



**OIG**

**Office of Inspector General**

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ISP-I-17-41

Office of Inspections

September 2017

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# Inspection of Embassy Podgorica, Montenegro

BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS

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September 2017  
OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS  
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Inspection of Embassy Podgorica, Montenegro

**What OIG Found**

- Embassy Podgorica operated well and pursued the Integrated Country Strategy's major policy objectives; however, the Ambassador did not foster the highest attainable degree of employee morale and productivity.
- Embassy administration of grants and export control assistance complied with Department of State standards.

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**What OIG Inspected**

OIG inspected U.S. Embassy Podgorica from May 5 to May 17, 2017.

**What OIG Recommended**

This report contains no recommendations.

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## CONTEXT

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Montenegro is a nation in Southeastern Europe slightly smaller than Connecticut. Its population of 650,000 is 45 percent Montenegrin and 29 percent Serb. The remainder of the population is primarily Bosniak and Albanian. Seventy-two percent of Montenegrins are Orthodox Christians and 19 percent are Muslim.

In May 2006, Montenegro separated from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and has made rapid progress toward North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union membership. On April 11, 2017, the U.S. President signed the instrument supporting Montenegro's accession to NATO.<sup>1</sup> Montenegro's greatest challenge to further integrating into Euro-Atlantic institutions is strengthening the rule of law to combat endemic organized crime and corruption. Public support for the United States remains relatively low, at around 40 percent. Russia has an active misinformation campaign in Montenegro. The embassy is countering that effort through its public diplomacy efforts.

Montenegro's economy is transitioning to a market system. Since 1999, it has privatized some 85 percent of its state-owned companies. Per capita gross domestic product is approximately \$17,000, and the service sector comprises 70 percent of the economy. Tourism each year brings twice as many visitors to Montenegro as its total population.

Embassy Podgorica's overarching aim is to support reform in Montenegro to achieve NATO and European Union membership, become a strong and stable democracy under the rule of law, and prosper as a market economy. Embassy Podgorica's FY 2015-17 Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) focused on four goals:

- Montenegro being fully integrated into Euro-Atlantic institutions.
- Montenegro contributing to economic growth in the United States and worldwide.
- The Montenegrin public supporting the United States, our values, and policies.
- Montenegro actively engaging in regional and global challenges.

Established in 2006, Embassy Podgorica was a relatively new embassy, staffed by 35 U.S. direct-hire employees, 133 locally employed (LE) staff, and 4 eligible family members and other locally-hired U.S. employee staff. The embassy's total estimated budget for FY 2016 was \$7.7 million with an additional \$3.1 million in foreign assistance funding. Other non-Department of State (Department) agencies at the embassy included the Departments of Defense and Justice. The chancery building of the embassy lacked sufficient space for staffing needs. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations plans to construct a new embassy compound in 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Montenegro was admitted to NATO on June 7, 2017, subsequent to the conclusion of the inspection.

OIG evaluated the Embassy's policy implementation, resource management, and management controls consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act.<sup>2</sup> OIG also assessed the embassy's security program, which is covered in a separate classified report.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTION**

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OIG assessed embassy leadership on the basis of Washington-based and on-site interviews, which included comments on the Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM); questionnaires that U.S. staff and LE staff completed; and OIG's review of documents and observations of embassy meetings and activities during the on-site phase of the inspection.

### **Tone at the Top and Standards of Conduct**

While embassy employees told OIG that the Ambassador and DCM held themselves to the high ethical standards that 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 1214 establishes, American staff consistently evaluated the Ambassador negatively against the leadership principles that are described in 3 FAM 1214. For instance, some employees described the Ambassador as a micromanager which delayed the clearance process for embassy memos and reports. Employees told OIG that rapid-fire taskings, shifting priorities, and the Ambassador's ambitious agenda hindered their ability to perform their core responsibilities. Further, employees expressed that they hesitated to offer differing points of view as the Ambassador did not proactively solicit their input and was not receptive to dissent. Some embassy personnel described the Ambassador as intimidating in her interactions with American and LE staff, which inhibited staff discourse and negatively affected mission morale.

Such characteristics and interactions as described above are not in accord with the highest standards of interpersonal conduct as outlined in 3 FAM 1214. The Department sets clear expectations for leadership to follow certain principles because it fosters the highest attainable degree of employee productivity and morale, all of which are essential to achieving mission goals and objectives. The Ambassador assured OIG that she valued the Department's leadership principles and would use her unique position to lead by example.

The American staff consistently evaluated the DCM positively. He solicited input, provided clear focus, visited staff in their workplaces, and was tuned into the overall morale of the embassy.

### **Execution of Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives**

OIG observations and interviews indicated that the Ambassador and DCM engaged in activities that furthered the ICS major objectives. Embassy employees were aware of ICS goals, the Ambassador referred to them in meetings, and reviewed them with section heads.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A.

The Ambassador cultivated relationships with Montenegro's senior leaders. In the 12 months prior to the inspection the Ambassador met with Montenegro's prime minister 8 times. During the same period, she hosted 58 representational events. Department officials and embassy employees noted that the Ambassador had excellent access to all levels of the Montenegrin government which allowed the embassy to advocate U.S. Government interests. The Ambassador and her staff also promoted Montenegro's membership in NATO.

The Ambassador and DCM regularly explained and publicly promoted U.S. interests and policies in Montenegro. In the 12 months prior to the inspection the Ambassador gave public remarks 69 times and the DCM spoke publicly 25 times. While the Ambassador acknowledged that she was not comfortable with live interviews and avoided giving them, her frequent public remarks and informal interactions were widely noted in the media and Department policymakers noted they were effective in advocating U.S. policy objectives.

The Ambassador and DCM regularly communicated and coordinated with the Department. The Ambassador had regular phone calls with the Deputy Assistant Secretary and office director in the Bureau of European Affairs and Eurasian Affairs and the DCM with the deputy office director. The Embassy hosted two Congressional delegations in April 2017.

## **Adherence to Internal Controls**

In its most recent Annual Chief of Mission Management Control Statement of Assurance, submitted to the Department on August 10, 2016, the DCM, acting as Charge d'Affaires, reported that the embassy completed required internal management control reviews. The statement identified no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. According to embassy management, the control reviews were conducted informally, via emails and discussions with section chiefs, and by completing OIG questionnaires pertaining to embassy functional activities. Embassy management determined that this evaluation process provided reasonable assurance that the embassy achieved the Department's management control objectives. Subsequent to submitting the statement, the embassy identified data input errors in the system for accounting for expendable supplies, as described later in the report.

The DCM complied consistently with 9 FAM 403.9-2(D)e and 9 FAM 403.10-3(D)(1) requirements to review a percentage of the Consular Chief's visa adjudications.

## **Security of the Mission**

OIG surveys and interviews confirmed that the Ambassador and DCM supported the embassy security program, as the President's Letter of Instruction and 2 FAM 113.1c(5) require. Since arriving in February 2015, the Ambassador approved 12 embassy security directives. The embassy was up to date on all drills, and the Ambassador and the DCM participated in those held during working hours.

## **Developing and Mentoring Future Foreign Service Leadership**

Embassy Podgorica's two First- and Second-Tour (FAST) employees praised the DCM's counsel and mentoring, which 3 FAM 2242.4 requires. The DCM helped plan FAST briefings, including sessions on the bidding and evaluation processes, and career path planning. The DCM also scheduled one-on-one meetings with FAST staff members, and identified opportunities for them to work outside their normally assigned duties, such as serving as site officers for official visitors and election monitors.

## **POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

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OIG reviewed the Political-Economic Section's policy implementation and found it met Department requirements. OIG evaluated reporting and advocacy, commercial promotion, Leahy vetting, and grants management. OIG also reviewed the grants administration of the embassy's rule of law program, which supports judicial training and efforts to fight corruption and counter violent extremism, and the embassy's Export Control and Related Security Program, which builds the capacity of police and border authorities in order to bring them up to European and international standards. All operations conformed to Department standards.

### **Advocacy and Analysis**

#### ***Political-Economic Section Fulfilled Advocacy and Reporting Functions***

The Political-Economic Section accomplished its advocacy and reporting responsibilities in accordance with ICS goals. Section staff met with Montenegrin government, as well as opposition, private-sector, and non-governmental organization representatives to report on events and advocate policy, especially the key ICS-related areas of democracy building and rule of law. Department offices and agencies consistently described embassy reporting as effective, comprehensive, and detailed. OIG reviewed 78 reporting cables transmitted in the six months prior to the on-site inspection and found them to be well sourced, timely, and relevant to ICS goals.

### **Civil Society, Rule of Law, and Export Control Assistance Effectively Managed**

OIG determined that the embassy effectively managed civil society, rule of law, and export control assistance programs. OIG reviewed the Political-Economic Section's administration of three civil society grant programs totaling \$207,314 and 28 Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs funded rule of law assistance grants, totaling \$371,700 in FY 2017. The grants funded American and international experts assistance and advisement to Montenegrin non-governmental organizations. OIG also reviewed the Export Control and Related Border Security Program's ten equipment donation programs totaling \$330,152 and forty training events totaling \$194,844, administered on behalf of the Bureau of International

Security and Nonproliferation. OIG found the embassy's administration of all assistance programs, including end-use monitoring, met Foreign Assistance Policy Directive standards.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Leahy Vetting Conducted In Accordance with Department Requirements***

Leahy vetting was timely and in accordance with Department requirements.<sup>4</sup> In the 12 months prior to the inspection, the embassy's one-person Leahy unit vetted 430 individuals for potential human rights abuses.

## **Public Diplomacy**

OIG reviewed the full range of the Public Affairs Section (PAS) operations and found that they aligned with Department guidelines and were well-integrated with the embassy's development and execution of ICS goals. For example, PAS had lead responsibility for implementing nearly a third of all key activities listed in the ICS, including 11 of 13 tied to the mission objective to strengthen civil society and democratic institutions. In 2016, PAS added a new LE staff position to cover social media and reconfigured the portfolios of the other four LE staff for a more rationally-aligned division of responsibilities. The strengthened staffing profile helped the section expand core activities to new areas (English language learning programs and educational advising). The additional attention to social media helped PAS nearly double Facebook engagement from FY 2016 to FY 2017. In partnership with municipal governments, PAS also supported American Corners<sup>5</sup> in Podgorica, Cetinje, and Pjlevjla. All three sites met the Bureau of International Information Program's operational standards for American Corners.

### ***Well-Administered Public Diplomacy Grants Advanced ICS Goals***

OIG reviewed all FY 2016 grants greater than \$20,000 (9 grants totaling \$315,197) and found well-documented grant files that complied with Federal Assistance Policy Directives. PAS issued 29 grants in FY 2016 totaling \$641,364. The grants were mostly drawn from Foreign Assistance Economic Support Funds (\$406,300) aimed at supporting democracy, media training, civic education, and NATO integration. OIG confirmed that PAS complied with Department guidance governing PAS administration of Economic Support Funds grants, all of which clearly supported ICS strategic goals and objectives.

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<sup>3</sup> The March 2015 Federal Assistance Policy Directive consolidated existing Grants Policy Directives into a single document that set forth internal guidance, policies, and requirements to be complied with when administering Federal Financial Assistance awards. The Federal Assistance Directive (FAD) went into effect as of May 20, 2017. OIG assessed the process under the 2015 FAPD, which was in effect at the time of the review but has since been retired

<sup>4</sup> The Leahy Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 prohibits the Department of State from furnishing assistance to foreign security forces if the Department receives credible information that such forces have committed gross violations of human rights. See 22 USC 2378d.

<sup>5</sup> American Corners are open-access facilities used to engage foreign audiences overseas.



### ***Promising Results with Fledgling English Language Programs***

In 2015, PAS introduced its first *English Access Micro-Scholarship Program* for disadvantaged youth and added another cohort in 2016. Building on this successful start, PAS is expanding the program to the country's remote and economically depressed northern region. The northern region is predominantly Muslim and is a target of anti-American Russian influence and reported source of foreign fighters for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The new Access program helps the embassy reach a community that has been difficult to engage and contributes to the ICS goal of countering violent extremism.

## **Consular Affairs**

### ***Programs Compliant; Position Descriptions Out of Date***

OIG reviewed implementation and oversight of 11 consular programs for Embassy Podgorica's Consular Section—consular leadership; cashiering and fee collection; controlled equipment and supplies inventories and consular systems administration; physical space and line of sight; communication and outreach; U.S. citizens services; passport and nationality; crisis management and the warden system; nonimmigrant visa processing; Visas Viper program,<sup>6</sup> and fraud prevention. OIG found that all programs and procedures complied with 7 FAM, 9 FAM and 7 Foreign Affairs Handbook. OIG advised the Consular Section Chief on several ways to improve the efficiency of consular processing, including using tilted stands for fingerprint machines, using the Enterprise Case Assessment System<sup>7</sup> to track investigations, updating (and dating) standard operating procedures, and updating internet and intranet websites.

OIG noted that the embassy's consular position descriptions were over 4 years old and did not accurately reflect current duties. Guidance in 3 FAH-2 H-441.3 requires that position descriptions accurately reflect employee duties and responsibilities. Duties were realigned since the position descriptions were last reviewed. During the inspection, the Consular Section Chief began updating the consular LE staff position descriptions and will send them to the Frankfurt Regional Support Center for reclassification.

## **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

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### **Management Operations**

OIG reviewed all major functions of the Embassy's on-site management operations, including general services, facility management, financial management, and human resources operations, and found that they generally complied with Department standards, with the exceptions noted below.

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<sup>6</sup> The Visas Viper program is a mechanism for overseas Missions to provide information on foreign nationals with possible terrorist connections.

<sup>7</sup> The Enterprise Case Assessment System (ECAS) is the Bureau of Consular Affairs fraud tracking system.

OIG did not inspect voucher certifications, the American personnel program, or other aspects of post management functions that were performed off-site. Embassy Zagreb provides human resources and financial management support and Embassy Belgrade provides facilities management support.

## **Financial Management**

### ***Embassy Directly Paid Official Residence Expenses Salaries***

The Embassy directly paid official residence expenses staff via electronic funds transfer. This practice violated 3 FAM 3257(a), which requires the principal officer or the household manager to pay the official residence staff. OIG issued a Management Assistance Report in April 2014<sup>8</sup> that addressed this improper practice and recommended that the Department issue a directive that prohibits an embassy's direct payment to the official residence expenses staff. However, because the Department did not implement the recommendation in OIG's 2014 report, OIG recently conducted a compliance follow-up review that made two new recommendations to the Department to address how official residence expenses staff should be paid.<sup>9</sup> In response to OIG's new recommendations, the Department reported that direct payments to official residence expenses staff – via post cashier, electronic funds transfers, and/or in cash directly from a post cashier – will be discontinued and the Department will update its policy guidance accordingly. As a result, OIG did not make a recommendation in this report.

## **General Services Operations**

### ***Data Input Errors Resulted in Inaccurate Inventory Certification***

In its FY 2017 Personal Property Management Report for expendable property, the embassy certified a shortage of \$68,142 (55.26 percent). However, the report was inaccurate and much of this property was actually on hand. The error occurred because LE staff entered incorrect data, such as inaccurate property values and property disposition status, into the Department's property management system. The Bureau of Administration verified to OIG that the embassy reported the error on its FY 2017 Property Management Report. The Department's manual "Expendables Management Recommended Operating Procedures for Overseas Posts" gives data entry instructions for accounting for the inventory of expendable property. OIG advised the General Services Officer to review property management procedures to ensure the embassy is following Department guidance. During the inspection, the Management Officer enrolled the LE staff Property Assistant in property management training.

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<sup>8</sup> OIG, *Management Assistance Report – Direct Payment of Official Residence Expenses Staff Salaries* (ISP-I-14-08, April 3, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> OIG, *Compliance Follow-up Review – Department of State Has Not Implemented Recommendations Pertaining to Official Residence Expense Staff Salaries* (ISP-C-17-32, August 2017).

## Information Management

OIG reviewed emergency operations, equipment inventories, records management, communications security, mobile computing, cyber security controls on unclassified and dedicated internet networks, radio and telephone systems, and classified and unclassified pouch operations. OIG validated that Information Management (IM) programs and services met customer needs and complied with 5 FAM 120, with the exception of the deficiency identified below.

### *Information Management Position Not Programmed To ICASS*

The International Cooperative Administrative Support Services<sup>10</sup> (ICASS) system did not capture the cost of IM officer positions to ensure the costs were distributed among the agencies that used their services. The Information Management Section had two Department funded positions—an Information Management Officer and an Information Management Specialist—costing an average of \$268,419 annually per position. Funded by the Department, these U.S. direct-hire officers also delivered some information management support services to other agencies at the mission.

To ensure the cost of IM services are equitably shared, in June 2010, the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation advised some embassies to convert one of their U.S. direct-hire IM positions to ICASS as soon as budgetary provisions could be made. OIG issued a Management Assistance Report in April 2017<sup>11</sup> that recommended the conversion of one U.S. direct-hire IM position to ICASS in many embassies, including Embassy Podgorica. In response to OIG's recommendation, the Department (Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation) reported that it was in the process of converting applicable IM positions to ICASS. As a result, OIG did not make a recommendation in this report.

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<sup>10</sup> The International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) system, established in 1997, is the principal means by which U.S. Government agencies share the cost of common administrative support services at more than 250 diplomatic and consular posts overseas. Through ICASS, which operates a working capital fund, service providers recover the cost of delivering administrative support services to other agencies at overseas missions, in accordance with 6 FAM 911 and 6 FAH-5 H-013.2.

<sup>11</sup> OIG, *Management Assistance Report – Cost of Information Management Staff at Embassies Should Be Distributed to Users of Their Services*, (ISP-17-23, April 2017).

## PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

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Title	Name	Arrival Date
<b>Chiefs of Mission:</b>		
Ambassador	Margaret Uyehara	2/2015
Deputy Chief of Mission	B. Bix Aliu	8/2014
<b>Chiefs of Sections:</b>		
Management	Lynn C. Virgil	7/2015
Consular	April M. Hayne	8/2016
Political-Economic	Leslie D. Freriksen	7/2016
Political-Military	Brian J. Weiss	3/2016
Public Affairs	Mark T. Weinberg	8/2015
Regional Security	Keith A. Easter	2/2017
<b>Other Agencies:</b>		
Department of Defense	Michael S. Tarquinto	7/2015
Department of Defense-ODC	Albert H. Geis	5/2016
Department of Justice-INL Legal Advisor	Erik N. Larson	1/2014

**Source:** Embassy Podgorica

## APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

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This inspection was conducted 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 Inspector's Handbook, as issued by OIG for the Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

### Objectives and Scope

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

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

### Methodology

In conducting inspections, OIG uses a risk-based approach to prepare for each inspection; reviews pertinent records; as appropriate, circulates, reviews, and compiles the results of survey instruments; conducts onsite interviews; and reviews the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, organizations, and activities affected by the review. OIG uses professional judgment, along with physical, documentary, testimonial, and analytical evidence collected or generated, to develop findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations.

For this inspection, OIG conducted approximately 121 interviews in Washington and at Embassy Podgorica (some people were interviewed more than once). The team also reviewed 127 personal questionnaires from American and locally employed staff at Embassy Podgorica, and reviewed 1,073 documents.

## APPENDIX B: MANGEMENT RESPONSES

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The Department had no comments.

## APPENDIX C: FY 2016 STAFFING AND FUNDING BY AGENCY

Agency	U.S. Direct-Hire Staff	U.S. Local-Hire Staff	Locally Employed Staff	Total Staff	Funding (\$)
<b>Department of State</b>					
Diplomatic and Consular Programs <sup>1</sup>	16	1	14	31	1,311,000
ICASS	2	2	101	105	4,192,400
Public Diplomacy	1	0	5	6	357,080
Diplomatic Security	1	1	5	7	225,321
Marine Security	8	0	3	11	104,100
Representation	0	0	0	0	19,500
Overseas Buildings Operations	1	0	0	1	1,331,439
Subtotal	29*	4	128	161	7,540,840
<b>Department of Defense</b>					
Defense Attaché Office	2	0	1	3	135,160
Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC)	3	0	3	6	0
Subtotal	5	0	4	9	135,160
<b>Department of Justice</b>					
International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP)	2	0	1	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>\$7,676,000</b>

Source: Generated by OIG from data provided by Embassy Podgorica

<sup>1</sup> Includes INL and EXBS

## ABBREVIATIONS

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DCM	Deputy Chief of Mission
FAST	First- and Second- Tour
ICS	Integrated Country Strategy
IM	Information Management
LE	locally employed
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PAS	Public Affairs Section



## OIG INSPECTION TEAM MEMBERS

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