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

Report of Inspection

Limited Scope Inspection of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's New Headquarters in Prague, Czech Republic

Report Number ISP-IB-10-27, March 2010

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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

This limited-scope inspection was requested by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) to review the security and management aspects of the planning for and implementation of the project for the relocation of the RFE/RL headquarters and the construction of a new headquarters building in a more secure area away from the center of Prague.

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 instances 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, and Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended. It is one of a series of audit, inspection, investigative, and special reports prepared by OIG periodically as part of its responsibility to promote effective management, accountability and positive change in the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

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, as appropriate, 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", written in a cursive style.

Harold W. Geisel
Deputy Inspector General

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KEY JUDGMENTS

- Close coordination and communication between the Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO), RFE/RL, and the contractor enabled exceptionally smooth, efficient, and cost effective construction of, and move to, RFE/RL's new headquarters building in Prague. The process, which resulted in a striking building that is very efficiently configured, was aided by a strong and comprehensive framework for the project provided in studies conducted by OBO.
- RFE/RL's director of corporate security has a strong security program, which is due primarily to his diligence and support of RFE/RL's president.

The inspection took place in Washington, DC, between July 20-31, 2009; and in Prague, Czech Republic, between August 3 and 13, 2009.

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MANAGEMENT

BACKGROUND

RFE/RL is a grantee of the U.S. Government, funded through the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). It is an independent entity providing international news and broadcasting services. RFE/RL programming, consisting of television, radio, and Internet, and using 28 languages, is aimed at audiences in 20 countries, such as Iran, Iraq, Russia, Afghanistan, and the republics of Central Asia. RFE/RL tries to provide its audiences with discussion and open debate of local, regional, and international news, history, politics, culture, and the arts, which may not be freely available in country.

From 1994 to 1995, RFE/RL moved its operations from Munich, Germany, to Prague, Czech Republic, a decision based primarily on cost considerations, declining budgets, and strong support from the Prague Government, especially President Vaclav Havel, who offered the unoccupied former Parliament building on Wenceslas Square to RFE/RL, virtually rent-free.

Concerns over security and the downtown location of the building accelerated greatly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. According to RFE/RL officials, the Czech Government made clear that it thought RFE/RL should move to a different, more secure location.

RELOCATION PLANNING

In 2003, RFE/RL initiated space-planning and staffing studies (based on earlier studies) to facilitate decisions regarding a move and established several task forces to analyze needs and consider configurations. In December 2003, RFE/RL identified net space requirements of 12,689 square meters (14,593 gross square meters) to support 23 broadcast services and technical support, requiring staffing of 622 people and preparation of 53 studios.

In 2003, the Senate Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary mandated that OBO assist RFE/RL and BBG to

deliver a report by April 2004, providing at least four options for the relocation of RFE/RL headquarters, considering alternate sites in different countries. ¹The OBO study, dated March 24, 2004, evaluated 20 relocation options in Budapest, Riga, and Prague. Other cities were eliminated, because they did not meet criteria for security and political stability.

The study used ten criteria to evaluate the optional sites:

1. security;
2. access to public transportation;
3. large enough site for operational purposes;
4. sufficient and continuous power;
5. clean, pollution free site;
6. cost to acquire;
7. relocation costs;
8. availability and cost of proper housing;
9. availability and cost of English-speaking schools; and
10. availability of English-speaking staff.

Two additional factors important to RFE/RL were finding competent technical support staff and accessibility to RFE/RL broadcast regions.

After reviewing all of the options, OBO determined, with Bureau of Diplomatic Security concurrence, that Prague was the best location for the RFE/RL facility, and that a new, purpose-built, secure facility should be constructed. OBO favored a build-to-lease (BTL) office facility, wherein a developer would acquire land, designs, and finances; construct a facility to RFE/RL's specifications; and lease the facility to RFE/RL. The BTL option is particularly appropriate for RFE/RL's needs during these times of increasingly tight budgets, since it precludes the need for total, up-front funding for the construction or purchase of a new facility.

The well-presented and thorough OBO study evaluated six Prague BTL options, found four acceptable, and recommended the ORCO site. The estimated average relocation cost for each of the four acceptable options was approximately \$19 million over the four year (FY 2004-07) period, with ongoing annual funding of \$5 million to \$6 million required for building lease and support costs.

¹ See pages 164 and 165 of Senate Report 108-144 for Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, 2004, published September 5, 2003, at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_cong_reports&docid=f:sr144.108.pdf

The second study prepared by OBO was the June 2005 report recommending acceptance of ORCO's BTL agreement for the construction of the new RFE/RL headquarters. Prior to making that recommendation, OBO had worked with RFE/RL to prepare a detailed Invitation for Proposal, which was delivered to four qualified developers. It then organized a multidisciplinary team within the Department to evaluate and score the resultant proposals from the developers. The team scored each of the four developers on seven criteria:

1. security acceptability (pass/fail);
2. developer qualifications;
3. site location;
4. site characteristics;
5. project concept;
6. financial terms; and
7. project risk/obstacles to success.

According to OBO's well-documented study, the ORCO proposal was the best overall, offering a superior site, an excellent design concept, and the most aggressive financial terms. Working closely with the RFE/RL relocation coordinators in Washington and Prague, OBO negotiated aggressively with ORCO to come up with a well-structured and comprehensive BTL agreement. RFE/RL and OBO revised and reworked the boiler plate requirements, and added and deleted provisions as needed to get the best product. The BTL agreement between RFE/RL and ORCO was signed on July 27, 2005. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) team found the BTL to be extremely well structured for RFE/RL. It put most of the financial risks and currency risks on ORCO; encompassed the construction budget (which ORCO had to control); required ORCO to fund the majority of the furnishings for the building; and provided an excellent structure to move from planning to construction.

After reviewing documentation for the project, and based upon interviews with many of the RFE/RL participants, the OIG inspectors concluded that a key to the project's success was the comprehensive nature of the signed BTL, and the preponderance of obligations it defined (and placed upon ORCO), making the tasks of the RFE/RL relocation coordinators and the project managers much easier and more clearly defined.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

After the BTL was signed, the RFE/RL relocation coordinators took the lead in actively managing the project. The chief financial officer (CFO) and the general counsel of RFE/RL were the prime contracting authorities for the project. They worked closely with a succession of RFE/RL presidents located in Prague.

RFE/RL had three project managers over the course of the project. All three were affiliated with EC Harris Built Asset Consultancy, the company RFE/RL hired to provide project management and cost management support. RFE/RL also engaged other consultants to ensure the best quality results, including: Arup (mechanical and engineering), Saunders (noise control), and Einhorn, Yaffe and Prescott (security). Also, a special consultant assisted in the design and implementation of the central news room.

During the design and planning phases, and leading into construction, the three project managers worked closely with the CFO and general counsel at RFE/RL Washington, and with the RFE/RL relocation coordinator in Prague. As the enterprise developed, the project managers met once or twice per week with the relocation coordinators, and they met as necessary with RFE/RL experts from technology, security, broadcasting, information technology, procurement, finance, etc. The third project manager enforced a working policy wherein he was the single point of contact with his counterpart, the ORCO development manager. This helped to reduce duplication of effort and minimize miscommunications.

Just as RFE/RL contracted for expertise, so did ORCO. Near the beginning of the project, ORCO established Hagibor Office, A.S., a Czech corporation, to be their operational entity for the project. The new building became known as the Hagibor building.

COORDINATION

From all reports, the shift from planning to construction went smoothly, as did the implementation of construction. This was due largely to the excellent framework of the BTL and its provisions, matched with the well-thought out and detailed relocation planning by the RFE/RL Washington and Prague teams and strong project managers. The groundbreaking for the Hagibor building was held in October 2006 and was attended by officials from both RFE/RL and ORCO.

RFE/RL maximized coordination throughout the process. They held weekly relocation team meetings, technical team meetings, and site meetings. The security and mechanical/electrical consultants had periodic site visits at appropriate milestones. The Prague chief of staff coordinated closely with the Washington CFO and general counsel, presented monthly briefings to BBG, and usually set up monthly videoconference calls as required. RFE/RL staff members received periodic project briefings via intranet communication and town hall meetings. RFE/RL also hosted periodic visits by at least two of the BBG governors who were personally interested in the project. In addition, RFE/RL held monthly meetings with the Czech National Museum, which would take over the old RFE/RL building in Wenceslas Square; these meetings became increasingly important as the schedule for the completion of the move was adjusted.

In addition, the BBG designated a staff coordinator who was deeply involved in the relocation project from its inception, coordinated closely with RFE/RL managers in Washington and in Prague, and made quarterly trips to Prague to follow up.

Best Practice: Securing staff buy-in for the move to a new office building via special communication efforts.

Issue: A move to a new office building is a radical disruption. In facilitating the transition, the issue is how best to inform the staff about the progress of the project and the working conditions that they will find in the new office; keep them apprised of changes in schedule; and secure staff buy-in regarding the move.

Response: The RFE/RL relocation team started early with efforts to communicate with staff regarding what would be happening in the move, and how it would affect them. Throughout the project, RFE/RL employees received briefings via intranet communication and town hall meetings. The team also surveyed employees for input on selecting computers and office chairs, making parking arrangements, and determining storage options to increase employee involvement and foster buy-in. It also gave rise to some helpful suggestions. As construction approached completion, the RFE/RL organized tours of the new building for each of the 28 language services to acquaint employees with the building configuration and how it would be utilized. RFE/RL increased communications as move-in day approached, especially since the move required leapfrogging RFE/RL's radio services to the new location, while still maintaining broadcasting. RFE/RL explained delays and discussed their consequences with employees.

Result: Many employees felt an initial hesitancy towards the move and the new building, but as they moved in and got settled, it gave way to mostly enthusiastic acceptance due primarily to the consistent flow of communication throughout the project.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on figures from the CFO and the Prague RFE/RL finance director, the relocation fit-out budget totaled approximately \$15.7 million. It was comprised of \$13.7 million, which was directly funded for the relocation; \$1.2 million from funds donated by the Czech Government; and \$800,000 from earlier year budget provisions. The latest estimate available indicated that actual spending could end up yielding \$600,000 in savings, due principally to lower technology costs than planned, reduced consultation fees, and reduced administrative expenses. Expenditures for the relocation were tracked by requisition, project code and department for control purposes.

The project manager and the RFE/RL relocation teams had to make only a few minor changes to the BTL plan and schedule. The turnover/completion date slipped from the original deadline of August 2008 to late October 2008 and finally to December 22 and 23, 2008, which were the dates of the actual turnover. This was due primarily to delays in preparing the technical rooms, readying the air conditioning, and obtaining an uninterrupted power supply – all of which were necessary for broadcast services to go operational. Because RFE/RL is an all-digital operation, using Internet Protocol packets of information, it was critical to resolve the technical and power issues before transfer of broadcast operations.

The recession and economic/construction downturn in Europe from 2007 to 2009 put severe pressures on ORCO, particularly as the dollar exchange rate fell from the 22 Czech crowns to the dollar, which was built into the BTL, to 17 crowns to the dollar. In response, ORCO and RFE/RL negotiated an adjustment in rental payments, which did not actually start until October 29, 2008, but were to be paid annually in advance and had been scaled from \$5.4 million per year initially, with later payments increasing on a set schedule. In light of the deteriorating economy, ORCO chose to forgive potential penalty payments. ORCO made these decisions because the structured BTL contract and the high quality of the building to be delivered argued for ensuring a good relationship with RFE/RL's landlord for at least the next 15 (and possibly up to 45) years. Of course, to protect ORCO, the revised arrangements included a clause requiring RFE/RL to pay a penalty if it terminated the project.

MOVE-IN

A major complication of the relocation was the necessity to “leapfrog” operations. This meant that to keep RFE/RL programming on the air without interrup-

tion, when one of the 23 broadcast services was being relocated to the new building it had to shift programming over to one of the other, fully operational broadcast services. Thus, the various office moves were conducted by temporarily alternating, or leapfrogging, RFE/RL operations from one broadcast service to another. This necessitated sequencing the move over a period of four to five months, in order to eliminate any downtime for the services. This prolonged process was planned for by both sides and built into the BTL. The leapfrog phase extended from January to May 2009.

The scope of the new RFE/RL headquarters building, as noted in the June 2009 progress report, is: a five-story building (including basement) that measures 20,942 gross square meters and 13,236 net square meters. It accommodates 636 staff members and has a total site area of 26,199 square meters, or approximately 6.5 acres. One of the most impressive features of the building's interior is its newsroom, located on the ground floor of an open, central atrium. The room's ceiling stretches to the very top of the structure, culminating in a glass roof, which can be shielded from the sun by automatic sliding screens. The building includes 47 studios of varying sizes (located in the corner areas of the building), as well as a cafeteria, snack bar, and an open-air, elevated terrace.

From its new location, RFE/RL currently is broadcasting in 28 languages to 20 countries, including Iran, Iraq, Russia, and the Central Asian republics. The technology staff told the OIG inspectors that during the relocation the technological infrastructure of RFE/RL was revamped, receiving a state-of-the-art makeover, including improved network security and increased bandwidth for internet, radio, and television operations. The development of integrated systems, in an intelligent business design, has ramped up the efficiency of technology operations and support services.

SUPPORT FROM EMBASSY PRAGUE

The OIG inspectors also met with officials from the U.S. Embassy Prague, to learn whether and how the embassy had directly supported the RFE/RL relocation project. After speaking with the embassy's chargé d'affaires, management counselor, facilities manager, consul general, and public affairs officer, the team concluded that — aside from basic encouragement, some help interacting with the Czech Government, and moral support from the three Ambassadors who served during the time of the project — RFE/RL operated quite independently.

COMPLETION

The RFE/RL Hagibor building had three formal grand opening ceremonies. The first, on April 20, 2009, was headlined by former Czech President Vaclav Havel (who also, along with the broadcasting director, co-directed the RFE/RL's first editorial meeting in the new building). The second ceremony, held on May 12, 2009, was keynoted by the Estonian President. The third grand opening, held on June 5, 2009, featured Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Close coordination and communication between the Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO), RFE/RL, and the contractor enabled exceptionally smooth, efficient, and cost effective construction of, and move to, RFE/RL's new headquarters building in Prague. The process, which resulted in a striking building that is very efficiently configured, was aided by a strong and comprehensive framework for the project provided in studies conducted by OBO.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
BTL	Build to lease
CAC	Compound access control
DCS	Director of corporate security
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OBO	Overseas Buildings Operations
ORCO	Orco Property Group
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

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