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

Report of Inspection

Compliance Follow-Up Review of Embassy Bogotá, Colombia

Report Number ISP-C-09-08A, December 2008

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PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION

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

PURPOSE

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

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

METHODOLOGY

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



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

Office of Inspector General

PREFACE

This report was prepared by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, the Arms Control and Disarmament Amendments Act of 1987, and the Department of State and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 1996. It is one of a series of audit, inspection, investigative, and special reports prepared by OIG periodically as part of its oversight responsibility with respect to the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors to identify and prevent fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement.

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

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

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

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "H. W. Geisel", with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Harold W. Geisel
Acting Inspector General

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INTRODUCTION



Compliance followup reviews (CFR) by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) provide senior managers of the Department of State (Department) with progress reports on the status of recommendations that result from inspections and provide OIG with a quality assurance assessment of its work.

This CFR took place in Washington, DC, between June 23 and July 11, 2008; and in Bogotá, Colombia between July 14 and

25, 2008. Ambassador Robert Barbour (team leader), Anita Schroeder (deputy team leader), Ruth McIlwain, and Peter Stella conducted the review.

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REVIEW OF KEY ISSUES

EVALUATION OF COMPLIANCE

The Report of Inspection for Embassy Bogotá dated March 2006 (ISP-I-06-16A) contained 16 formal recommendations. Prior to the CFR, OIG had closed 15 of these recommendations. The sole remaining unclassified recommendation, number 10, pertained to the savings benefit plan for locally employed (LE) staff. The CFR team closed recommendation 10 from the previous inspection. This CFR therefore closes the 2006 inspection report.

During the CFR, however, the OIG team made seven new recommendations. One of these pertains to embassy operations in Cartagena; three deal with rightsizing the embassy in Bogotá; two pertain to the LE staff savings plan; and one involves embassy switchboard coverage. The team also checked the 43 informal recommendations in the 2006 inspection report. Of these, five were repeated as informal recommendations. The OIG team added two new informal recommendations.

This CFR reviewed recommendations made in the March 2006 security inspection report (ISP-S-06-16A) and closes the 2006 report. The 2008 CFR security report is a separate document.

Although the 2006 inspection reports are closed, offices to which recommendations were addressed must still complete implementation of them or report to OIG the changed circumstances that substantially affect implementation.

BACKGROUND

Embassy Bogotá, work source of 4,600 people, dispenser of \$6 billion in U.S. assistance since 2002, and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere's (WHA) largest embassy, is a law enforcement bulwark in Colombia, a country that supplies roughly 90 percent of the cocaine and 50 percent of the heroin that enters the United States. That country today sees itself as being on an upswing away from the failing state that it was once feared to be. With recent operational successes having battered the biggest narcotics trafficking insurgency, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and

with some of the lesser politico-criminal organizations showing signs of weakness, embassy officers report that Colombia today is safer, economically stronger, better governed, and more democratic than it has been in decades. This combination of a continuing threat to American well being on the one hand, versus visible success for the policies and programs that it has implemented on the other hand, provides a major new challenge to the embassy: how to factor the Colombian Government's new stability and improved prospects into a lower human and financial American profile without lessening pressure on those who produce the cocaine and heroin that is still on American streets.

In addition to the question of how to rightsize the U.S. mission to Colombia, there is another major issue facing the Embassy— how to establish a foundation firmer than an unacknowledged branch office for the flourishing official community in Cartagena. These topics are discussed in the following sections.

CARTAGENA

The city of Cartagena lies some 400 miles north of Bogotá on the Caribbean “North Coast” of Colombia. Although there is no official diplomatic presence in Cartagena, approximately 67 U.S. Government personnel, all under Chief of Mission authority, work there. Another eight to 10 employees or contractors are expected to be on board in 2009. Fifty to 60 children of American employees and U.S. Government contractors attend an international school to which the Department has granted \$400,000 for security upgrades.

The Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) 53 direct-hire employees make up the bulk of the official U.S. community. Other members are Department of Defense (Army, Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and Coast Guard) and Department of Homeland Security. Most of the latter have temporary duty assignments. Permanent Department of Homeland Security assignments depend on a clarification of their long-term status vis-à-vis the government of Colombia. A Department assistant regional security officer is expected to arrive later this year, and an FS-02 international relations officer generalist is contemplated but has not been identified. With a number of projects all along the north coast, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is considering a permanent presence in Cartagena, and, because the city is an important north coast cultural center, the embassy may add a public affairs employee there. The American commercial implantation is also important.

Being the most prominent and best-known American agency, DEA is the default stop for Americans looking for assistance in Cartagena, especially official visitors. During July of 2008, the office provided substantial administrative assistance, briefings, and interface with local authorities for a host of U.S. Government officials. These included a Presidential candidate, the Energy Secretary with three Senators, and the commander of SOUTHCOM. The U.S. Ambassador is a frequent visitor and beneficiary of DEA support.

Once a popular tourist stop but more lately a place made unattractive by stories of Colombia's near lawlessness, the picturesque old city of Cartagena is bouncing back. A low-cost American air carrier now links it directly to Ft. Lauderdale, and the number of cruise ships stopping there is expected to increase from the near zero of 2004 to around 200 in 2008. This will put hundreds of thousands of American tourists ashore for short stays. Longer visits will begin in December 2008 when one cruise line will use Cartagena as a port of embarkation, meaning that the number of pre- and post-voyage nights ashore will increase greatly. Also on shore throughout the year are the crews of the many Navy, Coast Guard, and other U.S. Government vessels that regularly use Cartagena as a rest and refueling station.

As Cartagena returns to its former status as a tourist destination, the need for consular services, particularly American citizens services (ACS), will greatly increase. With about 20 percent of Colombia's population of 43 million, including 10,000 American citizens, Cartagena and the six provinces closest to it account for 15 percent of Embassy Bogotá's ACS service requests, 20 percent of its emergency and welfare issues, and 7.2 percent of its nonimmigrant visa business. There is a U.S.-Colombian binational center in the city, which is also home to various nongovernmental organizations supported by USAID.

An hour northeast of Cartagena, a small, part-time (eight hours per week) consular agency in Barranquilla is a vestige of the consulate that was closed in 1996. Operating costs in 2007 for the agent and his assistant were about \$100,000; the work is mostly notariats (about 260 in 2007) and ACS.

Although he is the ranking American official in Cartagena, DEA's assistant regional director has no organic tie to any other agency and is not the U.S. Ambassador's representative. No one is.

Nor does the DEA office have any status other than de facto. It is usually referred to as a branch office, but as such has no standing and provides no legal protections for DEA's armed special agents. Some thinly stretched immunity does come from their status as administrative and technical (A&T) personnel of the

Bogotá Embassy. Given the intimate U.S.-Colombian partnership that exists and the personal attitudes of the country's President, the U.S. Ambassador sees no reason to be uneasy today over the DEA office's de facto status. He is concerned, however, about its longer term juridical vulnerability and, for that reason, believes it imperative to regularize as quickly as possible the office's status and with it the immunities of its law enforcement staff.

DEA rents as “American Embassy” the entire fifth floor (14,500 square feet) in the privately owned Chambacú Building (Edificio Inteligente). This well-chosen site somewhat removed from the town center is surrounded by water and expanses of undeveloped land. About 60 percent of the DEA floor space is unclassified, including the assistant regional director’s office and those of a good number of special agents and the LE support staff. Colombian law enforcement officers are frequently present. More Colombian officers are permanently located in six special purpose rooms on the floor below and in another on the sixth floor. The lessor of these offices is the Colombian Government, but the ADR believes it would make the space available to the U.S. Government if asked to do so. The DEA office was built to and meets classified lock-and-leave standards.

There are upwards of 40 other tenants in the Chambacú Building, the largest being the municipal electric company. A British consulate adjoins the fourth floor special purpose rooms; an honorary Austrian consulate is also a tenant. Office space is regularly available for lease. When the OIG team visited, there were vacancies on both the fourth and sixth floors, above and below DEA's fifth-floor site.

The U.S. Government's anomalous, quasi-diplomatic presence in Cartagena and how to regularize it has been the subject of much debate. When the Barranquilla consulate closed in 1996, the embassy sought but failed to obtain explicit government of Colombia permission to convert the former post to a branch office with diplomatic privileges. (b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)

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(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5) In an exchange of notes later in 2001,
the Colombian government agreed that in accordance with the Vienna Convention
on Diplomatic Relations, “one of the offices that is part of the diplomatic mission”
could move to Cartagena, but it did not respond to the embassy’s request that these
personnel be accepted as A&T members of the embassy staff. (b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)
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(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5)(b) (5) He advised against establishing a branch office, recommending instead an exchange of notes for immunities. However, Embassy Bogotá's then-deputy chief of mission speculated that such an exchange (alone) might not stand up in the court of a hostile judge.

[illegible]

The anticipated increase in the number of U.S. agencies in Cartagena and the resultant expansion of its activities create a need for an internationally recognized and authoritative U.S. representation with immunities for its personnel and endowed with the authority to speak for the U.S. Government in general and the U.S. Ambassador in particular. There is also a need to anticipate that the demand for consular services will continue to grow as normality returns to Colombia's north coast.

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branch office's scope beyond law enforcement, a more authoritative U.S. Government representation will have to be established. Procedures for this are contained in 2 FAM 420.

Recommendation CFR 1: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, the Office of the Under Secretary for Management, and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should, in accordance with Department regulations, work with the Drug Enforcement Administration to develop and implement a plan for converting the embassy office in Cartagena into a consular post, which should deliver at least emergency services to American citizens and guarantee appropriate privileges and immunities to the American personnel included in it. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with WHA, M, and CA)

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

RIGHTSIZING

The 2006 OIG inspection report of Embassy Bogotá recommended that the Embassy perform a rightsizing review with the goal of determining the continued requirements for all agency staff resident at the mission. Such a review was submitted to the Office of Policy, Rightsizing and Innovation on June 29, 2006, and that office responded on November 27, 2006. The formal recommendation was closed on the basis of acceptable compliance.

In July 2008, the OIG team found that the mission was continuing to grow, in spite of the rightsizing review. The number of American positions in the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) basic package increased from 472 in 2006, to 542 in 2007, to 630 in 2008. The corresponding numbers for Department direct-hire employees in Bogotá were 117 in 2006, 123 in 2007, and 137 in 2008. In July 2008, WHA requested that three new entry-level consular positions be added to Embassy Bogotá's roster.

The Embassy performs a "census" every six months, tracking the number of all types of staff associated with the embassy. The January 2008 census lists 1,188 embassy employees, 226 temporary duty personnel, and 3,193 contractors, for a total mission population of 4,607 individuals.

In the inspection that resulted in the 2006 OIG report, Embassy Bogotá was depicted as exhibiting symptoms of nearly all the rightsizing imbalances that had attracted Congressional and Office of Management and Budget scrutiny in the past: duplication of administrative services among agencies, severe overcrowding of office space, high rates of growth in direct-hire staff, and serious security vulnerabilities that developed because staffing levels required the use of space not originally designated for offices. In the 10-year period leading up to 2005, the Embassy more than doubled, and the chancery constructed in 1995 was no longer adequate to house post personnel. In 2008, the OIG team found that all of the same symptoms existed, and that circumstance held true even after the completion of the new office annex in March 2007¹ with its offices and cubicles for 209 staff.

¹ Most of the moves to the new office annex occurred in December 2006, but the building was not officially completed until March 2007.

The Embassy is currently involved in preparing the third floor of the new office annex for occupancy by the narcotics affairs section (NAS). This work is expected to be completed in the fall of 2008. Following the NAS move, the NAS annex may be available for use as office space. This issue is discussed in the classified CFR report.

Embassy Bogotá is a unique mission that has been entrusted with management of hundreds of millions of dollars annually in U.S. aid to Colombia. Although Plan Colombia was originally envisioned to end in 2005, Congress has continued to fund many elements of the original program. The overall FY 2007 level of funding for Colombia was \$556 million, and the FY 2008 estimate is \$541 million. In FY 2008, Congress increased support for such “soft-side” programs as economic development, rule of law, human rights and humanitarian assistance, and decreased support for eradication, interdiction and Foreign Military Financing programs. The FY 2009 request is for over \$542 million, which seeks to restore some hard-side assistance and is consistent with these plans gradually to transition additional financial and operational responsibilities to the Colombian Government.

In FY 2009, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) requested \$329 million for counternarcotics and rule-of-law programs in Colombia, a request that is currently being considered on the Hill. Future funding levels from Congress are not very clear, but INL expects Congress to continue to increase support for soft-side programs while cutting hard-side assistance.

The NAS continues to make progress in nationalizing U.S.-funded programs to Government of Colombia control, but even with nationalization and reductions in program goals (e.g., reducing the spray goal in 2009 to 100,000 hectares from 130,000 hectares in 2008), funding for hard-side programs will be limited if Congressional cuts remain.

The uncertainty in the funding of NAS programs reflects the general uncertainty about many of the U.S. programs in Colombia. Some agencies within Embassy Bogotá have plans to increase staff, including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which in July 2008 projected the need for two additional American positions in Bogotá and four in Cartagena, along with one LE staff in Cartagena.² In June 2008, USAID requested, but not through the National Security Decision Directive-38 (NSDD-38) process, authorization to increase staffing levels by three U.S. direct-hire and four LE staff.³ Since October 2007, the Ambassador has approved NSDD-38

² This request has met with conditional approval.

³ This request will likely meet with post concurrence, followed by an NSDD-38 cable from the Department.

memos for some 19 positions—13 U.S. positions in Bogotá, five U.S. positions in Cartagena, and one LE staff position in Bogotá. No agencies have announced plans to reduce the number of staff.

Although the recent rescue of three American citizens held captive by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia might have been expected to result in a decrease in staff currently at the Embassy who were engaged in work to secure their release, no immediate staffing reductions have occurred.

All of these issues have restricted the ability of the Embassy and the Department to plan for the future. The Embassy was criticized in the last inspection for not having a systematic process for reviewing the administrative and security implications of NSDD-38 decision requests. Although 35 direct-hire American positions were approved in FY 2005, no additional funding was made available by ICASS Washington to support staffing requirements. This situation has been rectified to some extent by the efforts of ICASS Washington, the embassy ICASS council, and embassy management, but some inequalities still remain. From 2003 to 2007, ICASS funding increased 36 percent, both globally and for Embassy Bogotá. In the same time period, the global growth in numbers of employees served by ICASS increased only 9.3 percent, while the growth at Embassy Bogotá was just under 50 percent. Embassy Bogotá in FY 2007 had 12 U.S. direct-hire ICASS service providers for 530 U.S. direct-hire customers, for a ratio of 44 customers per service provider. The WHA average ratio was 24 customers per provider, and the worldwide ratio was 17 U.S. direct-hire customers per U.S. direct-hire service provider.

The approach to staffing Embassy Bogotá has been piecemeal and has not been managed in a strategic manner by the Department. The lack of comprehensive planning among all agencies associated with Embassy Bogotá, both at the Embassy and in Washington, combined with uncertainty regarding Congressional funding, has resulted in an overcrowded embassy. These are described in the Classified CFR report. In addition, the Embassy Bogotá ICASS support system, while performing efficiently, does not have the depth and strength that it should. The OIG team is making several recommendations designed to assist the embassy and the Department in coordinating and accommodating the growth in activities at Embassy Bogotá.

Recommendation CFR 2: Embassy Bogotá should require each U.S. Government agency operating in Colombia to submit a vision plan with staffing and funding forecasts for a designated future period. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation CFR 3: Embassy Bogotá should submit a future staffing estimate and space needs plan, which includes projected cost implications for all offices and agencies operating in Colombia through the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and other involved offices, including the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation; the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations; and the Washington office of the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services to the Under Secretary for Management. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with WHA, M/PRI, OBO, and M)

Recommendation CFR 4: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in coordination with the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should form a working group of concerned offices and agencies to produce an agreed-upon plan for rationalizing and reconciling future resource needs for the mission in Colombia with operational responsibilities and appropriations. (Action: WHA, in coordination with M/PRI and OBO)

CONSOLIDATION

The 2006 OIG inspection report recommended that the Embassy develop and implement a plan to consolidate the warehouse, motor pool, procurement, and financial operations of the U.S. agencies in Colombia. This recommendation was closed on the basis of acceptable alternative compliance.

As of July 2008, the Embassy had consolidated motor pool operations for ICASS, NAS, and USAID. The Embassy estimates that over a five-year period, the consolidation will save over \$900,000 from reductions in salaries for drivers and decreased automobile fuel and maintenance costs.

Embassy personnel told the OIG team that consolidation of procurement operations with USAID might be possible by the end of FY 2008, with the transfer of one local employee from USAID to ICASS. Funding is required from the Department before this action can be completed. In the future, the Embassy plans to consolidate administrative procurement among ICASS, NAS, and USAID, while leaving NAS and USAID with their own specialized programmatic procurement activities.

Warehousing consolidation is expected to be completed by the end of FY 2009, although some issues must be resolved before then. These are described in the section on warehouse management. The OIG team believes that the consolidation of warehousing and procurement should continue as scheduled.

The consolidation of financial services is more problematic due to differences among the agencies governing these functions that are being resolved. The Embassy should continue to review and report on the feasibility of consolidating financial services. The OIG team is not repeating the closed formal recommendation from the 2006 report but expects that the Embassy will continue to make progress toward consolidation of procurement, warehousing and financial services.

State 166504 issued on October 4, 2006, mandated consolidation of administrative support functions between the Department and USAID as of October 2007. This requirement postdates the 2006 inspection report.

GRANTS MANAGEMENT

The 2006 OIG inspection report noted that the public affairs section (PAS) grant files did not consistently include a brief narrative report of the accomplishments attributable to the expenditures of the grants office in accordance with Article V of the grant document. The 2006 OIG report included an informal recommendation (number 17) that Embassy Bogotá follow up with the grantees to ensure that reports were submitted and that these reports be placed in the grant files.

During the CFR, the OIG team found that a high percentage of the grant files sampled for FY 2006 and FY 2007 lacked reports from the grantees. Some of these grants have yet to be completed, and the reports are not yet due. For completed grants, when the OIG team compared the information in the grant file to that on the grant log spread sheet kept by the grants assistant, a number of grantees were shown as having submitted final reports, although these reports were not included in the files. When questioned, the grants assistant said that the PAS practice for grants for conferences and lectures, for example, was to gather hard copies and tapes of presentations and sometimes to prepare books of the conference. Once this was done, PAS noted on the grant log that the final report had been submitted by the grantee, although most attendees did not submit reports. In addition, PAS was not tracking individuals who did not submit reports. The PAS may want to suspend future payments or exclude these grantees from future awards, but their names are not being tracked.

The grant document clearly calls for the submission of a report from the grantee noting accomplishments attributable to the expenditure of funds. These reports may be short and may be done by e-mail. The OIG team believes that these reports from individuals are an important part of the grant process and should be routinely requested and included in the grant files. Although the acting public affairs officer told the OIG team that new procedures would, when put into effect, deny access to future grants to any grantee who failed to provide the necessary feedback, we have repeated the previous informal recommendation on this subject.

WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT

In addition to the chancery warehouse, Embassy Bogotá has three offsite warehouses managed by ICASS, NAS, and USAID. The three warehouses are scheduled to be consolidated by the end of FY 2009 under the Embassy's consolidation schedule. Several old recommendations and issues have been put on hold pending the warehouse consolidation, including purchasing metal shelving and developing a plan for the management of nonexpendable items (both informal recommendations from 2006).

The NAS and ICASS warehouses are colocated on property owned by one landlord. The general services office motor vehicle repair shop and supplies are located next to the two warehouses.

There is a vast difference in orderliness, upkeep and facilities between the ICASS and NAS warehouses. The ICASS warehouse is in a building that lacks a sealed roof. As in the previous inspection, the shelves, when they exist, are wooden. The ICASS warehouse is crowded, cluttered, and dirty. Much of the space is marked out for other agencies, and several of these agencies have what seems to be an excessive amount of residential furniture, much of which is in poor condition. As noted above, the general services office does not have a plan for replacing or retaining nonexpendable supplies, and there does not appear to be an organized method for determining which items are to be kept and which to be sold. The general services office staff are struggling to manage the ICASS warehouse against what seem to be almost insurmountable odds, and, given present conditions, are finding it difficult to plan for consolidation. Four times a year the general services office submits items that are no longer useful to ICASS to auction. However, even with this routine disposal schedule of unnecessary items, the warehouse is too cluttered to permit a thorough evaluation of what should be sold and what should be kept. The general services office noted that there was no money for staff overtime to prepare additional items to be sold.

The colocated NAS warehouse is located in a modern facility built by the landlord for NAS. The landlord has provided not only sufficient warehouse space and metal shelving but has included a training room, bathrooms and showers, a lunch room, two private offices, and office cubicles for 12 persons. NAS has two warehouse supervisors. Two other employees work in the large area in which the cubicles are located. NAS also has customs employees who are working closer to the airport.

Both the NAS and ICASS warehouses will be connected to the embassy Sensitive But Unclassified computer system by the end of August 2008.

The OIG team did not visit the USAID warehouse. Both NAS and USAID have expressed reluctance to consolidate the warehouses, particularly given the poor condition of the ICASS warehouse, but the Embassy is optimistic that the consolidation will proceed as scheduled. The OIG team made informal recommendations that the Embassy do the following to assist with the consolidation process:

- Increase the frequency with which excess items are disposed of via warehouse sales or other processes;
- Develop acquisition, replacement, and disposal plans for nonexpendable property;
- Work with other agencies to reduce the number of items they store in the ICASS warehouse; and
- Continue to do spot checks of the warehouse inventory and use these activities as an opportunity to identify items for disposal.

EMBASSY SWITCHBOARD OPERATIONS

The switchboard at Embassy Bogotá does not have an operator working 24/7. The Marine security guard at Post One answers all incoming calls after hours as well as on weekends and holidays. The memorandum of understanding between the U.S. Marine Corps and the Department, and 12 FAM 433.3 b. stipulate that Marine security guards shall not perform the functions of switchboard operator unless specifically authorized by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and Marine security guard battalion. There is no such specific authorization.

The average number of calls that go through Post One on a weekend or holiday is 150. The average number of after-hours calls is 20 to 30. Not only do the calls keep the Marines from performing their regular duties, but the Marines are not bilin-

gual and have difficulty with non-English calls. It is possible that bomb threats and other critical calls might not be understood.

Professional, bilingual telephone operators are therefore needed. Their prime duties would be to assist embassy employees or American citizens who might have an emergency and need someone fluent in both Spanish and English. The operators would be the first point of contact with embassy offices after hours and on weekends and holidays. In addition, the operators would be available to connect embassy employees to the International Voice Gateway for personal calls. Also, the switchboard operators would manage the newly purchased telephone tree software.

The embassy ICASS council approved 24-hour switchboard coverage, with four additional positions at an annual cost of approximately \$65,000.

Recommendation CFR 5: Embassy Bogotá should request, and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should approve and present to the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services Interagency Council, funding to hire bilingual telephone operators for 24-hour, seven-days-a-week switchboard service. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with WHA)

SAVINGS PLAN FOR LOCALLY EMPLOYED STAFF

In the 2006 report, OIG recommended that Embassy Bogotá provide LE staff with an appropriate savings plan benefit. At the time of the CFR, this recommendation was resolved/open.

The existing savings plan was approved by the Department in May 1992, at which time the employees of Embassy Bogotá agreed to deposit the money in the Credit Institution Cooperativa Alianza (Cooperativa Alianza). The employees, organized through an interest group called FONDEUSA, entered into an agreement with Cooperativa Alianza in October 1997, and money has been directly deposited by the Department into individual accounts of participating employees at Cooperativa Alianza since that time.

At the time of the CFR, employees told the OIG team that their deposits in the Cooperativa Alianza totaled some \$9 million or about 90 percent of that institution's total deposits. Of this total, some \$7 million may be currently outstanding in loans to embassy employees. In previous years, FONDEUSA had more participation on the board of directors, but today has only three of the nine board positions.

In 1995, the Government of Colombia created an institutional retirement plan with the objective of allowing employers to contribute money to employees' retirement funds. There are tax and insurance implications under this system that are not available to members of the Cooperativa Alianza.

In March 2008, at the embassy's request, Price Waterhouse Coopers completed a management audit report of Cooperativa Alianza and the savings plan. This report noted that FONDEUSA lacked a legal basis, that the Department and Cooperativa Alianza were not bound by any agreement, that the Department was not authorized to deduct contributions from employees' salaries for the savings plan, that employees not participating in the plan could claim before a labor judge or court that they were entitled to benefits, and that employees who were separated for cause would have paid nonrecoverable taxes on money and interest that they did not own.

Local employees expressed concern to the OIG team about what a migration of funds might mean, how this would affect current and future loans, and how the structure of Cooperativa Alianza would be affected by the change. Some LE staff noted that the issue had divided the local employee community and that the situation could generate financial panic.

In March 2008, Embassy Bogotá requested that the Bureau of Human Resources, Office of Overseas Employment approve a migration of the funds currently invested in Cooperativa Alianza to a more traditional pension fund. At the time of the CFR in July 2008, the office had not responded to the Embassy's request. The OIG team closed Recommendation 10 from the 2006 inspection report, and included two new CFR recommendations designed to facilitate the process of determining the future of the savings plan.

Recommendation CFR 6: The Bureau of Human Resources, in coordination with the Office of the Legal Adviser, should address the issues described in the Price Waterhouse Coopers report, and provide Embassy Bogotá with instructions or approval to take the steps necessary to establish a pension system for local employees that is consistent with both Colombian and American laws and regulations, and that provides adequate insurance coverage, as well as available tax benefits. (Action: DGHR, in coordination with L)

Recommendation CFR 7: Embassy Bogotá, based on instructions or approval from the Department, should establish a pension plan for locally employed staff that is consistent with both Colombian and American laws and regulations, and that provides adequate insurance coverage, as well as available tax benefits. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

COMPLIANCE FOLLOW-UP REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

Formal Recommendations

Recommendation CFR 1: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, the Office of the Under Secretary for Management, and the Bureau of Consular Affairs, should, in accordance with Department regulations, work with the Drug Enforcement Administration to develop and implement a plan for converting the embassy office in Cartagena into a consular post, which should deliver at least emergency services to American citizens and guarantee appropriate privileges and immunities to the American personnel included in it. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with WHA, M, and CA)

Recommendation CFR 2: Embassy Bogotá should require each U.S. Government agency operating in Colombia to submit a vision plan with staffing and funding forecasts for a designated future period. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Recommendation CFR 3: Embassy Bogotá should submit a future staffing estimate and space needs plan, which includes projected cost implications for all offices and agencies operating in Colombia through the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and other involved offices, including the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation; the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, and International Cooperative Administrative Support Services, Washington to the Under Secretary for Management. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with WHA, M/PRI, OBO, and M)

Recommendation CFR 4: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in coordination with the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, and the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should form a working group of concerned offices and agencies to produce an agreed-upon plan for rationalizing and reconciling future resource needs for the mission in Colombia with operational responsibilities and appropriations. (Action: WHA, in coordination with M/PRI and OBO)

Recommendation CFR 5: Embassy Bogotá should request, and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should approve and present to the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services Interagency Council, funding to hire bilingual telephone operators for 24-hour, seven-day-a-week switchboard service. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with WHA)

Recommendation CFR 6: The Bureau of Human Resources, in coordination with the Office of the Legal Adviser, should address the issues described in the Price Waterhouse Coopers report, and provide Embassy Bogotá with instructions or approval to take the steps necessary to establish a pension system for local employees that is consistent with both Colombian and American laws and regulations, and that provides adequate insurance coverage, as well as available tax benefits. (Action: DGHR, in coordination with L)

Recommendation CFR 7: Embassy Bogotá, based on instructions or approval from the Department, should establish a pension plan for locally employed staff that is consistent with both Colombian and American laws and regulations, and that provides adequate insurance coverage, as well as available tax benefits. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

COMPLIANCE FOLLOW-UP REVIEW INFORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL SERVICES OFFICE

Embassy Bogotá is not conducting periodic spot checks of expendable and nonexpendable inventories. These spot checks should be used as an opportunity to identify items for disposal.

Informal Recommendation CFR 1: Embassy Bogotá should ensure that the accountable property officer personally conducts periodic spot checks of nonexpendable and expendable inventories. The general services office should use these spot checks as an opportunity to identify items for disposal.

The Embassy Bogotá ICASS warehouse is crowded, cluttered, and dirty. Four times a year the general services office submits to auction items that are no longer useful to ICASS.

Informal Recommendation CFR 2: Embassy Bogotá should increase the frequency with which excess items are disposed of via warehouse sales or other processes.

Embassy Bogotá does not have a plan for replacing or retaining nonexpendable supplies, and there does not appear to be an organized method for determining which items are to be kept and which to be sold.

Informal Recommendation CFR 3: Embassy Bogotá should develop acquisition, replacement, and disposal plans for nonexpendable property. This might be done in a step-by-step manner to avoid burn out of employees.

Much of the space in the ICASS warehouse is marked out for other agencies, and several of these agencies have what seems to be an excessive amount of residential furniture, much of which is in poor condition.

Informal Recommendation CFR 4: Embassy Bogotá should work with other agencies to reduce the number of items they store in the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services warehouse.

MOTOR POOL

The Daily Vehicle Use Record Forms (OF-108) have not been signed by embassy personnel who use motor pool vehicles.

Informal Recommendation CFR 5: Embassy Bogotá should require all motor pool passengers, including the deputy chief of mission, to sign the Daily Vehicle Use Record Form (OF-108) in accordance with Department regulations.

The motor pool section has not established maximum and minimum stock levels for the official automobiles' stock of spare parts and lubricants.

Informal Recommendation CFR 6: Embassy Bogotá should keep stock levels according to the post's needs in accordance with Department regulations.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

During the CFR, the OIG team found that a high percentage of the grant files sampled for FY 2006 and FY 2007 lacked reports from the grantees, in accordance with Article V of the grant document.

Informal Recommendation CFR 7: Embassy Bogotá should routinely follow-up with grantees to ensure that they submit the required reports and then place these reports in the grant file.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

	Name	Arrival Date
Ambassador	William R. Brownfield	08/07
Deputy Chief of Mission	Brian A. Nichols	08/07
Chiefs of Sections:		
Consular	William J. Martin	11/07
Economic	Lawrence J. Gumbiner	08/06
Management	Gregory S. Stanford	08/07
Narcotics Affairs	Perry L. Holloway	07/05
Political	John Greemer	10/07
Public Affairs	Mark Wentworth	04/07
Regional Security	Stephen P. Brunette	06/08
Regional Affairs	David R. Fitzgerald	06/07
Other Agencies:		
Animal and Plant Health	Darya Chehrezad	02/06
Inspection Service		
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives	Orlando Blanco	10/05
Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Luis J. Sierra	08/07
Department of Defense	Cdr. Kevin D. Saderup	08/05
Department of Justice	Paul S. Vaky	08/04
Defense Intelligence Agency	Col. Mark Wilkins (DAO)	08/07
Foreign Agricultural Service	Richard T. Drennan	08/06
Drug Enforcement Administration	Jay B. Bergman	11/06

Federal Bureau of Investigation	Joseph A. Jeziorski, Jr.	01/07
Commercial Service	Margaret A. Hanson-Muse	07/07
International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program	Gary T. Sheridan	03/03
Internal Revenue Service	Olga E. Acevedo	03/04
Justice Sector Reform Program	Paul S. Vaky	08/04
Office of Foreign Assets Control Overseas Prosecutorial Development and Training	Mark A. Samara	06/08
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Paul S. Vaky	08/04
U.S. Agency for International Development	Maj. Humberto B. Ramirez	07/03
U.S. Secret Service	Susan G. Reichle, Acting	08/05
	Dennis Ramos-Martinez	02/06

ABBREVIATIONS

A&T	Administrative and technical
ACS	American citizens services
CFR	Compliance follow-up review
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
FONDEUSA	Abbreviation of “Fondación de USA”
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
LE	Locally employed
NAS	Narcotics affairs section
NIV	Nonimmigrant visa
NSDD-38	National Security Defense Directive-38
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PAS	Public affairs section
SHEM	Safety, health, and environmental management
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

APPENDIX

Status of 2006 Inspection Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, should designate and assign an Andean regional English language officer to work with the Colombian Ministry of Education, the binational centers, and educational institutions in Colombia and neighboring Andean countries. (Action: WHA, in coordination with ECA)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: PAS reported no record in its files of a request to Washington for a position, nor did the Washington office have such a record. However, in response to this recommendation, Washington assigned a regional English language officer to Lima with responsibility for Colombia. She makes several visits a year to consult and work with the binational commissions and educational institutions in Bogotá. Her last visit was in June 2008. The public affairs officer noted that one regional language officer was better than none. The post gets good benefit from it.

Recommendation 2: Embassy Bogotá should request, and the Department should approve, funding for public access control improvements that will facilitate the secure entry of 500 clients per hour and the screening of all American citizens requiring service. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with DS and OBO)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: Embassy Bogotá routes American citizens services customers through a separate compound access control. The remaining consular entry is dedicated to nonimmigrant and immigrant visa applicants.

Recommendation 3: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Office of Rightsizing the U.S. Government Presence Overseas, should conduct a comprehensive interagency rightsizing review of all positions under the Ambassador's authority. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with M/R)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: The status of rightsizing at Embassy Bogotá is discussed in the text of this report. Three new formal recommendations related to rightsizing have been included in this report.

Recommendation 4: Embassy Bogotá should develop and implement a plan to consolidate the warehouse, motor pool, procurement, and financial operations of the U.S. agencies in Colombia. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable alternative compliance

CFR Findings: The status of consolidation of support services at Embassy Bogotá is discussed in the text of this report.

Recommendation 5: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, should develop and implement a process to obtain from the government of Colombia refunds or exemptions from the value-added tax paid by contractors, grantees, and other government agencies. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with DS and INL)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: The NAS has implemented procedures to bypass the payment of value-added tax on certain purchases. During the time period between October 1, 2007, and June 30, 2008, the value of these purchases was \$12.7 million. The total value-added tax that NAS was not required to pay during this time period was over \$2 million.

Recommendation 6: The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should identify all major contracts applicable to Colombia and provide copies of these to the Embassy Bogotá personnel who have contract management and financial management responsibilities. (Action: INL, in coordination with A)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: The financial management officer verified that his office continued to receive copies of any contracts from NAS for which he certified payments. The NAS office continues to receive copies of contracts applicable to Colombia from INL.

Recommendation 7: Embassy Bogotá should check each grantee individual or organization against the Excluded Parties List Web site and confirm that the grantee is not listed and annotate that fact in the appropriate block on Form DS-4012. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: The folders for the grant files include a box that is to be checked to indicate that the grantee individual or organization has been checked against the excluded parties list. In the grant files randomly selected, the box had been checked.

Recommendation 8: Embassy Bogotá should write and implement a policy covering overtime hours worked. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: Embassy Bogotá issued a policy dated December 12, 2005, noting that failure to give eligible employees the choice between compensatory time and overtime was a violation of Federal law.

Recommendation 9: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Department, should submit Danger Pay Factors Form DS-578 to the Office of Allowances at the earliest opportunity. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with A)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: Embassy Bogotá is up to date with the submission of danger pay information.

Recommendation 10: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with the Office of the Legal Adviser and the Bureau of Human Resources, should review the comparator companies' practices, local law, and U.S. laws and regulations and provide locally employed staff with an appropriate savings plan benefit. (Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with L and DGHR)

Pre-CFR Status: Resolved/Open

CFR Findings: OIG closed the 2006 recommendation and replaced it with others designed to achieve the same purpose. This issue is discussed in the body of this report under Resource Management.

Recommendation 11: Embassy Bogotá should crosswalk Position PSA-0559, the incumbent employee, and all of the financial management functions from positions PSA-0559 and N70222 to the financial management office. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: All financial management functions are performed by the financial management office. The human resources office did not have a record of position PSA-0559.

Recommendation 12: Embassy Bogotá should rewrite the job description of Position N70222 and assign the incumbent full-time responsibilities for program management, including grants management, program funding management, very important persons invitational travel, print shop management, and other administrative duties that relate specifically to the public affairs section's programs and program budget. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: The position description for Position N70222 was written in May 2006 and rewritten on July 14, 2008. This position was converted to A53224, and at the time of the CFR, it was vacant.

Recommendation 13: Embassy Bogotá should discontinue the practice of maintaining cuff accounts in the public affairs section and instead obtain the Abacus software from the Foreign Service Institute to assist in managing program funds. (Action: Embassy Bogotá, in coordination with FSI)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: The financial management office handles all of the public affairs accounts, including program funds and is not using either cuff records or Abacus software.

Recommendation 14: Embassy Bogotá should reconcile monthly guard contract invoices with electronic guard monitoring reports to verify delivery of all services rendered and deduct from contract payments when services are not delivered. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: The Embassy is in compliance with this recommendation. The LE guard coordinator checks the guard electronic monitoring reports with the monthly guard contract invoices and brings any discrepancies to the assistant regional security officer's attention.

Recommendation 15: Embassy Bogotá should draft and implement a memorandum of understanding that outlines the narcotics affairs section's information management staff's responsibilities on the Department's Sensitive But Unclassified network, including the information management officer's oversight responsibilities. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: Embassy Bogotá provided the inspection team with a copy of the memorandum of understanding between the embassy's information management officer and NAS, dated March 7, 2007.

Recommendation 16: Embassy Bogotá should designate the information program officer as the information systems security officer for the Sensitive But Unclassified network, the information systems officer as the information systems security officer for the classified network, and an information management specialist in the information processing center as the alternate information systems security officer for both networks. (Action: Embassy Bogotá)

Pre-CFR Status: Closed on the basis of acceptable compliance

CFR Findings: Embassy Bogotá designated information systems security officers for the Sensitive But Unclassified and Classified networks in August 2007. The Embassy provided the OIG team with a cable designating the information system security officers.

Status of 2006 Inspection Informal Recommendations

Informal recommendations cover operational matters not requiring action by organizations outside the inspected unit and/or the parent regional bureau. Informal recommendations will not be subject to the OIG compliance process. However, any subsequent OIG inspection or on-site compliance review will assess the mission's progress in implementing the informal recommendations.

Public Diplomacy

The six member composition of the Fulbright Commission's board restricts continuity of operations. If members are excused or are absent for any reason, the board must cease operations for lack of a quorum.

Informal Recommendation 1: Embassy Bogotá should engage in an exchange of notes with the Government of Colombia on the Commission for Educational Exchange and Financing Programs (Fulbright Commission), seeking to increase the number of members on the commission's board of directors.

CFR Status: The embassy compliance report said that this idea was explored. However, guidance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and contacts in the Colombian Congress was that due to changes in Colombian law, the proposed change to expand the board membership could not be done by an exchange of notes, only by a rewrite of the bilateral agreement. The Embassy was told that politically, until the free trade agreement is passed by the U.S. Congress, a new Fulbright agreement would probably not pass the Colombian Congress. On the one or two occasions in which the embassy did not have a quorum for the commission meetings and needed to make a decision, the public affairs section circulated a decision memorandum by e-mail to all board members asking for their concurrence or for their refusal. This procedure worked well. If further discussion had been required or requested, the embassy planned to call a special meeting, but so far that has not been necessary. Commission business has not been held up for lack of a quorum.

Political Affairs

Embassy Bogotá reports well on Colombian Government successes but does not balance its political reporting with minority and opposition positions that would help Washington users understand other political factors at work in Colombia.

Political reporting is often done via e-mails or telephone calls to the bureau. This type of reporting excludes the full Washington community.

Informal Recommendation 2: Embassy Bogotá should send more widely distributed reporting cables to interested Washington agencies as a follow-up to its phone call and e-mail reporting to the bureau's country affairs office.

CFR Status: The Embassy's reporting by telegram has remained consistent at between 320-350 general distribution cables per year since the last inspection. WHA officers told OIG in the pre-CFR survey that, while more analytical reports would always be welcome, Embassy Bogotá's reporting in general was fully adequate for their needs. They also believed that Department officers would always expect Colombia's chronic crises to be covered by the fastest means possible, even though e-mail distribution was more limited than that of telegrams.

The political section has expanded its reporting to include information on the impact of regional conflict on domestic security. A factor in potential political instability is the large groups of displaced ethnic and indigenous minorities in Colombia.

Informal Recommendation 3: Embassy Bogotá should expand its reporting on ethnic and indigenous minorities and political stability vulnerabilities in Colombia.

CFR Status: The Embassy maintains that it has submitted quite a few reports on indigenous minorities and the Afro-Caribbean community, the latter being of particular interest. It expects to do more in this area and on political stability in general when the presently vacant analyst overseas position is filled later this year.

Economic Affairs

The economic section will lose two diplomatic readiness initiative rotational positions in the next fiscal year but will have additional reporting responsibilities if the proposed free-trade agreement is implemented and the economic picture in Colombia improves as a result of improved security. Several reporting positions in the political section cover issues that are closely aligned to economic issues, and some political positions also appear to be underemployed.

Informal Recommendation 4: Embassy Bogotá should examine its current staffing levels in the economic and political sections as a part of its rightsizing exercise, to see if it is possible to move one or two reporting positions from the political section into the economic section to cover the loss of the two rotational positions.

CFR Status: The recommendation was made moot by the transfer of a new economic position to Bogotá in 2006. That position is now permanent and has primary responsibility for free-trade agreement matters.

Consular Affairs

The consular section has recently developed an improved seven-day training program for new officers. The program consists of training in post-specific interviewing techniques, supplemented by ad hoc written materials developed by other entry-level officers.

Informal Recommendation 5: Embassy Bogotá should incorporate a training schedule, a table of contents, existing background materials, and post-specific standard operating procedures into a training handbook that can be retained and augmented as officers rotate through the consular section.

CFR Status: The section has a comprehensive training program for new officers. There is a handbook, hands-on period, and program of general familiarization with the section's responsibilities.

The consular section has a fulsome rotational program and assigns entry-level officers one or more portfolios in addition to their adjudication responsibilities. Decisions on rotations and portfolio assignments are transparent.

Informal Recommendation 6: Embassy Bogotá should inform consular officers early in their assignments about the complexities of managing a rotational program in a post the size of Bogotá and make the assignment process as participative as possible by meeting periodically with entry-level officers regarding their rotational opportunities.

CFR Status: There is an expanded rotational program that starts when the recommended advance information is provided. An active and wide-sweeping rotational program is managed by two entry-level officers who oversee not only intra-section moves, but also assignments as control officers, rotations to other sections and inter-post exchanges. The process is transparent and permits much negotiation.

Each entry-level officer manages one or more portfolios, in addition to his or her adjudication responsibilities. There are no standard operating procedures for most portfolios.

Informal Recommendation 7: Embassy Bogotá should assign each portfolio manager the task of preparing a standard operating procedure for a portfolio before it is handed over to a new manager.

CFR Status: This has been implemented. It has proven particularly useful in specialized areas like business visas.

Officers stretched into more senior positions head three of the consular section's four units. An entry-level officer doing immigrant visa work for the first time heads the complex immigrant visa unit.

Informal Recommendation 8: Embassy Bogotá should ensure that the consul general spends a portion of each day in the processing areas, in particular on the visa side, to lend support to the unit chiefs, provide feedback to the entry-level officers, and attend periodic unit meetings.

CFR Status: The consul general walks through the various units at least once every day, usually more.

One or two officers per day adjudicate applications for nonimmigrant visa renewal. Volume is very high, and only a small percentage of the applicants are interviewed, although their applications are scrutinized in desk adjudications after the applicants are fingerprinted.

Informal Recommendation 9: Embassy Bogotá should conduct a validation study of renewal cases to determine if abuse of status or fraud is involved in any significant proportion of these expeditiously processed cases.

CFR Status: The consular section conducted a validation study in 2006 and will conduct another study when the new fraud prevention manager arrives in August.

The immigrant visa unit uses a call center to allocate appointments to persons who were denied an immigrant visa pending additional documentation. The unit also receives applicants on one to two afternoons each week solely to give them appointment letters and application forms for their immigrant visa interviews when the originals have been lost in the local mail.

Informal Recommendation 10: Embassy Bogotá should implement an alternative method for immigrant visa applicants to provide missing documents resulting from initial visa interviews without requiring the applicant to come to the consular section in person. Personal appointments should be reserved only for urgent or sensitive cases.

CFR Status: Immigrant visa applicants who require additional documents may schedule expedited appointments (1½ business days) through the call centers. Applicants are not required to return in person. Rather, they may send the required documents with someone else as long as they provide a letter of authorization. In addition, for all return cases, officers review files prior to calling the applicant to the window. If the applicant can be approved, the case is approved in the system and passed to the cashier who informs the applicant the visa has been approved (saving valuable officer time). Unfortunately, previous attempts to allow applicants to send pending documentation via courier service have not worked.

Informal Recommendation 11: Embassy Bogotá should resume the practice of sending duplicate appointment packets to the U.S. petitioners and to the local beneficiaries.

CFR Status: The immigrant visa unit has posted all forms, packets, and the appointment list on the Internet. Therefore, it is no longer necessary to mail packets to petitioners (saving time and thousands of dollars). The unit sends all petitioners a copy of the system-generated instructions package and appointment package letters when the Embassy sends them to the beneficiary. In addition to these letters, the unit sends K Visa petitioners an additional letter with specific K-related information.

When its workload skyrocketed, the immigrant visa unit stopped accepting telephone or e-mail inquiries from the general public, referring them instead to the call center or the website. The volume of inquiries coming into the embassy switchboard and the e-mail boxes of other sections has increased significantly as a result.

Informal Recommendation 12: Embassy Bogotá should develop a procedure whereby the call center can forward urgent cases or inquiries outside their competence to the immigrant visa unit, which should then establish a mechanism to address some of those inquiries by phone or e-mail.

CFR Status: The system in place at the time of the last inspection is outmoded, and the new one works much better. The immigrant visa unit uses a public e-mail address in place of telephone/personal public attention hours. The consular section responds to most inquiries within a week. It now has public telephone hours for two hours once a week, and answers specific questions (in person) once a week. Because the packets can all be downloaded, applicants no longer need to come to the Embassy to pick up forms.

The Embassy has over 10,000 American citizens registered countrywide through the Internet-based registration system, hundreds with invalid e-mail addresses. There has been no revamping of the warden system since the inception of this system, nor has there been any effort to include hotels, universities, or businesses in the e-mail network.

Informal Recommendation 13: Embassy Bogotá should give priority to overhauling its warden system, drawing on resources outside of the small American citizens services unit, if necessary, to develop contacts at hotels, universities, and businesses.

CFR Status: The consular section has reorganized its warden system by ensuring that all wardens have been inputted into the ACS+ system and that their information is easily accessible. The ACS unit has increasingly used its wardens to be the initial responders to Americans in need of assistance when they are outside of Bogotá and has been collecting information regarding what special resources wardens may possess that could prove useful to the Embassy in case of emergency. The ACS unit has also developed an expansive contact list that includes 136 pages of contacts not only in the Government of Colombia, but also at hospitals, hotels, funeral homes, universities, and many other private businesses that are located in the major cities around Colombia. The Embassy has close ties with organizations such as the American Chamber of Commerce, the American Women's Club, and other embassies in Bogotá.

Law Enforcement and Narcotics Assistance

The authorized staff size of the NAS is appropriate, except for the one local-hire position that should be reprogrammed or abolished. The procurement agent position (number A60049) is no longer needed.

Informal Recommendation 14: Embassy Bogotá should reprogram or abolish procurement agent position number A60049.

CFR Status: The position is vacant. Its future status will be determined by redoing the computer aided job evaluation exercise that is now being performed and that will involve all positions. This is therefore only one among many positions likely to be affected.

Embassy Bogotá's NAS developed a subsidiary financial system, which it calls the local accounting system, to enhance its financial recording capabilities. INL was sufficiently impressed by the system's capabilities to base its worldwide local financial management system upon the Bogotá model.

Informal Recommendation 15: Embassy Bogotá should, prior to making a commitment with a contractor to update its local accounting system, consult with the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and review the local financial management system to see whether that system meets its needs.

CFR Status: Bogotá's local system became an INL template and has been widely used abroad. However, because of problems with budgeting and budget codes, it has been replaced by a new local financial management system.

Financial Management

The embassy collects payments for employees' personal use of government long-distance telephones. Under 5 FAM 523, employees must use calling cards for toll calls, except in emergencies.

Informal Recommendation 16: Embassy Bogotá should issue an administrative notice reminding employees of the restrictions on personal use of government telephones for long-distance calls.

CFR Status: The Embassy is drafting a policy on personal use of telephones and blackberries.

Grants Management

The grants files do not consistently include a brief narrative report of the accomplishments attributable to the expenditures to the grants office in accordance with Article V of the grant document.

Informal Recommendation 17: Embassy Bogotá should instruct the grants officer or the grants officer representative to follow up with the grantee to receive reports, and it should place them in the grants file.

CFR Status: The OIG team found that the grants officer or the grants officer representative was not routinely following up with the grantee to receive reports. This informal recommendation was reissued as an informal recommendation in the CFR. The public affairs officer noted that the section was going to institute a new system for getting the kind of feedback they wanted. Those grantees that do not cooperate will be placed on a red list, meaning no possibility of another grant in the future.

Some grants were erroneously issued to commercial vendors for direct services to the U.S. Government.

Informal Recommendation 18: Embassy Bogotá should instruct the grants officer to review the vendor and type of services provided to determine if a grant document is the correct vehicle, rather than a procurement.

CFR Status: The OIG team did not find any grants in FY 2007 or FY 2008 that had been issued to commercial vendors.

General Services

Household effects and personally owned vehicles of embassy personnel are flown to and from the post, except for the shipments for law enforcement agencies, which receive air and sea shipments.

Informal Recommendation 19: Embassy Bogotá should revise its shipment policy to determine if a mix of air and sea shipments is feasible and secure.

CFR Status: In 2006, the Embassy performed a cost comparison of the difference between the cost of surface and air shipments between Miami and Bogotá. The Embassy was paying approximately \$13,500 to ship 7,200 pounds of household effects and \$4,800 to ship a personally owned vehicle to Miami by air. The estimates for surface shipments were about \$7,600 and \$2,700, respectively. For 200 household effects and 150 personally owned vehicle shipments a year, the embassy saved around \$1.5 million the first year, and continues to realize significant cost savings as a result of changing from air to surface shipments.

Embassy Bogotá's purchase card holders in the general services office are not using the cards efficiently.

Informal Recommendation 20: Embassy Bogotá should review the usage of purchase card holders.

CFR Status: Embassy Bogotá is using purchase cards regularly. The contracting officer checks the Citibank monthly report with the purchase card holders, and purchase card purchases are tracked on the Integrated Logistics Management System "Ariba" software. The Embassy does not do bulk funding to each purchase card holder (with the exception of the information management officer), and treats purchase card purchases as regular purchase orders. In FY 2007, the financial management center charged \$795,703 to purchase cards; as of July 10, 2008, the cumulative FY 2008 charges were \$679,265, which would equate to an annual amount of \$1 million.

The chancery warehouse has some serious safety issues, including an unstable wooden floor on its second floor and no railing on one side of the stairwells.

Informal Recommendation 21: Embassy Bogotá should fix the safety issues of the chancery warehouse.

CFR Status: The embassy added a railing on the upper level of the chancery warehouse. The second floor is stable.

The chancery warehouse does not have metal storage shelves at the offsite warehouse to maximize the space.

Informal Recommendation 22: Embassy Bogotá should purchase metal storage shelves and install them in the offsite warehouse.

CFR Status: The wording of this informal recommendation is confusing, as it seems to apply to two separate warehouses — that on the chancery grounds, as well as the ICASS warehouse located offsite. The CFR team believes that the recommendation was meant to apply to the offsite ICASS warehouse. This informal recommendation has not been completed pending final decisions on consolidation of the three offsite warehouses at post (ICASS, NAS, and USAID). This issue is discussed in the resource management section of this report.

Embassy Bogotá does not have a written replacement-cycle program for residential property such as furniture and appliances.

Informal Recommendation 23: Embassy Bogotá should develop a plan for the management of all nonexpendable items, including an acquisition plan, a replacement-cycle program for furniture and appliances, and a justification for the quantities of items to be stored in the warehouses.

CFR Status: The embassy has not developed a plan for management of nonexpendable items, and the OIG team found that the ICASS warehouse was not well managed. This issue is discussed in the resource management section of this report.

The information management staff relocates information management property, but it but does not always notify the property section when items have been moved and where they have been placed. Doing so would allow the property's location to be updated in the nonexpendable property software application.

Informal Recommendation 24: Embassy Bogotá's information management and property sections should prepare a memorandum of understanding to establish accountability and strengthen inventory controls, including the movements of all information management equipment.

CFR Status: Embassy Bogotá prepared a memorandum of understanding dated June 11, 2008, between the general services officer and the information management officer regarding the movement of computer equipment.

Embassy Bogotá does not have any record of having conducted periodic spot checks of expendable and nonexpendable inventories.

Informal Recommendation 25: Embassy Bogotá should ensure that the accountable property officer personally conducts periodic spot checks of nonexpendable and expendable inventories.

CFR Status: The CFR was conducted in July 2008. The most recent spot check on record was May 2007. The general services office conducted a spot check of the warehouse during the CFR. OIG is repeating this informal recommendation.

Embassy staff, while in temporary housing, gets little advance information about the status of their permanently assigned housing.

Informal Recommendation 26: Embassy Bogotá should create a status report folder in the embassy's shared drive or in the computer software Interactive Administrative Support Package and use it to update newcomers about their assigned housing while they are in temporary housing.

CFR Status: Embassy Bogotá is providing information, floor plans, and photos to incoming personnel about their housing. The community liaison office coordinator and two American housing assistants keep newcomers informed about the status of their housing.

Facilities Maintenance

Embassy Bogotá does not have an active safety, health, and environmental management (SHEM) program. The SHEM committee has not met since 2002, and minutes were not kept of previous SHEM committee meetings.

Informal Recommendation 27: Embassy Bogotá should reestablish an active occupational safety, health, and environmental management program that meets at least semiannually and keep minutes of such meetings.

CFR Status: Embassy Bogotá established the program in 2007. The latest committee meeting minutes, as well as minutes of an accident committee, were provided to the inspection team.

There were some outstanding recommendations in the 2003 SHEM and fire and safety reports.

Informal Recommendation 28: Embassy Bogotá should implement corrective action for the remaining recommendations in the January 2003 safety, health, and environmental management report and the May 2003 fire and safety report.

CFR Status: Since the last inspection, Embassy Bogotá had another SHEM visit that provided the embassy with 30 findings **that have not been addressed**. A copy of the findings not addressed was provided to the inspection team.

Some of the fire extinguishers at the chancery, warehouse, and some residential apartments have not been checked. Some fire extinguishers are missing their “checked” tags.

Informal Recommendation 29: Embassy Bogotá should establish a schedule to check all fire extinguishers in the embassy buildings and residential apartments in accordance with Department regulations.

CFR Status: The fire extinguishers are on a yearly maintenance schedule. Fire extinguishers in residences are checked at the time the residence is vacated or reoccupied.

Motor Pool

The Daily Vehicle Use Record Forms (OF-108) have not been signed by embassy personnel who use motor pool vehicles.

Informal Recommendation 30: Embassy Bogotá should require all motor pool passengers, including the deputy chief of mission, to sign the Daily Vehicle Use Record Form (OF-108) in accordance with Department regulations.

CFR Status: The embassy operates home to office transportation via prearranged group shuttles, and the passengers do not sign the Daily Vehicle Use Record form for these trips. OIG agrees with this practice. At the time of the CFR, the embassy was not routinely requesting that passengers sign the vehicle use record, but this practice was re-emphasized during the CFR. OIG has repeated this informal recommendation in this report.

The motor pool section has not established maximum and minimum stock levels for the official automobiles' stock of spare parts and lubricants.

Informal Recommendation 31: Embassy Bogotá should keep stock levels according to the post's needs in accordance with Department regulations.

CFR Status: Embassy Bogotá does not keep stock levels for automobile spare parts and lubricants, but plans to do so once the warehouses are consolidated. OIG has repeated this informal recommendation.

Embassy Bogotá does not have an up-to-date and comprehensive administrative notice on the use of official vehicles. Motor pool shuttle vans do have an administrative notice on the use of official vehicles that is dated 2003. In 2004, Embassy Bogotá issued an administrative notice explaining the fees for other authorized use of official vehicles.

Informal Recommendation 32: Embassy Bogotá should review and reissue a comprehensive administrative notice on the use and fees for official and other authorized use of U.S. government vehicles.

CFR Status: Embassy Bogotá issued a comprehensive mission policy on transportation, including the use and fees for official vehicles on May 7, 2008.

Some foreign affairs agencies and other agencies at post do not follow the mission vehicle policy.

Informal Recommendation 33: Embassy Bogotá should ensure that all agencies at post follow the mission vehicle policy. Any circumstances that preclude agencies from adhering to the policy should be documented.

CFR Status: The May 7, 2008, mission policy on transportation allows agencies at post to fulfill transportation requirements that are beneficial to the U.S. government, safe, and consistent with sound management practices.

The 2003 motor transportation policy has the signature of the former Ambassador authorizing the use of government official vehicles for home-to-office transportation of the deputy chief of mission and other mission employees and waiving charges for home-to-office transportation. However, the policy has not been updated with the current Ambassador's authorization.

Informal Recommendation 34: Embassy Bogotá should update the motor transportation policy document with the signature of the current Ambassador,

authorizing the use of the government official vehicles for home-to-office transportation for the deputy chief of mission and other mission employees and waiving charges for home-to-office transportation, if appropriate.

CFR Status: The Embassy issued an updated mission policy on transportation on May 7, 2008.

Fuel information is not recorded on the Monthly Fuel Consumption Record, Form DS-1775.

Informal Recommendation 35: Embassy Bogotá should record monthly fuel consumption on the Monthly Fuel Consumption Record, Form DS-1775, in accordance with Department regulations.

CFR Status: The embassy is recording fuel consumption in a post database. The database provides the same information as DS-1775. However, OIG found that once the information was gathered, it was not being analyzed or used to identify potential fuel savings. OIG suggested that the post review the fuel consumption information on a regular basis.

Family Member Employment

Position descriptions and qualifications are determined by the position's supervisor. Some supervisors have requested Spanish-language capability at a higher level than may actually be needed for a position's duties and responsibilities.

Informal Recommendation 36: Embassy Bogotá should require supervisors to justify in writing the level of language qualifications required.

CFR Status: The Embassy now has the supervisor of the advertised position complete a form to justify the level of Spanish requested. This information is placed on every position description or funding availability request.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Embassy Bogotá advertises LE staff vacancies through the Bogotá intranet and Internet Web sites, and therefore may not be reaching a sufficiently wide range of applicants such as those who lack Internet connectivity. The Embassy needs to engage in practices that foster diversity in recruitment.

Informal Recommendation 37: Embassy Bogotá should work with the Bureau of Human Resources to establish practices that foster diversity in local recruitment.

CFR Status: Hard copies of vacancy announcements are left at the door of the human resources office. They are sent to local newspapers, universities, manpower operations, etc. Different offices might request different types of distribution of vacancy announcements. Newspaper advertisements can cost as much as 500,000 pesos for one ad, and thus placing announcements in newspapers depends on the availability of funding.

Dissemination of Information

Embassy Bogotá's intranet Web site provides useful information for mission staff members, but mission policies are only complete for 2005, and staff announcements are not purged for relevancy.

Informal Recommendation 38: Embassy Bogotá should assign a management office staff member to regularly update and keep current the mission policies and staff announcements.

CFR Status: The newly-arrived office management specialist in the management office and the management counselor are reviewing the mission policies and staff announcements to identify those that should be updated. This activity was not done before the CFR.

Community Liaison

Despite the fact that Embassy Bogotá has a bilateral work agreement with the Colombian Government, most family member employment is within the mission. The Embassy does not have information on U.S. companies or other institutions that may be able to use English speakers, nor does it have an employment and education officer.

Informal Recommendation 39: Embassy Bogotá should dedicate resources in the community liaison office to gather employment information within the American or multinational community so that family members can take advantage of the bilateral work agreement.

CFR Status: With the assistance of the Bureau of Management's Family Liaison Office in the Department, Embassy Bogotá established a SNAP coordinator position in May 2007, which is being funded by the Family Liaison Office for the first two years. In 2009, the embassy ICASS council will determine whether the position will be continued under ICASS funding. Although the position was vacant at the time of the CFR, a replacement for the original SNAP coordinator has been hired and is awaiting clearance.

Information Management

Embassy Bogotá's information management resources staff is not fully aware of all of the Department Sensitive But Unclassified and Classified network connections in other agency offices.

Informal Recommendation 40: Embassy Bogotá should label all Department Internet, Sensitive But Unclassified, and Classified cable connections, and create and maintain a list of all such locations.

CFR Status: Embassy Bogotá complied with this recommendation. All Department Internet, Sensitive But Unclassified, and Classified cable connections are labeled. The Embassy provided a list of locations to the inspection team.

The information processing center staff and information management staff of the NAS do not maintain the required systems maintenance and operations logs, despite the requirements of 12 FAM 622.5 and 632.5.

Informal Recommendation 41: Embassy Bogotá should create and maintain systems operations and maintenance logs for all servers on the Sensitive But Unclassified and Classified networks.

CFR Status: Embassy Bogotá complied with this recommendation and created and maintains a systems operations and maintenance log for all servers. The Embassy provided the inspection team with a copy of the various logs.

The information technology contingency plan is not integrated into the embassy Emergency Action Plan as required by 5 FAM 121.8 (a).

Informal Recommendation 42: Embassy Bogotá should include the information technology contingency plan in the Emergency Action Plan.

CFR Status: Embassy Bogotá complied with this recommendation and provided the inspector with a signed document from the current regional security

officer that states that the regional security officer has reviewed the information technology contingency plan and found it to be in compliance with the Embassy's emergency action plan.

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