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Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

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ISP-I-26-08

Office of Inspections

December 2025

# **Inspection of Embassy Wellington and Constituent Post, New Zealand, Cook Islands, and Niue**

BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

UNCLASSIFIED



# HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

ISP-I-26-08

## What OIG Inspected

OIG inspected the executive direction, policy and program implementation, resource management, and information management operations of Embassy Wellington. This inspection included Consulate General Auckland.

## What OIG Recommends

OIG made 19 recommendations to Embassy Wellington. In its comments on the draft report, the embassy concurred with all 19 recommendations. OIG considers all 19 recommendations resolved. The embassy's formal response is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.

December 2025

OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS

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**Inspection of Embassy Wellington and Constituent Post, New Zealand, Cook Islands, and Niue**

## What OIG Found

- Mission New Zealand's Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim, and acting Deputy Chief of Mission generally complied with Department of State standards for tone at the top and standards of conduct, execution of foreign policy goals and objectives, adherence to internal management controls, security and emergency planning, and equal employment opportunity. The Front Office emphasized professionalism in the workplace and fostered employee resiliency.
- The delineation of Embassy Wellington's responsibilities for the U.S. Antarctic Program was unclear. Specifically, mission staff did not have clarity on who was responsible for emergency response and assistance, and law enforcement or security support if a disaster or crime occurs involving U.S. citizens in the Antarctic region.
- The mission had deficiencies related to public diplomacy, consular, resource management, and information management operations.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Office of Inspector General (OIG) evaluated the executive direction, policy and program implementation, resource management, and information management operations of Embassy Wellington, New Zealand, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980.<sup>1</sup> The inspection included Consulate General Auckland. A related classified inspection report includes discussion of the security program, issues affecting the safety of mission personnel and facilities, and execution of foreign policy.

On January 21, 2025, the Secretary of State issued guidance to the Department of State (Department) on the administration's priorities.<sup>2</sup> The Department subsequently disseminated initial guidance on foreign assistance, public diplomacy, consular operations, personnel evaluation, planning and policy documents, and other Department activities. At the time of this inspection, the Department was developing detailed implementation guidance for these and other policy initiatives. Therefore, OIG did not assess the embassy's implementation of the new guidance as part of this inspection.



**Figure 1:** Map of New Zealand (Source: CIA World Factbook, as of June 2025).

## BACKGROUND

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The United States and New Zealand formalized diplomatic relations in 1942 when the United Kingdom recognized New Zealand's autonomy within the British Empire, but the first U.S. diplomatic presence dates to 1838.

The government of New Zealand attaches significant importance to continued close political, economic, and social ties with the United States. In 2010, the United States and New Zealand signed the Wellington Declaration,<sup>3</sup> outlining future cooperation, and then the Washington Declaration in 2012,<sup>4</sup> which strengthened the defense relationship. The United States and New Zealand have had a bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in place since 1992. U.S. goods exports to New Zealand totaled \$4.2 billion in 2022, and imports totaled \$5.4 billion.

The United States and New Zealand work together on a range of scientific areas, especially research in the Antarctic. Christchurch is the staging area for joint logistical support operations serving three

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for additional details.

<sup>2</sup> Cable 25 STATE 5156, "New Administration Priorities," January 21, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> The Wellington Declaration on a New Strategic Partnership Between New Zealand and The United States of America, November 4, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> The Washington Declaration on Defense Cooperation Between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Ministry of Defense of New Zealand and the New Zealand Defense Force, June 19, 2012.

U.S. permanent Antarctic research stations: McMurdo, Amundsen-Scott, and Palmer Stations.

The Ambassador to New Zealand, when encumbered, is also accredited to Niue, Cook Islands, and Samoa. In Samoa, the daily management of Embassy Apia was carried out by a resident Chargé d’Affaires, ad interim (Chargé).<sup>5</sup> Mission New Zealand supports Embassy Apia with consular, public diplomacy, management, and security services.<sup>6</sup>

According to the Department’s biennial ranking,<sup>7</sup> Mission New Zealand is considered a category 3 embassy. Specifically, the Department describes a category 3 embassy as a “medium-sized mission in a country with which the United States has an active bilateral relationship.” Other U.S. government agencies present at Mission New Zealand include the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security, and Justice.

## INSPECTION RESULTS

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OIG found Mission New Zealand’s Chargé and acting Deputy Chief of Mission<sup>8</sup> generally complied with Department standards for tone at the top and standards of conduct, execution of foreign policy goals and objectives, adherence to internal controls, security and emergency planning, equal employment opportunity, and developing and mentoring first- and second-tour employees.<sup>9</sup> In interviews with OIG, U.S. direct-hire and locally employed (LE) staff told OIG that they appreciated the Front Office’s attention to instituting standard operating procedures and processes, emphasizing professionalism in the workplace, and fostering employee resiliency. The Consul General in Auckland received praise from consulate general staff members for her leadership and management, particularly for advocating on their behalf with Embassy Wellington counterparts for greater coordination and consultation.<sup>10</sup>

OIG reviewed Mission New Zealand’s Political and Economic Section, which operates as a single unit even though its staff members are divided between Embassy Wellington and Consulate General Auckland. OIG assessed leadership and management, policy implementation and

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<sup>5</sup> See OIG, *Inspection of Embassy Apia, Samoa* (ISP-I-26-09, report not released at the time of this inspection report’s publication).

<sup>6</sup> Consulate General Auckland provides consular services for all of New Zealand. Embassy Wellington does not have a Consular Section. Under the provisions of a 2020 memorandum of understanding, consular staff from Consulate General Auckland periodically visit Embassy Apia to provide routine consular services such as visa interviews and passport application processing.

<sup>7</sup> The Department’s rankings of its overseas posts are based on the “level and type of work required to achieve our bilateral and multilateral core diplomatic mission.” Overseas posts are ranked on a scale from 1 to 5+.

<sup>8</sup> The Chargé, a Senior Foreign Service officer, assumed leadership of the embassy upon the departure of the former ambassador on January 16, 2025. The acting Deputy Chief of Mission, a Senior Foreign Service officer assigned by the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, arrived at the embassy on March 5, 2025, to serve in a temporary capacity until July 2025.

<sup>9</sup> The Department’s leadership and management principles outlined in 3 FAM 1214b are (1) model integrity, (2) plan strategically, (3) be decisive and take responsibility, (4) communicate, (5) learn and innovate constantly, (6) be self-aware, (7) collaborate, (8) value and develop people, (9) manage conflict, and (10) foster resilience.

<sup>10</sup> The Consul General in Auckland assumed her duties in July 2024.

coordination, and reporting, and found them generally in compliance with Department standards.

During this inspection, the mission addressed the following issues:

- The Public Diplomacy Sections updated the mission social media strategy and crisis communications plan and drafted a new mission media policy.
- The Diplomatic Technology (DT) units:
  - Conducted tabletop exercises of IT contingency plans on Sensitive But Unclassified and classified networks at Embassy Wellington.
  - Updated file permissions so staff had access to only their assigned section's files on the embassy's classified network.
  - Established and implemented a local IT configuration management protocol<sup>11</sup> for the mission.
  - Tested and posted cyber incident response plans for the embassy's unclassified and classified networks.
  - Updated the list of embassy personnel authorized to have access to the mailroom and server rooms to only staff who work in those areas.
  - Established and implemented ongoing mail screening procedures for diplomatic post office mail and packages in the mail screening facility at Embassy Wellington.
  - Posted daily and emergency mail screening standard operating procedures in the mailroom at Consulate General Auckland.
  - Published a memorandum that authorized Consulate General Auckland staff to pick up official pouch and diplomatic post office mail items addressed to their respective sections.
  - Updated the mission's mobile phone use policy to identify when a user will be responsible for the costs of personal calls made on U.S. government-issued mobile phones.

OIG determined Mission New Zealand lacked clarity on its emergency and security responsibilities with respect to the U.S. Antarctic Program as discussed in the Findings section below. Additionally, OIG found deficiencies in certain aspects of the mission's public diplomacy, consular operations, resource management, and information management operations, which are also detailed in the Findings section below.

OIG provided a draft of this report to Department entities for review and comment on the findings and recommendations. OIG issued 19 recommendations to Embassy Wellington. The embassy's complete response can be found in Appendix B. The embassy also provided technical comments that were incorporated into the report, as appropriate.

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<sup>11</sup> According to 5 FAM 114.6-2, a local configuration management protocol is the process in which "[the] system level change management team at the local post or bureau reviews changes affecting systems or applications for which the bureaus or posts are responsible."

## Findings

Executive Direction: Emergency Preparedness	
<b>Issue</b>	<p><b><i>Delineation of Mission Responsibilities for the U.S. Antarctic Program Was Unclear</i></b></p> <p>The National Science Foundation (NSF) manages the U.S. Antarctic Program and maintains facilities in New Zealand and in the Antarctic.<sup>12</sup> According to a 2003 memorandum of understanding (MOU)<sup>13</sup> between the Department<sup>14</sup> and NSF, the New Zealand chief of mission is responsible for the safety and welfare of U.S. government personnel in New Zealand. Roughly 90 percent of the approximately 3,000 U.S. government and contractor personnel stationed at NSF facilities in the Antarctic transited New Zealand.</p> <p>However, staff in Mission New Zealand told OIG they were unclear on what duties they would have—such as for emergency response and assistance, and law enforcement or security support if a disaster or crime occurs in the Antarctic involving U.S. citizens—and what would be handled by other U.S. government agencies. OIG determined Mission New Zealand could benefit from clarification from NSF on broader mission authorities, if any, in the Antarctic.</p>
<b>Criteria</b>	1 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 013.2 and the 2003 MOU between the Department and NSF
<b>Significance</b>	The lack of awareness of Mission New Zealand’s responsibilities could delay U.S. government response in the event of a crisis.
Recommendation 1	
Embassy Wellington, in coordination with the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should work with the National Science Foundation to clarify Mission New Zealand’s responsibilities for U.S. government employees and U.S. citizens stationed in the Antarctic. (Action: Embassy Wellington, in coordination with OES and DS)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>12</sup> Christchurch is the staging area for joint logistical support operations serving three U.S. permanent Antarctic research stations: McMurdo, Amundsen-Scott South Pole, and Palmer Stations.

<sup>13</sup> Department of State and National Science Foundation, “Memorandum of Understanding Between the Department of State and the National Science Foundation on Security Support Abroad U.S. Antarctic Program Office, New Zealand,” September 2003.

<b>Policy and Program Implementation: Public Diplomacy</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<p><b><i>Mission’s Implementation of the Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative Left Some Staff Confused About Roles and Responsibilities</i></b></p> <p>Although the mission’s implementation of the Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative<sup>15</sup> in 2022 followed Department guidelines, OIG found the organizational structure of the mission’s two Public Diplomacy Sections lacked clarity on division of duties, especially between the embassy and consulate general. Some staff noted they were unclear about roles and responsibilities because of duplicative, overlapping, or undefined responsibilities in the two sections’ organizational structures. This resulted in a lack of defined core educational outreach duties and the recurring need for embassy staff to travel to Auckland to facilitate media engagement there and in neighboring islands.</p>
<b>Criteria</b>	Department guidelines for the Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative, including cables 23 STATE 76022 and 20 STATE 73276, <sup>16</sup> and 3 FAM 7313.1(2), (4)
<b>Significance</b>	A lack of clarity and consensus about staff roles and responsibilities can undermine organizational effectiveness and risk not engaging strategic audiences to effectively advance mission objectives.
<b>Recommendation 2</b>	
Embassy Wellington, in coordination with the Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources for Public Diplomacy, should review the Public Diplomacy Sections’ organizational structures and position elements to optimize section effectiveness. (Action: Embassy Wellington, in coordination with R/PPR)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>14</sup> The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs’ Office of Ocean and Polar Affairs develops and coordinates U.S. foreign policy affecting the Antarctic region. According to 1 FAM 543b, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans, Fisheries, and Polar Affairs negotiates agreements in areas of responsibility and participates in interagency negotiations and implementation efforts.

<sup>15</sup> The Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative is a reorganization of the Department’s overseas public diplomacy sections that shifts public diplomacy practitioners to a policy-centered, audience-focused approach to advancing Integrated Country Strategy objectives. It replaces previous press and program silos with collaborative staff units organized around five functional clusters. The Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy’s Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources (R/PPR) oversees the initiative. All associated changes to section organization and positions require R/PPR approval.

<sup>16</sup> See Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy intranet site on the Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative; cable 23 STATE 76022, “Creating or Reclassifying Public Diplomacy Locally Employed Staff Position Classification – Post Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative (PDSI) Guidance,” July 6, 2023; and cable 20 STATE 73276, “Public Diplomacy Modernization Initiatives,” July 30, 2020.

<b>Policy and Program Implementation: Public Diplomacy</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<p><b><i>Public Diplomacy Award Files Lacked Required Documentation and Closeout</i></b>                      The Public Diplomacy Section’s grant file documentation did not consistently meet the requirements of the Federal Assistance Directive. OIG reviewed 20 public diplomacy awards issued from FY 2022 through FY 2024 that totaled \$1,972,185.<sup>17</sup> The grant files were missing documentation of competition and the merit review process for grant selection, evidence of performance monitoring, and final program reports by the grantee and assessment by the grants officer. Additionally, the section did not close out public diplomacy grants in accordance with Department standards. During this inspection, the section completed a new grants management standard operating procedure and began to close out awards, but many electronic grant files were overdue for closeout or missing documentation.</p>
<b>Criteria</b>	Federal Assistance Directive (October 2021, and later revisions), Chapter 2, Sections F and H; Chapter 4, Sections D.1.–D.6.; Chapter 5, Sections A and C
<b>Significance</b>	Although OIG found no evidence that the terms of the awarded grants were not met, failure to properly document and close out grant files can impair the section’s ability to identify and mitigate risk, monitor program implementation, evaluate program results, and ensure accountability for public diplomacy resources.
<b>Recommendation 3</b>	
Embassy Wellington should document and close out public diplomacy grants in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>17</sup> In a universe of 174 grants (45 open, 116 expired, 13 closed) from FY 2022 through FY 2025 totaling \$8,879,030, OIG reviewed 20 files totaling \$1,972,185.

<b>Policy and Program Implementation: Consular Operations</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b><i>Mission New Zealand's Consular Section Did Not Manage or Retire Immigrant Visa Records on Schedule</i></b> Of the Consular Section's approximately 150 refused or inactive cases, OIG reviewed a sample of 25 and found that 22 of those cases had not moved through the case termination process in the appropriate timeframe or were otherwise delayed in processing.
<b>Criteria</b>	9 FAM 601.6-3(A)a; 9 FAM 601.6-3(C)a, b(1); 9 FAM 601.6-3(D)a(1)(a)
<b>Significance</b>	Failure to properly manage and retire records may lead to mishandling case records or delaying case processing and cause the Consular Section to retain unnecessary personally identifiable information.
<b>Recommendation 4</b>	
Embassy Wellington should manage and retire immigrant visa cases in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<b>Policy and Program Implementation: Consular Operations</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b><i>Mission New Zealand's Consular Section Did Not Maintain Cashier Records According to Department Standards</i></b> Mission New Zealand's consular subcashiers did not maintain records in chronological order, did not retain certain required daily and monthly reports, and retained some records past their required destruction date.
<b>Criteria</b>	7 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-1 H-746.2
<b>Significance</b>	Without organized, complete records, the Consular Section may be unable to correctly reconcile fees collected against services provided or to resolve discrepancies.
<b>Recommendation 5</b>	
Embassy Wellington should maintain the Consular Section's cashier records according to Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<b>Resource Management: Human Resources</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<p><b><i>Mission Pension Plan for Locally Employed Staff Lacked Approval, and Obligating Documents Did Not Include Required Information</i></b></p> <p>Since 1984, the mission has implemented its own pension plan for LE staff. When the government of New Zealand developed a retirement savings plan in 2006, referred to as KiwiSaver, the mission continued to use its own plan, rather than participating in KiwiSaver. OIG determined that local law likely requires New Zealand government approval for both the mission's alternate plan and plan provider.<sup>18</sup> Neither mission staff nor the Bureau of Personnel and Training could provide documentation of such an approval. According to 3 FAM 7113.3, all agencies under chief of mission authority should follow the laws of the receiving state as long as those laws do not violate U.S. law or are inconsistent with U.S. public interest. Department guidance in 11 FAM 533a(2) and (3) states when an embassy determines it needs assistance interpreting local labor law, it can consult with outside counsel with prior Department authorization.</p> <p>Additionally, the documents used to obligate appropriated funds for the plan did not include information required by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), such as the total amount or cost, period of performance, and name of the contracting officer and vendor point of contact.</p>
<b>Criteria</b>	3 FAM 7113.3; KiwiSaver Act 2006 (New Zealand); Financial Markets Authority Act 2011 (New Zealand); Financial Markets Conduct Act 2013 (New Zealand); IR56 Taxpayer's Handbook (New Zealand); FAR 13.106-3; FAR Subpart 11.401; 4 FAM 223.1-6; 11 FAM 533a(2), (3)
<b>Significance</b>	Failure to obtain New Zealand government approval for the mission's alternate pension plan and provider could result in legal liability for the U.S. government and the mission. Additionally, failure to use adequate obligating documents could result in misappropriated funding.
<b>Recommendation 6</b>	
Embassy Wellington, in coordination with the Bureau of Personnel and Training, the Bureau of Global Acquisitions, and the Office of the Legal Adviser, should consult legal counsel in New Zealand to determine if its alternate pension plan complies with local law, and whether the obligating documents of the plan are adequate and in compliance with Department and other federal guidance. (Action: Embassy Wellington, in coordination with PERT, GA, and L)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<b>Resource Management: Facility Management</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b><i>Embassy Did Not Conduct Seismic Safety Evaluations for All Residences</i></b> OIG found 91 percent of the embassy’s residential properties did not have a seismic hazard rating assessment. According to 15 FAM 252.6b(1), embassies in elevated seismic areas, such as Wellington, should evaluate the seismic safety of their residential buildings using one or more approved methods. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations rates the occurrence or frequency of earthquakes in Wellington as “very high.”
<b>Criteria</b>	15 FAM 252.6b(1)
<b>Significance</b>	Failure to conduct seismic evaluations and mitigate identified deficiencies risks the life and safety of residents and could result in fatalities or serious injuries in the event of an earthquake.
<b>Recommendation 7</b>	
Embassy Wellington, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should evaluate all residential properties for seismic risk in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington, in coordination with OBO)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>18</sup> The mission’s pension plan predated the New Zealand government’s 2006 implementation of the KiwiSaver plan. As a result, OIG determined the mission would need to consult with local legal counsel to determine if the mission’s pension plan complies with local law.

<b>Resource Management: Facility Management</b>	
<b>Issue and Criteria</b>	<p><b><i>Mission Life Safety Programs Did Not Fully Comply With Department Standards</i></b></p> <p>OIG found the following deficiencies in life safety programs, which include fire protection and safety, health, and environmental management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mission did not have fire watch procedures (15 FAM 813.5b).</li> <li>• The mission did not inspect fire extinguishers or test smoke alarms or emergency lights monthly (15 FAM 843c, d; 15 FAM 842b; 15 FAM 844a).</li> <li>• Consulate General Auckland’s post occupational safety and health officer (POSHO) did not complete POSHO training (15 FAM 965b).</li> <li>• Consulate General Auckland did not establish a safety, occupational health, and environmental management committee (15 FAM 933.2a).</li> <li>• The mission’s POSHOs or Assistant POSHOs did not inspect designated work areas and document findings (15 FAM 962a, d, e, g, h).</li> <li>• The mission’s POSHOs or Assistant POSHOs did not provide workplace safety training (15 FAM 965e, g, h, j).</li> <li>• The mission’s POSHOs or Assistant POSHOs did not maintain safety records for required time periods (15 FAM 966).</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	Noncompliant life safety programs increase the risk of hazards that could lead to property damage, injury, or loss of life.
<b>Recommendation 8</b>	
Embassy Wellington, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should bring the mission’s fire protection and safety, health, and environmental management programs into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington, in coordination with OBO)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

Resource Management: General Services	
<b>Issue and Criteria</b>	<p><b><i>Mission New Zealand’s Contract File Management Did Not Fully Comply With Department and Federal Standards</i></b></p> <p>OIG reviewed contract files for all 74 mission awards worth approximately \$1.7 million and found the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For one contract over the simplified acquisition threshold, the annual contractor performance assessments in the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System<sup>19</sup> were missing for 2023 and 2024 (FAR 42.1502(a), (b); 14 FAH-2 H-572a, c, d, f; 14 FAH-2 H-142b(21)).</li> <li>• System for Award Management<sup>20</sup> registration was missing for 7 of the 10 awards requiring it (FAR Subpart 4.11).</li> <li>• National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2019, Section 889 documentation from the vendor, which stated that the vendor was not using equipment or services from any prohibited sources or had a waiver, was missing for 40 of the 46 awards requiring it (FAR 52.204-25(a), (b); FAR 52.204-26; FAR 4.2102(a), (c); FAR 4.2104).</li> <li>• Defense Base Act worker’s compensation insurance was missing for all 10 awards where it was required (FAR 52.228-3).</li> <li>• Two of the five sole source awards lacked justification and approval documents signed by the contracting officer’s representative (COR), contracting officer, and Department competition advocate (FAR 6.303, FAR 6.304).</li> <li>• The Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS)<sup>21</sup> COR eFiling module<sup>22</sup> was not used for any of the 14 awards requiring it (14 FAH-2 H-142b(16)(b); Department of State Acquisition Manual 604.802-80(b), (c)).</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	<p>Although OIG determined the mission monitored contracts, received goods and services for which it had contracted, and addressed contract performance when issues arose, noncompliant contract files increase the risk of contract mismanagement.</p>
<b>Recommendation 9</b>	
<p>Embassy Wellington should bring the mission’s contract files into compliance with Department and federal requirements. (Action: Embassy Wellington)</p>	
<b>Management Response</b>	<p>Concurred.</p>

<sup>19</sup> The Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, or CPARS, is the government-wide evaluation reporting tool for all past performance reports on contracts and orders. A performance assessment must be done in the system, annually, for each contract over the simplified acquisition threshold of \$250,000. See FAR 2.101’s definition of simplified acquisition threshold and FAR 42.1502(a) and (b).

Resource Management: General Services	
<b>Issue and Criteria</b>	<p><b><i>Mission New Zealand’s Contracting Officer’s Representative Program Did Not Fully Comply With Department Standards</i></b></p> <p>OIG found none of the mission’s three CORs were fully qualified to monitor and administer contracts, as described below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two CORs were missing or had expired COR certifications (14 FAH-2 H-143.1a, g, h; 14 FAH-2 H-113).</li> <li>• Two CORs lacked COR training or training had expired, one lacked annual ethics training, and one lacked training to combat trafficking in persons (14 FAH-2 H-143.1a–f; 11 FAM 622a(2)(a); Department of State Acquisition Manual 622.1780(b)).</li> <li>• The three CORs collectively lacked 10 of 14 required delegation memos (14 FAH-2 H-143.2a(2)).</li> <li>• One COR did not complete an annual financial disclosure (11 FAM 611.4(3)).</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	Although OIG determined the mission monitored contracts, received goods and services for which it had contracted, and addressed contract performance when issues arose, a noncompliant COR program increases the risk of contract mismanagement.
<b>Recommendation 10</b>	
Embassy Wellington should bring the mission’s contracting officer’s representative program into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>20</sup> The System for Award Management is the primary government repository for federal awardee information and serves as the centralized government system for certain contracting, grants, and other assistance-related processes. Information includes the identification of parties excluded from receiving federal contracts.

<sup>21</sup> ILMS is an integrated web-based system that encompasses all Department supply chain functions in one system.

<sup>22</sup> According to 14 FAH-2 H-142b(16)(b), the ILMS eFiling module is used for COR file management and provides the contracting officer visibility into the COR contract file contents.

Resource Management: General Services	
<b>Issue and Criteria</b>	<p><b><i>Mission New Zealand Did Not Manage Property as Required</i></b></p> <p>Mission New Zealand did not manage property in accordance with Department standards. Specifically, OIG found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embassy Wellington did not receive and enter furniture and appliance pool assets<sup>23</sup> into ILMS or label them in a timely manner (14 FAH-1 H-312a, b, d, i; 14 FAH-1 H-312.8-1a; 14 FAH-1 H-312.8-3a; 14 FAH-1 H-312.4-3a; 14 FAH-1 H-312.5-1a; 14 FAH-1 H-312.5-2; 14 FAH-1 H-312.9a, b; 14 FAM 413.5b; 14 FAM 413.6). Embassy staff delayed entering furniture and appliance pool assets into ILMS and labeling them until delivery to a residence, which could be weeks or months after receiving the assets.</li> <li>• Consulate General Auckland had unsecured property in its parking garage, including computer monitors and an X-ray machine (14 FAM 413.7a(1); 14 FAH-1 H-313a; 14 FAM 411.2-2b(1)).</li> <li>• The mission accountable property officer did not conduct or document quarterly property spot checks in Wellington or in Auckland (14 FAM 411.2-2b(8)).</li> <li>• The mission did not track uniforms and personal protective equipment in ILMS (14 FAM 446.1a, c; 14 FAH-1 H-418; 14 FAM 424; 14 FAM 414.2-1a(1), (2); 15 FAM 661.6).</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	Noncompliance with Department property management requirements increases the risk of loss of accountability or theft of government property.
<b>Recommendation 11</b>	
Embassy Wellington should bring the mission’s property management program into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>23</sup> A furniture and appliance pool program includes the purchase, replacement, refurbishment, maintenance, inventory control, warehousing, pickup and delivery, and eventual disposal of nonexpendable residential furniture, furnishings, appliances, and equipment. The program can achieve economies of scale and greatly reduce the time and effort required to oversee and manage residential furnishings.

<b>Information Management: Mail and Pouch</b>	
<b>Issue and Criteria</b>	<p><b><i>Mission New Zealand's Mail and Pouch Program Did Not Meet Department Standards</i></b></p> <p>Mission New Zealand did not manage its mail and pouch program in accordance with Department standards. Specifically, OIG found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mission did not have an agreement with the government of New Zealand for diplomatic post office operations (14 FAH-5 H-211.1(1)).</li> <li>• Consulate General Auckland's pouch control officer did not complete all required training to manage pouch services (14 FAM 728.1a).</li> <li>• Neither Embassy Wellington nor Consulate General Auckland had standard operating procedures or emergency plans for their mail and pouch operations (14 FAH-5 H-211.2b; 14 FAM 767.3a; 14 FAM 717c, d).</li> <li>• Consulate General Auckland's interim mail screening facility did not have its own ventilation system or an isolated heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (14 FAH-4 H-121.1b, e).</li> <li>• Consulate General Auckland's mail screening facility did not have two separate rooms to allow for separate screening of suspect items (14 FAH-4 H-121.1c).</li> <li>• Neither Embassy Wellington's nor Consulate General Auckland's mail screening rooms were under negative air pressure (14 FAH-4 H-121.1d(1)).</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	Mail and pouch programs that do not meet Department standards increase the risk of service disruption, improper service delivery, and exposure to hazardous material.
<b>Recommendation 12</b>	
Embassy Wellington should manage the mission's mail and pouch operations in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<b>Information Management: Information Systems Security</b>	
<b>Issue and Criteria</b>	<p><b><i>Information Systems Security Officer Did Not Perform All Required Duties</i></b></p> <p>The designated primary Information Systems Security Officer (ISSO) did not consistently perform ISSO duties for Mission New Zealand’s classified, OpenNet, and non-enterprise networks (NEN).<sup>24</sup> Specifically, the ISSO did not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review classified, OpenNet, and NEN user access annually to verify if access was still needed or had been updated (12 FAH-10 H-112.1-3b, c).</li> <li>• Brief employees on cybersecurity responsibilities prior to granting access to the mission’s networks (12 FAH-10 H-212.1-3(1)).</li> <li>• Apply the principle of least privilege<sup>25</sup> to LE staff system administrators’ access by preventing them from having full, unmonitored access to every section’s shared files (12 FAH-10 H-112.5-3; National Institute of Standards and Technology Special Publication 800-53, Section AC-6).</li> <li>• Review and remove password files saved on OpenNet shared folders (12 FAH-10 H-132.4-3(2)).</li> <li>• Use the ISSO checklist<sup>26</sup> to perform duties (5 FAH-11 H-116a).</li> </ul> <p>In February 2024, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security identified similar issues with the embassy’s and consulate general’s ISSO programs.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, OIG issued reports in May 2017 and December 2020 that highlighted widespread Department failures to perform ISSO duties.<sup>28</sup></p>
<b>Significance</b>	Failure to perform required ISSO responsibilities leaves Department networks vulnerable to potential unauthorized access and malicious activity.
<b>Recommendation 13</b>	
Embassy Wellington should require the Information Systems Security Officer to perform all duties in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>24</sup> OpenNet is the Department’s Sensitive But Unclassified network. A NEN is a Department-procured and locally managed computing environment.

<sup>25</sup> The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) defines the principle of least privilege as “allowing only authorized accesses for users (or processes acting on behalf of users) that are necessary to accomplish assigned organizational tasks.” See NIST Special Publication 800-53, Revision 5, “Security and Privacy Controls for Information Systems and Organizations,” page 36 (December 2020).

<sup>26</sup> The ISSO checklist includes a description of tasks, explanation of minimum tasks to be performed, and how often they need to be performed.

<sup>27</sup> Bureau of Diplomatic Security, “Cybersecurity Assessment US Embassy Wellington – Wellington ESC Bangkok 2024-001,” February 2024, and “Cybersecurity Assessment Consulate General Auckland – Auckland ESC Bangkok 2024-004,” February 2024.

<b>Information Management: Internal Control</b>	
<b>Issue and Criteria</b>	<p><b><i>Mission New Zealand Did Not Manage Its Mobile Devices in Accordance With Department Standards</i></b></p> <p>Mission New Zealand’s mobile devices program had minimal management control or oversight. Specifically, OIG found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mission did not have a written procedure that addressed receiving, inspecting, and accepting mobile devices into the inventory (14 FAH-1 H-312g). The same staff members who received mobile devices also kept property records and had inventory and property disposal duties (14 FAH-1 H-112.2j(2), (4)).</li> <li>• The mission did not have an accurate accounting or inventory of mission-owned mobile phones (12 FAH-10 H-163.1e).</li> <li>• The DT unit’s accountable property officer did not conduct quarterly unannounced spot checks to verify the accuracy of mobile device property records in ILMS (14 FAM 411.2-2b(8)).</li> <li>• Monthly phone bills showed mission employees’ names attached to the phone numbers, contrary to Department standards requiring that the names of the employees using the phones not be given to the vendor (5 FAM 524.2h).</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	Failure to implement the Department’s mobile device management standards increases the risk of compromise of Department information and loss of U.S. government property.
<b>Recommendation 14</b>	
Embassy Wellington should manage the mission’s mobile device program in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>28</sup> OIG, *Management Assistance Report: Non-Performance of Information Systems Security Officer Duties by Overseas Personnel* (ISP-17-24, May 2017); *Management Assistance Report: Continued Deficiencies in Performance of Information Systems Security Officer Responsibilities at Overseas Posts* (ISP-21-07, December 2020).

<b>Information Management: General Management</b>	
<b>Issue and Criteria</b>	<p><b><i>Mission's Diplomatic Technology Units Lacked Budget and Training Plans</i></b> Mission New Zealand did not manage the DT units in accordance with Department standards. Specifically, the mission did not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a budget plan that included replacement costs for the DT units' program- and International Cooperative Administrative Support Services<sup>29</sup>-funded equipment and actual or future projects identified in Mission New Zealand's Mission Resource Request (5 FAM 124.2b(1)).</li> <li>• Have a training policy or individual development plans for the DT units' staff (13 FAM 101.2-2(E), 3 FAH-2 H-135.5, 5 FAM 124.4c(3)(a), 5 FAM 124.2b(3)(d)).</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	Without a budget plan for equipment and a functional training plan that includes a training policy and individual development plans for the DT units' staff, the mission risks operational inefficiencies, security vulnerabilities, and service disruptions that can hinder productivity, increase costs, and compromise IT operations.
<b>Recommendation 15</b>	
Embassy Wellington should create budget and training plans for the mission's Diplomatic Technology units. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>29</sup> International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) is the principal means by which U.S. government agencies share the cost of common administrative support services at most diplomatic and consular posts overseas. Through the ICASS working capital fund, service providers recover the cost of delivering administrative support services to other agencies at overseas missions.

<b>Information Management: Emergency Communications</b>	
<b>Issue and Criteria</b>	<p><b><i>Mission New Zealand's Emergency Communications Operations Did Not Meet Department Standards</i></b></p> <p>The mission's emergency communications operations did not meet Department standards. Specifically, the mission did not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a copy of all radio frequencies approved by the government of New Zealand for use at Consulate General Auckland (5 FAM 541e).</li> <li>• Have an accurate accounting of its radio inventory at Consulate General Auckland (5 FAM 544.1(5), 5 FAH-2 H-736b).</li> <li>• Test the high frequency radio network on a weekly basis at Consulate General Auckland (5 FAH-2 H-723a).</li> <li>• Test the embassy or the consulate general alternate command centers' communications systems at least once a month (5 FAH-2 H-733, 5 FAH-2 H-655).</li> <li>• Have Bureau of Diplomatic Security-approved locks on the doors of the communication rooms of the embassy and the consulate general alternate command centers (12 FAM 642.3g, 12 FAH-10 H-232.5-1(3)).</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	Emergency communications operations that do not meet Department standards raise the risk that emergency communications will not be available or will be severely limited in functionality in an actual emergency.
<b>Recommendation 16</b>	
Embassy Wellington should bring the mission's emergency communications operations into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

Information Management: Information Security	
<b>Issue</b>	<p><b><i>Mission New Zealand’s Sensitive But Unclassified Server Rooms and Private Branch Exchange Rooms Did Not Meet Department Standards</i></b></p> <p>OIG found the embassy and consulate general placed non-Department-owned modems and routers inside Sensitive But Unclassified server rooms and private branch exchange<sup>30</sup> rooms, instead of in a demarcation room. These modems and routers supplied internet access to OpenNet and voice networks.</p>
<b>Criteria</b>	12 FAH-6 H-651.5-2a
<b>Significance</b>	Placing non-Department-owned telecommunications equipment in Sensitive But Unclassified server rooms and private branch exchange rooms creates security vulnerabilities of electronic surveillance and confidentiality risks when non-cleared technicians access the room for technical support.
<b>Recommendation 17</b>	
Embassy Wellington should bring the mission’s Sensitive But Unclassified server rooms and private branch exchange rooms into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>30</sup> A private branch exchange is a private telephone exchange that provides on-premises dial service and may provide connections to local and trunked communications networks. It is based on centralized stored program computer technology that provides switched telephone networking features and services.

<b>Information Management: Information Security</b>	
<b>Issue and Criteria</b>	<p><b><i>Mission New Zealand Did Not Manage Its Non-Enterprise Networks in Accordance With Department Standards</i></b></p> <p>The mission’s NENs did not adhere to the Department’s operational, access, and oversight standards. Specifically, OIG found the mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operated NENs with unapproved routers, desktops, printers, and wireless devices (5 FAM 872.3c).</li> <li>• Established wireless networks on NENs at the warehouse, Chief of Mission Residence, Deputy Chief of Mission Residence, Consul General Residence, surveillance detection office, and alternate command centers that did not meet Bureau of Diplomatic Security standards or were not approved (12 FAH-10 H-152.1a).</li> <li>• Did not implement identity and access control procedures (12 FAH-10 H-112.1-1a; 12 FAH-10 H-112.1-2g).</li> <li>• Did not review the NENs for prohibited and suspicious activity (12 FAH-10 H-112.9-2, 12 FAH-10 H-312.5-2, 12 FAH-10 H-312.5-3).</li> </ul> <p>In February 2024, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security identified similar issues with the mission’s NENs.<sup>31</sup></p>
<b>Significance</b>	Failure to secure and monitor NENs increases the mission’s vulnerability to cyberattacks.
<b>Recommendation 18</b>	
Embassy Wellington should manage the mission’s non-enterprise networks in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>31</sup> Bureau of Diplomatic Security, “Cybersecurity Assessment US Embassy Wellington – Wellington ESC Bangkok 2024-001,” February 2024, and “Cybersecurity Assessment Consulate General Auckland – Auckland ESC Bangkok 2024-004,” February 2024.

Information Management: Telephone Operations	
<b>Issue</b>	<p><b><i>Mission New Zealand's Desktop Telephone Use Accounting Process Did Not Meet Department Standards</i></b></p> <p>OIG found the mission did not have a call accounting<sup>32</sup> telephone use policy and had not configured its call accounting system to identify and seek repayment from employees making personal calls from desk telephones.</p>
<b>Criteria</b>	5 FAM 525a, c; 5 FAM 511c(4)
<b>Significance</b>	By not adhering to the Department's telecommunications management standards, the mission risks degraded systems performance and using government funds to pay for employees' personal calls.
<b>Recommendation 19</b>	
Embassy Wellington should bring the mission's telephone use accounting process into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)	
<b>Management Response</b>	Concurred.

<sup>32</sup> According to 5 FAH-2 H-114, call accounting is the process by which call detail records for specific, or groups of, telephone extensions are collected and recorded for billing and traffic monitoring purposes.

## PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

Agency/Section/Title	Name	Arrival Date
<b>Chiefs of Mission:</b>		
Chargé d’Affaires, ad interim	David Gehrenbeck <sup>a</sup>	9/2023
Deputy Chief of Mission (acting)	Angela Kerwin <sup>b</sup>	3/2025
<b>Constituent Post:</b>		
Consulate General Auckland, Consul General	Melissa Sweeney	7/2024
<b>Chiefs of Sections:</b>		
Consular Management	Marcia House	8/2022
Political and Economic	John Langer <sup>c</sup>	8/2024
Public Diplomacy	Christopher Allison	4/2022
Regional Security	Sara Devlin	6/2024
	Evan Tsurumi	7/2023
<b>Other Agency Representatives:</b>		
Drug Enforcement Administration	Doug Sullivan	4/2023
Legal Attaché, Federal Bureau of Investigation	Jason Alberts	6/2024
Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché	COL Matt Sova	8/2022
Defense Contract Management Agency	Gysselle Cox	10/2023

<sup>a</sup> David Gehrenbeck became Chargé d’Affaires, ad interim, on January 16, 2025.

<sup>b</sup> At the time of this inspection, Angela Kerwin served as the acting Deputy Chief of Mission.

<sup>c</sup> John Langer became acting Management Counselor in May 2025.

**Source:** Generated by OIG from personnel data provided by Embassy Wellington, New Zealand.

## APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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This inspection was conducted from April 7 to July 17, 2025,<sup>1</sup> in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2020 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspections Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department of State (Department) and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

### Objectives and Scope

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive Officer of USAGM, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and USAGM. 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 and U.S. interests are 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; and whether instances of fraud, waste, or abuse exist and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

### Methodology

OIG used a risk-based approach to prepare for this inspection. OIG conducted portions of the 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 surveys and compiled the results; and discussed the substance of this report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, and organizations affected by the inspection. OIG used professional judgment and analyzed physical, documentary, and testimonial evidence to develop its findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations.

OIG assessed executive direction based on interviews, staff questionnaires, and OIG's review of documents and observations of mission meetings and activities during the on-site portion of the inspection. OIG assessed the mission's policy and program implementation, which includes political and economic, public diplomacy, foreign assistance, and consular operations, through a review of the mission's advocacy and analysis work, section leadership, strategic planning and

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<sup>1</sup> The issuance of this report was delayed due to the lapse in appropriations, which began October 1, 2025, and ended November 12, 2025.

reporting, knowledge management, grants administration, program management and exchanges, media engagement, and oversight of American spaces. OIG also reviewed Mission New Zealand's provision of U.S. citizen services, crisis preparedness, management controls, visa services and processing, and fraud prevention programs. To address resource management, OIG reviewed internal control systems in facility management, general services, financial management, and human resources. Finally, OIG assessed the mission's computer network operations, information systems and administration of mobile computing devices, mail and pouch services, cybersecurity practices, records management, and telephone and emergency communications systems.

## APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
WELLINGTON NEW ZEALAND

October 3, 2025

UNCLASSIFIED

THRU: EAP – Kevin Kim, Senior Bureau Official

TO: OIG – Lisa Rodely, Acting Assistant Inspector General for Inspections

FROM: Chargé d’Affaires, ad interim, David Gehrenbeck

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – Inspection of Embassy Wellington and Constituent Post, New Zealand, Cook Islands, and Niue

Embassy Wellington and Consulate General Auckland have reviewed the draft OIG inspection report. We provide the following comments in response to the recommendations provided by OIG:

**Recommendation 1:** Embassy Wellington, in coordination with the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should work with the National Science Foundation to clarify Mission New Zealand’s responsibilities for U.S. government employees and U.S. citizens stationed in the Antarctic. (Action: Embassy Wellington, in coordination with OES and DS)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. Mission New Zealand is developing an internal standard operating procedure to clarify how it will handle emergencies involving U.S. personnel and citizens in Antarctica. The expected completion date is October 31, 2025. Additionally, in September 2025, OES began facilitating a conversation with Mission New Zealand and NSF to clarify law enforcement issues and responsibilities regarding the U.S. Antarctic Program (USAP) and requested that NSF provide written documentation of its responsibilities as head of Antarctica logistics for the USG. Further, Mission New Zealand will coordinate with OES, DS, EAP, and NSF to develop guidance clarifying Mission New Zealand’s responsibilities regarding the USAP to improve coordination between the Mission, NSF, and USAP regarding operations and activities in New Zealand. The establishment of a consulate in

Christchurch when the budget allows as proposed in previous Mission Resource Requests would contribute to improved coordination between Mission New Zealand and USAP.

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy Wellington, in coordination with the Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources for Public Diplomacy, should review the Public Diplomacy Sections' organizational structures and position elements to optimize section effectiveness. (Action: Embassy Wellington, in coordination with R/PPR)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation overall. PDS New Zealand has already begun the process of reviewing its PDS structure to devise a more effective one and will coordinate with R/PPR to ensure compliance with Department guidelines. In revising the structure, PDS New Zealand will work with R/PPR and other relevant offices in DC to address the lack of a strategic communications local staff position in Auckland to mitigate the impact on embassy Wellington staff managing media engagements and contact relationships in Auckland. As Mission New Zealand undertakes this revision, the requirement to travel to neighboring islands will remain. Mission New Zealand is responsible for covering the Cook Islands and Niue as part of its regular portfolio, and support from Mission New Zealand PDS for Samoa is a result of limited resources available at Embassy Apia and the long-standing history of the Ambassador to New Zealand being credentialed to Samoa as well. Mission New Zealand notes that the Senior Public Diplomacy Officer position is vacant with the new officer slated to arrive in late November 2025. The expected completion date is April 2026.

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Wellington should document and close out public diplomacy grants in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with this recommendation. Mission New Zealand PDS created a new Standard Operating Procedure for all Grants Officers and Grants Officer Representatives to follow, including a checklist detailing proper procedures and necessary documents for appropriate grants management throughout the lifecycle. The Grants Officers will work with the Grants Officer Representatives to close out any remaining open, expired grants in accordance with Department standards. The expected completion date is January 2026.

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Wellington should manage and retire immigrant visa cases in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington).

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. The Consular section is reviewing inactive and refused Immigrant Visa case files for appropriate action. The expected completion date is June 2026.

**Recommendation 5:** Embassy Wellington should maintain the Consular Section's cashier records according to Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington).

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation, and the Consular section has implemented the required changes. To ensure compliance with Department standards, the sub-cashiers now file all records in strict chronological order. Daily and monthly reports are properly retained and records that had exceeded their retention period have been destroyed by the Auckland Consular section.

**Recommendation 6:** Embassy Wellington, in coordination with the Bureau of Personnel and Training, the Bureau of Global Acquisitions, and the Office of the Legal Adviser, should consult legal counsel in New Zealand to determine if its alternate pension plan complies with local law, and whether the obligating documents of the plan are adequate and in compliance with Department and other federal guidance. (Action: Embassy Wellington, in coordination with PERT, GA, and L)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. Local labor counsel recommended in September 2025 that the embassy consult a firm that specializes in superannuation issues. Post will coordinate with L on appropriate next steps. Post will also confirm with L and the A/GA Desk Officer on the proper and compliant handling of obligating documents. The expected completion date is December 31, 2025, for obligating document review and receipt of legal opinion and confirmation of compliance.

**Recommendation 7:** Embassy Wellington, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should evaluate all residential properties for seismic risk in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington, in coordination with OBO).

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. Mission New Zealand notes that the OIG report stated that 91 percent of the embassy's residential properties did not have a seismic hazard rating assessment. Based on OBO records, which recognize 2019 assessments as valid, approximately 68.5 percent of the current housing pool has undergone seismic evaluation. The difference reflects OBO's acceptance of the 2019 methodology as still valid, while post believes OIG applied the updated methodology introduced after those inspections. Mission New Zealand acknowledges that 31.5 percent of the pool remains to be evaluated. The Embassy has requested from OBO the standard scope of work for residential seismic evaluations and pre-approved local engineering vendors and will coordinate with OBO to fund and complete the required assessments. The expected completion date is April 2026.

**Recommendation 8:** Embassy Wellington, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should bring the mission's fire protection and safety, health, and environmental management programs into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington, in coordination with OBO)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. Mission staff will establish formal fire watch procedures for periods necessitating fire watches per 15 FAM 813.5b. Mission New Zealand will continue to inspect emergency lights, test smoke alarms, and

inspect fire extinguishers monthly at all non-residential spaces and will conduct additional training for residents to inspect their in-home systems monthly. Consulate General Auckland will require the new Management Officer to take POSHO training. Consulate General Auckland and Embassy Wellington held a joint safety, occupational health, and environmental management committee meeting in September 2025. Although Mission New Zealand did not inspect designated work areas in 2022, Mission New Zealand has conducted and documented work area inspections since 2023 and will continue to do so. Mission New Zealand POSHOs and APOSHOs will conduct mission workplace safety training in October 2025. Mission New Zealand will review its recordkeeping process and identify a best practice for maintaining safety records for the required time periods. The expected completion date is April 2026.

**Recommendation 9:** Embassy Wellington should bring the mission's contract files into compliance with Department and federal requirements. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. Mission New Zealand is reviewing all existing contract files to identify and upload any missing contractor performance assessments into Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) and has already initiated the CPARS process for the one contract over the simplified acquisition threshold noted by OIG. In accordance with the September 2025 FAR Part 4 overhaul and Acquisition Alert 25-40, Mission New Zealand recognizes that SAM registration is no longer mandatory for overseas awards where it is not practicable. While SAM registrations, Defense Base Act insurance certificates, Section 889 certifications, and sole source justifications cannot be retroactively corrected for past awards, the Mission has implemented standardized procedures to prevent recurrence. These include mandatory use of the ILMS COR eFiling module, documented verification of SAM status or Offeror Identification data under FAR 52.204-90/91, and full compliance with Section 889 and justification and approval requirements for any sole source procurements. In parallel, the Mission is actively pursuing a Defense Base Act waiver to align local labor practices with Department policy and reduce administrative and cost burdens for future contracts. The expected completion date is December 31, 2025.

**Recommendation 10:** Embassy Wellington should bring the mission's contracting officer's representative program into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. The Embassy will institute semiannual reviews of COR certifications, training records, ethics and CTIP compliance, delegation memoranda, and financial disclosure filings to ensure compliance with Department standards. One of the three CORs departed post since the inspection. The remaining Facilities COR is current on all required training, including COR certification, annual ethics, and CTIP, and has submitted the required financial disclosure. The Diplomatic Technology COR will complete refresher training and update delegation documentation to bring the file into full compliance. To strengthen oversight, the Mission has embedded COR recordkeeping into the ILMS COR eFiling module and will require the Contracting Officer to

conduct annual file checks. This process links directly to the broader contract file compliance improvements under Recommendation 9, ensuring all contract administration is captured in the official system of record. The expected completion date is February 2026.

**Recommendation 11:** Embassy Wellington should bring the mission's property management program into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. The Mission has received and accounted for all furniture and appliance pool assets currently in storage. All residential furniture and appliances will be entered into ILMS and labeled upon receipt at post, rather than delayed until delivery to residences. Personal protective equipment and uniforms are being entered into ILMS as loanable property for the warehouse team. Accountable Property Officers in both Wellington and Auckland will implement and document quarterly spot checks, and unsecured property has been removed from the Consulate General Auckland parking garage. The expected completion date is April 2026.

**Recommendation 12:** Embassy Wellington should manage the mission's mail and pouch operations in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. DPM Washington confirmed that at the time Wellington's DPO was established a Host Nation Agreement was not required. In September 2025, DPM Washington provided the embassy with a diplomatic note template to begin discussions with New Zealand. Consulate General Auckland's pouch control office has completed the required training as of July 8, 2025. Consulate General Auckland posted standard operating procedures and emergency plans during the OIG visit; Embassy Wellington will establish standard operating procedures and emergency plans for pouch and mail operations. The deficiencies of the mail screening facility in Consulate General Auckland may require additional functional space to correct, and Mission New Zealand will coordinate with OBO on funding and scope of work for additional functional lease space and fit-out to overcome the deficiencies. Embassy Wellington has verified that its main screening facility is already under negative pressure. The expected completion date is April 2026.

**Recommendation 13:** Embassy Wellington should require the Information Systems Security Officer to perform all duties in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs and will use the ISSO Checklist to establish a methodical and well documented process for completing ISSO tasks along the prescribed timeline. The expected compliance date is December 1, 2025.

**Recommendation 14:** Embassy Wellington should manage the mission's mobile device program in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. The mission has already established a standard operating procedure (SOP) in which duties are separated. The GSO Receiving clerk has an SOP which he follows to receive IT assets. Property records are kept by the senior system manager. Property disposal duties are carried out by the Accountable Property Officer (APO). Disposal is carried out in accordance with Department regulations. Since the inspection, all mobile devices have been moved into the proper business unit's loanable property inventory. The APO now conducts quarterly unannounced spots checks. Monthly phone bills no longer show employees' names attached to the phone numbers. This recommendation has already been completed.

**Recommendation 15:** Embassy Wellington should create budget and training plans for the mission's Diplomatic Technology units. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. For DT, as for the other units in management, Mission New Zealand will include post-funded equipment in its budgeting process for Fiscal Year 2026 and will include individual training and development plans as part of its annual performance reviews section-wide training plan for Fiscal Year 2026. The expected completion date is March 2026.

**Recommendation 16:** Embassy Wellington should bring the mission's emergency communications operations into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with the recommendation. Consulate General Auckland has updated the asset management database in ILMS and now has an accurate accounting of its radio inventory and has begun testing the high frequency radio network on a weekly basis. Consulate General Auckland has purchased a new location for its alternate command center (ACC) and will add Diplomatic Security-approved locks. Once the new ACC is commissioned, the communications systems will be tested monthly. Embassy Wellington will install Diplomatic Security-approved locks at the embassy ACC and test the communications systems monthly. The expected completion date is November 2025.

**Recommendation 17:** Embassy Wellington should bring the mission's Sensitive But Unclassified server rooms and private branch exchange rooms into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with this recommendation. Neither Embassy Wellington nor Consulate General Auckland has been able to identify a space that meets the requirements specified in 12 FAH-6 H-651.5-2(a)(2). Mission New Zealand recommends a waiver to establish demarcation rooms at both posts inside the hardline that physically separate the non-department owned modems and routers from the SBU Server Room and PBX room. Embassy Wellington has already contacted the Foreign Post Telephone Office to determine requirements and will continue to work with the Department towards this goal. The expected completion date is September 2026.

**Recommendation 18:** Embassy Wellington should manage the mission's non-enterprise networks in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with this recommendation. Mission New Zealand has already eliminated four Non-Enterprise Networks (NEN) and is taking steps to remediate the remainder. The Mission will disable one NEN at an alternate command center by replacing it with a service that will only be activated during monthly testing and actual emergencies. Mission New Zealand has already removed some unapproved equipment at other NEN locations and continues to remove the remainder. For the NENs at the Chief of Mission Residence, Deputy Chief of Mission Residence, and Consul General Residence, the Mission will review best practices and develop a plan to remediate. The expected completion date is April 2026.

**Recommendation 19:** Embassy Wellington should bring the mission's telephone use accounting process into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Wellington)

**Management Response:** Mission New Zealand concurs with this recommendation. The Mission will establish a telephone use policy and will review its call accounting process to identify and seek repayment from employees incurring personal telephone costs exceeding a minimal threshold below which the repayment amounts would be less than the cost to recover them. The expected completion date is April 2026.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Melissa Sweeney, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission.



# HELP FIGHT

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