories would like to see a greater appreciation for their work and believe seeing both the Ambassador and DCM more frequently would help satisfy that need. Informal recommendations were made to address this problem. Staffing for the front office is adequate and is used efficiently.

## THE COUNTRY TEAM AND INTERAGENCY RELATIONS

All 14 U.S. government agencies, as well as seven Department section chiefs, at post sit on the full country team which meets weekly. This meeting is supplemented by a smaller weekly version, comprised of a more narrowly selected group

of agency heads and section chiefs. When in country, the Ambassador chairs the two weekly country team meetings. In his absence, the DCM chairs these meetings, as she does other meetings such as the Emergency Action Committee. The Ambassador, DCM, economic/political section (ECOPOL) chief and public affairs officer also meet the other three days of the week. Only one agency representative said he did not have such a meeting. There is a monthly meeting of the interagency law enforcement working group, the interagency democracy and human rights working group, and the interagency economic and commercial working group. The Ambassador and DCM call other ad hoc meetings on specific problems and issues as required, and the DCM holds separate periodic meetings with each agency head and section chief as warranted. The Ambassador and DCM use all meetings as tools to share information, seek guidance from the team and to assign projects and taskings. Although requiring time to hold, they have worked well.

Because of the deft work by the Ambassador, and especially the DCM, in orchestrating the work of participants in these meetings, there are no significant frictions and or turf battles in interagency relations. When differences occur, they are settled amicably and professionally. All of these meetings function smoothly and productively. Many experienced agency heads said that their relationship with the Ambassador and DCM was the best they have experienced. Both the Ambassador and DCM have also been very conscientious in including a full range of country team players in representational events.

## THE MISSION PERFORMANCE PLAN PROCESS

The MPP process has been exemplary in formulation and execution. The DCM chairs the initial meeting in an off-site location. It brings together all relevant offices of the country team for an initial discussion of issues and assignment of sections to develop. The DCM then tracks the process through each step, which includes numerous follow up meetings and drafting sessions, until the final plan is submitted to Washington. The goals and objectives selected in the most recent plan were on target, especially in the areas of democratization and good governance. They were, in fact, perfectly dovetailed with the broader U.S. government's foreign policy goals in these areas. The MPP has also been consistent in stating the case for additional human and financial resources and a NEC. As one agency head said, "The DCM uses the MPP as a living, breathing document," which is what it is intended to be. Although feedback from Washington in some areas has not been as desired, the post, nevertheless, has used its plan to coordinate the work of the mission in achieving the goals and objectives it has established and to make mid-

year corrections. Because of problems in the management section, the DCM has devoted more coordination time to this effort than would have been warranted if adequate management support had been available.

## SECURITY MANAGEMENT AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The DCM chairs the Emergency Action Committee and Visas Vipers (lookout) meetings. Both are convened periodically and on an ad hoc basis in response to specific situations. The DCM briefs the Ambassador on these meetings. The Marine security guard detachment received the highest score by far in the Office of Inspector General (OIG) questionnaire concerning 53 service support categories. Nonetheless, post personnel do not fully participate in the emergency preparedness drills and exercises carried out by the Marines under the direction of the regional security office (RSO). A separate classified security report contains further information on the security situation.

## EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND OTHER DISCRIMINATION ISSUES

Coordinators have been designated for the Federal Women's Program and Equal Employment Opportunity issues. Several African American staff members have outlined to the front office, and to their supervisors, problems they have encountered in being denied access to entertainment establishments because of their color. They have offered proposed strategies to the mission in addressing this problem through private and public initiatives. Thus far, these employees have not seen any front office movement in tackling this problem, which is inconsistent with U.S. non-discriminatory principles. Until this problem is resolved, it will continue to fester and impact negatively on the morale and productivity of concerned employees.

**Recommendation 1:** Embassy Santo Domingo should develop and implement a strategy for eliminating or reducing the discrimination now encountered by some African American employees who are denied entry to some private entertainment establishments in the Dominican Republic. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Human Resources should establish, well before final assignment, a briefing program that fully apprises prospective African American employees of what they may encounter in the Dominican Republic. (Action: DGHR)

Employees with member of household concerns feel that the front office has not responded to their numerous requests for issuance of an updated policy that is consistent with the latest Department policy on this issue. Until resolved, this issue will continue to affect the attitude, morale, and productivity of affected employees. The post has an obligation to respond.

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Santo Domingo should issue an administrative or management policy notice on members of household consistent with the latest Department policy on this issue. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

## LEADERSHIP

As a noncareer Ambassador on a first assignment, the Ambassador has leaned heavily on the DCM for support and guidance and has received it abundantly. The Ambassador has superb quick access to all levels of the Dominican government, particularly the office of President Fernandez, as well as private contacts. The DCM, an experienced economic officer with extensive multi-agency experience, also enjoys a wide range of outside contacts and good access. The Ambassador is not inclined to deal with lots of paper and written work, preferring instead a more personal and hands-on approach in exercising his leadership and influence with government officials and private contacts. This has worked well because of the DCM's efforts in preparing for him written materials for these encounters.

Both the Ambassador and DCM are respected and are well liked within the mission, particularly among agency representative and section chiefs. Country team members praise the Ambassador for his graciousness and easy way with people. However, many staff members below the country team level feel neglected and would like to see the Ambassador and the DCM in their offices more often. The absence of frequent front office visits to the various elements of the mission, particularly the consular section, has led to a feeling that the work carried out in

eight widely dispersed mission compounds is not fully understood and appreciated. The Ambassador and DCM need to engage in more walks around the mission to show their support. They also need to take the lead in supporting social activities that would bring together both Americans and FSNs. Improvement on this score could help to develop the sense of unity and community that FSN and American employees crave. OIG made several informal recommendations to address this problem.

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## PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The public diplomacy goal of mutual understanding is clearly included in the MPP. The public affairs section (PA) played a key role in formulating its contributions to the plan. Given the Ambassador's skill dealing with issues in a more personal, face-to face approach, the public affairs office has taken full advantage of this opportunity. PA has turned the Ambassador into a media celebrity, using him to advocate publicly on issues of importance. PA has moved from shielding the Ambassador from the press to putting him in front of it.

## THE ENTRY-LEVEL MENTORING PROGRAM

With a complement of 20 entry-level officers (mostly in the consular section) and four specialist positions, Santo Domingo compares with the largest posts in the size of its entry-level contingent. The DCM takes seriously and enthusiastically her regulatory responsibilities for mentoring and developing the entry-level personnel under her supervision. In carrying out her duties, she assures developmental opportunities for personnel. She periodically has one-on-one meetings with them, as well as larger gatherings. They are included in events at her home. She gives them substantive tasks for major events, opportunities for short-term exchanges to other sections, and note-taking assignments at various meetings. More importantly to the effectiveness of the program, she has designated a junior officer to provide day-to-day operational guidance and oversight for it, a move that has worked well. To sustain its continued good operation, the DCM must continue her oversight and personal involvement.

## RIGHTSIZING

The embassy's staff of 165 Americans and 350 FSNs advance U.S. interests in economic reform and growth, the strengthening of governmental institutions and the rule of law, and the suppression of narcotics trafficking and other criminal threats to the United States from the Dominican Republic. The embassy has used the MPP rightsizing guidance to review its staffing requirements and to tie them to the MPP's goals. Staffing information is current and accurate.

The embassy's various policy and law enforcement functions are complementary, and careful coordination among the sections and agencies responsible for those functions discourages inefficiencies. The DCM carefully reviews with the appropriate agencies and the management counselor NSDD-38<sup>1</sup> requests for the assignment of additional American personnel to Santo Domingo and presents recommendations to the Ambassador for his decision. An examination of the requirement for additional International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) support is part of each review.

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



The lack of space in embassy compounds and buildings, especially in the building housing the consular section, constrains the growth of the embassy's staff now. Any significant increase in program staff will require increased support personnel, thus compounding space requirements. The ICASS committee, under the recently elected chair, is about to begin a workforce analysis to determine whether the ICASS staff is at an appropriate level or whether there is opportunity for efficiency gains.

The embassy's workload is not likely to decline substantially in the coming years. The embassy's law enforcement activities and its efforts to build up sound, honest governmental institutions through advocacy and financial assistance will remain important. The consular section faces increased demand for passport issuance and other citizen services, and the section's queues for IV and NIV interviews are one year and two months, respectively. Yet the lack of space inhibits the assignment of enough additional personnel to consular work in Santo Domingo.

The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) at present expects to begin construction of a new, more spacious combined embassy compound in Santo Domingo in 2009, with an expected completion date of 2011 or 2012. The new chancery should afford the embassy more space to do its work, and a chance to collocate disparate elements of the mission now scattered over the city. In an initial study, the embassy projects a staff of 183 Americans and 387 FSNs in five to seven years. The embassy intends to refine this estimate in the coming months. The ICASS workforce analysis and a visit from the Management Undersecretary's Office of Rightsizing in the fall of 2005 should be helpful in that effort.

The Florida Regional Center (FRC) in Fort Lauderdale provides significant regional support to Embassy Santo Domingo, primarily for management operations such as human resources (HR), medical services, training, procurement, and information technology. The FRC has signed a memorandum of understanding with the embassy. Regional officers schedule visits to the embassy for one week, with no more than 60 days between visits. The FRC also offers regional administrative teams to posts. In March 2005 an FRC administrative team addressed property and inventory problems in Santo Domingo. The FRC is willing to expand its support to the embassy in other areas and is planning a visit of the regional contract and procurement staff. Greater use of the FRC by the embassy could reduce the embassy's workload and perhaps its staff. More extensive FRC support for financial services, for example, may be possible and should be explored. The embassy saves money by regularly using the expanded FRC training program and facility, as training in Fort Lauderdale is cheaper than in Washington.





## POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

### ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SECTION

The ECOPOL section has very capably supported the embassy's management in the formulation and pursuit of the MPP's policy goals in the Dominican Republic, especially those on economic prosperity and security and on democracy and human rights. The embassy's coordination of advocacy and reporting is extensive and sound. The ECOPOL chief attends the country team meetings and meets the Ambassador and DCM three times a week in a smaller group. The section's officers prepare briefing materials for the Ambassador and DCM's discussions with senior Dominican government officials and private leaders and join them in the meetings. The members of the section also pursue the embassy's goals in their own discussions with a wide range of Dominican officials and private citizens.

The ECOPOL section, comprising the chief, five other officers, a specialist, and an FSN political-economic assistant, is well managed, busy, and productive in its advocacy, reporting, and public outreach. Communication and morale within the office is good, although the officers regularly work 10 or more hours of overtime a week. The embassy proposes in its MPP to establish a second FSN position that would strengthen the section's institutional memory as well as its capability for analysis, advocacy, and reporting. The embassy has authority to create another FSN position if it so chooses. At any given time, two of the six officers in the section serve there in the second year of their two-year rotational assignments in Santo Domingo. The rotations each year cause inefficiencies for several months as the officers learn their new jobs. The ECOPOL section chief guides and directs his staff carefully and has encouraged formal training at the Foreign Service Institute for the rotational officers, as well as for other officers in the section, to accelerate their learning and to increase the section's capability. The officers all speak Spanish.

Offices in the Department and other agencies in Washington were very complimentary of the embassy's advocacy and reporting. Economic agencies commented,

in particular, that the Ambassador, the DCM, and the ECOPOL section had been very active and effective in lobbying Dominican officials and the Dominican Congress to repeal a law that was an impediment to the conclusion of the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement. They found the reporting on macroeconomic, financial, and trade matters excellent. Analysts in Washington praised the volume and quality of the embassy's reporting on political developments and leaders and on financial matters. Washington officials remarked that the DCM and officers in the ECOPOL section provide useful alerts by e-mail, follow up with telegrams, and respond quickly to e-mail inquiries.

The embassy and, within it, the ECOPOL section, directs its advocacy at promoting sound economic growth, at encouraging the establishment of honest governmental institutions and the rule of law, and at the suppression of criminal threats to the United States. In both advocacy and reporting, the ECOPOL section works productively with USAID, the U.S. Commercial Service, the Foreign Agricultural Service, and other agencies in the embassy.

The officers of the ECOPOL section enjoy excellent access throughout the Dominican executive and legislative branches of government and in private organizations. In 2004 the embassy, working as a team under the Ambassador and DCM's direction, helped prepare the Dominican government for the CAFTA negotiations, and promoted a successful outcome to them. Now the ECOPOL section is effectively supporting the embassy's leadership in seeking Dominican ratification of the agreement. The embassy also has pressed Dominican officials firmly for the prosecution of bankers whose fraud led to the collapse of the Dominican economy in 2003 and for compliance with the IMF standby agreement designed to restore sustainable economic growth. The political-legal officer in the ECOPOL section, in close cooperation with law enforcement agencies in the embassy, has facilitated the extradition of fugitives to the United States at a rate that has increased each year recently. The officer also has worked closely with Dominican justice officials, including the attorney general, to implement a new criminal procedures code, which will ensure that the prosecution of criminals in the Dominican Republic safeguards the rights of the accused under properly defined procedures. The embassy calls attention to labor and migrant rights by visits to industrial sugar plantations and the Haitian border area. It also has lobbied actively for the protection of U.S. intellectual property rights.

The ECOPOL section's reporting is pertinent to U.S. interests, accurate, and well written and edited. An impressive series of 52 cables kept readers in Washington informed of public issues and party politics leading up to the 2004 presidential election in the Dominican Republic. Another series covered the transition to the

new government and the embassy's efforts to establish contact with the government and to convey to it U.S. views on policy and institution building. A series of cables on politics and on the reform of the banking sector have documented developments and the embassy's advocacy. The ECOPOL section has won kudos from Washington for the section's reporting on energy, CAFTA, human rights, and labor rights.

The ECOPOL section has been a pioneer in the use of the classified SIPRNET to keep its readership up-to-date on conditions and events in the Dominican Republic. Each day the section posts abbreviated summaries of the main items in the Dominican press to the site as well as a daily article that a member of the section writes on a topic of current interest to its readers. The SIPRNET format is flexible. It permits the posting, in edited form, of articles first written as e-mails to a particular office in Washington. The format also allows the inclusion of photos and political cartoons. The ECOPOL section puts its telegraphic reporting onto the site, including its various series. It also includes on the SIPRNET site basic documents, such as the IMF standby agreement, the country commercial guide, biographies of prominent Dominicans, and speeches of the Ambassador and Dominican leaders. The site is a well-organized, comprehensive source of information on the Dominican Republic and U.S.-Dominican relations.

## NARCOTICS AFFAIRS SECTION

The embassy's front office provides strong leadership and assistance to the narcotics affairs section (NAS) and to the law enforcement agencies in the embassy. With that support, the chief of the NAS has been imaginative and effective in coordinating the work of the law enforcement agencies and in furthering the embassy's law enforcement goals. He enjoys the respect of and excellent relationships with the members of the various agencies and chairs the monthly meeting of the embassy's law enforcement committee. Washington offices and agencies were complimentary of his work.

In FY 2004, the NAS chief made efficient use of an annual budget of \$1.1 million to fund the Dominican police's special investigation unit that works with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. He also has identified gaps in the training of Dominican law enforcement agencies and has provided funds for training that will advance U.S. law enforcement goals in the Dominican Republic. The programs funded include curriculum improvement at the national police academy, training on port security, and training, funded jointly with the Netherlands

government, in the use of drug sniffing dogs. The NAS also has improved the information technology of the Dominican Republic's drug enforcement agency and has contributed to the embassy's campaign to discourage illegal migration to the United States.

The NAS chief is also responsible for law enforcement assistance programs in Haiti and spends about one quarter of his time there. He regularly works 10 or more hours of overtime a week. OIG concurred with the embassy's request in its MPP for a second NAS officer who could take on expanded duties in Haiti should conditions in that country permit.

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

Public diplomacy refers to the function of engaging, informing, and influencing key public international audiences. The PA section at Embassy Santo Domingo directs public diplomacy. Under the leadership of a strong and senior public affairs officer (PAO), PA is engaged in achieving the major MPP goal of mutual understanding. PA is an integral participant in the MPP process, contributing tactics to each MPP goal and advising on strategies. PA tries to secure broad support among Dominican political, social, and opinion leaders for the United States, its goals and values through programs, contacts, and exchanges.

PA works closely with the front office. The PAO is an active member of the weekly country team meeting, attends the weekly senior staff meeting, and meets with the Ambassador, DCM, and ECOPOL chief the other three days of the week to discuss policy issues. The PAO also meets with the DCM biweekly to discuss PA management and administrative issues. The PAO's close contact with the front office allows her to stay on top of all policy issues and to be an integral part of the policy making process. The Ambassador and DCM take great interest in public outreach activities led by PA and support PA efforts.

The Dominican media are eager to seek out U.S. views; the Ambassador's comments appear frequently in the papers and stimulate debate. Given the Ambassador's propensity to deal with most issues, including the media, in a personal, face-to-face approach, the public affairs office has taken full advantage of this opportunity. PA arranges an off the record meeting for the Ambassador and leading media figures approximately every six to eight weeks. PA has turned the Ambassador into a media celebrity in using him to advocate publicly on issues of importance such as CAFTA, narcotics interdiction, and illegal migration. The

Ambassador actively engages the press and uses it as an instrument for advancing his priorities. PA also does active press and media promotion for leading U.S. visitors.

PA works to improve Dominicans' understanding of U.S. domestic and foreign policies and social and cultural values through personal diplomacy, strategically placed op-ed pieces, speeches by the Ambassador and others, and multiple high-level visits. Over the next few years, the embassy will expand the pool of Dominican leaders with first-hand exposure to the United States by identifying candidates for academic and exchange programs from a wider variety of institutions and specialities. The embassy will create a larger base of Dominicans well informed about U.S. culture, values, and policies by improving English language skills and offering U.S.-derived materials.

PA is strong in both programming and outreach. The exchange programs are well managed and have an impact on targeted sectors of the Dominican society. PA manages public relations and cultural and educational exchanges for the embassy, including arranging press conferences, official statements, and guidance. The section also handles student and scholarly exchanges, performances, and exhibitions. Working with the NAS and consular section, PA conducted a large scale campaign of billboards, radio and TV spots, leaflets, and giveaway posters to draw public and media attention to the dangers of traveling illegally by small boats (yolas) to Puerto Rico. PA will use the same approach to discourage trafficking in persons this year. The international visitor program is well managed and has good participation from sections and agencies throughout the embassy. The voluntary visitor program works well.

PA sections worldwide have for some years been trying through quantitative means to measure the success of their programs. They have had little success to date. The PA section in Santo Domingo has tried to do some informal quantitative surveys. Nonetheless, more work in Santo Domingo, perhaps using global guidance, to raise the measurement level above anecdotal evidence would be useful.

Given the lack of a Fulbright Commission in the Dominican Republic, PA administers all aspects of the program. PA is actively working to revive the Fulbright Alumni Association to take a more active interest and role in Fulbright affairs.

The PA section's information resource center (IRC) is very good. In recognition of its expertise and success, it was chosen by Washington offices to host a regional conference for IRC personnel to discuss possible improvements in other embassy IRCs. The center has a full-time web master who works closely with all mission

sections, and is the primary source for the embassy's web site content. The content is very good, especially for consular section affairs, and helps to hold down the still massive number of telephone calls that all embassy elements receive concerning visas. PA has also donated collections of scholastic books for primary and secondary students to various libraries and schools, but the books are too expensive to meet all requests.

The IRC will facilitate Dominicans' access to electronic information, particularly U.S. government information, through a new virtual library project. PA Santo Domingo is among the forerunner posts in the world to offer a virtual (electronic) library of databases. This collection of databases and on-line reference material is available to contacts from remote locations via passwords. The virtual library specifically targets academics, government officials, and the press, giving them instant access to hundreds of web sites in both English and Spanish. These databases offer Dominicans much greater access to information in English and Spanish, including direct access to declassified U.S. government documents. The project has attracted a great deal of interest, including from the Dominican presidency. PA hopes to receive more funding from Washington to allow more system users access to the databases and to train the information gatekeepers how to use this resource.

The PA section has correctly identified that there is no need for hard copy distribution of the Washington File. All mission elements that request them receive daily copies of the New York Times, the Washington Times, the Financial Times and the Washington Post. Selected stories from the file are posted to the web page, and the IRC distributes electronic copies to appropriate contacts.

The PA staff in Embassy Santo Domingo consists of three U.S. Foreign Service officers and 15 authorized (one vacancy) LES positions. They carry out an active program of information and cultural work in support of these goals. The PAO position is ranked at the FS-01 level (the incumbent is FE-OC), the information officer at the FS-02 level, and cultural affairs officer (CAO) at FS-02. The section is performing well even though much of the local staff has been hired in the past two years. An entry-level officer fills the FS-02 CAO position. The CAO was an FS-06 when she arrived, effectively a quadruple stretch to the FS-02 position. The first-tour officer was assigned due to an absence of bidders for the off-the-normal-bidding-cycle vacancy created by the early departure of the previous CAO. OIG questions whether a first-tour officer is a good match for the demands of this mid-level position. OIG believes that the effectiveness of the section is reduced as a result and recommends that the first-tour officer receive more intensive development and mentoring, including by the DCM. OIG made two informal recommendations in that regard.



Staffing and financial resources are generally adequate for the present scope of the PA program. The section has total programming funds of \$869,000 for FY 2005. The embassy in its 2006 MPP requested an entry-level officer rotational position to serve as assistant CAO, which OIG does not support. OIG believes that the preferred appointment described above of a mid-level officer to the CAO FS-02 mid-level position would eliminate the need for an assistant CAO position. OIG believes that the information officer, who must deal with the local media in Spanish, could benefit from further language training, even though he has reached the required level of proficiency for the position. Because of recent embassy language program budget cuts, he is paying out of his own funds for further training. OIG believes that he would be a candidate for any case-by-case review of further language training petitions, which is covered by an informal recommendation made in the HR section below.

PA is physically separated in a stand-alone annex about 10-15 minutes from the embassy. The separation impedes efficiency and cuts off U.S. and Dominican staff from casual contact and relationship building with other embassy sections. PA is separated from many of its natural partners and colleagues in other embassy sections and agencies. This also impedes embassy understanding of PA activities and what it can offer. PA should seek every opportunity to make other agencies and sections more aware of what PA does and what services PA can offer. Most of the PA FSNs expressed little understanding of what other embassy sections and agencies do. The section should make sure its FSNs take part in any enhanced FSN orientation program offered by the embassy (see HR unit in resource management discussion below). OIG made other informal recommendations regarding PA operations.

## CONSULAR AFFAIRS

The consular staff produces a huge volume of work daily under totally inadequate working conditions resulting from a severe lack of space. Santo Domingo is the third-largest IV processing post. Demand for services far outweighs the staff's ability to keep ahead of a growing backlog in all areas. More time has to be devoted to each case because of the preponderance of fraudulent or altered documents. Each morning six "greeters" organize huge crowds on the sidewalk outside the consulate compound and guide visitors to the one narrow door in the pedestrian entrance. Mixed in with the applicants are consular employees who must enter through the exit door. Once inside the consulate grounds, applicants line up at various windows and eventually sit in outdoor and indoor waiting rooms.



## Consular Resources and Management

The consular section includes the consul general's office, NIV and IV units, American citizens services (ACS) unit, fraud prevention unit, a cashier, a consular agency in Puerto Plata, and a federal benefits unit. The section is staffed by 32 officers and eligible family members and 72 FSNs. In FY 2004, the consular section processed 42,199 IVs, 75,017 NIVs, issued 6,725 U.S. passports and 1,098 reports of births, and performed 2,995 fraud investigations.

The consul general is an experienced, involved manager who, with a de facto deputy who is chief of the visa units, has greatly improved work procedures and conditions throughout the section. The consul general and two of six mid-level officers will leave the mission soon. Their replacements are due at various times over the next few months. The deputy will assume leadership of the section temporarily.

The deputy coordinates administrative and other projects, such as the consular package, but the position has not been used to its full potential. For example, the consular front office takes many phone calls requesting visa case information. The calls are transferred to the NIV unit, interrupting staff and workflow. OIG made an informal recommendation to direct such calls to the deputy who sits away from the daily action. OIG made another informal recommendation that the deputy, in conjunction with the public diplomacy staff, initiate a campaign encouraging the public and mission members to go to the section's helpful web site or telephone the call center for visa information.

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The 17 first- and second-tour officers have busy interview schedules but need to be included in discussions on how to accomplish their workload. Also, there should be more transparency on who is chosen for a particular internal portfolio assignment. For example, the NIV unit chooses an entry-level officer as a "line officer" to promote consensus among the interviewing officers. Some officers view this job as a desirable opportunity but were not made aware of why a particular individual was chosen. Also, some officers felt that they were not encouraged to

promote a team effort. Because these perceptions appear to be the result of inadequate communication, OIG made an informal recommendation to foster teamwork.

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The embassy's call center is in Mexico and is part of a Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) umbrella contract. In addition to giving NIV and IV information, the call center gives detailed IV case status and, working with the local bank that collects the machine readable visa fees, schedules NIV appointments. Applicants in the Dominican Republic buy pin numbers for either five or 15 minutes of call center service and callers from the United States pay by credit card. OIG monitored calls and found that the callers could be better served. For example, an IV applicant was on the phone six minutes when the caller should have had the answer in one minute. The caller wanted to know if an open appointment meant that he could go to the consulate at any time. The operator asked irrelevant questions before taking the case number. After opening the case, the operator asked more

questions and even left the phone for a few minutes instead of confirming the “open appointment” and answering “yes.” The callers about NIV cases do not always receive correct information and have to listen to too much nonessential information. Although the call center’s office manager visited the section to discuss ways to help operators understand the different Spanish-language accent of Dominicans, there is still a problem with communication.

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Santo Domingo should request funding from the Bureau of Consular Affairs to send two Foreign Service nationals, one from the immigrant visa unit and one from the nonimmigrant visa unit, to the call center in Mexico to assist in training operators on answering calls from Dominican citizens. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with CA)

## Consular Space, Equipment, and Systems

The consular office building (COB) compound underwent a long overdue physical security upgrade that improved perimeter walls and included a new pedestrian and vehicle entrance in 2003-2004. However, a separate employee entrance was not completed, forcing employees into the morning chaos of applicants. Every morning visitors to the COB are grouped on the sidewalk into at least four lines. An awning covers only two lines. OIG recommended that a new awning large enough to protect all the visitors from rain or sun be installed.

The single greatest challenge to consular operations in the Dominican Republic is the 30-year-old, outdated, overcrowded COB. The facility has insufficient room for staff and applicants (especially the number of windows to conduct interviews), equipment, and file cabinets. NIV files are stored in cabinets scattered throughout the building, and IV files are stored in four converted shipping containers in the backyard. File storage is not efficient.

The offices and work areas in parts of the section were recently renovated using money from the consular improvement initiative fund managed by OBO. Colorful walls, new furniture, and well-appointed offices on the second and third floors have greatly improved the environment. However, the first floor, which is the heart of public contact activity, is extremely overcrowded, and the noise level makes it difficult to concentrate. All functions need more interview windows; there are sometimes three employees at a window that is equipped for one. Four FSNs do not have desks, and the five eligible family members working on IVs are



ing cases, actions taken, and actions needed. At least two officers attend to walk-in passport applicants on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, as well as the reports of birth appointments on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The workload is high and complicated by the proximity of the Dominican Republic to the United States and pervasive fraud in consular matters. On January 1, 2006, the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative will go into effect and all Americans must present a valid passport to travel to the Caribbean. A continuing problem has been that first-time applicants for passports, especially those allegedly from Puerto Rico, have presented false American birth certificates for proof of citizenship. Applicants claim that they used these certificates to travel to the Dominican Republic. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative will greatly increase passport issuance as most of the American population in the Dominican Republic are dual nationals and have been traveling back and forth to the United States on birth certificates.

Passport issuance increased by 2,000 from May 2004 till May 2005 as compared to the same time frame for the previous year. Efficiency could be improved if the staff had more interview windows. Present staff numbers are inadequate to absorb the actual and future increase in workload. ACS is having difficulty keeping up with the present passport workload, and there is a two-month waiting period for a report of birth appointment. As requested in the MPP, one more U.S. officer and one more LES member are required to meet present and projected workloads.

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, the Bureau of Human Resources, and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should request the assignment of an entry-level officer to the American citizens services unit. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with WHA, DGHR, and CA)

**Recommendation 7:** Embassy Santo Domingo should establish a locally employed staff position in the American citizens services unit. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

Three visits to the consular section are required to complete a report of birth. The first visit is to get the forms, the second to have someone check the forms and, if they are complete, to make an appointment. On the third visit, one parent and the child must appear to complete the application. Parents should be encouraged

to obtain forms from the Internet and receive an appointment by sending copies of completed forms and documents by fax or e-mail.

The crime rate in the Dominican Republic is increasing. The number of murders of U.S. citizens went from seven in FY 2003 to 19 in FY 2004. Most of the current 57 American prisoners are incarcerated for drug offences. An officer and an FSN visit them at least quarterly.

OIG visited a prison and saw the desperate conditions. During the visit, the American prisoners asked if there was any chance of being transferred to the United States. Recently, Puerto Rican officials visited the prisons after a fire killed two Americans from Puerto Rico. The officials contacted the U.S. Department of Justice to express interest in a prison transfer treaty. The Dominican Republic has recently expressed little interest in a prisoner transfer treaty. OIG believes that such a treaty would be a humane way to deal with U.S. prisoners in the Dominican Republic.

**Recommendation 8:** Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, the Bureau of Consular Affairs, and the Office of the Legal Adviser, should formally request the government of the Dominican Republic to enter into a prison transfer treaty relationship with the United States by acceding to either the Organization of American States prison transfer treaty or the Council of Europe prison transfer treaty, since the United States is already party to both agreements. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with WHA, CA, and L)

The FSN who specializes in arrest cases has a law degree. He also backs up property disputes and crime victims' portfolios and works closely with the legal attaché on managing the stolen vehicle convention. The FSN has been trying to keep abreast of recent changes to the procedures of the Dominican Republic's criminal code and other regulations. An informal recommendation was made that the embassy sponsor the FSN's attendance at some local legal seminars, which would assist him in his duties.

The Dominican Republic is a signatory to the Hague Convention on Child Abduction, but the United States has not recognized the country as a treaty partner and sent notice to the Hague. CA's Office of Children's Issues has concerns that the country's legal infrastructure is inadequate to allow it to implement the convention effectively. The embassy has answered the office's questions and has informed the office that the embassy is convinced that the Dominican government has the

will to implement the convention to its fullest and that the government has demonstrated its concern for children's rights in complex child welfare cases. The embassy is waiting for action from the Department.

**Recommendation 9:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Santo Domingo, should decide whether the United States will recognize the Dominican Republic as a signatory to the Hague Convention for the Abduction of Children. (Action: CA, in coordination with Embassy Santo Domingo)

## Federal Benefits Unit

In the Dominican Republic 7,400 people receive monthly social security checks. The unit achieved the highest percentage of beneficiaries worldwide enrolled in the international direct deposit program at 97 percent. However, Social Security Administration headquarters reports that the Dominican Republic is the largest Western Hemisphere fraud challenge. Claims representatives must do identity checks periodically, as many families do not report the death of a beneficiary.

## Consular Agency

The consular agency has a new office in Puerto Plata on the north coast. This area is home to many American retirees and is a popular tourist spot. The original office opened in 1983, and has had the same consular agent since 1988. The agent visits the 17 American prisoners in the area. The staff of ACS works closely with the agency.

The embassy would like to open another agency in Higüey on the east coast. Over the past 10 years, the region has grown to rival and even surpass the north coast in attracting American tourists. In September 2004, Hurricane Jeanne stranded over 1,000 tourists for two and a half days in damaged, isolated hotels. Floods prevented anyone from the embassy from traveling there. OIG recommended that the embassy provide CA with justification to open a consular agency in Higüey.



## Visa Unit

The visa unit's primary goal is protecting U.S. borders. The unit works closely with the FPU, the mission's law enforcement agencies, and local officials to facilitate legitimate travel and deny visas to ineligible applicants. All visa officers are trained to detect fraudulent applications and verify identities and civil or judicial documents. The unit works closely with the homeland security, law enforcement, counternarcotics, and Visas Viper committees. They share information on potential threats to national security, and the unit enters the information into the visa lookout system. The FPU manager is the Visas Viper coordinator and reports the results of monthly meetings. Visas are revoked in accordance with regulations when appropriate. The NIV chief consults with the Department before revoking the visa of a government official.

## Immigrant Visa Unit

The IV unit is the third-largest IV-issuing unit in the world, after Ciudad Juarez and Guangzhou, due to the extraordinarily strong family and cultural ties that link the eight million inhabitants to Dominicans who reside in the United States. IV work is especially demanding because of the many fraud issues; staff spends a great deal of time dealing with false birth certificates, sham marriages, and sham fiancé relationships. Many applicants present incomplete or incorrect affidavits of support and have to return to the unit two or three times before the case can be considered for issuance.

The IV chief is an expert in IV matters, and the consular staff values his knowledge and guidance. When the chief arrived in July 2002, he discovered an enormous backlog of cases created by a combination of misapplication of the public charge refusal, clause (212(a)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and insufficient staff over several years. The chief has aggressively attacked the backlog and reduced it somewhat by scheduling new cases in conjunction with the refused cases as those applicants write in for a new interview. At present, applicants refused under clause 212(a)(4) before August 2002 are immediately put on the IV wait list for an appointment.

The unit is run efficiently; however, there is still a year's backlog that will not be reduced completely without more staff. The unit has seven line officers with a full schedule of 16 new cases a day and a number of walk-in pending cases; i.e., cases recently refused. Most cases include several applicants so an officer's actual adjudication rate is approximately 35 applicants a day. This work will keep increas-



ing because as more visas are issued, more immigrant petitions will be filed. As requested in the FY 2005 MPP and the FY 2004 consular package, the unit needs one more officer, which should reduce the present backlog by 20 percent.

**Recommendation 10:** Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, the Bureau of Human Resources, and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should request an entry-level officer in the immigrant visa unit. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with WHA, DGHR, and CA)

The hard-working deputy chief of the IV unit has repeatedly requested that his office be relocated to the first floor. In 2002, he submitted a plan to the management section. The move would improve efficiency and provide line of sight supervision over the interviewing officers. The plan proposes that the IV FSN team on the first floor move to the second floor with the other three teams. These two moves should take place as soon as possible.

The 1999 inspection report discussed the unit's problem with filing refused cases. There was an explosion of refused cases due to a new requirement for additional evidence of support. Because there was no more room in the unit and the floor was in danger of not supporting the weight of more filing cabinets, the embassy acquired four 40-foot shipping containers and located them in the backyard about 20 feet beyond the consulate building. OIG found that the containers were a suitable interim solution but totally insecure and inadequate for the long run.

In 2005, these containers are still there and are now more of a hazard than in 1999. The FSNs detailed their frustration in working in these windowless 'boxcars' with no passageway when drawers are opened. Now, most of the file cabinets are beyond capacity and more space is needed. According to the IV chief, the unit could make a good start at removing some file cabinets and even containers if they could cull the inactive 212(a)(4) cases. Current CA policy is that Category 1 files<sup>2</sup> should be scanned and returned to the Kentucky consular center for storage. Posts may ship old files to the Kentucky consular center for scanning if they do not have the resources to complete the scanning at post.

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<sup>2</sup> Files containing visa refusals of applicants with criminal records, records of a serious offense, or affiliation with the Communist Party.

**Recommendation 11:** Embassy Santo Domingo should coordinate with the Kentucky consular center and the Bureau of Consular Affairs to ship 212(a)(4) refusal cases under the Immigration and Nationality Act, or cases that cannot overcome the public charge criteria of the Immigration and Nationality Act, to the Kentucky consular center for scanning and storage. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with the KCC and CA)

The web site for all consular units maintained by the public affairs section is attractive and informative. The 'Ask the Consul' weekly local newspaper article is posted and addresses many frequently asked questions. The detailed IV site lists cases with appointment dates and also a waiting list of the new cases received from the visa center and the cases that have been approved for re-interview. The IV unit receives approximately 4,000 congressional letters and approximately 14,000 other inquiries annually. They have good templates and efficiently handle most of this heavy load of correspondence. Previously, the workload was even larger as there were many inquiries from lawyers and applicants asking for case/appointment status, or if a letter for re-interview had been approved in a 212(a)(4) case refused before August 2002.

The IV web site now includes a list of all cases with their appointment dates and has helpful search information. It informs the reader that the appointment list is updated on the 15th of each month for the next month. The web site lists all cases on the waiting list so the reader knows if the case has been received from the national visa center or if they will eventually receive an appointment in a 212(a)(4) case refused before August 2002. This allows the IV staff to concentrate on more substantive tasks.

## Nonimmigrant Visas

During the past year, the chief of the NIV unit was on leave for a considerable period of time. Processing suffered because of the lack of officers and reduced interview space as a result of the security construction project. OIG supports the recent approval of a much-needed deputy NIV unit chief position to assist with management and training.

There is now a full complement of eight entry-level officers who have reduced the waiting list from 100 to 60 days. In FY 2005, the NIV unit will process about 80,000 visas in this high-stress, high-fraud environment. The officers claim that

productivity could be increased if interviewing officers did not have to take fingerprints. An informal recommendation was made to have an eligible family member take fingerprints in advance of the interview to save time.

The congested work area is inadequate. More workspace would be available with fewer data-entry positions. OIG informally recommended the section undertake a strong campaign to encourage applicants to fill in the NIV application on the Internet. NIV files are in cabinets throughout the building. The unit should send issued files back to the United States after adjudication instead of keeping them for a year.

About half of all NIV applicants are refused visas. The staff, working with the FPU, discovered fraud involving baseball players recruited for U.S. major league baseball teams. The NIV and FPU staffs have devoted considerable time educating baseball officials on the seriousness of fraud in visa applications. Flight crews, religious orders, amateur sport teams, music groups, and dental associations are just a few of the other groups that require in-depth scrutiny to ensure that they do not insert an imposter among their membership.

## Fraud Prevention Unit

The FPU's work is outstanding from top to bottom. It has good morale and is extremely well managed by an organized FPU manager who is on an excursion tour. FPU objectives are advanced by the knowledge, efforts, and expertise of the assistant regional security officer/investigator.

The Dominican Republic has a high degree of organized visa and passport fraud, there are patterns of alien smuggling to the United States, and local law officials would benefit from increased contact with a U.S. law enforcement representative engaged in consular fraud investigations. The assignment of an assistant regional security officer to the FPU, in accordance with the memorandum of understanding between the Bureau of Consular Affairs and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, has effectively addressed this need.

FPU performs almost 3,000 investigations annually. On a rotating basis, investigators are assigned to the NIV, IV, and ACS units and are available to confer with officers and interview 'suspicious' applicants. Of cases referred to the FPU in FY 2004, fraud was confirmed in 49 percent of IV cases, 47 percent of NIV cases, and 25 percent of ACS cases. Since the arrival of the FPU manager two years ago, the backlog of requests for investigation has been reduced from over 1,000 to fewer than 176. In the MPP, the embassy asked for an entry-level officer to assist

in the unit because there are many duties that only a cleared American can perform. OIG made an informal recommendation that entry-level officers rotate through the FPU. The unit has an impressive tracking system, and the embassy has volunteered to participate in the Department's pilot study for a worldwide tracking system.



## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The single most important improvement for management operations of Embassy Santo Domingo would be a new, consolidated chancery compound that would collocate all 14 mission agencies and provide safe, secure, and functional office space for 165 American citizen employees and 350 LES. Eight spread-out, deteriorating, cramped, and vulnerable compounds currently affect communication and impede efficient operations. The embassy continues its efforts to press the Department for a new facility that it believes is essential to execute programs, achieve performance goals, and meet security standards. Santo Domingo is on the Department's priority list of 80 diplomatic facilities for replacement. Further discussion of real property is under management operations below.

Morale is affected by the disjointed working conditions throughout the mission. It acts as an obstacle to interagency cooperation and a sense of community within the mission. Plans to construct a new embassy compound, with an expected completion date of 2011, may alleviate some of the problems, but there is still a long wait. The mission has a pervasive atmosphere of chronic complaints and dissatisfaction that spills over into other areas, in particular management operations. The overall running of the management section is weak (scoring a low 51 out of 53 services in questionnaires). OIG identified several areas for improvement in this report. Santo Domingo could be a rewarding assignment, but because of budget constraints, hardship conditions in a developing country, and inherent inefficiencies, it is more often viewed as a challenge.

~~**SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED**~~

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Foreign National Staff	Total Staff	Total Dollar Funding FY 2005
State - Program	50	13	93	156	5,006,608*
State - ICASS	7	11	154	172	5,501,500
State - OBO	1			1	1,854,298
State - DS	4	4	3	11	1,039,830
Narcotics Affairs Section	1	2		3	195,256
U.S. Agency for International Development	12	4	63	79	3,284,000
Department of Commerce	2		9	11	572,797
Department of Agriculture-FAS	1		7	8	500,853
Department of Agriculture-APHIS	3		6	9	4,838,600
Federal Bureau of Investigation	3			3	158,990
Peace Corps	3		6	9	1,756,400
Defense Attache Office	5	1	1	7	247,020
Military Assistance Advisory Group	6		1	7	388,210
Drug Enforcement Administration	12	2	1	15	NA
Department of Homeland Security	5	1	2	8	581,300
Force Protection	2	1		3	339,500
Tactical Analysis Team	2			2	48,000
U.S. Marshall Service	2	1		3	300,000
Marine Security Guard Detachment	6		4	10	105,654
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>26,718,816</b>

\* Includes \$869,157 Public Diplomacy; \$38,600 Representation

## MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

The management section suffers from (b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) some inefficient operations, primarily housing and maintenance. (b) (6)

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(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6)(b) (6) Comments on OIG’s questionnaires and interviews disclosed some discontent with the section’s responsiveness, transparency, and customer service orientation. Housing, the language program, procurement, and maintenance all rated low. Quality of life scores were also low for community morale, ambassador attentiveness, snack bar operations, and the community liaison office. In contrast, high marks were given to the medical unit (number 2 out of 53 services), mail services (number 3), motor pool (number 4), customs and shipping (number 6), and voucher processing (number 8).

A heavy workload, real property issues, local staff concerns about retirement benefits and a pending salary increase, and difficulties in finding and maintaining suitable housing all hamper embassy operations. The embassy is addressing these issues. Budget constraints have forced the embassy to cut training, the language program, overtime, and nonessential procurement. OIG made an informal recommendation that some case-by-case exceptions be made for those employees who need continued language training to perform their jobs at a high level. Funds management is especially important during a period of severe budget constraints for the embassy. Current budget cuts to programs and ICASS services, substantial exchange rate losses, and an unbudgeted mandatory increase in post allowances of \$600,000 have severely impaired the embassy’s ability to operate. There has been no general salary increase for LES since 2003, and a pending increase may not be fully funded. Several agencies use Santo Domingo as a regional base, creating an additional burden for management operations. The management counselor is credited with raising the differential allowance through his personal initiative and developing the needed reporting to receive a cost of living allowance.



The DCM has played an active role in the section, counseling supervisors, improving communications, and creating working groups to address issues. The management section is coping with the staff and resources it has to meet performance standards, look for ways to improve procedures, and resolve problems. The arrival of new supervisors during last summer's transfer cycle and the dismissal of several local employees for poor performance already has resulted in marked improvements in the section. The FRC provides significant regional support for HR management, medical, training, regional procurement, information technology, and regional administrative teams. OIG made an informal recommendation for the management section to prepare a briefing book for the new management counselor of who's who on the staff, issues, problems, and project status for each unit.

## GENERAL SERVICES

The general services office (GSO) had a complete turn over of American management staff in 2004 except for facilities management. Under the direction of an experienced supervisory GSO, two first-tour officers, and a facilities manager, steady improvements have been made to property management, the warehouse, the housing program, and maintenance. Motor pool operations, customs and shipping, and household furnishings all scored high on the OIG questionnaires. Areas that require more attention are procurement, housing, and maintenance.

### Real Property

Santo Domingo is on the long-range plan for a NEC with construction scheduled to begin in 2009 and finish in 2011 or 2012. During the inspection, an OBO-contracted local real estate specialist conducted a site survey of 21 sites for further analysis and OBO review, to be narrowed down to two final sites. If another embassy's NEC is delayed, Embassy Santo Domingo could move higher on OBO's top 80 NEC list if a site is already identified that meets approval and funding is made available to acquire the property and have it under contract in a current fiscal year. The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) would have to approve moving the embassy up on the list to replace another embassy not so far along in the process. In March 2005, the embassy submitted to OBO its five-year staffing projections for the NEC. WHA advised the embassy to take the requested addition of an HR officer position out, but the management counselor refused. USAID is in a government-owned building but states it cannot wait for completion of the NEC in 2011 or 2012 and intends to secure funds and relocate into new facilities if the

NEC schedule is not accelerated. OIG notes that all agencies are by law (Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005, P.L. 108-447) required to share proportionally in the construction of new NECs through the capital security cost-sharing program. A separate USAID building could lead to double costs for USAID. Congressional legislation and Department security requirements state all agencies must be collocated in NECs or request a waiver.

The mission is spread out over the city in eight facilities. Heavy traffic congestion and time spent traveling between compounds takes up hours of work time. A separate classified security report discusses security aspects. All of the buildings are overcrowded, aging facilities in need of an overhaul. This inefficient operation requires more maintenance support, additional generators, and continuous repairs to building systems. The NEC will collocate all agencies, the warehouse, and the Marine house on one compound. A decision will have to be made at that time on the government-owned Ambassador's residence, located next to the present chancery compound. An OBO global condition survey conducted in 2005 did not find significant maintenance problems, and working conditions were deemed crowded but livable until the NEC is completed. There are no other major OBO projects planned. The Department has made over \$300,000 of improvements in recent years to the consular building to address staff concerns.

## Housing

The housing program is the source of numerous complaints and is a key factor for morale. A study contracted by OBO in 2003 found many of the embassy housing pool properties were seismically unsound. Consequently, embassy management began a three-year process to replace unsafe housing as an occupant departed or mid-tour if requested. The embassy is ahead of schedule and plans to meet this goal by the end of 2005. This will change the embassy housing profile and probably increase leasehold obligations. It is difficult for the GSO housing office to find suitable housing that meets Department guidelines for size, security, and lease costs. The RSO limits available areas of the city because of security. Traffic congestion forces the embassy to find properties closer in to lessen commute time. Inflation and currency fluctuations have increased prices. Landlords are resistant to make the many safety, security, and other upgrades to meet U.S. standards. Almost every property requires an OBO waiver, which is a real problem when the waiver is turned down. In response to an embassy request, OBO plans to contract with a local firm to do a real estate market survey in 2005.

The embassy has an active, engaged housing board. All housing assignments are made in accordance with Department standards, and no appeals are pending

with the board. The Ambassador, as recommended by the DCM, did decide on a few appeals in recent years. A review of the housing board minutes does not indicate any favoritism. Before a new lease is signed and the house assigned, the housing board conducts a site visit. All new houses are also approved by the RSO and GSO maintenance.

Several initiatives are underway to improve the housing program. The embassy welcome cable, post report, and housing handbook are being updated to clearly describe the difficult housing situation at post. To meet housing demands, the GSO housing unit continuously searches for new properties and starts landlord negotiations much earlier in the process. Improvements have also been made in the housing make ready program. The GSO housing and maintenance staffs meet regularly to coordinate arrival and departure schedules with housing assignments. Contractors are occasionally used to meet housing deadlines. A financial penalty clause is added to all leases for landlord failure to meet agreed deadlines for upgrades or make-readies. Last summer's elimination of transient quarters occurred before housing was available for new arrivals, causing lengthy and expensive delays in temporary quarters such as hotels. This year's goal is to reduce greatly the costly temporary quarters allowance and move new employees directly into their permanent housing. OIG made an informal recommendation to develop standard operating procedures for housing program procedures to include clear definitions between landlord maintenance responsibilities and GSO maintenance responsibilities.

The GSO housing unit needs an additional local position to process and schedule the overwhelming maintenance requests from housing occupants who often demand immediate attention. During the past year, the housing unit received more than 1,400 customer service calls and 1,500 e-mails for maintenance on leased properties. There are 56 unsafe properties either already returned to the landlords or being returned that require the legal documentation and negotiations between contractors and embassy housing staff be completed. Each of the returned properties must be replaced with new, safe, and secure properties that meet U.S. standards and have all the appropriate approvals of the housing board, RSO, GSO maintenance, safety officer, and OBO. To continue improvements to the housing program, meet embassy demands, and focus on customer service, an additional local position should be established.

**Recommendation 12:** Embassy Santo Domingo should establish a local housing assistant position in the general services unit. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

## Maintenance

The quality of, and responsiveness to, requests for maintenance and repairs on mission facilities and housing was an area of complaint from embassy staff. An experienced facilities maintenance officer is steadily making improvements as time, staff, and budget allow. In 2004, the maintenance office implemented a preventive maintenance program dedicated to critical systems, including generators, air conditioners, and elevators. Aging office buildings in eight locations, poor quality housing construction, and environmental conditions make a good preventive maintenance program crucial. The increase in the number of American direct-hire positions impacts on the GSO maintenance staff ability to respond to work order requests and deliver needed services.

To maintain American staff morale, the maintenance employees are working on call 24-hours to respond to emergency or urgent after-hours maintenance requests. A maintenance handbook is provided to all housing occupants and new arrivals that provides clear and reasonable guidance on emergency response and routine maintenance. A large problem is that American employees do not follow published guidelines on what constitutes an emergency, requiring excessive overtime in response to a complaint that could be handled during normal duty hours. There were some complaints that the on-call employees are not always responsive and in fact may leave their cell phones turned off. Another problem is the duty driver is not always available for on-call technicians, and it is difficult and dangerous for them to take a taxi late at night. OIG discussed with the motor pool the need to have the duty car available whenever possible and left an informal recommendation. OIG made an informal recommendation for the GSO maintenance office to reissue annually the administrative notice on definitions of an emergency and to abide strictly by it.

Some housing occupants complain the maintenance staff may show up to address a work order but then leave without completing the work or giving an explanation. The initial response to work order requests is usually within one day, compared to standards that require five days. Maintenance staff must often have to find the right part or the right technician to do the job. The maintenance unit is working on improving customer service and feedback on work order requests. Improvements include work order status forms left in residences, follow-up phone calls, customer satisfaction surveys, and an on-call maintenance staff for emergency after hour requests. These new procedures require Spanish translations and training the maintenance employees to use the form. OIG made an informal

recommendation to issue an administrative notice on work order request procedures, maintenance response, and customer feedback. OIG also informally recommended maintaining a log of maintenance requests, response time, and complaints.

## Safety, Health, and Environmental Management

OBO conducted a safety, health, and environmental management visit in April 2002 to provide training and guidance on the embassy safety program. Many deficiencies requiring immediate correction were identified, and the embassy promptly implemented the recommendations. A few minor remaining items are being addressed. The embassy is committed to a good safety program, and the DCM plans to hold monthly safety committee meetings. The next safety, health, and environmental management training visit to post is scheduled for late 2005.

## Procurement and Contracting

Embassy customers view the procurement office as an uneven service provider. Many offices cite delays in obtaining goods and services. Physical separation of the procurement unit and financial management office impacts communication required for rapid turnaround on procurement requests. The procurement unit implemented the post administrative software suite for procurement in May 2005. This new system should sharply reduce the time it takes to fund procurement requests and improve customer service. No problems were found with contracting. The local employees in the procurement unit are eager and willing to ask for advice and guidance from the Department on any procurement or contracting matters. There are some problems with internal controls that are discussed below in the management controls section of this report.

## Property Management

The warehouse is well organized, and property is well protected. Plentiful shelving and good planning provide for adequate use of space. Customers are satisfied with expendable supplies services. However, some non-Department agencies' warehouse property is not recorded in inventory records as required by 14 FAM 414. OIG recommended informally that the embassy keep inventory records for all property stored in the warehouse. A new inventory clerk has been trained. A visit from the FRC administrative team suggested updated training for the warehouse manager. The embassy concurs and intends to send the manager to the next scheduled training. Substantial issues and problems with property management are discussed below under the management controls section of this report.

## Motor Pool

The motor pool received high scores on OIG's workplace and quality of life questionnaires. Motor pool maintenance and upkeep of vehicles was one of the highest rated elements on the questionnaires. OIG affirmed driver courtesy, professionalism, and customer service orientation. The FSN motor pool supervisor, in the job for seven years, pays close attention to the management of vehicle operations and maintains good oversight and control on the use of vehicles and maintenance. Driver trip logs, vehicle repair, and maintenance data are maintained for reporting purposes. OIG provided some counseling on interpersonal issues.

### Motor Pool Policy and Reimbursement for Taxis and Private Vehicles

Many embassy employees have incurred personal transportation expenses for the conduct of official business in normal working hours and at night. The embassy's motor vehicle policy (mission notice 05-064 of January 27, 2005) states correctly (end of section 6 of notice) that if during the normal working hours of 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., a motor vehicle is not available for transportation within Santo Domingo, other arrangements will be made. These arrangements may include use of a personal vehicle for the conduct of official business on a mileage-reimbursable basis, or use of taxis or other public transportation. In section 10 of the notice, employees are told that the motor pool does not provide services outside of regular business hours (before 7:00 a.m. or after 6:00 p.m.) and that employees are expected to use their personal vehicles for evening representational functions and the like. Section 10 of the notice does not make it clear that after regular working hours, employees are still eligible for reimbursement for use of their private vehicles on a mileage basis or for the use of taxis. OIG recommended informally that the embassy make clear in its motor vehicle policy that the reimbursement is allowed for the use of taxis and privately owned vehicles for official representational events at all hours.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

Embassy Santo Domingo does not have a direct hire American HR officer. For the past two years, the embassy has requested through the MPP process the establishment of an American HR officer position. The embassy receives good regional support from an experienced HR officer out of the FRC. She visits the post at least one week a month and is heavily involved in human resources management. While





provide guidance, assistance, and technical support to more than 350 local employees on these new programs. An LES position request is before the ICASS council and is also included in the MPP.

**Recommendation 13:** Embassy Santo Domingo should establish a local compensation and benefits position in the human resources unit. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

## Local Employee Salary Increase

The Department completed the 2004 annual salary review of the off-the-shelf vendor, the UN Development Plan, used to determine local compensation for Embassy Santo Domingo. April is the embassy's fixed effective date, but the increase was delayed this year pending authorization from the Department. The local employees are anxiously awaiting their much anticipated salary increase, as they have not received a salary increase since 2003, when an emergency 40 percent increase was granted to offset inflation and currency devaluation. No salary increase was authorized in April 2004 as a result of the 2003 salary survey review. It is difficult for local employees to understand why the American employees at post get a post allowance to offset inflation, while their salary increases are deferred. Many local employees told OIG they want to maintain their standard of living in a time of a general deterioration in the local economy. Another complaint to OIG was that embassy management does not keep them informed of wage increase issues. OIG also made an informal recommendation about special leave benefits.

The FSN committee and the regional HR officer had to push the management counselor to finally release a mission notice in April 2005 on the salary increase situation, basically stating that WHA was holding all salary cables because of budget constraints. During the inspection OIG requested that the embassy contact WHA to push for the release of the salary survey results. WHA advised all its posts that local employee salary increases would be authorized only if fully funded by the embassy. A salary authorization cable arrived during the inspection. The embassy states it will take about two months to determine the amount of increase the embassy and all agencies in the mission can agree on and to process the salary payments. Payment of the salary increase when approved by the embassy cannot be made retroactive.



## Local Employee Retirement Pensions

In 2003, the Dominican Republic government instituted a law to create a new social security and health benefits system. The retirement system was implemented but health benefits are still pending. The new law requires the embassy to convert the existing defined benefit retirement plan with a private firm to individual accounts. A survey of embassy comparators indicates that the companies have converted their retirement plans to certificates of deposit and already joined the new local social security system. The Foreign Service Act of 1980 (22 USC 3968) directs that consistent with the public interest, the Secretary establish local compensation plans, including participation in local social security plans, based upon prevailing local practice. The embassy was advised in 2003 there was no legal basis to authorize nonparticipation, especially in light of the U.S. assistance from USAID to adopt economic reform, including implementation of the new social security law. The Department authorized the embassy to join the local system and purchase certificates of deposit with existing benefits in March 2004. All new embassy employees since then have enrolled in the local social security system, about 60 to date. Forcing those employees already enrolled in the local social security system to withdraw from it will create another difficulty.

In July 2004, the embassy requested a public interest determination from the Department's Undersecretary for Management that would allow the embassy to participate in the Global Retirement Fund and not join the local social security system, citing corruption in the country's financial institutions (major financial fraud occurred in 2003). The embassy has serious concerns about the security of funds that would be held by the Dominican government in the social security system for the retirement of embassy employees. In discussions with OIG, the local employees expressed their distrust of the new retirement system. The Department's Office of Overseas Employment (HR/OE) has expressed reservations as the financial justification does not meet the criteria established by the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser (L) for a public interest determination and would set a precedent for a large number of other embassies where the host country is affected by similar corruption, banking crises, and inflation. The financial and legal repercussions of withdrawal from the local social security system, if duplicated elsewhere, could be significant for the Department.

Before a public interest determination can be made, the Department advised the embassy to approach the host government to determine its reaction to nonparticipation by embassy employees in the local social security system to minimize any adverse consequences. The Department also requested the embassy to expand more on the corruption in the Dominican Republic and seek a legal

opinion to determine if diplomatic entities must participate in the local social security system. An embassy interagency retirement committee, led by the DCM, meets weekly to work on the local retirement issue. The embassy intends to complete the Department requirements for the public interest determination as soon as possible.

OIG found the information persuasive that the embassy provided in the course of the inspection that pervasive corruption and institutional weaknesses in the Dominican Republic, especially in the country's banking sector, might put U.S. government and employee contributions to the new Dominican social security system in serious jeopardy of loss. Major Dominican banks own the pension funds that hold and manage the social security contributions and the banks are in a position of manipulating and misusing them. Technical banking regulation is improving in response to the requirement of the International Monetary Fund standby program, but regulators may not be experienced and independent enough to prevent such misuse. A \$3 billion banking fraud that came to light in 2003 led to a severe economic downturn in the Dominican Republic. Yet, owing to the political influence of those associated with the banks, and to corruption, the Dominican government has not successfully prosecuted anyone involved in the 2003 banking fraud. As the inspection drew to a close, the embassy was about to send a cable to the Department describing in detail the corruption in the Dominican government and banking sector and the potential for the loss of contributions to the Dominican social security system.

Negotiations are ongoing between the embassy and the current retirement plan provider for a more favorable termination and withdrawal of assets without penalties or delayed return of U.S. government funds. HR/OE discussed the retirement plan with the plan provider and determined the termination clause is typical insurance practice and was consistent with other similar contracts. No formal amendments or extensions to the contract have been made since 1990. The contract appears to have expired in 1994. The embassy continues to make payments into the retirement plan, and the contractor continues to provide benefits. The Bureau of Administration's Office of the Procurement Executive advised the embassy the retirement plan was not a contract but a human resources benefit issue. The embassy requested and received legal advice from L. The embassy requested that WHA establish a suspense deposit account to temporarily deposit retirement funds until the retirement issue could be sorted out, but the request was denied.

Embassy Santo Domingo, including the DCM, is commended for addressing this important issue and for its commitment in seeking resolution to the persistent problem of finding long-term retirement security for local employees. A pervasive

distrust of the local social security system exists mission wide among both Americans and local employees. Anything other than a public interest determination for approval to enter the Global Retirement Plan would cause upset. The Department has provided four alternatives to the new retirement system and alternatives to terminate the present contract. At this point, the embassy is continuing its efforts to terminate the existing contract and move to an alternative retirement plan.

## Computer Aided Job Evaluation

The CAJE system replaced the narrative position classification standards for LES. The HR evaluators found CAJE to be more objective and faster than the old narrative standards. Embassy Santo Domingo implemented CAJE in January 2005 after approval by the Department of the embassy's CAJE results submitted before the Department's October 2004 deadline. Two of the HR specialists are trained and certified to use CAJE. The embassy spent an intensive 18 months briefing and training managers, supervisors, and local employees on the CAJE process. The HR specialists conducted the required job discussions in all sections except for the financial management office and one non-State agency, where a CAJE evaluator was brought in from another post. The HR unit positions were sent to the Department for evaluation as required. For the embassy CAJE profile, 27 percent of the local positions were upgraded, six percent downgraded, and 62 percent remained unchanged. An appeal is pending in the consular section's IV unit. Supervisors and employees were advised of the dispute resolution process. Most appeals were resolved at post, five were sent in to HR/OE.

The most difficult section in the CAJE process is the consular IV unit. The regional HR officer and the senior CAJE evaluator continue to work with the supervisors and the employees to finish the CAJE evaluations. Implementation of CAJE in the IV unit is contentious. At their request, OIG met with the consular employees in this unit and advised their positions be sent to HR/OE for final evaluation. The embassy did use reference consular jobs where applicable. Overall, the CAJE process worked smoothly with a few exceptions.

## Training

Despite many complaints from local staff about the lack of training opportunities, OIG found that the embassy is doing better than the FSN perception in this area. The embassy has an updated draft training policy under final review. An annual training assessment is conducted to establish training needs and set priorities. Individual development plans will be requested this year for every employee



**Recommendation 15:** Embassy Santo Domingo should request, and the Foreign Service Institute should provide, assistance and materials to hold a series of sessions on improving interpersonal skills, communication, and teambuilding. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with FSI)

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## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

The mission community is generally satisfied with the ICASS process. In customer surveys, the mission expressed mixed views for the following services: procurement, housing, residential, and nonresidential maintenance operations. The ICASS council is collegial and works well together. There is an ICASS working group to address operational issues. The ICASS council and the service provider have clear and open lines of communication. There are some duplicate administrative support structures at the mission. Peace Corps and USAID subscribe to the ICASS basic package only.

The ICASS service standards were consistent with embassy operations and included measurable performance aspects. Service standards originated in October 2002, and the ICASS council has discussed updating them. Because some ICASS services were viewed in the customer survey as uneven, OIG recommended informally that the ICASS council review the service provider standards. The customer survey also indicates many customers lack information on the ICASS service standards. OIG recommended informally that ICASS standards be posted on the embassy web site. Many ICASS employees have not had ICASS training and are not aware of their roles and responsibilities. The last embassy training was in 2001. OIG recommended informally that the embassy request post-based training from the Department ICASS Service Center.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The financial management office operates smoothly and effectively supports embassy operations. An American financial management officer supervises 11 local employees. Since a highly critical OIG inspection of the unit in 1999, the embassy benefited from the back-to-back assignment of two experienced financial management officers. Financial transactions are timely and accurate, payments are prompt, and office files well maintained.

Financial management has improved dramatically since the 1999 OIG inspection. Clearing the advices of charge is a priority. The LES competently manage the embassy allotments. The low level of unliquidated obligations indicates the good coordination between embassy sections and the financial management office to clear accounts. An embassy program is in place to eliminate unauthorized commitments. OIG observed the close monitoring and enforcement of Department policy with the general services office. The financial management officer is able to work competently and amiably with the ICASS council and makes things work in a management section suffering from overall weak leadership. Nonetheless, there were deficiencies in reconciling consular fees and generating consular deposit receipts. These deficiencies are discussed below in the management controls section of this report.

### Representation Funds

Three embassy sections used representation funds for substantial purchases of Marine Ball tickets in November 2004 for host country counterparts. According to 3 FAM 3241.3, expenditures for tickets or admission to unhosted events normally

are a poor use of representation funds, and while not prohibited, are considered allowable only in those instances where the highest levels of host country officials are present and the attending employee has the necessity and opportunity to fulfill the purpose of the representation allowance. Expenses for attending fund-raising dinners, concerts, balls, or other strictly social functions normally do not meet the criterion for the representation allowance and typically are prohibited. OIG recommended informally that the embassy exercise greater caution in using representation funds to purchase tickets to balls and other no-host events.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY

Embassy Santo Domingo's information management unit adequately meets the needs of 300 users at the embassy compound and four other locations in the city, while satisfying most of the Department's information management and information technology security requirements. The unit scored ninth out of 53 support services in OIG's questionnaire. OIG found that the office performs well, providing a high level of customer service and maintenance over all areas of information management, including systems modernization upgrades, records and configuration management, mailroom and telephone operations, and an emergency and evacuation radio program. However, OIG is making formal recommendations for the post to improve its reporting of actions to correct systems weaknesses and deficiencies, and to improve its training for information management office staff. One informal recommendation was provided to assist the information management officer (IMO) in managing customer calls and prioritizing the information technology staff's work. The post's information security program is very organized, and appropriate documentation is up to date.

The embassy's information technology environment includes 282 workstations and 26 servers on the unclassified network, 28 workstations and three servers on the classified network, and seven standalone Internet workstations. Standard Department software and locally approved applications are installed on workstations and servers. The unclassified systems operation uses Windows 2003 Active Directory. The Global Information Technology Modernization-Unclassified migration was completed in February 2005. In April 2005, the information program center completed its first full inventory of information technology assets in 10 years.



## Information Management

The information resource management office staff is dedicated and includes an IMO, information program officer, information systems officer, two information management specialists, an information program assistant, and 17 LES. The office has a demanding workload with server facilities situated in five locations throughout the city. Responses to the workplace questionnaire for this inspection revealed mid-level to high scores for user evaluations of the office operations. However, OIG found a need for improvement in coordination on the part of the IMO and senior post management to schedule mandatory systems maintenance. Also, OIG noted that the IMO had not been identifying and reporting actions to correct systems weaknesses and deficiencies and was not ensuring IT staff were receiving technical and management training to maintain proficiencies and improve their skills.

### Information Management Officer Senior Management Coordination

OIG noted during the inspection that problems in the past had arisen on at least two occasions with respect to senior post management and the IMO deciding when major system maintenance actions should be performed. The IMO recognizes the importance of the varying actions and the severity of the potential for loss of information and use of the post's network if actions are not performed. The IMO should work closely with senior post management to schedule required systems' maintenance and inform them of the potential results of not taking actions to maintain the system. Senior post management should develop awareness and be able, from the information provided by the IMO, to make informed decisions concerning network maintenance in normal and emergency situations. OIG discussed this important issue with senior post management in order to increase the awareness.

### Reporting Deficiencies and Corrective Actions

OIG found that Embassy Santo Domingo has not submitted information as required using the Department's State Automated Federal Information Security Management Act Information Reporting Environment. This information tool is used by the Department's Office of Information Assurance to track posts' and bureaus' plans of actions and milestones for correcting information security weaknesses and deficiencies. In addition, the information is used by the Department's chief information officer to report to the Office of Management and Budget on the





**Recommendation 18:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ask the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Information Resource Management, to ensure that supervisory personnel in the information management office of the embassy are provided management training before arriving at post. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with WHA and IRM)

### Managing Work

OIG found that the information management office does not have a method in place to manage customers' calls and prioritize the work of the information technology staff. OIG informally recommended that the office implement the Department's universal trouble ticket system to manage and prioritize the workload. The IMO should contact the appropriate office in the Bureau of Information Resource Management to implement the universal trouble ticket system at the embassy.

### Information Security

Embassy Santo Domingo's overall information security program is very organized and appropriate documentation is up to date. The two information systems security officers ensure that personnel are provided with detailed user security and responsibility briefings. All appropriate logs are reviewed and kept longer than the six-month minimum requirements, the networks security configuration is in accordance with Department standards, and the baseline toolkit software that is run on the networks ensure compliance. Patches on the classified network are up to date.  
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## COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

The community liaison office (CLO) does not run a strong program despite two co-CLO coordinators both working 30 hours. There were complaints in questionnaires and interviews about problems with the sponsor program, misinformation, events planned with little notice, and limited involvement by the CLOs with the community. The CLO coordinators receive embassy management support, meet weekly with the management counselor, have an open door to the DCM and Ambassador, attend country team meetings, and sit on various boards as nonvoting members. During the inspection, the senior CLO resigned after two years, and the embassy was recruiting for a bilingual replacement. The co-CLO is new to the job with less than two months experience and is not scheduled for CLO training until later this year. OIG will brief the Department family liaison office to provide oversight and guidance to the new CLO coordinators and to schedule them for training.

The CLO office, while not solely responsible for improving morale, can find creative ways to try to bring the community together. One suggestion is come up with activities for the large unmarried staff contingent that can find itself adrift because many CLO functions focus on the families. Quality of life issues also play a role in the difficulties two new CLO coordinators will have in managing an effective CLO program. There is a CLO advisory board, but it is difficult to find volunteers for CLO activities or events in a mission with little sense of community. The sponsorship program for newcomers suffers from the lack of committed volunteers. On the plus side, the number of family member employment opportu-

nities has increased over the past year, but some position vacancies go unfilled for lack of applicants. The embassy is working with the host government to sign a bilateral work agreement, but based on the lack of complaints about local employment opportunities, it appears few family members are looking for employment.

## HEALTH UNIT

Health care is one of the embassy's strongest functions. The embassy's U.S. staff rated the health unit as the second-highest service provider in a list of 53 categories in the inspection's workplace and quality of life questionnaire. The embassy's health unit is adequately staffed with a physician's assistant, a locally hired American nurse, a recently hired half-time nurse, who is an employee family member, and a receptionist/clerk/translator to provide good care for the embassy community. The regional physician visits regularly from the FRC. The regional psychiatrist from Mexico City visits less frequently owing to a heavy travel schedule. The health unit chief indicated that adequate psychiatric care is available from practitioners in Santo Domingo.

The health unit's patient workload is increasing gradually. The addition of the second nurse to the staff will permit the unit to devote more attention to community health promotion, including stress management. The nurse will also monitor closely the rising incidence of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever as well as other diseases associated with declining public health expenditures in the Dominican Republic.

The health unit's drugs, including narcotic drugs, are properly stored. Inventories and dispensing logs are in use and up to date. Consistent with 16 FAM 744, the health unit has stopped ordering supplies of nonprescription medicines and has urged the members of the embassy community to maintain their own supplies of over-the-counter medicines. The embassy's financial management office collects from employees' reimbursements from insurance companies for medical payments originally paid by the U.S. government. During the inspection, the embassy prepared a mission notice restating the policy and regulations on billing and collection of employee debts to the government.

## AMERICAN EMBASSY RECREATION ASSOCIATION

The embassy's recreation association's activities are limited to gasoline sales to association members and the sale of souvenir items. It does not operate a commissary or sell duty-free alcoholic beverages. The association has had limited success in recent months in maintaining cafeteria operations in the chancery and consular buildings. Cafeterias in annexes other than the consular section do not appear practical. Most American consumer items are available locally.

The association has not met the important objective of securing food services for the mission's employees in the chancery and consulate cafeterias. As a result, employees spend excessive time and money on food shopping and deliveries, creating unnecessary inefficiencies. This has a negative impact on employee morale. Historically, the recreation association has not effectively managed contracting for these services. The last food services vendor, in operation for three months, ceased operations in April 2005 after the association failed to negotiate a contract. A previous vendor provided food services from May 2000 to November 2004 on a contract that expired in May 2001 and was never renewed. Instead, the association used a purchase order to secure food services for three years. In the end, this vendor was four months in arrears in paying its contractor fee (rent), offered poor quality service, and charged prices the local employees could not afford. The new association board is currently soliciting offers for a new food service contract. The association should restore cafeteria service to the chancery and consular buildings as soon as possible, while attempting to provide at least some food service that is reasonably priced, particularly for the FSNs.

**Recommendation 19:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the recreation association contracts for a qualified food service vendor for the chancery and consulate buildings that provides reasonably priced options for all employees. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

The recreation association management does not engage with the Department's Office of Commissary and Recreation Affairs. The association was late in submitting its required audited financial statements for the past two years and has neglected to include copies of the auditor's management letters. The last two management letters cited that certain fixed association assets were not reported on the balance sheet. The recreation association board has not resolved this issue. The new recreation association board should resolve all exceptions noted on its auditor management letters.

**Recommendation 20:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the recreation association board resolves all exceptions noted on its auditor management letters. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

## SCHOOLS

The quality of education for dependent children at post received mid-rank scores in the workplace and quality of life questionnaire. Most respondents expressed general satisfaction with the local schools, with some qualifications. OIG believes that the quality of schools at post is adequate. About 59 embassy dependents attend the (b)(2)(b)(6) 10 attend the (b)(2)(b)(6) seven the (b)(2)(b)(6) and one each in the (b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)

(b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6), with a student body that is 35 percent U.S. citizens and a majority of Dominican citizens, has an official relationship with the embassy and the Department, including security and import support. The Ambassador has appointed an officer in the political section to represent the embassy on the school board. (b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6) Complaints about (b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6) include some deficiencies in the quality of special needs instruction, and the teaching of Spanish as a second language. The Department's Office of Overseas Schools, which visited Santo Domingo twice in 2004, has deemed the instruction at (b)(2)(b)(6) to be adequate. (b)(2)(b)(6) (b)(2)(b)(6) is working to improve its Spanish instruction.

## MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

OIG found significant management control weaknesses in some areas of the embassy. In planning for the inspection, the embassy embarked on an ambitious campaign led by the front office to formulate a stronger management controls program. Delegations were appropriately made and resources committed in an effort to develop a competent program. The DCM is the designated management controls coordinator for the embassy and is heavily involved in the management controls program. She is well informed on Department program regulations to properly carry out its objectives.

The June 2004 Chief of Mission Management Controls Statement of Assurance did not report any material weaknesses. However, management control problems were later identified in nonexpendable property inventory and corrective measures undertaken. Embassy practice is to use the Department's risk assessment questionnaire as the basis for its management controls assertions. OIG believes having risk assessment results analyzed by the Department's management control officer is a useful tool, but using that alone does not satisfy Department requirements for an effective management controls program.

Embassy Santo Domingo does not have a formal management controls structure in place that fully meets 2 FAM 021 regulations regarding the Department's policy for management control systems. For example, the embassy does not have documentation to indicate incorporation of the U.S. General Accounting Office's Internal Control Standards that includes identifying risks and techniques to overcome them. Further, embassy managers lack sufficient understanding of the Department's management controls program to be effective overseers. The DCM advised OIG that all embassy managers with management control responsibilities will get appropriate training.

Conducting a management control review, as prescribed in 2 FAM 021, is a systematic method that affords the best and most direct approach to meet Department requirements and to detect program vulnerabilities. Recognizing and formulating a management control strategy to ensure nonexpendable property is properly accounted for could have prevented the embassy from experiencing a breakdown in its control over property (see property management section below) that necessitated convening a property survey board to review and eventually write-off \$375,000.



**Recommendation 21:** Embassy Santo Domingo should conduct an embassy-wide management controls review as described in Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 22:** Embassy Santo Domingo should enroll all embassy managers with management control responsibilities in the Management Controls Workbook distance-learning course at the Foreign Service Institute. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

## CONSULAR SECTION MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Management controls in the consular section are for the most part good. Some entry-level officers were assigned as accountable officers, contrary to regulations, but this was corrected during the inspection. According to the Consular Management Handbook, section 632, experienced consular officers are to be selected because of the responsibility inherent in being an accountable officer.

The NIV chief had an informal system for reconciling off-site machine-readable visa fees. Applicants pay the machine-readable visa fee, it is deposited in a consular account at a local bank, and the bank transfers the money to the embassy bank account. Each morning, an FSN checks on-line the amount deposited from the previous day in the consular account, records the amount, and writes how many applicants paid. The Class B cashier sends the NIV chief the general accounting receipt listing the total deposited to the embassy bank for each day. The FSN compares that total with the local bank total. The NIV chief said that he compares the amount on the general receipt with the number of paying applicants from the daily NIV report, but he had incomplete records of a continuous audit of machine-readable visa fees, which should be done in accordance with the Consular Management Handbook, section 767, and exhibit 7.6.

**Recommendation 23:** Embassy Santo Domingo should implement a process for keeping cumulative running totals of machine-readable visa fees collected compared to nonimmigrant visa applications processed. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

## GENERAL SERVICES CONTROLS

To respond to emergency or urgent after hours maintenance requests, the maintenance unit rotates an on-call FSN duty every week and on weekends, usually a supervisor and three maintenance technicians. There were many complaints from the maintenance staff that on-call duty affects the quality of their private lives and requires them to be within reach of the embassy at all hours. The maintenance staff also complained that not all calls received were true emergencies and that they were intimidated by Americans irate that the emergency had to await resolution until the next working day. The maintenance staff offered OIG some alternatives to on call duty that they would like considered. OIG informally recommended that the facilities maintenance manager consider these alternatives.

Emergency calls are directed to the supervisor, and 15 minutes of overtime is paid only for emergency calls received or made. No other payment is made for on-call duty. The technicians are paid for each hour of actual response time. Premium overtime pay for on-call duty is paid for actual time worked. The Department authorized the embassy's premium pay plan, based on prevailing practice. An OIG review of overtime request forms shows excessive phone calls charged as overtime by the maintenance supervisors that are not verified by the supervisor with cell phone charges or duty log. The on-call supervisors do not maintain a log of all emergency after hour calls as required. Maintenance technician overtime claimed for hours worked are not verified with the housing occupant. The facilities maintenance manager should do spot checks to verify overtime claimed by the on call maintenance staff.

**Recommendation 24:** Embassy Santo Domingo should implement management control procedures to verify overtime requests for on-call hours worked and require maintenance supervisors to maintain a log of all emergency after-hours calls. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

## Property Management

For many years prior to OIG's inspection, property management operations lacked effective internal controls. As a result, the embassy lost a sizable but undeterminable amount of property, and the warehouse physical appearance was poor. The embassy made strenuous efforts to strengthen its controls in the months before the inspection. When a new assistant general services officer started to

conduct inventories in February 2005 and found excessive, inexplicable reconciliation differences, the embassy moved to address the condition. The embassy's latest physical inventory dated May 2005, reported shortages of \$375,000 or 3.89 percent of total nonexpendable inventory.

The embassy requested management assistance from the FRC's Florida regional assistance team. The team conducted a thorough inventory reconciliation and review of the embassy's nonexpendable property application (NEPA) program in March 2005 and assisted the embassy in completing property inventories and required reports to the Department. In addition, the team provided operational guidance, training, and suggestions for maintaining accountable property management operations. The embassy convened a Property Survey Board. The board used the assistance team's property review and analysis to determine possible explanations for the property discrepancies and make recommendations to strengthen property management internal controls. OIG found the embassy in compliance with the team's property management review.

The Florida regional assistance team analysis determined that inventory reconciliations from previous years were incorrect. The review of inventory files from 1999 and 2003 indicated little or no documentation confirming that the NEPA inventory was properly reconciled. For example, in 2003 the embassy reported to the Department a nonexpendable property shortage of \$13,000. However, missing property reports totaled over \$100,000 with no documentation stating the remaining \$87,000 of missing property was located. There are no NEPA generated reports on file in the embassy for 2000 to 2002, and the embassy reported zero percent of missing nonexpendable property to the Department for those years. The assistance team reported to embassy management that the property management review showed that zero percent of missing property was not possible. The embassy resolved the problem in 2004 when the FSN was terminated who had given sole responsibility for NEPA but did not have adequate American officer oversight.

## Personal Property Custody

The embassy does not keep proper personal property custody records for property issued to employees for exclusive use or maintain a charge-out file in the property office as required by 14 FAM 414.3. There is no mission policy in place for property loans to employees. There was an instance where an officer was allowed to take home government property without justification for personal need or signing a property receipt. This increases the potential risk to the government for loss of property. OIG made two informal recommendations that the embassy

(1) issue an administrative notice specifying conditions for loan and receipt of government property and (2) implement Department procedures regarding personal custody records.

## Procurement and Contracting

In preparation for OIG's inspection, the assistant general services officer reviewed internal controls and found the procurement unit disregarded many Department requirements for documenting procurement procedures. Without proper documentation, the embassy had no reasonable assurance that it paid the lowest prices for goods and services and increased its risk for procurement fraud. Proper procedures are now in place. Contract files are also not well maintained. Documents are not organized or secured in files. OIG made an informal recommendation to file contract records properly. Embassy management failure to implement controls over time has clouded the control environment in the procurement section. Correcting procedures and tightening controls is a necessary and important task. The embassy management controls review being formally recommended above will help strengthen procurement and contracting internal controls and set the office on the right track.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

There are management control issues that need to be addressed in the financial management office, particularly control and verification of consular fees. The financial management office does not reconcile the record of consular fees to the Charleston Financial Services Center disbursing accountability report at the end of each month (Consular Management Handbook, Section 766). As a result, the embassy does not address the risk that consular fees recorded are not equal to consular fees deposited. An informal recommendation was made to reconcile the monthly consular services report with the financial services center disbursing accountability report.

The financial management office issues the general receipt for consular fee deposits after it receives the bank deposit receipt, which can be days after the deposit is made. This causes delays for consular section cashier record keeping. OIG recommended informally that the financial management office issue the general receipt for consular fee deposits on the same day the deposit advice is received from the consular cashier.



## FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** Embassy Santo Domingo should develop and implement a strategy for eliminating or reducing the discrimination now encountered by some African American employees who are denied entry to some private entertainment establishments in the Dominican Republic. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Human Resources should establish, well before final assignment, a briefing program that fully apprises prospective African American employees of what they may encounter in the Dominican Republic. (Action: DGHR)

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Santo Domingo should issue an administrative or management policy notice on members of household consistent with the latest Department policy on this issue. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Santo Domingo should request funding from the Bureau of Consular Affairs to send two Foreign Service nationals, one from the immigrant visa unit and one from the nonimmigrant visa unit, to the call center in Mexico to assist in training operators on answering calls from Dominican citizens. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with CA)

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should request approval and funding from the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' consular improvement initiative fund to construct a facility in a section of the outside nonimmigrant visa waiting room to perform the fingerprint, facial recognition, and nonimmigrant visa data-entry functions. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with CA and OBO)

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, the Bureau of Human Resources, and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should request the assignment of an entry-level officer to the American citizens services unit. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with WHA, DGHR, and CA)

**Recommendation 7:** Embassy Santo Domingo should establish a locally employed staff position in the American citizens services unit. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 8:** Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, the Bureau of Consular Affairs, and the Office of the Legal Adviser, should formally request the government of the Dominican Republic to enter into a prison transfer treaty relationship with the United States by acceding to either the Organization of American States prison transfer treaty or the Council of Europe prison transfer treaty, since the United States is already party to both agreements. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with WHA, CA, and L)

**Recommendation 9:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with Embassy Santo Domingo, should decide whether the United States will recognize the Dominican Republic as a signatory to the Hague Convention for the Abduction of Children. (Action: CA, in coordination with Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 10:** Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, the Bureau of Human Resources, and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should request an entry-level officer in the immigrant visa unit. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with WHA, DGHR, and CA)

**Recommendation 11:** Embassy Santo Domingo should coordinate with the Kentucky consular center and the Bureau of Consular Affairs to ship 212(a)(4) refusal cases under the Immigration and Nationality Act, or cases that cannot overcome the public charge criteria of the Immigration and Nationality Act, to the Kentucky consular center for scanning and storage. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with the KCC and CA)

**Recommendation 12:** Embassy Santo Domingo should establish a local housing assistant position in the general services unit. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 13:** Embassy Santo Domingo should establish a local compensation and benefits position in the human resources unit. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 14:** Embassy Santo Domingo should solicit a contractor or locate a regional trainer to provide leadership, supervisory skills, performance evaluation, teambuilding, and customer service training for employees. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 15:** Embassy Santo Domingo should request, and the Foreign Service Institute should provide, assistance and materials to hold a series of sessions on improving interpersonal skills, communication, and teambuilding. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with FSI)

**Recommendation 16:** Embassy Santo Domingo should submit data to the Department using the State Automated Federal Information Security Management Act Reporting Environment information tool as required by Department guidance. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 17:** Embassy Santo Domingo should develop and maintain a training program to keep information technology staff proficient and ensure the staff's technical skills are current. (Action: American Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 18:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ask the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Information Resource Management, to ensure that supervisory personnel in the information management office of the embassy are provided management training before arriving at post. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo, in coordination with WHA and IRM)

**Recommendation 19:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the recreation association contracts for a qualified food service vendor for the chancery and consulate buildings that provides reasonably priced options for all employees. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 20:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the recreation association board resolves all exceptions noted on its auditor management letters. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 21:** Embassy Santo Domingo should conduct an embassy-wide management controls review as described in Department regulations. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 22:** Embassy Santo Domingo should enroll all embassy managers with management control responsibilities in the Management Controls Workbook distance-learning course at the Foreign Service Institute. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)



**Recommendation 23:** Embassy Santo Domingo should implement a process for keeping cumulative running totals of machine-readable visa fees collected compared to nonimmigrant visa applications processed. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

**Recommendation 24:** Embassy Santo Domingo should implement management control procedures to verify overtime requests for on-call hours worked and require maintenance supervisors to maintain a log of all emergency after-hours calls. (Action: Embassy Santo Domingo)

## 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.

### Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission

Employees would like to see more outreach by the Ambassador and the DCM. Many feel that the absence of periodic visits by them to their offices means they do not care about what they do or they are taken for granted.

**Informal Recommendation 1:** Embassy Santo Domingo should set up a schedule for the Ambassador and the deputy chief of mission to make a more concerted effort to conduct periodic walk arounds and morale boosting visits to all mission offices, especially those located outside of the chancery compound, such as the consular section.

**Informal Recommendation 2:** Embassy Santo Domingo should attempt to further foster a sense of community and unity by encouraging more informal mission-wide social gatherings, inviting as many Foreign Service nationals and American employees as possible.

**Informal Recommendation 3:** Embassy Santo Domingo should have more periodic town hall meetings, when the weather permits, to include all Americans and Foreign Service nationals, to inform them of how the mission is doing, provide an update on the security posture, and reinforce how much their work contributes to the mission's success.

Many employees, especially FSNs, said they lack a sense of what the mission is doing.

**Informal Recommendation 4:** Embassy Santo Domingo should issue an unclassified, sanitized mission wide e-mail of notes of items discussed at the weekly country team meeting.

Some agency representatives said they receive no feedback on briefing papers and other written materials prepared for the DCM and Ambassador.

**Informal Recommendation 5:** Embassy Santo Domingo should develop and implement a process to provide feedback on written materials prepared for the Ambassador and deputy chief of mission.

## Public Affairs Section

The current assignment of a first-tour entry-level officer to the cultural affairs officer 02 mid-level position reduces the effectiveness of the PA section and requires extra effort to develop and mentor the entry-level officer.

**Informal Recommendation 6:** Embassy Santo Domingo should initiate an active search for a mid-level candidate for the upcoming off-cycle 02 cultural affairs officer position and ensure Washington support for the post's selection of a mid-level candidate.

**Informal Recommendation 7:** Embassy Santo Domingo should have the deputy chief of mission and the public affairs officer, during the remainder of the incumbent cultural affairs officer's tour until December 2005, implement an intensive development program for the entry-level officer.

No one physical or electronic calendar describes all activities in the public affairs section, thus precluding quick and constant understanding by some personnel of the section's activities.

**Informal Recommendation 8:** Embassy Santo Domingo should establish a public affairs section common calendar in Microsoft outlook software with entry and delete access by all personnel.

The weekly meeting which includes all staff in the public affairs section can go on for a few hours, thus taking too much staff time.

**Informal Recommendation 9:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the public affairs section limits the duration of weekly meetings.

## Consular Section

Telephone calls for visa information are disturbing the workflow in the NIV unit on the ground floor.

**Informal Recommendation 10:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that telephone calls for visa information are directed to the chief of the visa unit.

There are too many telephone calls for visa information coming in to the consular front office from mission members and the public. Other embassy sections also receive many calls for visa information.

**Informal Recommendation 11:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the chief of the visa unit, in conjunction with the public affairs section, initiates a campaign encouraging mission members and the public to go to the section's helpful web site or telephone the call center for visa information.

Some of the first- and second-tour officers said that they were not encouraged to promote teamwork and had little say in how they accomplished their own workloads.

**Informal Recommendation 12:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that consular managers look for more ways to foster teamwork and encourage officers to offer ideas on how best to accomplish their own workloads.

Entry-level officers would benefit from more consular managerial experiences, and FSNs would benefit from some of their management ideas and experiences.

**Informal Recommendation 13:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that managers in the visa unit look for more responsibilities for entry-level officers. For example, the immigrant visa unit could have an officer assigned to each team or a segment of the IV function.

The consular FSNs reported a perceived lack of support from the HR unit.

**Informal Recommendation 14:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the consular section appoints a representative from the section to the human resources unit to establish better relations between the two sections.

Some consular FSNs are dissatisfied with their congested and unhealthy work environment.

**Informal recommendation 15:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the staff of the medical unit offers regular sessions to the consular staff on how they can guard their health and avoid stress in such a demanding office situation.

The consular FSNs would like more regular feedback on their performances.

**Informal Recommendation 16:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that consular supervisors develop a plan for periodic counseling sessions for the Foreign Service nationals they supervise.

The awning over the crowds lined up on the sidewalk outside the consulate is not large enough to cover all the visitors.

**Informal Recommendation 17:** Embassy Santo Domingo should install a larger awning outside the consulate compound.

There is a need for new equipment to improve the efficiency of consular operations, and funding may be available.

**Informal Recommendation 18:** Embassy Santo Domingo should require the chief of the visa unit to make a prioritized list of equipment and furniture needs in the consular section and place an order for the necessary items.

Members of the consular staff are constantly interrupting the two information management specialists assigned to the consular building. With minimal training, many calls for help would be unnecessary.

**Informal Recommendation 19:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the information management specialists in the consular section give training sessions to consular staff on how to take care of the systems equipment and resolve simple problems.

Applicants must come to the consular section three times in order to complete a report of birth; visits could be easily be reduced to one.

**Informal Recommendation 20:** Embassy Santo Domingo should encourage parents to obtain reports of birth forms from the internet and receive an appointment by sending copies of completed forms and documents by fax or e-mail, thus eliminating two of three currently necessary visits.

The FSN arrest specialist, who has a law degree, has been trying to keep abreast of recent changes to the procedures governing the criminal code in the Dominican Republic.

**Informal Recommendation 21:** Embassy Santo Domingo should sponsor the Foreign Service national arrest specialist's attendance at some local legal seminars.

There is one consular agency on the north coast, but now the east coast has surpassed that area as a tourist spot. After Hurricane Jeanne, flooding prevented anyone from the embassy from traveling to the east and assisting the over 1,000 American tourists stranded in isolated, damaged hotels.

**Informal Recommendation 22:** Embassy Santo Domingo should send a request to the Bureau of Consular Affairs citing why a consular agency should be opened on the east coast, suggesting possible locations, and estimating the costs involved.

The deputy chief of the IV unit and one IV unit FSN should switch floors to improve efficiencies and supervision.

**Informal Recommendation 23:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the deputy chief of the immigrant visa unit moves from the second floor to the first floor and that one immigrant visa unit Foreign Service national moves from the first to the second floor.

NIV officers could increase productivity if they did not have to fingerprint applicants.

**Informal Recommendation 24:** Embassy Santo Domingo should allow an eligible family member to take the fingerprints of nonimmigrant visa applicants.

Getting applicants to fill out NIV applications via the Internet would speed up processing of applications.

**Informal Recommendation 25:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the nonimmigrant visa unit encourages applicants to fill out nonimmigrant visa applications on the Internet so that staff can scan the information and save time.

NIV files are in cabinets throughout the building.

**Informal Recommendation 26:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that the nonimmigrant visa unit sends the issued nonimmigrant visa applications back to the United States as soon as possible.

The fraud prevention manager needs assistance to adequately accomplish the many duties that only an American can perform.

**Informal Recommendation 27:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that entry-level consular officers spend some time in the fraud prevention unit on a rotational basis.

## Resource Management

### Management Operations

As part of the post's budget-driven decision to terminate all language training for staff with proficiency already equal to or greater than the position's language designation, officers at the proficiency level must pay out of pocket for any further training.

**Informal Recommendation 28:** Embassy Santo Domingo should establish a case-by-case review led by the deputy chief of mission of applications for funding continued language training for certain personnel, including the information officer in the public affairs section, who have already achieved required language proficiency but who could benefit from greater training.

The management section has many problems, issues, and projects that require the attention of the new management counselor.

**Informal Recommendation 29:** Embassy Santo Domingo should prepare a briefing book of who's who on the management section staff, issues, problems, and project status for the new management counselor arriving in July.

## General Services

### Housing

The housing program received many complaints. Improvements have been made in the program, but questions and problems continue with housing assignments, make ready, landlord maintenance, and customer service with no clear procedures.

**Informal Recommendation 30:** Embassy Santo Domingo should develop standard operating procedures for the housing program to include clear definitions of landlord and general services unit maintenance responsibilities.

### Maintenance

Duty drivers are not always available for on-call technicians after hours.

**Informal Recommendation 31:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that a duty driver is readily available for on-call technicians to deal with after-hours maintenance requests.

The GSO maintenance staff work on call to respond to emergency or urgent after-hours maintenance requests that require overtime. Many American staff do not abide by existing guidelines on what is an emergency and are sometimes irate with the local employees.

**Informal Recommendation 32:** Embassy Santo Domingo should annually reissue the administrative notice on definitions of an emergency for after-hours maintenance requests and instruct all personnel to abide by them.

Residential and building maintenance received numerous complaints. Embassy staff complained GSO maintenance was not responsive and provided no feedback on the status of work order requests.

**Informal Recommendation 33:** Embassy Santo Domingo should issue an administrative notice on work order request procedures, maintenance response, and customer feedback.

**Informal Recommendation 34:** Embassy Santo Domingo should maintain a log of maintenance requests, response time, and complaints.

### Property Management

Some warehoused property was not recorded in inventory records as required by 14 FAM 414.

**Informal Recommendation 35:** Embassy Santo Domingo should keep inventory records for all property stored in the warehouse.

### Motor Pool

Some confusion exists as to whether employees are eligible for taxi or private vehicle reimbursement for official representational events after hours as stated in 6 FAM 1993.

**Informal Recommendation 36:** Embassy Santo Domingo should make clear in its motor vehicle policy the Department regulations regarding use and reimbursement of taxis and privately owned vehicles for official representational events at all hours.



## Human Resources

Embassy employees want more communication from the HR unit, more transparency, clearer information, and improved procedures for complaints. The HR unit has discussed doing a separate newsletter for LES to supplement information in the embassy newsletter.

**Informal Recommendation 37:** Embassy Santo Domingo should publish a locally employed staff newsletter.

The HR unit conducted two surveys on special leave with embassy comparator companies that resulted in no change to the embassy local leave plan. The local employees continue to push for special leave (leave beyond normal U.S. standards), and the Department advised that another survey with questions on specific instances must be conducted.

**Informal Recommendation 38:** Embassy Santo Domingo should conduct a survey on special leave asking comparators questions on specific instances when special leave would be granted.

FSNs do not always understand what other sections and officers do and need more orientation.

**Informal Recommendation 39:** Embassy Santo Domingo should ensure that all Foreign Service nationals receive adequate training, including orientation sessions, as to what other sections do.

## International Cooperative Administrative Support Services

ICASS service standards were last updated in October 2002. The ICASS council has discussed updating the service standards. Some ICASS services were viewed as uneven in the customer survey.

**Informal Recommendation 40:** Embassy Santo Domingo should review international cooperative administrative support services provider standards.

The last customer survey indicated many customers lacked information on international cooperative administrative support services standards.

**Informal Recommendation 41:** Embassy Santo Domingo should post international cooperative administrative support services standards on the embassy's web site.

A large number of ICASS employees have not had ICASS training and are not aware of their roles and responsibilities. The last post training was in 2001.

**Informal Recommendation 42:** Embassy Santo Domingo should request international cooperative administrative support services training from the international cooperative administrative support services service center.

## Financial Management

Three embassy sections used representation funds for substantial purchases of Marine Ball tickets in November 2004 for host country counterparts. According to 3 FAM 3241.3, expenditures for tickets or admission to unhosted events normally are a poor use of representation funds, and while not prohibited, are considered allowable only in those instances where the highest levels of host country officials are present and the attending employee has the necessity and opportunity to fulfill the purpose of the representation allowance.

**Informal Recommendation 43:** Embassy Santo Domingo should exercise greater caution in authorizing representation funds to purchase tickets to balls and other no host events.

## Information Management

Embassy Santo Domingo's information management office does not have a method in place to manage customers' calls and prioritize the work of the information technology staff.

**Informal Recommendation 44:** Embassy Santo Domingo should use the Department's universal trouble ticket to manage customer's calls and prioritize the work of the information technology staff.

## Management Controls

### General Service Maintenance

There were many complaints from the GSO maintenance staff that on-call duty affects the quality of their private lives, that not all after-hours calls were emergencies, and questioned overtime payment for response time. The staff offered some alternatives they would like considered.

**Informal Recommendation 45:** Embassy Santo Domingo should review on-call duty procedures and discuss possible alternatives with the general services office maintenance staff.

### Personal Property Custody

The embassy does not have a policy for personal property loans to employees. As a result, the government risked the loss of property.

**Informal Recommendation 46:** Embassy Santo Domingo should issue an administrative notice specifying conditions for loaning government property, and enforce the rules.

The embassy did not keep proper personal custody records for specialty property issued to employees for exclusive use, nor did it maintain a charge-out file in the property office as required by 14 FAM 414.3.

**Informal Recommendation 47:** Embassy Santo Domingo should implement Department procedures regarding personal property custody records.

### Procurement and Contracting

Contract files are not well maintained. Contracting documents are not organized or secure in the files.

**Informal Recommendation 48:** Embassy Santo Domingo should file contract records properly.

## Financial Management

The FMO does not reconcile the record of consular fees to the Charleston Financial Services Center's disbursing accountability report at the end of each month, per the Consular Management Handbook, Section 766.

**Informal Recommendation 49:** Embassy Santo Domingo should reconcile the monthly consular services report with the Charleston Financial Services Center disbursing accountability report.

The FMO issues consular deposit receipts after it receives the bank deposit receipt, which can be days after a deposit is made. This causes delays for consular section record keeping.

**Informal Recommendation 50:** Embassy Santo Domingo should issue a general receipt on the same day the deposit advice is received from the consular cashier.



## PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Arrival Date</b>
Ambassador	Hans H. Hertell	11/01
Deputy Chief of Mission	Lisa J. Kubiske	07/03
<b>Chiefs of Section</b>		
Consul General	Mary B. Marshall	09/02
ECO/POL Counselor	Michael A. Meigs	08/03
SAA	John E. Bobbin	10/02
Management Counselor	Roland G. Estrada	07/01
RSO	Joseph P. Hooten	11/04
Public Affairs Counselor	Patricia M. Hawkins	10/02
<b>Other Agencies</b>		
Foreign Agricultural Service	David G. Salmon	08/02
Foreign Commercial Service	David K. Katz	06/04
APHIS	Carolyn T. Cohen	11/00
Department of Defense		
Defense Attache	Glenn R. Huber	01/03
Military Assistance, Advisory Group	Pedro A. Orona	05/03
Force Protection Unit	Blasé W. Smith	12/04
US Coast Guard	Pedro L. Jimenez	05/03
Department of Justice:		
Legal Attache	Andrew Diaz	06/04
Drug Enforcement Administration	Elias L. Lopez	03/03
Homeland Security	Bartolome Rodriguez	03/01
U.S. Marshall Service	Robert Sanchez	05/04
Tactical Analysis Team	Joseph L. Bell	01/03
Peace Corps	Javier L. Garza	07/03
USAID Director	Elena L. Brineman	07/00



## ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	American citizens services
CA	Bureau of Consular Affairs
CAFTA	Central America Free Trade Agreement
CAJE	Computer assisted job evaluation
CAO	Cultural affairs officer
CLO	Community liaison office
CMS	Carol Morgan School
COB	Consular office building
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
Department	Department of State
DGHR	Bureau of Human Resources
ECOPOL	Economic and political section
FRC	Florida regional center
FPU	Fraud prevention unit
FSN	Foreign Service national
GSO	General services office
HR	Human resources
HR/OE	Office of overseas employment
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	Information management officer
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
IRC	Information resource center



IV	Immigrant visa
KCC	Kentucky consular center
L	Office of Legal Adviser
LES	Locally employed staff
MPP	Mission Performance Plan
NAS	Narcotics affairs section
NEC	New embassy compound
NEPA	National nonexpendable property application
NIV	Nonimmigrant visa
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PA	Public affairs section
PAO	Public affairs officer
RMO	Regional medical officer
RSO	Regional security office(r)
SIPRANET	Classified reporting system
SMS	Systems management software
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

