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

# Report of Inspection

## Embassy Suva, Fiji

Report Number ISP-I-09-26A, March 2009

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## PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections, as issued by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of State (Department) and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).

### PURPOSE

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the BBG, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and the BBG. Inspections cover three broad areas, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980:

- **Policy Implementation:** whether policy goals and objectives are being effectively achieved; whether U.S. interests are being accurately and effectively represented; and whether all elements of an office or mission are being adequately coordinated.
- **Resource Management:** whether resources are being used and managed with maximum efficiency, effectiveness, and economy and whether financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- **Management Controls:** whether the administration of activities and operations meets the requirements of applicable laws and regulations; whether internal management controls have been instituted to ensure quality of performance and reduce the likelihood of mismanagement; whether instances of fraud, waste, or abuse exist; and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

### METHODOLOGY

In conducting this inspection, the inspectors: reviewed pertinent records; as appropriate, circulated, reviewed, and compiled the results of survey instruments; conducted on-site interviews; and reviewed the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, organizations, and activities affected by this review.



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

*Office of Inspector General*

PREFACE

This report was prepared by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, and Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended. It is one of a series of audit, inspection, investigative, and special reports prepared by OIG periodically as part of its responsibility to promote effective management, accountability and positive change in the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

This report is the result of an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the office, post, or function under review. It is based on interviews with employees and officials of relevant agencies and institutions, direct observation, and a review of applicable documents.

The recommendations therein have been developed on the basis of the best knowledge available to the OIG and, as appropriate, have been discussed in draft with those responsible for implementation. It is my hope that these recommendations will result in more effective, efficient, and/or economical operations.

I express my appreciation to all of those who contributed to the preparation of this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. W. Geisel".

Harold W. Geisel  
Acting Inspector General

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

- A major embassy personnel turnover in summer 2008 involving concurrent departure of the Ambassador, the deputy chief of mission (DCM), and several other key officers weakened executive direction and productivity in the mission.
- The embassy's political and economic reporting is overwhelmed by mandatory reporting requirements on five countries, and embassy operations are sometimes hampered by strained relations with the interim Government of Fiji.
- The security assistance office's (SAO) area of operation is larger than the area under the Chief of Mission's authority. This disconnect has hampered the operations of both the SAO and mission management. It is in the best interests of the U.S. Government that the two parties find a mutually satisfactory solution.
- Consular section management and staff perform extraordinarily well, especially given the size and complexity of the consular district, the largest in the world in terms of area.
- Mission management operations perform well and are well positioned to handle its expanding role.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between September 4 and October 3, 2008; in Suva, Fiji, between October 6 and 17, 2008; and in Paea, Tahiti, and French Polynesia, on October 4 and 5, 2008. Ambassador Rudolf V. Perina (team leader), Dr. Louis A. McCall (deputy team leader), Joseph S. Catalano, Ernest J. Fischer, and Peter Stella, Jr. conducted the inspection.



## CONTEXT

Embassy Suva is growing in importance as a regional hub for U.S. interests in the South Pacific. The embassy is accredited to the Governments of Fiji, Kiribati,



Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu. Its commercial and consular responsibilities encompass the largest U.S. consular district in the world, including French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna Islands. The Embassy's Defense attaché office represents the U.S. Pacific Command in the region. The Embassy also opened a regional environmental office in 2006 and a regional public diplomacy office in 2007.

Fiji, the largest and most complex of the states Embassy Suva serves, attained independence in 1970 after nearly a century of British control.

Since 1987, civil unrest and several military coups have disrupted democratic development. Most recently, the embassy's relations with the host government were strained by the Fijian military's December 2006 extra-constitutional seizure of power from the democratically elected government. Rule by the current interim government has been punctuated by occasional human rights violations and assaults on press freedom. The U.S. Government has imposed travel bans on members of the Fijian military and interim government but maintains working-level relations with both. The Embassy enjoys friendly relations with the governments of Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, and Tuvalu.

The United States has cut off virtually all military assistance to the Fijian military but recognizes the contributions of Fiji and Tonga armed forces to international peacekeeping, especially in the Middle East where Fiji has long participated in the Multinational Force of Observers in the Sinai and has troops serving with the United Nations mission in Iraq. Tonga was an early coalition member in Iraq. Currently, its platoon of 55 soldiers is providing security for the headquarters of Multi-National Forces Iraq.



Embassy Suva's top mission priorities include protecting and assisting American citizens, of which over 100,000 visit the consular district annually, and promoting a return to democratic and constitutional government in Fiji. The embassy also places high priority on maintaining close ties with regional friends and allies. All five nations to which Embassy Suva is accredited are members of the United Nations and other international fora.

Embassy Suva's authorized staff includes 21 U.S. direct-hire positions, 3 American citizen local hires, and 56 locally employed (LE) staff. Other agency staff includes 12 authorized U.S. direct-hire positions and 39 LE staff. The Embassy has a number of U.S. direct-hire authorized positions that are currently unfilled. A part-time U.S. consular agent works in French Polynesia. The Peace Corps program in Kiribati had no volunteers since it suspended operations in 2008 due to unreliable air transportation. However, 56 volunteers serve in the Fiji program while another 64 volunteers serve in the Tonga program.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

At the time of the inspection, Embassy Suva is in the midst of a major turnover of personnel involving the Ambassador, the DCM, the political-economic section chief, the Defense attaché, and the regional security officer (RSO). The Ambassador and DCM departed, and the newly arrived DCM, who has been at post less than two months, is serving as chargé d'affaires.

The concurrent turnover of so many key personnel, including both the Ambassador and DCM, weakened executive direction over mission activities and reduced the production of certain sections. For almost a one month period, the public affairs officer (PAO) served as chargé, in addition to undertaking a good share of political and economic reporting and retaining his own public diplomacy duties. Although an exceptionally competent and knowledgeable officer, the PAO could not compensate for the absence of a front office team.

The new chargé has begun to reverse this situation by assuming low-key though steady command of the mission. He has not significantly altered front office procedures pending arrival of the new Ambassador. He follows the previous pattern of weekly country team meetings and a monthly meeting with all embassy personnel. His relaxed, open-door management style is appreciated by the embassy staff. Relations with the newly arrived Defense attaché are excellent, and overall mission morale is good.

The mission's pursuit of its Mission Strategic Plan (MSP) objectives is hampered, in the case of Fiji, by the restricted relationship with the government. The embassy pursues the goals of transformational diplomacy primarily by working through non-governmental organizations, civil society representatives, and other nongovernmental actors.

Post management actively supports the mission security program and takes a lead role in the emergency action committee. Coordination between the chargé and the newly assigned RSO is off to a fair start and should improve as the relationship matures. Close coordination and free exchange of information between post management and the regional security office are critical for an effective mission security program.

Post management is sensitive to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) concerns of both American and LE staff employees. The chargé is also supportive of the entry-level officer program and has undertaken mentoring sessions with the two entry-level officers at post.

## POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

### POLITICAL/ECONOMIC REPORTING AND ANALYSIS

The chief of the embassy's political and economic section departed post in mid-July, and no successor is currently identified. The section is staffed by a mid-level officer who works half-time in the consular section. He is assisted through occasional reporting from the APO and by a staff of three LE staff whose expertise covers the five countries to which Embassy Suva is accredited.

Mandatory reporting requirements on five countries, such as the annual human rights reports plus routine demarches to five capitals, consume about 90 percent of the political work of the section. The Department has also requested a daily update on political developments in Fiji. This has left little time for staff visits to the four other countries for which Embassy Suva has responsibility or for the deeper analytical reporting and biographical reporting in which Washington has interest. The section has nonetheless produced some excellent reports that have received kudos in Washington, including an analysis of Fiji's draft "Peoples Charter" and an evaluation of the prospects for new elections in the country.

Under the Global Repositioning Initiative, the embassy requested an additional mid-level political/economic position to supplement the one full-time and one part-time direct-hire positions now comprising the section. The request is justified and reasonable but the immediate priority is to fill the position that is currently vacant so that staffing is at least up to authorized levels.

### Economic/Commercial

Given the staffing gap involving the political/economic section chief, the economic/commercial work of the embassy is currently understaffed. One mid-level officer works less than half-time and one full-time and one part-time LE staff do economic/commercial work. Commercial library space is earmarked in the new embassy compound (NEC). The loss of space in the current chancery was a major

impediment to servicing and interacting with local enterprises. The Fiji American Chamber of Commerce registered in 2006. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) team met with the chamber leadership and heard high praise for the relationship with the Embassy and the recently departed Ambassador.

The balance of bilateral trade in 2007 was heavily in favor of Fiji. The United States is Fiji's fifth largest source for imports. Chicken imports from the United States may be a commercial opportunity in the current market, but the part-time officer doing commercial work is too understaffed to explore the possibility. Even so, the section has done outreach, including participation in a trade fair in Tonga using money from the Department's Business Facilitation Incentive Fund. In July 2008, Business Facilitation Incentive Fund money was used to bring the Foreign Commercial Service senior commercial officer from Sydney, Australia, to do trade promotion events in Fiji.

## PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The regional PAO position at Embassy Suva was filled in 2007 and provides programs to eleven nations in the South Pacific. Previously, the embassy did not even have its own PAO; a group of LE staff had each given a portion of their time to the public affairs function. The regional PAO now operates an office with three LE positions, a media specialist, a cultural specialist, and a program assistant, none of whom had prior experience in the embassy. Just prior to the OIG inspection, the media specialist departed after only one year on the job. A replacement media specialist has been recruited and was expected to start work shortly after the departure of the OIG team. A fourth LE staff, requested in the FY 2010 MSP, is yet to be approved or added.

## Public Diplomacy Resources and Infrastructure

The public affairs staff is located in extremely cramped space, which was made available by taking over part of the space that had belonged to the commercial library. One consequence is that there is no information resources center (IRC). However, the move to the NEC will relieve the space problem and a new LE staff member has been requested in the FY 2010 MSP. If approved, that LE staff position would be the mission webmaster and IRC director. The new staff member would also have a regional role to complement that of the regional PAO. It is intended that this person would function as a regional webmaster and assist with the development of Internet websites for the other countries supported by the regional

PAO. Likewise, this new staff person will assist in delivering IRC services to these areas. Embassy Suva currently hosts a Virtual Presence Post website for Tonga. With the arrival of the regional webmaster, at least three additional Virtual Presence Posts are planned. This advance in outreach will not be possible without the outfitting of the IRC in the NEC and the approval of the fourth LE staff position in the section.

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs should approve and fund the expansion of the regional public diplomacy outreach to include outfitting the information resource center in the new embassy compound and a fourth locally employed position to serve as both a regional webmaster and director of the information resources center. (Action: EAP)

## Challenges, Successes, and Managing the Public Diplomacy Budget

The regional PAO faced and successfully overcame the challenges of starting up a new office. He reestablished the Fulbright scholars and Humphrey Fellows programs at post. Since the July 2008 departure of the Ambassador, DCM, and political/economic section chief, he served for a month as chargé and subsequently as the acting DCM. He also had oversight of the political/economic section. Although this was at the expense of the public diplomacy function, he made up for it with extensive overtime. The first public diplomacy budget is being prepared for FY 2009. The absence of an FY 2008 budget may have contributed to public diplomacy funds having to be returned to the Department. Unclarified assumptions regarding obligated funds that were not actually expended led to an end-of-year surplus of \$22,000, which he returned to the Department rather than expend it in a rushed and unplanned way. That represented a one-time “problem” that should not be repeated. The costs of travel and programming in the region, the larger staff, and the new initiatives recommended by the OIG team will all require more than the \$202,300 actually expended in FY 2008. It would be self-defeating for the Department to cut the public diplomacy budget in FY 2009 by the amount of the unexpected “surplus” in FY 2008.

## Strengthening the Media

There is no tradition of investigative journalism in Fiji and the other countries under the responsibility of Embassy Suva. Democratic institutions in Fiji have been under siege since the military coup in December 2006 ousted a democratically elected parliamentary government. During the inspection, the High Court, put in place by the current regime, ruled that the regime's decision to delay the return to a constitutional civilian regime was legitimate.

The media in Suva is weak. The same holds true to an even greater extent in the smaller countries with programs under chief of mission authority where the media, at best is nascent. There are also reports of corruption and graft reaching to higher levels of government in Fiji. Corruption, international crime, and mismanagement are problems throughout the region. The FY 2010 MSP has as its top priority the goal of protecting and fostering the development of democracy and democratic institutions. A related goal is to promote U.S. values and policy goals through public diplomacy outreach.

The media in Fiji and in the region could use encouragement. Without a program of promoting investigative journalism in the region, an important component of civil society is omitted. Prior to 2007, Embassy Suva did not have the capacity for public diplomacy outreach to the media. Embassy Suva did not have an embassy-only PAO or a regional PAO to pursue programs with the media.

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy Suva, in coordination with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, the Bureau of East Asian and the Pacific Affairs, the Bureau of International Information Programs, and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, should develop and implement a program to train journalists in the region and promote investigative journalism. (Action: Embassy Suva, in coordination with DRL, EAP, ECA, and IIP)

## REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS OFFICE FOR THE SOUTH PACIFIC

The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs has established five regional environmental hub offices of which the hub in Suva, set up two years ago, is the latest. The hub was a Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs priority to which the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs acceded. The office covers 16 political entities, although the regional environmental officer (REO) focuses mostly on 12 entities in the South Pacific. An REO out of Bangkok covers the Asian mainland and the more populous East Asian countries for the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. The posts of the REO at Embassy Suva include all of Oceania, Australia, New Zealand, and the New Zealand self-governing dependencies. It does not include French Polynesia, New Caledonia, or Wallis.

The REO has focused on three issues: biodiversity (including invasive species), climate change, and ocean fisheries. He actively participates in the MSP process. There is one environmental hub-related goal in the MSP. The REO travels heavily and participates in a number of intergovernmental organizations. In the process, his efforts demonstrate U.S. interest in the issues that matter to the countries of the region. For example, the REO headed the U.S. delegation to the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program, which concluded on September 12, 2008, in Pohnpei, in the Federated States of Micronesia. Several organizations, such as the Pacific Island Forum and the South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission are headquartered in Suva, which is itself a regional hub for the Pacific Islands.

The REO's biggest accomplishment has been in standing up the office, becoming a recognized and accepted official in his interactions with Pacific Island governments, and brokering the activities of U.S. technical agencies such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Forest Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey. Besides the REO, the office includes a very capable LE staff member who has a Master's of Science degree in Marine Studies and related work experience. The REO is the only officer at Embassy Suva with a grants warrant; he has unexpectedly found himself with duties on behalf of the mission that are outside of his normal portfolio. The OIG team informally recommended that the PAO complete training and obtain a grants warrant.

When asked by the OIG team, the REO acknowledged that a better working relationship with the regional PAO was of mutual interest. The two are both in agreement on the issues, but each has been too busy to act on that agreement as fully as they would like. They have worked well together on a strategic speaker initiative that



brought in an American environmental expert to Suva for two days of public discussions. Both officers want to build on this promising start. The OIG team encouraged the two regional officers to continue working closer to make Pacific Islanders more aware of U.S. government environmental affairs efforts in their behalf to include the promotion of achievements, key grants, and efforts to ensure regional media coverage of outcomes of regional environmental fora in which the United States participates. Two negative factors are that the small U.S. grants available through the REO do not compete well with the large grants from Australian and New Zealand Governments and the fact that media is not well developed in the islands.

## CONSULAR

Embassy Suva's consular section ably addresses policy and functional issues while providing competent and timely services. The consul applies explicit consular functional and managerial supervision while implementing superior practices. The section enjoys positive relationships with other mission elements. Section morale, professionalism, and training levels are high as a direct result of the consul's efforts.

Two full time and one part-time American officers and nine LE staff work in the consular section. A quarter-time consular agent in Paea, French Polynesia, augments the team. The consular district, which includes Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, Tuvalu, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna Islands, is the largest in the world in terms of area. Operations focus on assisting U.S. citizens resident in the consular district and the growing numbers of American tourists who visit annually—the key FY 2010 MSP consular mission priority. Visa services consume most consular resources. Staff and office space seems adequate for the current workload. Across the street from the chancery entry, a shelter seats ten consular clients. Wheel-chair-bound persons can enter interior waiting space which seats about 30 people. Seven teller windows provide interview security.

The OIG team observed consular staffers providing highly effective and courteous service to American citizens and visa applicants. Consular management successfully develops personnel resources and fully implements and executes quality benchmarks. Commendably, all LE staff completed Foreign Service Institute distance learning courses within the past year and most are currently enrolled in continuing consular education.

## American Citizen Services

About 3,500 American citizens live in the consular district and up to 100,000 American tourists, a number that grows each year, visit the district annually. Residents include missionaries and businesspeople. Tourists range from 80 year old cruise ship passengers to young backpackers. Americans may encounter incidents from minor hassles to serious crimes. The unit continually updates relationships with host country authorities to help resolve such matters. Consular travel to Tonga and annual visits to Tahiti notwithstanding, the consular district's size and transportation realities limit the section's service potential. The OIG team informally recommended developing, funding, and implementing an outreach travel plan targeting key sites within the district, including such tourist destinations as the Wallis and Futuna Islands in French Polynesia.

During FY 2008, the embassy processed about 50 death cases, 275 passport requests, and 20 consular reports of birth applications. To save client time and effort, the section distributes passports and other materials via courier services or local mail. E-mail messages link the section to Americans resident in the district. The section wisely invests effort in maintaining a warden system to inform U.S. citizens of potential problems. Unpredictable political and weather conditions in this geographic area emphasize needs for this system and obligations to ensure that it works. Consular efforts yield a reliable and robust system. The section sends e-mail messages to key American residents and specific institutions: These parties forward the message to other citizens. Back-up communication system options include telephonic message distribution.

## Visa Services

The visa unit adjudicated about 1,500 immigrant and diversity immigrant and 8,200 nonimmigrant visa applications in FY 2008. The 671 diversity immigrant visa applications handled in Suva pose special challenges. A congressionally mandated program, diversity visas benefit persons of nationalities historically underrepresented in past immigration into the United States. Applicants must meet specific standards to be eligible for the lottery-type selection process. Consular staff must verify that lottery winners satisfy diversity visa eligibility requirements and that family relationships conferring derivative benefits really exist. Substantiating applicants' claims means careful vetting of successful applicants, and, at Embassy Suva, about 50 percent of the applicants fail to qualify for diversity immigrant visas.

Limited economic opportunities contribute to the failure of 60 percent of first time applicants to qualify for American visitor visas. In this environment, fraud ranks high on the visa unit's concerns. The staff verifies information and investigates suspicious cases, but has few opportunities to look into cases outside Suva. Careful evaluation of individual visa applicants helps protect U.S. borders by identifying and excluding terrorists, stemming illicit immigration, and encouraging legitimate travel to the United States. The consul and vice consuls rightly emphasize the need for lawful and fair eligibility adjudication.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) selected Embassy Suva for a pilot laptop nonimmigrant visa program with a proposal of using Tonga and later, perhaps, Tahiti in trials. The program will enable consular officers to perform visa eligibility interviews away from consular sections. Visa units at the "home section" complete visa processing with passports being returned to applicants via a courier service. This program, primarily intended to manage consular workloads and serve visa seekers, remains in the pilot program stages. Full implementation awaits methodology verification, cost determination, and then successful field testing. CA expects user fees to cover all laptop nonimmigrant visa costs, although geographical bureaus may pay officer travel and subsistence costs.

Embassy Suva consular leadership is responsible for seeking guidance from the RSO in assessing and selecting laptop nonimmigrant visa locations, estimating costs, and preparing an implementation plan for submission to CA. The consul, with input from other embassy elements, drafted a plan, submitted it to CA, and awaits input from Tonga. When this and similar information from other pilot plan candidates become available, CA will determine whether to formally establish the program and set fees. The opportunity to apply for American visas in new locations may build a positive effect but failure of higher numbers of applicants to qualify for such visas could easily undermine that effect. About 70 percent of Tongans who apply for the first time for nonimmigrant visas in Suva, for example, do not qualify in spite of the fact that they must overcome substantial hurdles just to get to Fiji.

The Visas Viper Program requires that information on "people who may threaten the welfare of the United States" held by any mission element be shared with the consular section for submission to the Department, which reviews reports to identify names for inclusion in the Automated Visa Lookout System. Embassy Suva's Visas Viper committee meets regularly-- this embassy's environment results in few submissions.

## Consular Agency Paea, Tahiti, French Polynesia

Consular agencies perform limited consular services in places lacking standard Foreign Service posts. Low operating expenses make agencies an extremely cost-effective means of serving American citizens abroad. Embassy Suva's consul supervises a consular agency near Papeet , Tahiti (an overseas territory of France—French Polynesia). Travel to Tahiti, about 2,100 miles east of Fiji, may require up to 30 hours. Absent this agency, the time/distance delay would make it extremely difficult to provide emergency services. Americans living in and visiting French Polynesia express thanks and satisfaction with the agent and his services.

Located in Paea near Papeet , the agency is officially open ten hours a week. However, clients call throughout the week. Waiting and work areas are compact. Controls on materials (including official seals and files) meet CA standards. Problems with consular fee collection systems caused the agent to devise a fall-back system. The OIG team counseled the agent on this and other management issues.

About 1,500 U.S. citizens live in French Polynesia and some 80,000 Americans visit annually. The agent usually processes about 25 passport and 5 report of birth applications a month and up to 30 death/estate services a year. He visits arrested and imprisoned American citizens, helps with Federal benefit and tax inquiries, provides voting information, and performs other consular services. The agent set up an e-mail system for alerting American residents and contacting hotels in emergencies. Besides this "store-front" activity, the agent liaises with regional authorities. His extensive circle of contacts and area experience enable him to assist Americans in difficulty or seeking routine services, and to support official visitors to the region.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

The RSO, under the direct supervision of the DCM, has primary responsibility for law enforcement coordination. The key U.S. objectives in the region are to reduce the vulnerability of local institutions to misuse by terrorists and organized crime elements and to combat narcotics trafficking. Nauru and Tonga are beneficiaries of law enforcement assistance programs, but cooperation with Fiji is hampered by the strained bilateral relationship. Fiji was recently designated a tier three country for trafficking in persons due to its lack of government programs to combat trafficking.



## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### OVERVIEW

Embassy Suva's program responsibilities have grown with the establishment of the regional environmental office and public diplomacy hub and the expansion of SAO programs. Embassy Suva is well-staffed and funded but added SAO programs may necessitate staff additions, a redistribution of work, or other remedies. A much-needed second information management position was added this year. However, the position remains unfilled. A NEC is scheduled for completion in 2009, at which time eight additional facilities maintenance staff positions will be added.

Embassy Suva is a well-run post, despite difficulties brought on by current bilateral relations and an up-tick in administrative workload. Embassy Suva recently lost access to the tarmac for its classified diplomatic pouch pick-ups and has been unable to obtain diplomatic status for the newly arrived RSO. A spousal bilateral work agreement is not effective as the host country refuses to abide by the terms. Morale of both American and LE staff is generally good.

### Resource Chart

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Locally Employed Staff	Total Staff	Total Funding FY 2008
State – D&CP	7	3	14	24	\$1,104,900
State – ICASS	2	0	31	33	1,201,600
State – Public Diplomacy	1	0	3	4	225,700
State – Diplomatic Security	1	0	5	6	620,919
State – Representation					13,200
State – OBO	2 USDH, 4 USPSC		6	12	866,190
State – OBO/NEC					905,600

Defense Attaché Office	2	0	1	3	310,125
Security Assistance Office	1	0	3	4	1,806,610
Peace Corps – Fiji	4	0	2 FSN 14 PSC	20	1,300,000
Peace Corps - Tonga	2	0	2 FSN 25 PSC	29	890,000
Peace Corps - Kiribati	1		1 FSN 18 PSC	20	800,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>68 FSN 57 PSC</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>\$10,044,844</b>

Source: Embassy Suva

Please note that staffing reflects currently filled positions rather than authorized positions.

## MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

Embassy Suva's management operations are well run. With the exception of travel services, the mission community rated all administrative services high on the OIG Workplace and Quality of Life Questionnaire. It gave similar high marks on the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) Customer Services Survey. The management officer is a solid performer. She has fine tuned an already good operation and prepared it to meet expanding challenges. She is also the human resources officer and financial management officer. An LE staff position was recently added to the human resources office. Maintenance of the \$62.3 million NEC, as noted above, will necessitate hiring additional maintenance staff. The Office of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) will assist in the task of hiring the right personnel. In addition to the current OBO NEC project staff of 12, a when-actually-employed OBO facilities manager, who will be on temporary duty to post for one year, will assist in the transition to the NEC. His duties will include preparing position descriptions and training requirements for the NEC maintenance staff.

Embassy Suva gives high marks to Embassy Canberra for its regional human resources efforts. While the number of visits has trickled off in recent years, the high quality of guidance provided has not. The same can be said for Embassy Wellington's regional facilities maintenance efforts. Embassy Suva reports that it receives excellent support from the regional medical officer based in Embassy Jakarta.

Mission LE staff compensation is in line with the latest LE staff salary survey. However, as a group they are frustrated by the lack of a salary increase in the last

four years. A forthcoming increase in the miscellaneous benefit allowance may do little to ease this concern. The embassy will remain vigilant for signals requiring it to be proactive in seeking a spot check salary survey. LE staff risk benefit plans, including the local social security system, are all viable. Among the LE staff concerns is their work commute, which will change with the opening of the NEC, the lack of life insurance plans, and the awards program. The Foreign Service Nationals Association has already met with the chargé and provided its concerns. Both parties have agreed to quarterly meetings. Embassy Suva only recently determined that its LE staff medical plan was obtained without a required contract. A contract solicitation for this medical plan is being prepared. A purchase order for the services with the current provider was prepared in the interim.

## Security Assistance Office's Expanded Role and its Impact on Administrative Operations

The management section is attempting to handle SAO's expanded mission requirements. Yet, a final decision on how best to accomplish this has not been worked out. Until two years ago, State and SAO at Embassy Suva had the same geographic area of responsibility. In 2007, SAO's area of responsibility expanded from Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Nauru to include Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands. In 2008, SAO added two U.S. direct-hire positions. Embassy Suva's administrative platform did not expand accordingly. SAO Canberra had previously handled these three country programs. In 2008, security assistance and security cooperation funds totaled approximately \$1.8 million.

The management section is no longer willing to coordinate troop movements from Tonga to Iraq and other military exchange locations. A draft memorandum of understanding outlines in detail what Embassy Suva's administrative section sees as its role in this area. The memorandum of understanding, not yet seen or commented on by SAO, is a positive step.

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Suva should reach agreement with the security assistance office on the type and level of administrative assistance it will provide for programmatic travel. (Action: Embassy Suva)

The majority of SAO travel is for military and police personnel from Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands. Travel includes Tongan troop deployments to Iraq. The outsourcing of Embassy Suva's air travel services



to Embassy Wellington's travel management center has greatly relieved pressure on Embassy Suva's lone travel person but while this person no longer does ticketing, she remains involved in several ways. She reviews ticketing to ensure that routing is in compliance with travel regulations and is responsible for reconciling travel card expenses related to this complex process. This duty is time consuming when related to SAO travel. Because Embassy Suva is an ICASS Lite post, SAO's true travel service costs are not distributed according to workload counts.

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Suva should create a subcost center to track personnel costs for travel services to the security assistance office and, if warranted based on data collected, ask its International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council to authorize the hiring of an additional locally employed staff member. (Action: Embassy Suva)

## Certifying SAO Travel Vouchers

Embassy Suva certifies SAO travel vouchers for Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru. Embassy Canberra now certifies for Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. However, this arrangement is only temporary since the Defense attaché in Embassy Canberra wishes to discontinue paying for ICASS services for programs that are no longer Embassy Canberra's. Embassy Suva is not equipped to handle this workload when Embassy Canberra ceases to provide the service. When the regional Defense attaché responsibility for Embassy Port Moresby was transferred from Embassy Canberra to Embassy Suva, it created a situation in which Embassy Port Moresby's SAO travel vouchers are issued through Embassy Suva, but cannot be certified in Suva. Embassy Suva's management officer is uncomfortable certifying SAO travel vouchers as the appropriations and types of money are not standard. Some vouchers are not submitted for months. For example, it took troops returning from Bangladesh four months to submit their vouchers. There are a number of potential solutions that need to be explored. Embassy Bangkok's post support unit may be willing and able to handle SAO's travel vouchers. Another option might be to have SAO certify its own travel vouchers if the propriety of doing so is certain. An SAO staff member has recently received a certifying officer's warrant.

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Suva, in coordination with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Embassies Canberra, Port Moresby, and Bangkok, should determine how best to provide and charge the security assistance office for regional vouchering services. (Action: Embassy Suva, in coordination with EAP, Embassies Canberra, Port Moresby, and Bangkok)

## RIGHTSIZING

Embassy Suva's rightsizing report is not due for several years. In preparation for the NEC, in May 2005, Embassy Suva did prepare an NEC staffing statement. It projected an increase of five U.S. direct-hire positions and seven LE staff positions. Three of the U.S. direct-hire positions, namely those of the public diplomacy officer, science and technology affairs officer, and the split political/economic/consular position are already filled. The information management specialist position has been approved but not filled. The fifth and final position is that of the facilities maintenance specialist. This position has not been formally approved. Five new LE staff positions, three in public diplomacy, one in the regional environmental office, and one in human resources are now filled. The eight other LE staff positions are facilities maintenance positions to be filled later.

## FY 2010 Mission Strategic Plan

Embassy Suva's FY 2010 MSP addresses two management performance indicators, namely the completion of and move to the NEC and the level of training and professional development for the LE staff. The MSP does not have a performance indicator, that is, a benchmark to gauge progress addressing how the regional administrative needs of SAO are to be met at Embassy Suva. The SAO's area of responsibility began changing in 2007 and now is larger than the geographic area under the chief of mission's authority.

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Suva should establish an FY 2010 performance indicator addressing the provision of administrative support for the security assistance office and appropriate targets and results. (Action: Embassy Suva)

## International Administrative Cooperative Support Services

As noted above, Embassy Suva is an ICASS Lite post with four service subscribers, the Department of State, Department of Defense, SAO, and Peace Corps Fiji. ICASS Lite charged the Department disproportionately for travel services and in doing so undercharged SAO. An ICASS mechanism is available to remedy this situation.

## GENERAL SERVICES OPERATIONS

General services operations (GSO) provides quality services. GSO is managed by a first-tour general services officer, who brought a wealth of private sector know-how to the job. He provides direct supervision to all traditional GSO services except travel, which is handled by the management officer. He is also the post occupational safety and health officer and the de facto facilities manager. He is assisted by 18 LE staff, which will be 19 when the Ambassador's driver position is filled. This is in line with the Embassy's current size.

A review of GSO disclosed no reportable problems. Embassy Suva had been obtaining LE staff health plan coverage for years without a valid obligating document. When this came to light, GSO signed a purchase order with the health plan provider. GSO will advertise a request for proposal for an LE staff health plan once the solicitation is ready. The solicitation is being prepared by Embassy Singapore's procurement office and should be ready in a matter of weeks.

The GSO facilities crew is not responsible for the leased chancery building. The chancery landlord provides all maintenance and repair services for the chancery apart from security and information technology systems. The GSO facilities crew devotes its time to the government-owned chief of mission residence and leased residences. Residential landlords generally provide repair and maintenance when such work is their responsibility.

## REAL PROPERTY

Completion of the NEC is scheduled for 2009. Construction is proceeding on schedule. The original NEC project was downsized to bring it in line with the original budget so that construction contracts could be awarded. Included in the facilities cut are a GSO annex, gym, and warehouse. To further save on construction costs, construction of the nonclassified space was separated from construction of classified space so that non-American workers could build that portion of the project. OBO and Embassy Suva disagree on whether an American or LE staff member should manage the NEC. OBO wants an LE staff manager and the embassy wants an American facilities manager assigned to this position. The embassy believes it will be unable to hire a qualified LE staff facilities manager. Both have agreed to test the waters in Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand. OBO will factor this outcome into its staffing decision.

Decommissioning of the current chancery building will start in 2009. The embassy anticipates that the landlord will strongly argue for substantial remunerations in payment for the changes to the original building.

The chief of mission residence needs extensive renovation but this renovation will start only after completion of the NEC. The renovation will include remodeling the dining room and kitchen. In the interim, extensive make-ready efforts, at a cost of \$56,000, have prepared the residence for the incoming Ambassador.

## HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE

The human resources office's LE staff of three provides high quality services to both American and LE staff. Post considers the regional human resources support from Embassy Canberra to be very good despite the infrequency of visits. The LE staff compensation plan is in line with comparator entities. LE staff compensation has remained constant for several years, a source of post concern. The post is recalculating payouts of the miscellaneous benefit allowance that will increase amounts paid to the LE staff. Only the nurse position has an exception rate. The post has made LE staff training a high priority as evidenced by its prominence in the management section of the MSP and the training received. The post has an active awards program. LE staff have noted that the awards program flattened out in recent years in terms of dollar amounts awarded and the frequency of awards. A sampling of LE staff files revealed them to be complete. The post elected to stop using an LE staff handbook. It argues that all relevant information can be found in policy notices and

the LE staff handbook is not necessary. An LE staff handbook is a useful vehicle for providing all necessary human resources information to the LE staff. Embassy Suva should update its LE staff handbook. An informal recommendation addresses this issue.

## EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Embassy Suva's EEO and the Federal Womens Program manager programs suffered somewhat by the transfer cycle. An incoming officer is identified to serve as the Federal Womens Program manager. An EEO counselor was designated and already has presented programs on several occasions. The counselor's name was posted on the post Internet site but not on a bulletin board. An informal recommendation addresses the need to post EEO information and the name of the counselor on a bulletin board. There are three pending EEO cases being handled through the proper channels.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OFFICE

The financial management office provides satisfactory services as the three LE staff in the office are struggling to keep pace with the growth of post budgets and other duties. The financial management office maintains SAO's funding as presented in its budget. Difficulties often arise when monies from one SAO account are moved to a different SAO account without notice provided to the financial management office. This made the task of certification of SAO funds availability uncertain at times. A draft memorandum of understanding between SAO and the Department management at post will address the need for continued communications between SAO and the financial management office on funds management. At times, the Class B cashier is overwhelmed by SAO travelers in need of cash travel advances. There is no readily apparent alternative. The LE staff purchase travelers checks for their official travel. This is an improved practice as the LE staff had previously received large cash advances. Without holding local bank accounts, this option is not open to SAO travelers.

## SECURITY

Embassy Suva has a resident RSO who also supports the Peace Corps office in Tonga. Overall, the mission security program is operating extremely well. The RSO has a Foreign Service national investigator, a residential security coordinator, and a surveillance detection coordinator, but he has no administrative support for his classified and office operations. The embassy is a lock-and-leave post; there are no Marine security guards stationed in Fiji. Local contract guards and an LE surveillance detection team provide security at the chancery and all official residences.

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(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2)(b) (2) a NEC is under construction by OBO on a 10.55 acre site within the Suva city limits. The building is scheduled for occupancy in June 2009, and will provide a significant improvement in working conditions for the staff. The new facility will meet all Overseas Security Policy Board standards for a lock and leave post but, because of the building size and complexity, maintenance of security equipment will be a challenge for the regional security office.



## QUALITY OF LIFE

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(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6) Department allowances recompense tuition costs and the school is accredited by the Western Association of Colleges and Schools. (b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6)(b)(2)(b)(6) . In FY 2008, the Department granted \$50,000 for salary support, educational materials, in-service training purposes, and equipping a new multipurpose hall. The (b)(2)(b)(6) initially allocated these funds incorrectly but action by the embassy's management officer rectified the error. One embassy employee sits on the school board. A regional educational officer from the Office of Overseas Schools visited the school in March 2007 to evaluate its needs. That officer's report noted that parents expressed mixed opinions about the school with most finding it satisfactory for students below the 8th grade level and acceptable at the higher grades. However, one family decided to send a dependent of secondary school age to boarding school away from Fiji rather than to the (b)(2)(b)(6) .

## MEDICAL UNIT

A part-time LE staff registered nurse manages the embassy's medical unit. Medical specialists are available on call. The Office of Medical Services and the regional medical office in Jakarta support the unit. A regional medical officer visited Suva three times within the last year. OIG review confirmed that the unit protects confidential patient records and general medical supplies, destroying outdated materials in accord with Office of Medical Services-sanctioned practices. The unit has no controlled medical supplies. It follows Office of Medical Services guidelines in providing care, which limits services sometimes expected by clients.



The embassy's health unit occupies a small suite on the chancery's second floor. It offers medical counseling as well as outreach including health promotion and education. The nurse provides emergency first aid for all embassy staff and primary outpatient care for Americans assigned to the mission. Health unit staff oversee additional medical treatment or procedures that require use of Fijian facilities. The unit coordinates emergency medical activity with the management section and the regional medical officer. This includes an average of six medical evacuations a year, usually to Singapore, New Zealand or Australia, to help ensure that employees obtain satisfactory medical care. Embassy personal questionnaires revealed that staffers hold a high opinion of the nurse's performance and manner.

## COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

A community liaison office coordinator serves the Embassy Suva community. The coordinator is paid for a 25-hour work week but generally spends 25-30 hours per week. She is compensated for additional hours with compensatory time or regular duty pay. The coordinator's activities include preparing and maintaining all welcome and orientation materials, nominating sponsors for new arrivals, advising employees on local conditions, offering general guidance and a sympathetic ear, organizing social events for staff and family members, managing a lending library, and maintaining the emergency school pick-up plan. The coordinator assists with ensuring that residences for new arrivals are made ready and coordinates recreational programs. This includes providing information to help staffers arrange travel outside the capital to experience the country's culture and beauty. She organizes informative and entertaining morale building events for embassy American and LE staff and families. Embassy employees rated the coordinator as highly effective and positive in the personal questionnaires.

## MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Embassy Suva has a strong management controls program. The newly arrived chargé is the management controls coordinator. He signed and sent the FY 2008 chief of mission annual management certification in August 2008. The management certification did not identify any management control weaknesses. The post has completed risk assessments the last two years and identified areas for improvement. The most recent self-scored risk assessment results were posted in August as well. It is evident by this effort that post is committed to the process.

The embassy properly designated accountable consular officers, consular sub-cashiers, and alternates. Consular subcashiers have their own cash advances. The consular agent in Paea collects consular fees which the consular subcashier processes. As noted above, the agent encountered difficulties with consular fee collection system hardware and software. The OIG team's random accountable consular officer records and accounts verification revealed no mathematical errors.

Accountable consular officers comply with Consular Management Handbook standards to control supplies of blank passports, reports of birth, immigrant visa and nonimmigrant visa documents, official seals, funds, and other accountable items. Stocks appear adequate. Sensitive computer access controls, computer file security, inventories generated by consular computer systems, and the nonimmigrant visa referral system satisfy standards.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SECTION

Embassy Suva's information management section has been overburdened having only one information management specialist (IMS) for its 122 users on the OpenNet network plus the management of its classified local area network, the telecommunications infrastructure, and telephones. The IMS also hosts embassy personal digital assistant users on a dedicated Blackberry Enterprise Server. The embassy also services 13 fobs, devices used to access OpenNet from remote locations over commercial lines. The lack of a back-up IMS and the additional pressures of preparing the embassy for the 2009 move to the NEC contributed to the decision by the incumbent IMS to curtail his assignment. Although the Department has agreed to assign

a second IMS, that officer had not yet arrived. Shortly after the inspection, the IMS was scheduled to depart post on a permanent change of duty station, leaving post communications in the hands of a temporary-duty IMS.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs should approve and fund the expansion of the regional public diplomacy outreach to include outfitting the information resource center in the new embassy compound and a fourth locally employed position to serve as both a regional webmaster and director of the information resources center. (Action: EAP)

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy Suva, in coordination with the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, the Bureau of East Asian and the Pacific Affairs, the Bureau of International Information Programs, and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, should develop and implement a program to train journalists in the region and promote investigative journalism. (Action: Embassy Suva, in coordination with DRL, EAP, ECA, and IIP)

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Suva should reach agreement with the security assistance office on the type and level of administrative assistance it will provide for programmatic travel. (Action: Embassy Suva)

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Suva should create a subcost center to track personnel costs for travel services to the security assistance office and, if warranted based on data collected, ask its International Cooperative Administrative Support Services council to authorize the hiring of an additional locally employed staff member. (Action: Embassy Suva)

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Suva, in coordination with the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Embassies Canberra, Port Moresby, and Bangkok, should determine how best to provide and charge the security assistance office for regional vouchering services. (Action: Embassy Suva, in coordination with EAP, Embassies Canberra, Port Moresby, and Bangkok)

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Suva should establish an FY 2010 performance indicator addressing the provision of administrative support for the security assistance office and appropriate targets and results. (Action: Embassy Suva)



## 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.

### Regional Environmental Affairs Office

Embassy Suva hosts one of five regional environmental affairs office hubs around the world. Unlike all of the other hubs, the Suva office does not maintain a webpage.

**Informal Recommendation 1:** Embassy Suva should develop an Internet webpage for its regional environmental affairs office.

The regional environmental officer at Embassy Suva is the only officer at post with a grants warrant. This has given him duties on behalf of the mission that are outside of his normal portfolio. In addition, he is a frequent traveler, which periodically leaves the post without an officer with a grants warrant.

**Informal Recommendation 2:** Embassy Suva should require the public affairs officer to complete training and obtain a grants warrant.

### Consular Affairs

Embassy Suva's consular district includes the French Polynesian island groups of New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna islands that attract fast growing numbers of American residents and tourists. Consular staffers have not visited these places or developed local contacts and have no knowledge of on-the-ground conditions there.

**Informal Recommendation 3:** Embassy Suva should develop, fund, and implement an outreach travel plan targeting key sites within the district, including such tourist destinations as the Wallis and Futuna Islands in French Polynesia to establish emergency services procedures to be ready if needed.



## Management

Embassy Suva's LE staff handbook was intentionally not updated in the belief that electronic and other hard copy human resources policies should suffice. A LE staff handbook is a useful vehicle for providing necessary human resources information.

**Informal Recommendation 4:** Embassy Suva should update its LE staff handbook.

Embassy Suva has not posted the name of the Equal Employment Opportunity coordinator on a bulletin board accessible to the mission community.

**Informal Recommendation 5:** Embassy Suva should post the name of the Equal Employment Opportunity coordinator on a prominent bulletin board within the chancery.

## PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Chargé d'Affaires	Richard Pruett	8/15/2008

### Chiefs of Sections:

Management	Ila Jurisson	8/29/2006
General Services	Scott Gallaway	5/15/2008
Information Program Management	Steven Baldwin	8/14/2007
Financial Management	Ila Jurisson	8/29/2006
Consular	Debra Towry	9/14/ 2006
Political/Economic	Vacant	-
Regional Public Affairs	Jeffrey Robertson	7/28/2007
Regional Security	Matthew McCormack	7/25/2008
Regional Environment	Joseph Murphy	10/10/2006
Overseas Building Operations	Tracy Thomas	5/19/2007

### Other Agencies:

Department of Defense	Cmdr. Robert Forwood	8/17/2008
Peace Corps Fiji	Ruth Larimer	2/19/2008
Peace Corps Tonga	Jeffrey Cornish	2/22/2007
Peace Corps Kiribati	Michael Koffman	2/20/2007



## ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Bureau of Consular Affairs
DCM	Deputy chief of mission
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
GSO	General services operations
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
IMS	Information management specialist
IRC	Information resources center
LE	Locally employed
MSP	Mission Strategic Plan
NEC	New embassy compound
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OBO	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
PAO	Public affairs officer
REO	Regional environmental officer
RSO	Regional security officer
SAO	Security assistance office

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