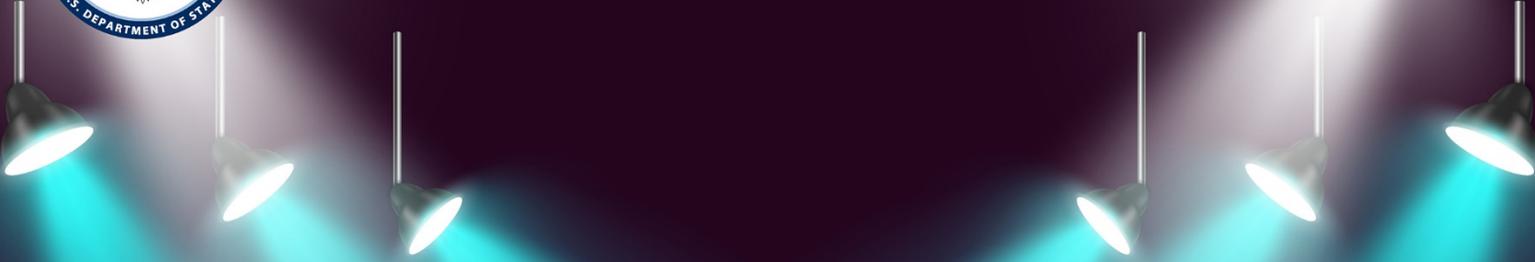




Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State



FYs 2019-2020

# SPOTLIGHTS ON SUCCESS

Best Practices From the Department of State



## MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING INSPECTOR GENERAL

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Matthew S. Klimow

I am pleased to present the Office of Inspector General (OIG) Spotlights on Success for Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020. In this inaugural publication, we highlight some of the success stories we discovered while conducting the inspections of 43 embassies and bureaus over the past two fiscal years.

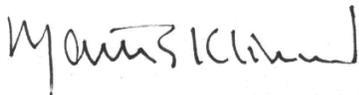
Part of our mission is to increase collaboration to maximize the benefits of OIG's work. In highlighting successful projects and processes throughout the world, we encourage others to adopt practices that have already been tested and have enjoyed positive results.

We began to highlight innovative practices in 2014 but it was not until FY 2017 that we formally started calling them "Spotlights on Success" and included them in more inspection reports on a consistent basis. One of our primary missions is to prevent and detect waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement in the programs and operations of the Department. By highlighting those things that have worked well in the Department, we seek to increase good governance, efficiency and encourage positive change.

This publication includes 38 Spotlights on Success from five different regional bureaus, and four domestic operations. Several embassies had multiple entries, with Embassy Nairobi being credited with six Spotlights on Success.

The spotlights are categorized by topics reviewed and presented in OIG's inspection reports. Additionally, several of the success stories fall under management challenge categories that are identified in a companion publication, *Inspector General Statement on the Department of State's Major Management and Performance Standards Fiscal Year 2020*. These challenges include Protection of People and Facilities, Oversight of Oversight of Contracts, Grants, and Foreign Assistance; Promoting Accountability through Internal Coordination; and Workforce Management.

We hope you take the time to read these stories and consider ways they may be adapted to other bureaus and posts throughout the world.



Matthew S. Klimow  
Acting Inspector General  
December 8, 2020

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## CONSULAR OPERATIONS

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### **Quarterly Trips to Deliver Consular Services to Somalia**

*Inspection of Embassy Nairobi, Kenya* (ISP-I-19-08, October 2018)

None of Embassy Nairobi's many responsibilities was more challenging than its mandate to assist U.S. citizens in Somalia. The embassy's Interagency Country Strategy included a goal to improve consular capabilities in Somalia. Its importance was underscored in October 2017 when two terrorist truck bombs exploded in Mogadishu, killing hundreds of people, including three U.S. citizens. To improve its abilities to assist Americans, the Consular Section implemented a policy of quarterly visits to Somalia. On the first visit in November 2017, the consular team met with Somali immigration officials to improve their ability to confirm the identity of travelers and with airline and hospital representatives to enhance assistance for U.S. citizens. The team appeared on Somali radio and online to clarify details about the diversity visa program and met with members of the Somali-American Parliamentarian Caucus of Somalia's Parliament to discuss how to improve consular services to U.S. citizens in Somalia. On that first trip, they also met with the next-of-kin of U.S. citizens killed in the October terrorist attack and engaged with U.S. citizen wardens who assisted U.S. citizens affected by that attack.

In a second quarterly visit in March 2018, a consular team for the first time provided routine American citizens services by delivering passports and consular reports of birth abroad and accepting passport applications. The team met with representatives of the Somali Ministry of Education and with hospital officials, and they participated in a radio interview to publicize the availability of consular services. In establishing these quarterly visits, Nairobi's Consular Section demonstrated that with thoughtful planning, a focused message, and by developing key contacts, consular services could be delivered in a dangerous environment.

### **Business Travel Program Increased Efficiencies in Visa Application Processing**

*Inspection of Embassy New Delhi and Constituent Posts, India* (ISP-I-19-10, February 2019)

Consulate General Mumbai's Consular Section collaborated with the U.S. Commercial Service to promote meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibition travel by Indian businesspeople to the United States. The Consular Section used preliminary meetings with companies and their travel management representatives to discuss the purpose of the group's travel, qualifications for participation, details on expenses covered by the companies, and other group information that improved the efficiency of the visa interview process. This coordination enabled Consulate General Mumbai to better manage group interview scheduling, provided greater context during interviews, and helped facilitate adjudication determinations.

## **Mission Staffing, Planning, and Visa Demand Tracking System**

*Inspection of Embassy New Delhi and Constituent Posts, India* (ISP-I-19-10, February 2019)

Consulate General Hyderabad's Consular Section created a Microsoft Excel-based system called the Consular Operations Breakdown for Resource Allocation, or COBRA, to determine how staffing affects non-immigrant visa workload and scheduling. By combining current and anticipated staffing data and historical and projected workloads, COBRA calculates how many NIV appointments can be scheduled based on available staffing and predicts appointment wait times. In use by all of Mission India, COBRA assists managers to plan staffing and scheduling needs at particular points in time. During the inspection, Mission India used COBRA to prepare metrics-based requests for temporary duty staffing to manage personnel gaps during the summer busy season.

## **Improved Evaluation of Treaty Trader Visa Applicants**

*Inspection of the Bureau of Consular Affairs, Kentucky Consular Center* (ISP-I-19-36, August 2019)

In recent years, the Kentucky Consular Center (KCC) successfully implemented nearly a dozen new programs—built on its expertise and access to analytical tools—that gave consular officers abroad well-developed data to assist in visa adjudication, particularly in identifying non-bona fide travelers. At the time of OIG's inspection, the Pre-Adjudication Support Service Unit was piloting a program to streamline and improve visa adjudication for treaty traders and investors (also known as E visas), which is the most time-consuming and complex visa category on a per applicant basis. To obtain an E visa, applicants must be coming to the United States to engage in substantial trade or to develop and direct the operations of an enterprise in which they have invested a substantial amount of capital.

Evaluation of these E visas requires expertise in business and finance matters, including an understanding of relevant regulations, that not all overseas adjudicators or fraud prevention units possess; small consular sections are at a particular disadvantage. Moreover, most E visas require several hours to adjudicate because of the intensive document review. Under the pilot program, KCC's cadre of trained experts verified the complex documentary requirements for E visas before cases were transmitted to consular sections. KCC's scrutiny and analysis, in turn, allowed adjudicators to focus on an applicant's qualifications for the visa rather than on the voluminous documentation that accompanied the application.

KCC's ability to identify needs and develop programs that give overseas visa adjudicators more complete and well-researched cases is a significant asset to the Department's enhanced vetting of visa applicants.

## **Joint Fraud Investigations Team a Successful Model of Interagency Cooperation**

*Inspection of Embassy London and Constituent Posts, United Kingdom* (ISP-I-20-12, August 2020)

Embassy London's Consular Section collaborated with the Department of Homeland Security's Homeland Security Investigations and Customs and Border Protection staff to form a joint fraud investigations team to combat consular fraud and terrorism. The Consular Section co-located team members in a single office, which facilitated seamless communication and information sharing. The partnership yielded several notable successes, including the October 2019 conviction of a U.S. Army deserter charged with producing child pornography.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTION**

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### **Fostering a Culture of Respect and Tolerance in the Work Place**

*Inspection of Embassy Nairobi, Kenya* (ISP-I-19-08, October 2018)

Embassy Nairobi's Ambassador told OIG that following a 2016 discussion with Kenya-based African-American members of "Black Lives Matter," he recognized that open dialogue about race was needed at the embassy. Initially, the Front Office focused on facilitating community-wide dialogue on race relations and then, at the request of the locally employed staff, added ethnic relations to address tribal-based tensions in Kenyan society. Following the initiative of embassy staff, the Front Office started a cultural dialogues forum, in which U.S. direct-hire and local staff addressed common cultural miscommunications and misperceptions. Embassy staff told OIG that the Front Office's leadership and initiative in creating a race and ethnic relations group and the cultural dialogues forum, as well as the Front Office's initiative to add a cultural component to the newcomers briefing, had eased tensions between U.S. direct-hire and locally employed staff and among the multi-ethnic local staff. The initiatives also provided opportunities for candid discussions of race and ethnic relations and fostered an environment of mutual respect and tolerance in the workplace.

### **Soliciting Staff Feedback and Identifying Areas for Improvement**

*Inspection of Embassy Nairobi, Kenya* (ISP-I-19-08, October 2018)

Embassy Nairobi's Front Office used the morale survey tool, developed by a Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatrist, to solicit feedback from staff and identify issues that negatively affected morale. At the Ambassador's request, the Nairobi-based Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatrist administered the survey in February 2018. Based on the survey results, the Front Office took steps to address the four major issues identified: security, housing, parking, and awards. The Ambassador told OIG that he found the survey to be an excellent management tool and highly recommended its use worldwide by all chiefs of mission.

Embassy staff told OIG that they saw a direct correlation between the survey and the Front Office's actions to address those issues and welcomed the Front Office's attention. The morale survey has been presented at chief of mission conferences, the Foreign Service Institute, and the Office of the Director General of the Foreign Service, as well as to leaders in the regional bureaus. It is available to all chiefs of mission.

## **Using the Integrated Country Strategy to Drive Interagency Coordination**

*Inspection of Embassy Nairobi, Kenya* (ISP-I-19-08, October 2018)

Embassy Nairobi's Front Office restructured the embassy's four working groups, chaired by the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM), to align with the four Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) goals: democracy and governance, economic prosperity, security, and health. The Front Office used the working groups, plus more than a dozen sub-working groups chaired by mid-level officers, to coordinate foreign assistance and develop strategies for achieving embassy-wide policy objectives. To reinforce the policy development and advocacy role of these groups, the Front Office conducted separate country team meetings for every working group, with agency members contributing information relevant to each working group's own ICS goal. Section and agency heads told OIG that even though having multiple meetings was more time consuming, they found the working group structure to be an effective way to share information and to de-conflict programs, especially the many law enforcement agency programs used to train Kenyan police.

## **PEPFAR Coordination Office Successfully Promoted Cooperation Among Interagency Stakeholders**

*Inspection of Embassy Kigali, Rwanda* (ISP-I-19-15, March 2019)

Embassy Kigali's President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Coordination Office successfully promoted cooperation among interagency stakeholders in Rwanda. The United States has invested nearly \$1.3 billion in Rwanda through PEPFAR since FY 2004, including \$80.9 million in FY 2018. The three-person office coordinated the efforts of the Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Department of Defense to ensure that clearly defined lanes of responsibility reinforced efficiencies and managed resources. For example, USAID focused on commodities procurement as well as orphans and vulnerable children; CDC handled clinical services and prevention; and the Department of Defense targeted military-linked communities and voluntary male circumcision. (According to the World Health Organization, male circumcision may reduce the risk of heterosexually acquired HIV infection in men by approximately 60 percent.)

The office also led the development of country operational plans that outlined program activities and succeeded in securing funding allocations for PEPFAR work in Rwanda. In addition, it led interagency meetings that promoted assessments of milestone achievements,

such as progress toward United Nations-established goals to identify HIV prevalence, provide treatment, and measure success rates of viral suppression.

Washington offices and the interagency community touted the PEPFAR Coordinating Office's role in promoting cooperative approaches in Rwanda and managing relations with the Government of Rwanda and the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator in Washington.

## **Embassy Response to Ebola Threat Was Quick and Comprehensive**

*Inspection of Embassy Kigali, Rwanda* (ISP-I-19-15, March 2019)

Embassy Kigali responded quickly and comprehensively to the August 1, 2018, notification of an Ebola outbreak in bordering eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The next day, the DCM, acting as Chargé, met with a CDC and USAID team to assess the situation, and the Consular Section sent a health alert to U.S. citizens enrolled in the consular alert system. The DCM then launched twice weekly Ebola meetings with the core interagency team composed of staff from CDC, USAID, and various embassy sections.

The embassy also began sending cable updates to the Department and participating in a weekly interagency call with the National Security Council, and kept staff advised of significant developments. The Ambassador met with the Rwandan Minister of Health to advocate for improved host government communication and coordination. The Ambassador also toured an Ebola treatment center on the border and engaged with the British High Commission to discuss joint advocacy to the Government of Rwanda regarding Ebola preparedness. The DCM tested the Health Unit's readiness by presenting with Ebola symptoms in an unannounced drill.

## **Initiative Improved Coordination With High-Level Visitors**

*Inspection of Embassy Canberra and Constituent Posts, Australia* (ISP-I-20-07, February 2020)

A Mission Australia initiative improved coordination between mission staff and high-level visitors. Following the Ambassador's arrival in March 2019, the embassy began sending a letter from the Ambassador to all high-level U.S. Government visitors encouraging cooperation between the mission and the visitors' staff in planning and carrying out visits. The Front Office implemented this change following incidents in which mission staff were not included in meetings with high-level visitors and their Australian counterparts. The letter highlighted the importance of mission involvement in the planning, execution, and follow-up of these visits and advises visitors to contact the Ambassador directly if they have any concerns about the mission's role. During the inspection, OIG learned of three instances where the letter prompted cooperation on an upcoming visit after initial expressions of reluctance to do so. The letter highlighted the Ambassador's authority to carry out the chief of mission responsibilities delineated in 2 FAM 113.1c (2, 3, 6, and 15). It also facilitated planning for visits and positions mission staff for success in following up with local contacts once a visit is over.

## **Innovative Program Implemented for New Desk Officers**

*Inspection of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs* (ISP-I-20-15, September 2020)

In 2018, the Office of Western European Affairs initiated an innovative and ambitious orientation program for new desk officers in response to the heavy workload and annual turnover of the office. This office is the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs' (EUR) largest geographical office, with 22 staff members responsible for 15 countries in Western Europe. In addition, in part due to the heavy travel of the President and the Secretary of State to Western Europe, the office accounted for 27 percent of all briefing papers EUR produced from July 2018 to July 2019. It typically had an annual turnover of half its office staff each summer due to Foreign Service officer rotations, and many new staff were serving in Washington for the first time. The orientation program included a half-day seminar with speakers from other EUR offices, including the Front Office. The Office of Western European Affairs presented an overview of the bureau's culture and tips on navigating the briefing paper process, working with the National Security Council, handling meetings with Department leadership, and other issues. In addition, each officer received a detailed handbook covering a range of issues from clearances to updating the EUR SharePoint site. The seminar included meetings with office leadership and peer-to-peer consultations in which experienced officers counseled incoming staff. New desk officers credited the program with easing the transition and onboarding process. The EUR Office of European Union and Regional Affairs was invited to join the program, and the Office of Nordic, Baltic, and Arctic Affairs asked to join the program to provide the same onboarding training to their new staff.

## **Annual Selection Goals Used to Assess Integrated Country Strategy Implementation**

*Inspection of Embassy Prague, Czech Republic* (ISP-I-20-28, September 2020)

At Embassy Prague, the Ambassador established an innovative approach to bring the ICS to the forefront for embassy employees and to measure progress in implementing its objectives. At the beginning of each calendar year, all sections set at least three goals, directly tied to Embassy Prague's overall ICS objectives, that they wanted to achieve during the year. The embassy then reviewed each section's accomplishments to assess ICS implementation results. The process also encouraged collaboration between agencies and sections and helped identify potential duplication of efforts. The Ambassador held quarterly goal review sessions with all the sections and monthly meetings with the section heads. Additionally, he held end-of-year meetings with all sections to evaluate their success in meeting their goals and discuss lessons learned. The Ambassador also hosted a lunch for all sections that met their goals for the year.

## GRANTS AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

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### **Financial Compliance Training Assists Grant Recipients**

*Inspection of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor's Foreign Assistance Program Management* (ISP-I-19-12, October 2018)

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) developed an innovative program to deliver financial compliance training to grant recipients. To promote better understanding of Federal financial processes outlined in 2 Code of Federal Regulations 200, DRL sponsored annual training sessions focused on financial compliance that have included more than 30 DRL grant recipients with operations in 15 countries. DRL's training provider also visited individual grant recipients to conduct financial reviews and provide technical assistance to improve grant recipients' financial operations.

DRL staff said that this training helped improve grant recipients' compliance with Federal financial standards. OIG has consistently identified financial management deficiencies among grant recipients, such as unsupported or unallowable costs and incomplete financial reporting, in its previous oversight work, making this training valuable to address a key grants management risk area.

### **New Approach Aided Embassy in Improving Foreign Assistance Programming**

*Inspection of Embassy Nouakchott, Mauritania* (ISP-I-20-04, November 2019)

Embassy Nouakchott promoted a "whole of government" approach to foreign assistance programming in two coordinated and complementary ways, including a Program and Advisory Council and a Program and Grants Office, both of which coordinated Department-funded foreign assistance. The Program and Advisory Council served as a coordinating body to ensure activities funded through multiple foreign assistance streams were known to, and coordinated throughout, the mission and included American and locally employed (LE) staff representatives from the Departments of State and Defense and USAID. Although the DCM oversaw and participated in the council, the chairmanship rotated among American council members. The Program and Grants Office served as the point of contact for other U.S. Government agencies such as the Departments of Agriculture and Labor, which were not present in Mauritania but funded sizeable assistance activity across the country (\$17 million since 2014). An experienced LE staff member led the office, reported directly to the DCM, and served as the permanent deputy chair of the Program and Advisory Council. The office worked closely with USAID's Country Program staff, provided programmatic continuity, tracked all U.S. Government assistance to Mauritania, and maintained extensive contacts with Mauritanian ministries as well as international and nongovernmental organizations. The office also organized and participated in visits to grantees across the country, which afforded valuable reporting opportunities on developments in remote regions of the country. This "whole of government"

approach enabled the embassy to maximize the effect of foreign assistance resources, minimize programmatic redundancies, and ensure foreign assistance was consistent with ICS priorities.

## **Annual Regional Grants Training Supported Mission-Managed Awards**

*Inspection of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs* (ISP-I-20-05, November 2019)

Beginning in 2014, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) started delivering grants training for employees who work at the bureau's 52 overseas embassies and consulates to improve management of foreign assistance and public diplomacy grants. The week-long training—held annually in either the Florida Regional Center in Ft. Lauderdale or at a regional embassy—covered the entire assistance life cycle and included presentations by WHA offices and Bureau of Administration staff responsible for grants policy and the State Award Management System used to issue and manage Federal assistance awards. During the 2019 training, which occurred during the inspection, 40 employees from 19 embassies and consulates attended. Training participants served as grants officers or grants officer's representatives for mission-managed public diplomacy and foreign assistance awards, including awards supporting the Central America Regional Security Initiative and grants funded by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. As of May 2019, at least one other regional bureau planned to replicate WHA's model.

## **INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

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### **Centralized Program Improved Workstation Deployment**

*Inspection of Embassy Canberra and Constituent Posts, Australia* (ISP-I-20-07, February 2020)

At Mission Australia, Consulate General Perth's Information Systems Center centralized the management and configuration of its operating systems, applications, and user settings (also known as Group Policy management) in an Active Directory environment. Use of the Group Policy management console facilitated rapid deployment of workstation configuration updates to keep them current with Department standards. The console provided administrators with a streamlined dashboard-style view of all the assets under their control and combines the functionality of multiple tools, allowing administrators to configure changes more quickly and consistently. As a result, Information Systems Center staff were able to maintain up-to-date systems configurations, which contributed to the consulate general's high, A+ compliance ratings against the Department's standards. The consulate general maintained this rating for the 6 months prior to the inspection and, on several occasions, had the top rating in the Department.

## **Travel Request Application Reduced Time to Finalize Plans**

*Inspection of Embassy Dhaka, Bangladesh* (ISP-I-20-17, June 2020)

IM staff created a travel request application to help employees prepare and expedite their travel plans. The application incorporated the user's saved profile preferences with his or her travel plans to create a comprehensive itinerary. It also gave users travel-specific reminders related to, for example, visa requirements and leave requests. The application helped to reduce the time it takes employees and the travel office coordinator to finalize travel plans.

## **POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

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### **U.S.-Colombia Action Plan Reduced Training Costs, Overhead**

*Inspection of Embassy Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic* (ISP-I-19-17, July 2019)

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) office at Embassy Santo Domingo in 2017 expanded a collaborative program with the Government of Colombia to provide training and technical assistance for Dominican police, judges, and prosecutors. By using this program, rather than contractors, the U.S. Government saved significant funds and strengthened regional collaboration. Under the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan on Regional Security Cooperation, INL Santo Domingo funded 52 training and technical assistance activities in the Dominican Republic in 2017. From 2014 to 2018, the program trained 2,735 Dominican police officers in 158 similar activities. Under this program, Colombian National Police trained the Dominican National Police in areas such as criminal investigations and internal affairs and management.

Colombian legal professionals also trained their Dominican counterparts in anti-money laundering and countering transnational crime. The United States funded travel costs, the Colombians covered instructor salaries and training expenses, and the Dominicans provided the training facilities. The average cost to the U.S. Government for a 2-week program was approximately \$18,000, a significant savings over the up to \$109,000 for comparable training activities when INL Santo Domingo used contractors.

### **Saved Elephants Promoted Rule of Law, Counterterrorism, and Development**

*Inspection of Embassy N'Djamena, Chad* (ISP-I-20-02, November 2019)

The Political-Economic Section at Embassy N'Djamena generated important collaboration between the United States and Chad in protecting the country's rapidly diminishing elephant population from further poaching. The program also sought to eliminate a potential source of financing for terrorism through poaching in Chad and the region and to further the U.S. National Strategy for Combatting Wildlife Trafficking. After the loss of 95 percent of Chad's native elephant population to poaching since 2005, the Political-Economic Section began

working in 2016 with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Chadian Ministry of Environment, and N'Djamena University's environmental faculty and students to enable Chadian rangers and the university to track and monitor remaining elephant herds. After 3 years of planning, the United States provided funding for 2 ranger vehicles and 28 tracking collars as well as monitoring. The project formally launched in April 2019 with the first successful tranquilizing and attaching of a collar to a bull elephant near Lake Chad. The ministers of environment and education, the provincial governor, local villagers, and embassy leaders attended the event, which received wide coverage in the press and social media. The project provided a model of collaboration between U.S. and local partners that furthers key U.S. regional priorities promoting rule of law, countering terrorism, and fostering economic development and environmental protection.

### **Mission Geneva Adopted a 'Whole of Government' Approach**

*Inspection of U.S. Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland (ISP-I-20-16, June 2020)*

Mission Geneva adopted a "whole of government" approach to staffing arrangements to meet its multifaceted and unique mandate. The mission's staff comprised experts from several Federal agencies, in addition to Department generalists, to represent the United States to the myriad United Nations (UN) and other international organizations in Geneva. This collaboration contributed to Government efficiency. For example, the co-location of a USAID representative in the Humanitarian Affairs Section reflected the longstanding collaboration between USAID and the Department on humanitarian issues and resulted in effective collaboration on oversight of humanitarian organizations and food aid coordination. More significantly, since 2016, personnel from four Federal agencies (Commerce, USAID, Health and Human Services, and the Department) worked together in a single Multilateral Economic and Political Affairs Section led by two senior Department officers. Personnel from the five specialized units within the section—Intellectual Property Rights, Labor and UN Reform, Peace and Security, Environment-Science-Technology, and Health—coordinated constantly and backstopped each other as U.S. priorities shifted and workloads fluctuated. Department staff appreciated their interagency colleagues' depth of subject matter expertise. They, in turn, appreciated the Department's guidance in addressing common political themes, including the need to counter the influence of malign state actors and improve UN governance across Geneva-based institutions. The diversity of the section staff led to the development and delivery of a coordinated U.S. response on these common political themes.

## PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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### **Increasing Human Rights Outreach Through Social Media**

*Inspection of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor* (ISP-I-19-11, October 2018)

DRL's Office of Policy Planning and Public Diplomacy actively used social media tools to conduct outreach on human rights issues. At the time of the inspection, the bureau's Facebook page was the Department's second-most popular domestic page, with approximately 2.3 million followers, 98 percent of whom lived outside the United States. The office produced 70 videos over 12 months, 52 of which were part of its Human Rights Heroes Initiative and spotlighted individuals and institutions engaged in human rights work around the world. For example, in December 2017, the office produced a video interview of a North Korean defector, which drew about 11,000 viewers. Its videos, tied to bureau strategic priorities, were viewed 2.2 million times. Finally, the office's May 2018 interactive web chat on media literacy attracted participation by 35 U.S. embassies and other programming venues, the largest number of venues in the Department's history for such outreach, according to information reviewed by OIG.

### **Media Literacy Campaign Combats Disinformation**

*Inspection of Embassy Nairobi, Kenya* (ISP-I-19-08, October 2018)

Embassy Nairobi's Public Affairs Section conducted an extensive media literacy campaign to combat disinformation targeted at the embassy during the Kenyan elections. The campaign, known as "YALI21 Checks: Stop, Reflect, Verify," employed the full range of public diplomacy tools, including speakers, exchanges, videos, and online resources, to amplify a Bureau of International Information Programs initiative. Kenyan journalists from traditional and social media, including the blogging community, engaged in embassy programs to help Kenyans understand the role of responsible journalism and apply critical thinking skills to information they see on the internet. The Ambassador launched the campaign in March 2018 through extensive media efforts that included interviews with Kenyan and international media. In surveys conducted following "YALI Checks: Stop, Reflect Verify" programs, 100 percent of respondents said they gained a better understanding of how to recognize false news reports; more than 90 percent said they would recommend the program to friends. Expanding on the successes of the "YALI Checks" program, the embassy launched Africa's first academic institution for the study of social media development and trends, in partnership with U.S. International University–Africa, in April 2018.

### **Competitive College Clubs Laid Foundation for Youth Engagement**

*Inspection of Embassy Banjul, The Gambia* (ISP-I-19-04, November 2018)

Embassy Banjul's Public Diplomacy Section, as part of its educational advising services, established "Competitive College Clubs" in five rural high schools and a "Banjul Scholars Club"

for high-performing students at five capital region high schools. Students practice making presentations and writing essays and research papers, organize community service projects, and learn critical thinking through debates on current topics. The section provided core EducationUSA services through the clubs and created activities to address barriers to educational advancement and create a centerpiece for youth engagement nationwide. For example, public diplomacy and consular officers conducted informational sessions on college admissions and visa requirements, and the Ambassador met with club members three times in the year prior to the inspection.

In addition to creating a WhatsApp group to facilitate direct communications and youth networking, the embassy further supported the program by funding a summer camp focused on leadership skills and providing a small library of reference materials to each club. Through this approach, the clubs not only improved the participants' higher education prospects but also prepared the next generation of leaders to face the political, economic, and social challenges of The Gambia's future.

## **Creative Use of Film Festival to Build Understanding and Support for the United States**

*Inspection of Embassy Paramaribo, Suriname* (ISP-I-19-20, July 2019)

Embassy Paramaribo adapted the use of movies, a traditional public diplomacy tool, to inform youth audiences in Suriname on a wide variety of issues, such as religious freedom, civil rights, and women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, or STEM, fields, as well as on other aspects of U.S. society and culture. In 2017, the annual embassy-organized film festival reached approximately 8,750 students from 37 middle and high schools, representing almost one quarter (23 percent) of all Surinamese youth aged 12-17. Thirteen movies were shown over 45 viewings, with each movie having an associated lesson plan for teachers to use in the class to amplify the movie's theme. This approach enabled the embassy to reach audiences from 9 of 10 administrative districts in Suriname.

## **Social Media Communications Spurred Public Discussion on Bilateral Ties**

*Inspection of Embassy Kathmandu, Nepal* (ISP-I-20-22, May 2020)

In April 2019, the embassy launched a social media campaign—organized around the hashtag “#CloseWhereItCounts”—with a video of the Ambassador in which he emphasized the United States' commitment to Nepal. Among other current and historical U.S. contributions to Nepal, he cited agricultural development assistance, post-earthquake reconstruction, and maternal and child health programs. Weekly reports by the Department consistently showed high engagement scores for the embassy's social media since the launch, with Nepal ranking as high as Pakistan and Bangladesh (with 7.5 and 5.5 times the population, respectively). The campaign increased public engagement with the embassy, especially as users shared unexpected or unknown stories about the history of U.S.-Nepal cooperation. The embassy reported that the

campaign became a topic of conversation with its policy-related interlocutors and that its themes of U.S.-Nepal closeness resonated at a time of public discussion about Nepal's partnerships with the United States, China, and other countries. The embassy cited several factors for the campaign's success: (1) drawing on the whole range of U.S. engagement with Nepal, including development assistance, Peace Corps presence, educational exchanges, and cultural preservation projects; (2) coordinating story development and the timing of postings; (3) conveying a tone of respect for the Nepali people and culture; and (4) using other communications, such as public remarks, press interviews, and placement of articles in Nepali media, to raise awareness.

## **Embassy Cooperated Across Missions to Advance Shared Policy Goals**

*Inspection of U.S. Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, Switzerland* (ISP-I-20-16, June 2020)

While most Public Diplomacy Sections have a limited set of issues and a clear host country audience around which to organize programming, Mission Geneva faces the challenge of how to program on global issues that involve multiple countries. The section found that working with other multilateral missions on a common issue could be a successful way to advance shared policy goals. In 2018, the section partnered with the Delegation to the Conference on Disarmament and the Public Diplomacy Section of the U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Vienna to develop and fund an exchange program focused on nuclear disarmament and related issues. The missions cooperatively selected delegates representing 11 key member states from Geneva and Vienna's respective multilateral disarmament organizations. As part of the program, the group traveled to Washington, New Mexico, and California for a comprehensive introduction to the U.S. approach to nuclear disarmament issues. In their evaluations, participants unanimously praised the "eye-opening" program for giving them a much better understanding of how and why the United States arrives at its policy positions.

## **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

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### **Continuous Process Improvement System Helped Track and Resolve Deficiencies**

*Inspection of Embassy Maseru, Lesotho* (ISP-I-20-01, October 2019)

In 2018, while working on the annual Chief of Mission Management Control Statement of Assurance, Embassy Maseru instituted a continuous process improvement system that significantly improved the embassy's ability to track and resolve its internal control deficiencies. The embassy also created a quality coordinator position, currently filled by an eligible family member, to run the tracking system. The system included all deficiencies identified through the statement of assurance process as well as in OIG questionnaires and recommendations in past OIG reports of other embassies. The quality coordinator tracked the deficiencies, met regularly with the employees responsible for addressing these concerns and entered into the system

updates on the embassy's progress in resolving the problems. A deficiency was not considered "corrected" until preventative measures were in place to ensure that it did not re-occur. As of April 2019, the embassy had successfully resolved 62 items identified since the process began in December 2018.

## **LE Staff Executive Corps Enabled Peer Training, Shared Throughout Region**

*Inspection of Embassy Pretoria and Constituent Posts, South Africa (ISP-I-20-09, January 2020)*

Since 2004, the Bureau of African Affairs has enlisted the assistance of LE staff to train peers through a program called the LE Staff Executive Corps. Relative to their peers, members of the corps usually have longer tenure and more experience, and they also usually are viewed to have particularly high integrity, interpersonal and communications skills, and judgment. Since its inception, the program has focused on LE staff in embassy Management Sections and enlisted them to train and assist their colleagues in other posts in Africa. In 2019, for the first time in the history of the program, Embassy Pretoria and Consulate General Johannesburg nominated two Public Diplomacy Section staff for the program because of their expertise in using the State Assistance Management System and in the administration of American Spaces. Both were accepted into the program and, with the financial support of the Bureau of African Affairs' Office of Public Diplomacy, one traveled to two other missions in Africa to assist with developing grants management procedures, which significantly improved staff's understanding of the Department systems for managing grants at those missions. This innovative use of the LE Staff Executive Corps program resulted in useful guidance to the receiving missions, facilitated the sharing of best practices in the region, and saved Department resources because grants trainers did not have to be sent from Washington.

## **Process Audit Improved Financial Management Procedures**

*Inspection of Embassy Canberra and Constituent Posts, Australia (ISP-I-20-07, February 2020)*

At Embassy Canberra, the Financial Management Office used a process audit to improve its operations and training. In 2018, the office audited its financial activities, resources, and behaviors to determine whether those processes were efficient. As a result, the office created work instructions that outlined detailed, comprehensive step-by-step procedures for completing specific tasks in all areas of financial management, including procedures for year-end closure and for sending invoices to the designated billing official. The process audit and work instructions led to improvements in the office's productivity, quality, speed, and risk mitigation. Additionally, they served as a reference document and training guide for new and inexperienced financial management staff.

## **Embassy Instituted Mentoring Program for LE Staff, Eligible Family Members**

*Inspection of Embassy London and Constituent Posts, United Kingdom* (ISP-I-20-12, August 2020)

Embassy London instituted a mentoring program specifically created for LE staff and eligible family members. This grassroots initiative, designed by LE staff in 2016, promoted professional development and morale while increasing interagency bonds and embassy productivity. Program organizers matched mentors (American direct hire or other LE staff) with local employees and eligible family member mentees, using written applications and in-person interviews to maximize suitability of pairs. Since its inception, the mentoring program has linked 17 to 20 mentoring pairs for each 6-month cycle. As further evidence of its success, former mentees have volunteered to be mentors in later cycles.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

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### **Drive-Cam Program Improved Driver Safety**

*Inspection of Embassy Nairobi, Kenya* (ISP-I-19-08, October 2018)

Embassy Nairobi's Drive-Cam Program, the largest program of the 22 participating diplomatic posts worldwide, led to improved motor pool drivers' performance and fewer accidents. Since implementing the program, the embassy saw a reduction of 78 percent in severity and 79 percent in frequency of risky driving incidents. Embassy Nairobi required drivers to take safety refresher training for each incident captured by the Drive-Cam. In May 2018, the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' Office of Safety Health and Environmental Management gave (SHEM) the embassy a Department award in recognition of its record of improving driver performance. Embassy management and the Front Office were fully engaged in supporting the program and ensuring training to improve driver performance.

### **Law Enforcement Training Alumni "TED Talks"**

*Inspection of Embassy Paramaribo, Suriname* (ISP-I-19-20, July 2019)

Embassy Paramaribo's Political-Economic Section, as part of its INL program, hosted a 2018 seminar on the value of training delivered to the previous year's graduates of the International Law Enforcement Academy. The academy is a U.S. Government-funded center based in El Salvador that provides law enforcement courses to police officers from Latin America. The section asked Surinamese academy alumni to provide feedback on what they had learned and how they had put their new skills to work. Section staff also assisted participants in creating presentations, similar to "TED Talks," to share their feedback.

The event was an opportunity for police officers throughout the country to re-connect with classmates, exchange knowledge, and to become re-energized in their roles as reform agents.

In addition, it allowed embassy staff to further develop relationships with Surinamese law enforcement officials who share embassy reform goals. INL funding covered the minimal cost of the event. Given the success of the event, the embassy was planning additional seminars for more graduates in the future.

### **Crisis Preparedness Fair Involved Embassy Community in Emergency Planning**

*Inspection of Embassy Maseru, Lesotho* (ISP-I-20-01, October 2019)

In December 2017, the Regional Security Office organized a Crisis Preparedness Fair as part of a broader crisis management exercise. The Crisis Preparedness Fair was an effort to involve the entire embassy community—especially LE staff and American family members—in emergency planning. Most embassy sections hosted their own emergency preparedness-themed activities. For example, the Public Affairs Section held a question and answer game show, the Information Management (IM) Office displayed emergency communication equipment, the Regional Security Office and Health Unit had trauma and medical treatment demonstrations (including CPR), and the Facilities Management Section offered fire extinguisher training. The fair included information for participants to take home. In addition to providing training and exposure to emergency resources and personnel, it gave key external contacts an informal environment in which to meet the embassy staff with whom they would interact in an emergency. The fair was well received within the community, and the Regional Security Office planned to make it an annual event.

### **Regional Security Office Initiative Promoted Respect for Diversity in Local Guard**

*Inspection of Embassy Nouakchott, Mauritania* (ISP-I-20-04, November 2019)

With the help of the LE staff, the Regional Security Office at Embassy Nouakchott convened female members of the local guard force and gave them a platform—the Women in Nouakchott (WIN) initiative—to voice their concerns, promote respect for diversity in the guard force, and share strategies to resolve challenges in both the workplace and outside the embassy. WIN was composed of female guards, but its meetings were open to all guard force members. The WIN initiative identified and successfully resolved challenges related to inadequate restrooms and inappropriate uniforms and shoes for female local guards. The Regional Security Officer told OIG he planned to create a network for WIN members to communicate with their counterparts at other U.S. embassies in the region.

### **Embassy Identifies Life Safety Issue Resulting in Worldwide Alert**

*Inspection of Embassy Stockholm, Sweden* (ISP-I-20-06, December 2019)

Embassy Stockholm staff discovered a life safety issue with lamps that affected overseas posts. Specifically, lamps purchased under a worldwide General Services Administration contract were dangerous when used with a standard European light bulb. When a standard European bulb

was placed in the lamp, a portion of the metal bottom of the bulb remained above the lamp's plastic base. If someone touched the metal portion of the bulb, he or she was at risk of an electrical shock even if the lamp was not turned on. The embassy immediately notified SHEM and the Bureau of Administration's Office of the Procurement Executive (OPE). OPE contacted the vendor, which confirmed the risk through Underwriters' Laboratories. According to OPE, the contractor sold 5,325 of these lamps to the Department at an estimated cost of more than \$700,000. SHEM issued a worldwide safety alert instructing overseas posts to remove the lamps from service immediately. OPE negotiated with the vendor that agreed to replace the lamps at no additional cost, including shipping.

## **New Program Tracking Radio Checks Improved Participation Rates**

*Inspection of Embassy Dhaka, Bangladesh* (ISP-I-20-17, June 2020)

The IM Office at Embassy Dhaka created an application that allowed the Marine Security Guards to easily track participation by each employee and dependents during the weekly checks of the emergency and evacuation radio network. The program also accounted for those employees and dependents who were away from the embassy during each radio check. The Front Office and the Country Team reviewed rates of participation each week, and supervisors followed up with those individuals who did not take part. The weekly radio check participation rate improved dramatically from 2018 to 2019, when the system was implemented. In the first 6 months of 2018, the participation rate averaged 38.3 percent per week but increased to an average of 92.8 percent in the 6 months leading up to mid-October 2019. A higher participation rate minimized the risk that a family would be unable to send or receive messages in an emergency.

## **Solar- and Wind-Powered Repeater to Address Emergency Service Disruptions**

*Inspection of Embassy Windhoek, Namibia* (ISP-I-20-32, September 2020)

Embassy Windhoek's IM staff installed a solar and wind-powered repeater for the ultra-high frequency radio emergency and evacuation system to address service disruption due to frequent power outages. Before installing the repeater, the embassy relied on the local electricity power supply, which was inconsistent and made the repeater unusable. By implementing a solar- and wind-turbine-powered solution, the embassy had access to uninterrupted emergency and evacuation radio communication and saved \$18,000 in electricity bills. Furthermore, this project advanced the Department's Greening Diplomacy Initiative.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Department's Greening Diplomacy Initiative "is driven by the concept of eco-diplomacy, a term the Department coined to reflect the importance of leveraging the Department's facilities and operations as a strategic platform to advance the conservation of natural resources and highlight U.S. environmental technological and policy successes." See "Sustainability at the U.S. Department of State," <https://www.state.gov/sustainability-atthe-u-s-department-of-state/>.

## ABBREVIATIONS

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CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
COBRA	Consular Operations Breakdown for Resource Allocation
DCM	Deputy Chief of Mission
DRL	Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
EUR	Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
ICS	Integrated Country Strategy
IM	Information Management
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
KCC	Kentucky Consular Center
LE	Locally Employed
OPE	Bureau of Administration, Office of Procurement Executive
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief
SHEM	Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, Office of Safety Health and Environmental Management
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
WIN	Women in Nouakchott