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Office of Inspector General United States Department of State

ISP-I-26-13

Office of Inspections

July 2026

Inspection of Embassy Bratislava, Slovakia

BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS

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HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General
United States Department of State

ISP-I-26-13

What OIG Inspected

OIG inspected Embassy Bratislava's achievement of foreign policy goals and objectives, policy and program implementation, consular operations, resource management, and information management.

What OIG Recommends

OIG made 7 recommendations to Embassy Bratislava. In its comments on the draft report, Embassy Bratislava concurred with 4 recommendations, partially concurred with 2 recommendations, and did not concur with 1 recommendation. OIG considers all 7 recommendations resolved. The Embassy's response can be found in the Findings section of this report. The Embassy's formal response is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.

July 2026

OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS

BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS

Inspection of Embassy Bratislava, Slovakia

What OIG Found

- Embassy Bratislava generally advanced U.S. foreign policy goals and managed its operations in accordance with U.S. Department of State standards.
- The Embassy did not have a mechanism to coordinate foreign assistance with Washington bureaus and offices.
- The Embassy generally complied with Department standards relating to life safety, property management, financial management, and personnel.
- The Embassy had several deficiencies in its information management operations related to information systems security duties, local configuration management protocols, physical and environmental protection of IT resources, and mail and pouch standards.
- Spotlight on Success: Embassy Bratislava's innovations in consular operations resulted in greater efficiencies for passport and visa applicants.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND	1
FOCUS AREAS	2
Advancement of Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives.....	2
Foreign Assistance.....	3
INSPECTION RESULTS.....	4
Spotlights on Success	5
Findings	6
PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS	12
APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY	13
APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	15

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) inspected Embassy Bratislava's advancement of foreign policy goals and objectives, policy and program implementation, consular operations, resource management, and information management, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980.¹ A related classified inspection report includes OIG's review of Embassy Bratislava's security program.²

OIG also conducted a management review of certain Embassy leaders during this inspection.³ The purpose of the management review was to assess whether there were any instances of serious management concerns, meaning the subject officers did not comply with laws, regulations, or U.S. Department of State (Department) guidance, and the noncompliance negatively impacted the ability to conduct operations at the Embassy. For this inspection, the officers subject to the management review were the Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM).⁴

BACKGROUND

The United States established diplomatic relations with Slovakia when it separated from the Czech Republic in 1993. Slovakia has been a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union since 2004, and its major trading partners are European countries. U.S. exports to Slovakia totaled \$1.02 billion in 2025, an increase from \$554.3 million in 2024. The United States imported approximately \$6.6 billion worth of goods in 2025, a decrease from approximately \$8.18 billion in 2024. The U.S. Department of Defense provides military assistance to Slovakia's military modernization efforts to enhance interoperability with U.S. and NATO forces and reinforcing long-term U.S. strategic, economic, and security interests in central Europe.

At the time of this inspection, Embassy Bratislava was refining its strategic goals to align with Administration priorities. The Embassy's previous goals were:

- Strengthen capacity and willingness to meet regional and global challenges together.
- Enhance economic prosperity and security that is good for the environment and fair to people.
- Build popular support for transatlantic values and counter disinformation.
- Increase people-to-people ties.

¹ See Appendix A for additional details about the scope and methodology for this inspection.

² OIG, *Classified Inspection of Embassy Bratislava, Slovakia* (ISP-S-26-13, June 2025).

³ The management review is required by the Department of State Authorization Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, Section 7203; included as Division G in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2025 (Public Law 118-159); signed into law on December 23, 2024.

⁴ The Ambassador departed Embassy Bratislava on January 16, 2026. The DCM became Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim and the Regional Security Officer began serving as the acting DCM.

According to the Department's biennial ranking, Embassy Bratislava is considered a category 2 embassy (on a scale from 1 to 5+). The rankings are based on the level and type of work required to achieve the Department's bilateral and multilateral core diplomatic mission. The Department describes a category 2 embassy as an overseas post where a dedicated staff can cover essential U.S. foreign policy and national security interests in a country with limited political and economic influence on regional matters. Other U.S. government agencies represented at the Embassy include the U.S. Departments of Commerce and Defense.

The Ambassador, a member of the Senior Foreign Service, arrived in Bratislava in September 2022. He departed in January 2026, during this inspection, and the DCM, who arrived in July 2024, became Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim (Chargé). The Regional Security Officer served as acting DCM.

FOCUS AREAS

For FY 2026 inspections, OIG selected two focus areas—advancement of foreign policy goals and objectives, and foreign assistance—in recognition of Department efforts to address Administration priorities. Embassy Bratislava's work in these two areas is described below.

Advancement of Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives

Embassy Bratislava's Country Team, led by the Ambassador and DCM, developed and advanced foreign policy goals and objectives as required by Department guidance.⁵ The Ambassador distributed cards on the Embassy's four strategic goals and reinforced them in Country Team meetings and town halls. Washington officials confirmed the Embassy's efforts were consistent with the Administration's national security goals. The Public Diplomacy Section advanced U.S. foreign policy objectives through a broad range of public diplomacy programs and media outreach.

Under the Ambassador's direction, the Country Team focused on facilitating the delivery of F-16 fighter jets together with requisite training and maintenance. The Ambassador encouraged the Slovak government to purchase additional planes and to work with U.S. government and industry contacts to facilitate deliveries. The Embassy's U.S. Military Group coordinated with the Ambassador and Slovak authorities on the deliveries and the development of training and maintenance capacities. The Public Diplomacy Section promoted press coverage on the delivery of the F-16s and funded an English Language Fellow at Slovakia's military academy. Following the Ambassador's departure, the Chargé liaised with Department officials on the delivery of the F-16s and prospects for additional sales.

Officials at the Department and other agencies credited the Ambassador and Country Team for their work leading to the signing in January 2026 of an intergovernmental agreement on civilian

⁵ Cable 26 STATE 30238, "Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) Launch," April 3, 2026, outlined the Integrated Country Strategy development process including a draft submission due date of June 15, 2026.

nuclear cooperation, described as a key step in advancing a potential U.S. commercial bid to construct a new civil nuclear reactor in Slovakia. They told OIG the Ambassador's high-level contacts in Slovakia and timely interventions in Washington were crucial in pushing forward the agreement. The Political-Economic Section led a multi-agency working group that generated the agreement language and will implement it. Working level officials in Washington also highlighted their counterparts in the Embassy's Political-Economic Section and the U.S. Commercial Service for their effective communication. OIG interviews and reviews of Embassy documents also found close coordination between those sections and the Front Office.

Foreign Assistance

Beginning in January 2025, the Department took several actions that affected U.S. foreign assistance globally. This included initiating a foreign assistance review,⁶ which resulted in the termination of many programs and realignment of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) functions to the Department.^{7,8} In April 2025, the Secretary announced a comprehensive reorganization plan that began to take effect on July 14, 2025.^{9,10} The reorganization included changes in responsibilities for regional bureaus for administering foreign assistance.¹¹

From FY 2023 through FY 2025, the Embassy managed foreign assistance awards worth \$508,108 that focused on the Embassy's strategic goals and Department priorities.¹² OIG found both the Public Diplomacy Section and the Political-Economic Section implemented grants according to federal management requirements and terminated these awards in 2025 as directed.

Separately, eight Department bureaus and offices managed 25 awards for Slovakia and for regional programs that included Slovakia, not all of which were coordinated with Embassy Bratislava. The majority of these programs were also terminated according to Washington guidelines in 2025. Eight awards remained open and continued to be managed by Department bureaus and offices, several without coordination with Embassy Bratislava. These awards focused on issues related to the Russia-Ukraine war, including refugees, border security, and energy security.

⁶ The foreign assistance review was initiated by Executive Order 14169, Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid, January 20, 2025, Section 3(a) through (c).

⁷ Cable 25 STATE 24730, "Updated Guidance for Ongoing State and/or USAID-Funded Foreign Assistance Programs," March 19, 2025.

⁸ Department of State Congressional Notification and Transmittal Letter, March 28, 2025.

⁹ Secretary of State Marco Rubio Press Statement, "Building an America First State Department," April 22, 2025.

¹⁰ Cable 25 STATE 69592, "Message to Department on Reorganization Implementation," July 11, 2025.

¹¹ "Department of State Reorganization Fact Sheet," May 29, 2025; and "Department of State Reorganization Frequently Asked Questions," July 11, 2025.

¹² Of these awards, \$434,109 was programmed through FY 2026 but terminated in FY 2025.

The Embassy lacked a foreign assistance coordination mechanism to address these Department-implemented and managed awards and regularly share information among the Embassy, Department, and regionally based bureaus in neighboring countries, which is addressed in the Findings section below.

INSPECTION RESULTS

OIG reviewed Embassy Bratislava's leadership in accordance with Section 7203 of the Department of State Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 and did not identify any actions or behaviors of serious concern that negatively affected the Embassy's ability to conduct operations.¹³

OIG also identified an innovative aspect of the Embassy's consular operations, which is described in the Spotlights on Success section below. OIG determined Embassy Bratislava generally adhered to applicable laws, regulations, and Department guidance. However, as discussed in the Findings section below, OIG identified deficiencies in certain aspects of the Embassy's policy and program implementation and information management.

During this inspection, the Embassy addressed the following issues:

- The DCM completed the mandatory reviews of nonimmigrant visa adjudications and would continue timely reviews as Chargé.
- The Embassy updated its gift registry and received clearance from the Office of the Legal Adviser on how to dispose of gifts received.
- The Political-Economic Section identified Leahy vetting coordinators and issued an Embassy-wide notice to update personnel about revised Leahy vetting procedures.
- The Public Diplomacy Section increased its use of cable and "Public Diplomacy Highlights" reporting to Washington, demonstrating its accomplishments and sharing insights with key audiences.
- The Management Section:
 - Corrected an open deficiency from the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations inspection at the Chief of Mission Residence.
 - Stored and secured materials that could be used as improvised weapons.
 - Fixed the automatic safe-closing mechanism on a residential swimming pool gate so the gate is properly secured.
 - Established a fire watch procedure for periods of fire protection system outages.
 - Updated the locally employed (LE) staff debit card program documentation.
 - Updated the local compensation plan to include a new salary schedule and remove the section pertaining to the Afghanistan Service Benefits package.
 - Updated the Embassy's LE staff grievance policy and procedures.
- The Diplomatic Technology (DT) unit:

¹³ The officers subject to the management review were the Ambassador and the DCM.

- Placed a hard copy of the Embassy's unclassified IT Contingency Plan at the alternate command center.
- Established maintenance logs for both unclassified and classified server rooms, as well as the main private branch exchange.
- Updated the access list to the main telephone frame room.
- Added a one-page information sheet on Embassy Bratislava's intranet website for mail and pouch services, accessible to Embassy users.
- Updated file permissions so staff had access only to their assigned section's files on the Embassy's unclassified network.
- Installed a shower and an eye wash kit in the mail screening facility.

OIG provided a draft of this report to Department entities for review and comment on the findings and recommendations. OIG issued 7 recommendations to Embassy Bratislava. The Embassy's complete response can be found in Appendix B. The Embassy also provided technical comments that were incorporated in the report, as appropriate.

Spotlights on Success

Consular: Innovation

Consular Section's Innovations Led to Greater Efficiencies for Passport and Visa Applicants

Issue: Prior to August 2025, the Consular Section manually tracked and emailed information requests on nonimmigrant visa cases that were denied pending additional information. Furthermore, until April 2025, U.S. citizens sometimes paid the wrong passport application fee online.

Success or Innovation: Embassy Bratislava's Consular Section developed an innovative Power Automate-driven process for nonimmigrant visa cases that are denied pending additional information.¹⁴ The automation simultaneously emails custom pending information requests to applicants while automatically copying the requested information to an internal tracking spreadsheet. The Consular Section also developed quick response, or QR, codes for online payment of passport application fees.

Significance: The automation improved accuracy and efficiency of nonimmigrant visa case tracking. The QR codes led to greater efficiencies for U.S. citizen passport applicants and decreased the number who erroneously paid for the wrong services.

¹⁴ Microsoft Power Automate is a cloud-based platform designed to automate workflows and processes across various applications, systems, and services. It enables users to streamline repetitive tasks, improve efficiency, and integrate different tools using low-code or no-code solutions.

Findings

Policy and Program Implementation: Foreign Assistance

Embassy Bratislava Lacked a Mechanism To Coordinate Foreign Assistance With Department Bureaus and Offices

Issue: OIG determined that Embassy Bratislava had limited or no knowledge of some Department bureau and office awards for U.S. engagements in Slovakia. Washington bureaus and offices designed and implemented large multi-country programs with regional funding related to the Russia-Ukraine war and new funding to counter adversarial competition. From FY 2022 through FY 2025, eight Department offices managed an estimated \$293 million in foreign assistance awards for Slovakia and for regional programs that included Slovakia.

Criteria: Federal Assistance Directive 6.2, Chapter 3, Section C (October 2021) and subsequent editions; 1 FAM 013.2e(1); 1 FAM 013.2k(6); 2 FAM 113.1c(4)

Cause: OIG determined the Embassy relied on ad hoc communications to coordinate oversight of foreign assistance instead of using a formal structure. This limited the Embassy's ability to track regional and local programs that were implemented by Department offices in Washington, DC.

Significance: Without a mechanism to regularly share information among Embassy sections and Washington bureaus and offices, the Embassy risks duplicating efforts and missing opportunities to promote cost efficiency. Additionally, lack of coordination has the potential to complicate Embassy relationships with partners, limiting the ability to conduct oversight, strengthen networks, and identify programming gaps.

Recommendation 1: Embassy Bratislava, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should establish a foreign assistance coordination mechanism in accordance with Department guidelines. (Action: Embassy Bratislava, in coordination with EUR)

Management Response: Did not concur. The Embassy noted that although it had limited or no knowledge of some Department bureau and office assistance awards for large, multi-country programs that included Slovakia, it did not believe that the Embassy should lead the foreign assistance coordination mechanism. The Embassy noted that the Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (EUR/ACE) would be best positioned to lead a coordination mechanism because it has the broad view of multi-country assistance programs.

OIG Reply: OIG considers this recommendation resolved. OIG acknowledges that EUR/ACE can be a source of information on assistance programs that include Slovakia. However, Department standards require the chief of mission to direct, coordinate, and supervise all U.S. government executive branch activities, operations, and personnel in the chief of mission's country of responsibility. Further,

the Federal Assistance Directive requires the embassy to be part of the awards process and coordination. The embassy can determine the form or format of the coordination mechanism. This mechanism would allow the Embassy to capture any assistance outside of EUR/ACE that other agencies at the Embassy may be aware of. This recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that Embassy Bratislava established a foreign assistance coordination mechanism in accordance with Department standards.

Information Management: Information Systems Security

Embassy Bratislava Did Not Consistently Perform Required Information Systems Security Officer Duties

Issue and Criteria: Embassy Bratislava did not consistently perform the required Information Systems Security Officer (ISSO) duties for the classified, OpenNet,¹⁵ and non-enterprise networks.¹⁶ Specifically, the Embassy did not:

- Review classified, OpenNet, and non-enterprise network user access annually to verify if access was still needed or had been updated (12 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-10 H-112.1-3b and c).
- Apply the principle of least privilege to LE staff system administrators when they were allowed full unmonitored access to some sections' shared files (12 FAH-10 H-112.5-3; National Institute of Standards and Technology Special Publication 800-53, Rev. 5, AC-6).
- Review and verify there were no password files saved on OpenNet shared folders (12 FAH-10 H-132.4-2(8), 12 FAH-10 H-132.4-3(2)).
- Use the ISSO checklist to perform information systems security duties (5 FAH-11 H-116a).

Furthermore, a September 2025 Bureau of Diplomatic Security cybersecurity assessment identified similar issues with Embassy Bratislava's ISSO program.¹⁷ Additionally, OIG issued reports in May 2017 and December 2020 that highlighted widespread Department failures to perform ISSO duties.¹⁸

Cause: Embassy staff told OIG they prioritized other tasks due to staffing shortages in the DT unit.

¹⁵ OpenNet is the Department's Sensitive But Unclassified network.

¹⁶ A non-enterprise network is a Department-procured and locally managed computing environment. Non-enterprise networks are used by a specific entity to meet their mission requirements that cannot be achieved using an enterprise managed solution.

¹⁷ Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Cybersecurity Assessment U.S. Embassy Bratislava, September 2025.

¹⁸ OIG, *Management Assistance Report: Non-Performance of Information Systems Security Officer Duties by Overseas Personnel* (ISP-17-24, May 2017); and *Management Assistance Report: Continued Deficiencies in Performance of Information Systems Security Officer Responsibilities at Overseas Posts* (ISP-21-07, December 2020).

Significance: Failure to perform required ISSO responsibilities leaves Department networks vulnerable to potential unauthorized access and malicious activity.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Bratislava should require the Information Systems Security Officers to perform all duties in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bratislava)

Management Response: Partially concurred. Embassy Bratislava noted that while execution of all Information Systems Security Officer (ISSO) duties was inconsistent, the Embassy has since completed the required reviews, followed the ISSO checklist, and removed passwords on OpenNet. Additionally, the ISSO will begin to review user access annually. The Embassy also noted that they believe they are following least privileged principles for locally employed staff.

OIG Reply: OIG considers this recommendation resolved. This recommendation can be closed when the OIG receives and accepts documentation that Embassy Bratislava required the ISSO to perform all duties in accordance with Department standards.

Information Management: Information Systems Security

Classified IT Contingency Planning Did Not Comply With Department Standards

Issue: Embassy Bratislava did not have an IT contingency plan for its classified network.

Criteria: 12 FAM 632.3-2, 5 FAM 851.2d(1)

Cause: Embassy staff told OIG they prioritized other tasks due to staffing shortages in the DT unit.

Significance: Not having an IT contingency plan that is tested and annually reviewed increases the risk the Embassy will not be able to maintain availability of critical information resources in emergency situations.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Bratislava should implement an IT contingency plan for its classified network in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bratislava)

Management Response: Concurred.

Information Management: Information Systems Security

Embassy Bratislava Did Not Have a Local Configuration Management Protocol

Issue: Embassy Bratislava did not have a local configuration management protocol to verify the hardware, software, or network components installed on its non-enterprise network did not adversely affect the local IT infrastructure under the Embassy's operational control.

A September 2025 Bureau of Diplomatic Security cybersecurity assessment identified similar issues with Embassy Bratislava's use of unauthorized hardware and software in its non-enterprise network.¹⁹

Criteria: 5 FAM 862.3 b and c, 5 FAM 863.1

Cause: Embassy staff told OIG they prioritized other tasks due to staffing shortages in the DT unit.

Significance: Without a local configuration management protocol, the Embassy cannot manage risks to the Department's information stemming from unapproved hardware and software on its networks. For example, OIG found the Embassy installed unapproved network devices and software on its non-enterprise network to monitor the network and manage its wireless access points without approval from the Department's Technology Review Board.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Bratislava should implement a local configuration management protocol in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bratislava)

Management Response: Concurred.

Information Management: Telephone Operations

Telephone Switch and Main Distribution Frame Room Did Not Meet Department Standards

Issue: Embassy Bratislava's telephone switch and main distribution frame room did not meet physical security standards. OIG found the telephone switch and main distribution frame room that fed the Embassy's controlled access area was not secured by a Bureau of Diplomatic Security-approved lock and the room was not alarmed.

Criteria: 5 FAH-2 H-621.1(7)

Cause: Embassy staff told OIG they did not know that communication rooms serving controlled access areas needed to use a Bureau of Diplomatic Security-approved lock and had to be alarmed.

Significance: Failure to adhere to the Department's physical security requirements for telephone switch and main distribution frame rooms supporting controlled access areas leaves the Embassy's communication systems vulnerable to eavesdropping or tampering.

Recommendation 5: Embassy Bratislava, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should secure its telephone switch and main distribution frame room serving the Embassy's controlled access area, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bratislava, in coordination with DS)

Management Response: Partially concurred. Embassy Bratislava noted that

¹⁹ Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Cybersecurity Assessment U.S. Embassy Bratislava, September 2025.

although there was no alarm in the telephone switch and main distribution frame room, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) confirmed that the lock met DS standards and was sufficient. Additionally, the Embassy installed an alarm in the frame room.

OIG Reply: OIG considers this recommendation resolved. This recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that Embassy Bratislava has secured its telephone switch and main distribution frame room serving the Embassy's controlled access area.

Information Management: Physical and Environmental Controls

Physical and Environmental Protection of IT resources Did Not Meet Department Standards

Issue: Embassy Bratislava did not control physical access to the network switches in the Post Communications Center and Regional Security Officer suites, by securing them in locked cabinets.

A September 2025 Bureau of Diplomatic Security cybersecurity assessment identified similar issues with Embassy Bratislava's lack of physical security for network switches.²⁰

Criteria: 12 FAH-10 H-272.3-1(1)

Cause: Embassy staff told OIG they believed the Post Communications Center and Regional Security Officer suites had sufficient physical protection to allow for switches to be unprotected.

Significance: Unsecured switches are susceptible to unauthorized physical access, which could lead to accidental disruption of services or allow malicious actors to disrupt network operations, intercept sensitive communications, introduce unauthorized devices, or simply deny the device's network connectivity.

Recommendation 6: Embassy Bratislava should move switches to secure cabinets or enclosures to meet the Department standards for physical and environment protection of IT assets. (Action: Embassy Bratislava)

Management Response: Concurred.

Information Management: Mail and Pouch Operations

Unclassified Controlled Air Pouch Processing Did Not Meet Department Standards

Issue: OIG found that the Embassy did not process unclassified controlled air pouches, that contained Sensitive But Unclassified material, in accordance with Department guidance.

²⁰ Ibid.

Specifically, Embassy staff processed these pouches in an unclassified, rather than a classified mail room.

Criteria: 14 FAH-4 H-212.1-5a(1)(a)

Cause: Embassy staff told OIG that they processed unclassified controlled air pouches in the unclassified mail room due to its convenient ground floor location. They explained that their classified mailroom is situated on the second floor of the Post Communications Center, making it inconvenient to transport unclassified controlled air pouch packages upstairs. Also, Embassy staff said that they were not aware of the Department requirement to process unclassified controlled air pouches in a classified mail room.

Significance Unclassified controlled air pouches are used to transmit Sensitive But Unclassified material that might disclose the nature of a classified project if the contents were known. Processing these pouches in an unclassified mailroom increases the risk of disclosure.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Bratislava should manage the mail and pouch program in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bratislava)

Management Response: Concurred.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

Section/Title	Name	Arrival Date
Chiefs of Mission:		
Ambassador	Gautam Rana*	9/2022
Deputy Chief of Mission	Heather Rogers†	7/2024
Chiefs of Sections:		
Consular	Eve Bentovim	6/2023
Management	Vanessa Stotts	9/2025
Political-Economic	Courtney Kline	8/2024
Public Diplomacy	Elizabeth Blumenthal	7/2024
Regional Security	Brian Janik‡	7/2023

* Ambassador Rana departed Embassy Bratislava on January 16, 2026.

† Heather Rogers became Chargé d’Affaires, ad interim on January 16, 2026.

‡ Brian Janik became the acting Deputy Chief of Mission on January 16, 2026.

Source: OIG generated based on personnel data provided by Embassy Bratislava in December 2025 and January 2026.

APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

This inspection was conducted from December 8, 2025 to April 3, 2026, in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* (December 2020), issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the *Inspections Handbook*, issued by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department of State (Department) and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

As described in Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, OIG is required to conduct inspections, audits, and investigations to systematically review the Department's overseas posts to determine whether:

- Financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- Resources are used and managed efficiently, effectively, and economically.
- Activities and operations adhere to laws and regulations.
- Fraud or other serious problems, abuse, or deficiencies exist and whether adequate steps were taken to detect, correct, and prevent them.
- Policy goals and objectives are being effectively achieved, and the interests of the United States are being accurately and effectively represented.

Objective

OIG conducted this inspection to assess Embassy Bratislava's efforts toward achieving U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, as well as to determine whether it adhered to applicable laws, regulations, and Department guidance related to policy and program implementation, consular operations, resource management, and information management.

Additionally, in accordance with Section 7203 of the Department of State Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, Public Law 118-159,¹ OIG conducted a management review of certain Embassy leaders during this inspection to assess whether there were any instances of serious management concerns, meaning the subject officers did not comply with laws, regulations, or Department guidance and the noncompliance negatively impacted the ability to conduct operations at the mission.

Scope and Methodology

OIG assessed whether the Embassy effectively achieved U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, as represented in the Department and post guidance through a review of the Embassy's leadership, strategic planning, advocacy and analysis work, reporting, knowledge management, program management, media engagement, and oversight of American Spaces. To assess the Embassy's implementation of foreign assistance, OIG reviewed Embassy coordination of foreign assistance programs operating in the country, monitoring of foreign assistance being

¹ The Department of State Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025 was included as Division G in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, signed into law on December 23, 2024.

implemented in the country, Leahy vetting, and the Embassy's administration of awards. OIG also assessed consular operations through a review of Embassy's provision of U.S. citizen services, consular crisis preparedness, management controls, visa services and processing, vetting and fraud prevention programs. To address resource management, OIG reviewed internal control systems and management of life safety, real property, personal property, financial operations, and personnel. OIG assessed the Embassy's diplomatic technology operations and services, including classified and unclassified computer operations, communications security, cybersecurity practices, records management, emergency communications and telephone, mail, and pouch services management.

OIG used a risk-based approach to prepare for this inspection. OIG submitted questionnaires to U.S. direct-hire and locally employed staff at the Embassy, as well as select staff in relevant domestic bureaus. OIG inspected the Consular Section remotely and certain Embassy operations were not within the scope of this review. Specifically, OIG did not review the Consular Section's case intake, interviews, U.S. citizen services case files, and physical records management.

OIG conducted portions of this inspection remotely and relied on audio- and video-conferencing tools in addition to in-person interviews with Department and other personnel. OIG also reviewed pertinent records; circulated questionnaires and compiled the results; and discussed the substance of this report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, and organizations affected by this inspection. OIG used professional judgment and analyzed physical, documentary, and testimonial evidence to develop its findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations.

APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



Embassy of the United States of America
Bratislava, Slovak Republic

Date: 6/10/2026

UNCLASSIFIED

THRU: EUR-IO – Arthur Milikh

TO: OIG – Ryan McGonagle, Acting Assistant Inspector General for Inspections

FROM: Embassy Bratislava – Heather Rogers

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – **Inspection of Embassy Bratislava, Slovakia**

Embassy Bratislava has reviewed the draft OIG inspection report. We provide the following comments in response to the recommendations provided by OIG:

OIG Recommendation 1:

Embassy Bratislava, in coordination with the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, should establish a foreign assistance coordination mechanism in accordance with Department guidelines. (Action: Embassy Bratislava, in coordination with EUR)

Management Response:

Embassy Bratislava concurs with the finding that Embassy Bratislava had limited or no knowledge of some Department bureau and office assistance awards for large, multi-country programs that included Slovakia but does not concur that the remedy for this is to set up a post-led foreign assistance coordination mechanism. Post lacks visibility on the array of multi-country assistance programs that might include Slovakia. In order for a coordination mechanism to be effective and to include all posts that might be included in such multi-country programs, post would welcome an EUR ACE-led coordination mechanism since EUR ACE has the broad view of assistance programs and would know which countries were included in those programs. Post recommends this as an alternative action.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Elizabeth Blumenthal.

OIG Recommendation 2:

Embassy Bratislava should require the Information Systems Security Officers to perform all duties in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bratislava)

Management Response:

Embassy Bratislava concurs partially with this finding. While the ISSO has not been consistent with all required reviews, many of the required reviews have been completed. Regional DT has been assisting with reviews and the local ISSO has also been doing reviews which weren't considered during the investigation. There is still more that the local ISSO can do and we are taking steps to improve efforts and results.

The report broke out this recommendation into four different areas which we will speak to here:

1. Review user access annually – We concur. The ISSO will begin to perform this duty more dutifully. We are creating a schedule and dedicated time for this.
2. Least Privileged – We do not concur. We are following Least Privileged principles for LE staff system administrators in that only necessary staff have needed credentials and only access to what they need. Bratislava's threat environment does not rise to the level that would prohibit local staff from assisting with these duties
3. Passwords on OpenNet – We concur. We agree that passwords were found on SharePoint. These weren't put there by Bratislava employees and the passwords weren't for any post resources. However, we have removed those passwords, and we make it a point not to save passwords in unapproved storage locations.
4. ISSO Checklist – We do not concur. Bratislava and regional resources have been following these checklist items; however, we acknowledge that we have not been as consistent as is required. As stated earlier, local ISSO staff were performing checks which were not readily accessible during the investigation, but that issue has been fixed, and they are now accessible for review.

We plan to have all aspects remediated by July 1, 2026.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Andrew Dgien.

OIG Recommendation 3:

Embassy Bratislava should implement an IT contingency plan for its classified network in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bratislava)

Management Response: Embassy Bratislava concurs with this finding. Since the inspection visit, we have completed an IT contingency plan for the classified network.

This has been remediated, so no further action is required aside from regular annual updates.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Andrew Dgien.

OIG Recommendation 4:

Embassy Bratislava should implement a local configuration management protocol in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bratislava)

Management Response: Embassy Bratislava concurs with this recommendation. Embassy Bratislava has created a tailored Configuration Management Plan that identifies the process in which an IT product will be introduced into the environment. The OIG report references the Non-Enterprise Network (NEN) as a source for non-tracked hardware or software. Embassy Bratislava has deprecated the NEN network at the chancery.

Remediation of this is complete. No additional actions are required.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Andrew Dgien.

OIG Recommendation 5:

Embassy Bratislava, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should secure its telephone switch and main distribution frame room serving the Embassy's controlled access area, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bratislava, in coordination with DS)

Management Response: Embassy Bratislava concurs partially with this recommendation in that there was no alarm in the telephone switch and main distribution frame room. However, DS has confirmed that the lock meets DS standards and is sufficient. We have installed an alarm in the space mitigating the issue.

Remediation of this is complete. No additional action by post is planned.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Andrew Dgien.

OIG Recommendation 6:

Embassy Bratislava should move switches to secure cabinets or enclosures to meet the Department standards for physical and environment protection of IT assets. (Action: Embassy Bratislava)

Management Response: Embassy Bratislava concurs with this recommendation. Most of the switches at post are correctly secured, but there are two switches that are not. We are in the process of purchasing and shipping enclosures to secure these two devices.

Remediation is pending. It will take significant time to ship these cabinets to post. We expect to have this resolved July 1, 2027.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Andrew Dgien.

OIG Recommendation 7:

Embassy Bratislava should manage the mail and pouch program in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Bratislava)

Management Response: Embassy Bratislava concurs with this finding and recommendation. We have developed a plan to address this when UCAP pouch arrives. UCAP pouches will be moved to a secure space and proceed with opening there and distributing the packages as necessary.

Remediation is complete. A plan is in place and will be implemented the next time UCAP arrives at post. No further action is planned by post.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Andrew Dgien.



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