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Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

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ISP-21-08

Office of Inspections

February 2021

# **Management Assistance Report: Deficiencies in Consular Physical Space at Overseas Missions**

MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE REPORT

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## Summary of Review

OIG reviewed 46 overseas inspection reports issued from October 1, 2017, to August 12, 2020, and identified 45 findings<sup>1</sup> and recommendations related to consular physical space. Specifically, OIG identified deficiencies related to line of sight over consular workspace, handicapped accessible facilities, privacy booths for conducting sensitive interviews, signage to provide the public with directions and information about consular services, and canopies or other types of shelters. The reports cited several causes for these deficiencies. For 31 of the 45 findings and recommendations (69 percent), the deficiencies were related to obsolete or dated design of consular space. For the other 14 findings and recommendations (31 percent), OIG reports cited inadequate management oversight of consular physical space issues by post consular managers as the cause of the deficiencies. Based on its review of the inspection reports, OIG found that consular managers lacked training and communication on consular physical space standards, and that Department standards on canopies or other shelters required clarification. Additionally, in the course of conducting this review, OIG found that the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) did not collect comprehensive data on problems with consular physical space at embassies and consulates, which limited the ability of both consular managers overseas and Department of State (Department) staff to identify and correct these deficiencies systematically. In this report, OIG made three recommendations to CA to address the causes of consular physical space deficiencies. In its comments on the draft report, CA concurred with all three recommendations. OIG considers all three recommendations resolved. The bureau's response to each recommendation and OIG's reply can be found in the Recommendations section of this report. The bureau's formal written response is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.

## BACKGROUND

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Consular managers are responsible for ensuring consular physical space at U.S. embassies and consulates is secure, adequate, and efficient for all public and office needs. Department standards for consular physical space management are contained primarily in 7 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-1 H-263.8 and 7 FAH-1 H-280, et seq. These standards demand adequate waiting space, interview windows, handicapped facilities, and line of sight<sup>2</sup> over consular physical spaces, and other requirements. Consular physical space standards are important to ensure that consular sections present a suitable public image of the United States, meet the needs of customers with disabilities, and support internal controls intended to deter consular malfeasance.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this report, findings are deficiencies described in inspection reports about which OIG advised the inspected entities, or which the entity's management corrected during the inspection but did not result in a recommendation.

<sup>2</sup> Guidance in 7 FAH-1 H-281e states that workstations and offices for adjudicating officers should be located throughout a consular section to provide the greatest possible range of overlapping lines of sight. The Bureau of Consular Affairs' "Consular Section Design Guidelines and Requirements" (March 2020) states that line of sight is a key requirement of consular design and a critical component of effective consular management and accountability. According to these guidelines, line of sight "is cheap, effective, and requires no maintenance. It enhances a sense of community and team building, and discourages poor performance, misbehavior, and malfeasance. Line of sight is a concept, not a formula. It means, generally, an open and visible work environment."

Responsibility for consular physical space is shared among multiple entities overseas and in Washington, D.C. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) is the lead bureau for building and renovating overseas facilities. CA's Office of the Executive Director coordinates with embassies and OBO to address physical space issues related to consular sections. The Department established the Facilities Planning Board, comprised of senior CA and OBO personnel, in 2013 to review, recommend, and budget for all CA infrastructure requests in a transparent manner.<sup>3</sup> Once a year, the board formally recommends a list of projects to the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs for approval.<sup>4</sup> The Bureau of Diplomatic Security oversees consular physical space issues that involve security and access control.<sup>5</sup> Within embassies, facility managers are responsible for overall space and facilities management. However, consular managers also are responsible for analyzing consular space and usage during renovations and new construction and identifying deficiencies that need attention as work progresses.<sup>6</sup> Because this management assistance report (MAR) extracted data from overseas inspections of consular operations, its conclusions stem from the perspective of the consular manager in the field.

This MAR seeks to determine root causes of consular physical space deficiencies identified in OIG inspections and bring systemic issues to the attention of Department senior leadership for corrective action. This report addresses protecting people and facilities and promoting accountability through internal coordination and clear lines of authority, which OIG has identified as major management challenges for the Department in *Inspector General Statement on the Department of State's Major Management and Performance Challenges*.<sup>7</sup>

## FINDINGS

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OIG reviewed 46 overseas inspection reports issued from October 1, 2017, to August 12, 2020, to determine what findings have been reported regarding deficiencies in consular physical space and what underlying factors contributed to or caused the deficiencies. OIG identified 45 findings and recommendations related to consular physical space deficiencies. Specifically, OIG identified deficiencies related to line of sight over consular workspace, handicapped accessible facilities, privacy booths for conducting sensitive interviews, signage to provide the public with directions and information about consular services, and canopies or other types of shelters. The reports cited several causes for these deficiencies. For 14 findings and recommendations (31 percent), OIG cited inadequate oversight of consular physical space issues by post consular managers as the cause of the deficiencies. For 31 of 45 of these findings and recommendations

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<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, "Consular Facilities" intranet page, accessed on April 13, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Cable 18 STATE 108514, "Funding for Consular Infrastructure Improvement Projects," October 26, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> According to 7-FAH-1 H-281d, "The Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the regional security officer at post also play important roles in aspects of a facility's design affecting security and access control."

<sup>6</sup> According to 7-FAH-1 H-281b, "Consular managers must nonetheless be fully involved in analyzing space use and configuration and in any redesign or renovation of existing consular workspace or a move to new quarters."

<sup>7</sup> OIG, *Inspector General Statement on the Department of State's Major Management and Performance Challenges* (2019).

(69 percent), the deficiencies were related to obsolete or dated design of consular space and were largely beyond the control of consular managers because they required major construction projects to remedy. Of the 31 findings and recommendations related to obsolete or dated design of consular space, OIG determined that 7 findings and recommendations involved the lack of canopies or other shelters in walkways and outdoor consular waiting areas. In the course of conducting this review, OIG also found that CA did not collect comprehensive data on problems with consular physical space at embassies and consulates, which limited the ability of both consular managers overseas and Department staff to identify and correct those deficiencies systematically. Based on a review of OIG documentation supporting the findings and recommendations, interviews with Department officials, and reviews of Department documents and records, OIG identified three areas related to consular physical space that require Department attention: training and resources; canopies or other shelters; and consular data systems.

## **Training and Resources**

### ***Consular Managers Lacked Training and Communication on Consular Physical Space Standards***

While conducting work for this MAR, OIG determined that of the 14 consular physical space findings and recommendations where inadequate management oversight of consular physical spaces was the underlying cause, 12 were the result of situations involving consular managers. The managers were unaware of consular space standards or faced competing priorities that prevented them from initiating mitigation strategies.<sup>8</sup> To understand why this occurred, OIG reviewed the Department's training, guidance, and other communication provided to consular managers to help them understand and prioritize consular section physical space requirements. In doing so, OIG found that neither the Department's Foreign Service Institute nor CA had developed and delivered any training on management of consular physical space. For example, the Foreign Service Institute's mandatory course for first-time consular managers<sup>9</sup> did not include information on consular physical space standards. This issue should be addressed because this course reaches consular managers at the stage of their careers when they are initially responsible for consular physical space issues.

OIG also found that CA provided limited other resources—sporadic worldwide cable guidance and an intranet site focused on submitting funding proposals for improvements of consular facilities—to facilitate consular managers' understanding of applicable standards.<sup>10</sup> OIG

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<sup>8</sup> For the remaining two findings and recommendations, OIG found consular managers were aware of the issues but had yet to take corrective action.

<sup>9</sup> The Foreign Service Institute Consular Training Division's PC-550 "Consular Management Basics" course is mandatory for direct-hire Foreign Service officers who will be serving for the first time as the chief of a consular section, regardless of section size.

<sup>10</sup> Recent guidance related to consular physical space management included the January 29, 2018, Assistant Secretary of Consular Affairs' monthly "In Case You Missed It" cable (18 STATE 8406). This cable addressed OIG findings on the need for consular sections to intersperse seating to improve line of sight. Other cables were 17 STATE 10852 (February 3, 2017) on "Funding for Consular Infrastructure Improvement Projects," repeated as 18

determined that CA could leverage existing resources to help increase consular managers' understanding of consular physical space standards and to ensure that consular managers prioritize addressing consular physical space deficiencies. These include the Regional Consular Officer and Consular Management Assistance programs,<sup>11</sup> Department consultations for outgoing consular managers, and the use of CA's intranet site to share information on principles of consular space management, especially easily implemented solutions to common problems, such as interspersed seating. As stated in *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, section 14.03, management should communicate quality information across all levels of the organization to enable employees to perform key objectives and address risks.<sup>12</sup> Without improved training and increased CA guidance and communication, consular managers may lack awareness of consular physical space standards and consequently not take action to identify and correct deficiencies.

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with the Foreign Service Institute, should implement a plan to improve both training and the availability of resources on consular physical space standards for consular managers. (Action: CA, in coordination with FSI)

## **Canopies and Other Types of Shelters**

### ***Department Standards Do Not Clarify the Circumstances Under Which Canopies or Other Shelters Are Required***

OIG found that Department standards do not clarify the circumstances under which canopies or other shelters are required in walkways or other outdoor consular waiting areas. During this MAR, OIG determined that 7 of the 31 findings and recommendations related to obsolete or dated design of consular space involved the lack of adequate waiting space appropriate for the embassy or consulate's climate. Specifically, OIG found that these spaces lacked canopies or other shelters in walkways or outdoor consular waiting areas.<sup>13</sup> Canopies or other types of shelters protect consular customers from rain, snow, and extreme temperatures during the security and administrative intake processes.

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STATE 108514 (October 26, 2018). The latter two cables, as well as CA's intranet site on consular facilities, limit their guidance to procedures for funding consular infrastructure improvements.

<sup>11</sup> A Regional Consular Officer is an experienced consular officer designated by the Department to provide support and guidance to small- and medium-sized consular sections. Consular Management Assistance Teams provide management assistance, ensure compliance with management controls, build consular management capacity by identifying and developing strong consular managers, coach and mentor consular managers to improve effectiveness and efficiency, and champion CA initiatives.

<sup>12</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* (GAO-14-704G, September 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Consular waiting areas may include the consular arrival court in front of the compound access control (CAC), a consular garden, and the consular section waiting room inside the main embassy or consulate building. The CAC is a building on the perimeter of the compound used to screen visitors. A CAC that is dedicated to consular visitors is often referred to as a consular CAC. The consular garden refers to the path on an embassy compound that visitors follow between the CAC exit and the entrance to the consular section waiting room at the main embassy or consulate building. The consular garden also is used as an overflow staging area for busy or peak times.

According to Department standards in 7 FAH-1 H-281a, consular lines and waiting areas are both potential public relations opportunities and security challenges and every effort should be made to accommodate the public as efficiently, safely, and pleasantly as possible. Additionally, guidance in 7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(e) states that public consular areas should include adequate waiting space appropriate for the embassy or consulate's climate. However, these standards do not clarify when canopies or other shelters are required. Furthermore, OBO's 2016 design guide and standards for certain consular facilities, which are approved by DS, call for the inclusion of canopies or other shelters in construction projects,<sup>14</sup> but also do not specify when canopies or other shelters are required. Lastly, the Department's physical security standards in 12 FAH-5 do not preclude canopies or other shelters in new embassy construction or at compound access controls if security requirements are observed.<sup>15</sup>

OIG determined that CA and OBO collaborated productively in managing consular physical space issues through the annual meeting of the Facilities Planning Board, biweekly meetings of a CA-OBO working group, weekly updates on active projects, and frequent, informal communication. However, despite these efforts, OIG found that disagreements over canopies and other shelters persisted, with OBO occasionally proposing to exclude them on the basis of security and other concerns and CA maintaining they are necessary in order to meet Department standards in 7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(e). CA leadership and subject matter experts told OIG of the challenges in balancing DS' security concerns and determining which Department entity is responsible for funding canopy and other shelter projects with CA's desire to protect customers from inclement weather and other elements. OBO staff told OIG that site-specific design considerations, such as climate, security concerns, volume of consular customers, host government zoning regulations, and other factors sometimes led to the elimination of canopies and other shelters during construction projects. OIG determined that revising the standards in 7 FAH-1 H-280 to clarify when canopies and other shelters are required would help to resolve these challenges. Without updated standards that clarify the circumstances under which canopies and other shelters are required, the Department was at risk of not consistently providing adequate waiting spaces to consular customers.

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with the Bureaus of Diplomatic Security and Overseas Buildings Operations, should update Department standards and guidance to clarify the circumstances under which canopies or other shelters are required in consular waiting spaces. (Action: CA, in coordination with DS and OBO)

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<sup>14</sup> OBO design standards C020301-03.01 for the consular garden and C020104-03.01 for the consular arrival court (2016 OBO Design Standards, November 5, 2015) illustrate the inclusion of shelter for consular customers through overhangs at the entry and exit of CAC and shelters in the consular arrival court and notes that the goal is to provide shelter for visitors. The OBO design guide, which is considered advisory rather than mandatory, also supports the inclusion of canopies or other shelters. However, the updated 2020 OBO design standards for the consular CAC that OIG reviewed do not illustrate the inclusion of canopies or other shelters.

<sup>15</sup> See 12 FAH-5 424.1-5, "Compound Access Control (CAC);" 12 FAH-5 Appendix L, "Physical Security Standards Matrix;" and 12 FAH-5 Appendix M, "Climbable Elements."

## Consular Data

### *Department Lacked Comprehensive Data on Physical Space Standards*

While conducting work for this MAR, OIG also sought to identify the underlying factors that contributed to or caused consular space deficiencies. OIG found that CA did not collect comprehensive data on problems with consular physical space at embassies and consulates. Although CA and OBO had a well-established process for coordinating and tracking consular physical space issues related to ongoing and planned construction,<sup>16</sup> they lacked a database to track consular physical space deficiencies at existing facilities. This weakness limited the ability of both consular managers overseas and Department staff to identify and correct those deficiencies systematically.

CA employs a variety of internal controls processes to gather data about consular physical space. The two primary internal controls processes are the Consular Package – Management Survey and the Annual Certification of Consular Management Controls, both of which involve annual submissions of data from consular managers to CA.<sup>17</sup> The Consular Package – Management Survey collects data on consular physical space issues, such as customer service windows, queuing and microphone systems, and the need for upgrades or renovations to consular space. However, the survey did not collect specific data on the consular physical space deficiencies OIG identified as common findings in inspection reports, including the following:

- Inadequate line of sight over cashier booths, visa and passport printing areas, and consular workspace.
- Inadequate consular waiting areas.
- A lack of wheelchair-accessible customer service windows and bathrooms.
- A lack of privacy booths for sensitive conversations.
- Inadequate canopies and other shelters for consular walkways and exterior waiting areas.

Similarly, the Annual Certification of Consular Management Controls does not comprehensively address the common deficiencies identified above. CA staff told OIG that in developing requirements for their main internal controls processes, they sought to avoid overburdening

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<sup>16</sup> CA has access to OBO's Building Management Integrated System, OBO's central repository for all repair and improvement requirements. The system is designed to maintain a worldwide inventory of repair and improvement requirements for current and future fiscal years, to prioritize those requirements, and to track approved projects from initial funding until completion. CA also maintains the Consular Affairs Small Projects spreadsheet to track construction projects for consular physical space under the CA Small Projects and Capital Construction Program for consular physical space improvements.

<sup>17</sup> The Consular Package – Management Survey collects information on consular workload, staffing, and operating conditions. The Annual Certification of Consular Management Controls is used to review consular management controls and procedures conducted by overseas consular managers and covers such items as financial accountability, systems access, and controlled supplies, among others. In addition to these two primary internal controls processes, CA's Regional Consular Officer and Consular Management Assistance Teams programs also evaluate consular space issues.

consular managers while still collecting necessary data that is most relevant to ensuring management controls are in place. OIG believes that relatively minor changes to questions in both the Management Survey and the Annual Certification would enable CA to collect baseline data on consular physical space deficiencies worldwide which, in turn, would allow the bureau to identify and correct such deficiencies more systematically. This data is especially important when consular physical space standards, such as those covering handicapped accessible facilities, are required by statute.<sup>18</sup> As described in 2 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 021.1a and c, bureaus are required to maintain an effective management control structure and to regularly review and evaluate those controls. Without improvements to data collection for consular physical spaces deficiencies, the Department is at risk of being unable to identify and correct deficiencies that impede efficient consular operations.

**Recommendation 3:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should update the Consular Package – Management Survey and the Annual Certification of Consular Management Controls to collect data on compliance with Department consular physical space standards and use the information to identify and correct physical space deficiencies. (Action: CA)

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<sup>18</sup> The U.S. Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 requires that all Federal buildings be accessible to people with disabilities. See 42 USC § 4151 et seq.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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OIG provided a draft of this report to Department stakeholders for their review and comment on the findings and recommendations. OIG issued the following recommendations to the Bureau of Consular Affairs. The bureau's complete response can be found in Appendix B.<sup>1</sup>

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with the Foreign Service Institute, should implement a plan to improve both training and the availability of resources on consular physical space standards for consular managers. (Action: CA, in coordination with FSI)

**Management Response:** In its January 26, 2021, response, the Bureau of Consular Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Consular Affairs implemented a plan to improve both training and the availability of resources on consular physical space standards for consular managers.

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with the Bureaus of Diplomatic Security and Overseas Buildings Operations, should update Department standards and guidance to clarify the circumstances under which canopies or other shelters are required in consular waiting spaces. (Action: CA, in coordination with DS and OBO)

**Management Response:** In its January 26, 2021, response, the Bureau of Consular Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Consular Affairs updated Department standards and guidance to clarify the circumstances under which canopies or other shelters are required in consular waiting spaces.

**Recommendation 3:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should update the Consular Package – Management Survey and the Annual Certification of Consular Management Controls to collect data on compliance with Department consular physical space standards and use the information to identify and correct physical space deficiencies. (Action: CA)

**Management Response:** In its January 26, 2021, response, the Bureau of Consular Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

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<sup>1</sup> OIG faced delays in completing this work because of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting operational challenges. These challenges included the inability to conduct most in-person meetings, limitations on our presence at the workplace, difficulty accessing certain information, prohibitions on travel, and related difficulties within the agencies we oversee, which also affected their ability to respond to our requests.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Consular Affairs updated the Consular Package – Management Survey and the Annual Certification of Consular Management Controls to collect data on compliance with Department consular physical space standards and used the information to identify and correct physical space deficiencies.

## APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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This review was conducted from May 14 to August 21, 2020, in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspections Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive Officer of USAGM, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and USAGM. Consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, this review focused on deficiencies in consular physical space at overseas posts.

OIG's specific inspection objectives were to determine (1) what findings have been reported in OIG inspection reports issued from October 1, 2017, to August 12, 2020, regarding deficiencies in consular physical space and (2) what underlying factors contributed to or caused the deficiencies.

OIG reviewed 46 overseas inspection reports issued from October 1, 2017, to August 12, 2020. OIG used professional judgment, along with documentary, testimonial, and analytical evidence collected or generated, to develop its findings and actionable recommendations.

Robin Busse and Theodore Coley conducted this review. Other report contributors include Leslie Gerson, Caroline Mangelsdorf, and Patricia Stewart.

## APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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January 26, 2021

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Sandra Lewis, Assistant Inspector General for Inspections

FROM: CA – Ian G. Brownlee, Acting Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – *Management Assistance Report: Deficiencies in Consular Physical Space at Overseas Missions*

The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) has reviewed the draft OIG inspection report. We provide the following comments in response to the recommendations provided by OIG:

**OIG Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with the Foreign Service Institute, should implement a plan to improve both training and the availability of resources on consular physical space standards for consular managers. (Action: CA, in coordination with FSI)

**Management Response:** CA and the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) concur with the recommendation. CA's Office of the Executive Director (CA/EX) is working with FSI/SPAS/CON to create a training module on consular physical space requirements for inclusion in PC550 – Consular Management Basics, a mandatory course for all first-time consular section chiefs. The module is scheduled to be ready by the next iteration of the course in late March/April 2021. CA/EX also will update the information available on CAWeb regarding physical space requirements.

**OIG Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs, in coordination with the Bureaus of Diplomatic Security and Overseas Buildings Operations, should update Department standards and guidance to clarify the circumstances under which canopies or other shelters are required in consular waiting spaces. (Action: CA, in coordination with DS and OBO)

**Management Response:** CA, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS), and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) concur with the recommendation. Department design standards already include the provision of canopies or other shelters that satisfy all Overseas Security Policy Board (OSP) standards. CA and OBO will update those standards and guidelines as necessary to make clear that these shelters are a design requirement and must be constructed to provide reasonable protection from the elements unless regional or site-specific circumstances prohibit construction or use.

**OIG Recommendation 3:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should update the Consular Package – Management Survey and the Annual Certification of Consular Management Controls to collect data on compliance with Department consular physical space standards and use the information to identify and correct physical space deficiencies. (Action: CA)

**Management Response:** CA concurs with the recommendation. CA/EX will add a series of questions to the Management Survey of the Consular Package designed to elicit data regarding posts' current consular physical space, including any deficiencies that may exist. The next iteration of the Management Survey is scheduled to be sent to the field in late January 2021. CA/EX will maintain centrally and use posts' responses to identify and prioritize issues for correction, subject to funding availability. CA/EX will modify the Annual Certification of Consular Management Controls to include a statement regarding post compliance with consular physical space requirements.

## **APPENDIX C: CRITERIA GOVERNING CONSULAR PHYSICAL SPACE**

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This annotated appendix lists criteria containing standards and regulations governing or related to consular physical space and Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH) citations for reference. Criteria are accessible to the public except for the intranet sites for the Bureaus of Consular Affairs and Overseas Buildings Operations, which are limited to Department of State personnel.

- Office of Executive Director's Post Analysis and Support Division work on consular facilities. (7 FAH-1 H-122.6-1)
- The role of observation in workload management (walkthrough of applicant experience). (7 FAH-1 H-262.1)
- Guidance on information and signs. (7 FAH-1 H-263.8)
- Guidance on queueing systems. (7 FAH-1 H-263.9)

### **MAIN FACTORS FOR EVALUATING CONSULAR SPACE**

#### **Introduction**

- Ensuring existence of line of sight, i.e., open and visible work environment. Workstations and offices for adjudicating officers located throughout section to provide greatest possible range of overlapping lines of sight. (7 FAH-1 H-281e)

#### **Evaluating Consular Space: Public areas**

- Entrance for public separate from main embassy or consulate entrance. (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(a))
- Posted sign and notice at entrance listing consular hours, visa requirements and fees, priority dates (reference to General Support Services website/call center, where applicable), holidays, after-hours emergency telephone numbers, etc. (7 FAH-1 H-263.8b and c, 7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(b))
- Clear and concise informational and directional signage in accordance with Department standards at 7 FAH-1 H-263.8c, directing public to correct entrances, waiting areas, and windows. (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(c))
- Space at entrance for verifying appointments and issuing queue tickets (where used). (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(d))
- Public areas with adequate waiting space appropriate for post's climate. (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(e))
- Separate waiting areas, or some architectural separation, for American Citizen Services (ACS), Immigrant Visas (IV), Nonimmigrant Visas (NIV). (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(f))
- Clean public restrooms and drinking water facilities, as appropriate. (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(g))
- Providing reading materials and/or video display with travel information and/or visa application instructions, as appropriate. (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(h))
- Adequate interview windows for IV and NIV intake and biometric enrollment. (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(i))

- Privacy booth for sensitive cases or fraud interviews. (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(j))
- Electronic queueing system with displays visible in all waiting areas. (7 FAH-1 H-263.9, 7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(k))
- Handicapped access, including interview window low enough for wheelchair access. (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(l))
- Control of physical access to consular section from public areas and other parts of embassy/consulate. (7 FAH-1 H-282(1)(m))

#### **Evaluating Consular Space: Work areas**

- Open floor plan to allow for line-of-sight supervision. (7 FAH-1 H-282(2)(a))
- Modular furniture with workspace partitions not exceeding 42 inches of height to facilitate line of sight. (7 FAH-1 H-282(2)(b))
- Individual work areas for temporary duty (TDY) personnel. (7 FAH-1 H-282(2)(c))
- Dual monitor configuration for work areas. (7 FAH-1 H-282(2)(d))
- Secure storage adequate for controlled items the post would reasonably expect to have on site. (7 FAH-1 H-282(2)(e))
- Conference room or meeting space (where possible). (7 FAH-1 H-282(2)(f))
- Visa and passport production area separate from work area but within supervisor's line of sight. (7 FAH-1 H-282(2)(g))
- File room or other space for storage of sensitive, unclassified files, records, and equipment, including backup consular computer equipment. (7 FAH-1 H-282(2)(h))
- Cashier booth allowing line of sight per 7 FAH-1 H-281(e). Cashier booth should have (a) fully transparent, or mostly transparent walls on at least two sides facing the general workspace from a height of 30 inches all the way to the ceiling or top of the door, (b) a transparent door, or a door whose surface area is at least 50 percent transparent above the 30-inch mark, and (c) be as small as possible to accommodate only the cashier, ACRS machine, money drawers, printer, safe and file cabinet. (7 FAH-1 H-282(2)(i); Consular Section Design Guidelines and Requirements, CA/EX, March 2020; consular managers should request from their post's CA/EX/PAS management analyst)
- Space for courier passback operations or separate windows for return of IV or NIV. (7 FAH-1 H-282(2)(j))

#### **Maximizing Space/Layout:**

- Consider other measures before renovation/construction, such as improving use of space through application of 1CA management tools or repositioning furniture/equipment to achieve better workflow. (7 FAH-1 H-283)
- Analyze floor plans to consider, among others, internal controls such as physical access to consular section, work area, control of accountable items, line-of-sight supervision, and security of cashier's booth. (7 FAH-1 H-283(6))

#### **Renovation, Expansion, Moves:**

- Consular managers must coordinate OBO renovation/expansion projects of consular physical space, including public areas, with CA/EX/PAS regional analyst who will provide on CA and OBO policy. (7 FAH-1 H-285a)

- Consular managers can submit OBO projects for improvements of consular space by January 31 each year for OBO funding. OBO focuses on fire protection and life safety, and critical infrastructures. CA will consider funding through Facilities Planning Board for projects not approved by OBO. (7 FAH-1 H-285b; CA Web/Management and Leadership/Consular Facilities; cable 18 STATE 108514, "Funding for Consular Infrastructure Improvement Projects," October 26, 2018)
- Obtaining approval for repairs and improvements for recently renovated space. (15 FAM 645.2)

### **Security and Public Access Controls**

- Consular managers need to participate actively with regional security office and OBO in planning any remodeling of CACs for consular visitors. (7 FAH-1 H-284b)

### **Maintenance**

- Public areas of consular physical space subject to higher wear-and-tear than any other area of embassy or consulate, necessitating greater maintenance. Ambassador, deputy chief of mission, principal officer (consulate), management officer, and facilities manager should make regular visits to consular section with special emphasis on public areas to view condition and enlist support for adequate maintenance. (7 FAH-1 H-286)

### **BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS INTRANET**

- Information on consular facilities and consular signage programs and on management of consular facilities.<sup>20</sup>

### **BUREAU OF OVERSEAS BUILDING OPERATIONS INTRANET**

- 2016 OBO Design Guide on Consular Waiting Areas (p. 160-165) and Consular Affairs Suite (p. 174-179).
- 2016 OBO Design Standards, sections B08 Consular Affairs; C020104 Consular Arrival Court; C0203 Consular Zone; C020301 Consular Garden; D060101 Consular Waiting; D06020104 Consular Affairs Suite (including interview windows, privacy booths, cashier booths, and consular waiting areas).

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<sup>20</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs intranet site at <https://intranet.ca.state.sbu>.



# **HELP FIGHT**

## **FRAUD, WASTE, AND ABUSE**

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