



**OIG**

**Office of Inspector General**

U.S. Department of State • Broadcasting Board of Governors

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# **Inspection of Emergency Preparedness and Residential Security at Embassy Kingston, Jamaica**

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**BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS**

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## Summary of Review

The 2016 Atlantic hurricane season was the most active and costliest since 2012 and the deadliest since 2008. A total of 15 named storms—including 7 hurricanes, 4 of them major—affected or threatened U.S. diplomatic missions and U.S. citizens in the Caribbean basin and North Atlantic. Following this season of above-average activity, OIG reviewed emergency preparedness at Embassy Kingston to assess the mission's compliance with Department of State (Department) guidance on communication, planning, coordination, and training for crisis management. Due to Jamaica's high crime rate, OIG also reviewed the embassy's residential security program. The inspection was conducted January 30 – February 3, 2017. OIG found the embassy's emergency planning and residential security programs generally met Department standards. OIG made four recommendations in this report to improve testing of the embassy's communications equipment. There is one additional recommendation, contained in a Sensitive But Unclassified annex to this report, which addresses an issue related to the embassy's residential security program. In its comments on this draft report, Embassy Kingston concurred with the four recommendations. The embassy's response to each recommendation, and OIG's reply can be found in the Recommendations Section of this report. OIG considers the four recommendations resolved. The embassy's formal written response is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.

## BACKGROUND

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Jamaica is a 4,250 square mile island country, slightly smaller than Connecticut, in the Caribbean Sea 90 miles south of Cuba and 118 miles west of Haiti. It is located in the Atlantic hurricane belt and on the same tectonic plate as Haiti, which suffered a devastating earthquake in 2010. According to the U.S. National Hurricane Center, an average of 10 named storms form in the Atlantic annually. One 2016 storm—Hurricane Matthew—was forecast to strike Jamaica as a Category 5 storm on October 1 but changed course to the east and bypassed the island.

According to the embassy's Overseas Security Advisory Council 2016 crime report, Jamaica's per capita murder rate ranked among the top five in the world. As a result, the Department's security environment threat list rated the crime threat as "critical." OIG inspected the residential security program to determine if the Regional Security Office provided the required level of protection to personnel and residences.

At the time of the inspection, Embassy Kingston had 86 U.S. direct-hire employees and 214 local staff members. In addition, the embassy supervises consular agencies in Montego Bay, Jamaica, and George Town, Cayman Islands.

## FINDINGS

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### Emergency Preparedness

#### *Embassy Leadership Prioritized Emergency Preparedness*

OIG found that Embassy Kingston's leadership prioritized the safety and security of official and private American citizens and their families in accordance with 2 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 113.1 (c)(5). The Ambassador conducted town hall meetings on emergency preparedness for embassy staff and with the American citizen community in Montego Bay and Cayman Islands. The embassy conducted exercises with the Jamaican Defense Force and coordinated with local disaster preparedness entities and tourism organizations. The embassy stored stocks of emergency supplies on the embassy compound and at the designated alternate command center. The Consular Agents maintained contacts with hotels and other tourist facilities, and the Consular Agent in the Caymans sat on the local government emergency planning board. The Consular Section supervised a local volunteer warden<sup>1</sup> network throughout Jamaica and Cayman Islands, and the contact list was complete and current. The section used Department-provided tools to plan emergency preparedness and organized officers and local staff into teams for emergency response.

In advance of Hurricane Matthew, the Emergency Action Committee held five meetings, participated in planning conference calls with other missions in the region, and collaborated with the Department's Operations Center to coordinate responses. The Emergency Action Committee followed the procedures laid out in its Emergency Action Plan when it decided to consolidate personnel at the embassy and alternate command center and when it decided to request authorized departure for some staff. Although the hurricane did not make landfall, Emergency Action Committee members and other embassy staff told OIG they found it a useful opportunity to test their overall emergency preparedness. Staff praised the Deputy Chief of Mission (who was charge d'affaires at the time) for providing clear direction and exhibiting a calm demeanor during the crisis preparations and response.

#### *Embassy Should Conduct Broad Crisis Risk Assessment*

Embassy staff consistently told OIG they were confident in the level of the embassy's hurricane preparedness but less so in its ability to respond to other types of crises. In the event of an earthquake, for example, staff noted the embassy would be more dependent on the limited capacity of local law enforcement and emergency response bodies. OIG suggested the embassy use the Department's crisis risk assessment tools to assess its vulnerability to and preparedness for other types of emergencies and to guide future planning and training. The embassy circulated the results of the Emergency Action Committee's October 12, 2016, after-action review to section heads but did not submit it formally to the Department. Although not required, OIG encouraged embassy leadership to distribute it more widely.

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<sup>1</sup> The warden network, required by 7 FAM 071, assists embassies during crises by exchanging emergency information between the embassy and the local American community.

### ***Embassy Emergency Action Plan Complete and Up To Date***

The embassy's Emergency Action Committee drafted a complete Emergency Action Plan in accordance with 12 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-1 H-232. The Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the Office of Emergency Management reviewed and approved the plan in January 2017.

The Emergency Action Plan addressed multiple threat scenarios, including hurricanes and earthquakes. It took into account host country personnel and resources and provided for coordination with U.S. Department of Defense assets as would be needed in the event of evacuation or other exigent circumstances. Embassy personnel also maintained regular contact with local police and emergency response personnel.

The embassy's hurricane planning and preparation efforts guided its response to the threat posed by Hurricane Matthew. However, the Emergency Action Committee's after-action review found that the Emergency Action Plan lacked comprehensive guidance for hurricane response and an up-to-date emergency contact list. The embassy addressed both issues in the January 2017 updated plan.

### ***Embassy Conducted All Required Emergency Drills***

The embassy conducted all required post drills in accordance with Department standards in 12 FAH-1 H-765. The Regional Security Officer told OIG that both the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission supported the embassy's emergency preparedness program and participated in embassy drills. Additionally, prior to the beginning of hurricane season, the embassy held a mission-wide training session for embassy personnel.

## **Emergency Communications**

### ***Embassy Communications Plan and Testing Needed Attention***

OIG found that Embassy Kingston's emergency communications program generally met Department standards but identified three deficiencies in the testing and maintenance of emergency communications equipment, as described below.

Reviews of lessons learned from the Hurricane Odile and the Arab Spring crises<sup>2</sup> identified satellite phones and emergency radios as key communication tools during crisis events. The lessons learned highlighted the importance of conducting regular testing of and training exercises for communications equipment in advance of a potential crisis.

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<sup>2</sup> Department cable 2014 Mexico 7004, "Mission Mexico's Response to Hurricane Odile," October 29, 2014; Department cable 2011 State 121343, "Evacuation Lessons Learned from Arab Spring Posts," December 7, 2011.

### ***Embassy Did Not Conduct Weekly High-Frequency Radio Testing***

Due to competing priorities Embassy Kingston had not tested the primary high-frequency radio<sup>3</sup> at the chancery or the off-site high-frequency radio at the alternate command center in the two months prior to the inspection. Department standards in 5 FAH-2 H-723, however, require weekly testing of the primary high-frequency radio at the chancery and monthly testing of off-site radio equipment testing to ensure the equipment's operational readiness. If emergency communications equipment is not tested regularly, it may be inoperable during a crisis.

**Recommendation 1:** Embassy Kingston should test its high-frequency radio network in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

### ***Satellite Phones Were Inoperable***

OIG found that the embassy did not have an accurate inventory of satellite phones and that several phones were inoperable. OIG reviewed the mission's satellite phone inventory, and, out of thirteen total units, OIG identified three units that did not have available minutes or were defective. The embassy did not ensure that all phones were operational due to competing priorities. According to 7 FAM 1844(9), embassies should have satellite phones ready in case all other communications fail. Without valid SIM cards and available minutes for all satellite phones, emergency personnel may not be able to communicate during a crisis.

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy Kingston should ensure that all satellite phones are operational. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

### ***Alternate Command Center Radio Equipment Unprotected***

The emergency radio equipment at the alternate command center was stored in a room with a vented window that allowed dirt and debris to enter. In October 2016, the Regional Information Management Center in Ft. Lauderdale advised the embassy to protect the equipment by relocating it to an environmentally controlled location. Although such a location was available in the alternate command center, the embassy did not move the equipment due to competing priorities. According to 5 FAH-2 H-741(a)(b), the information programs center is responsible for the operational readiness and relocation of emergency and evacuation radio equipment. Failure to relocate the equipment to an environmentally controlled room threatens the functionality of the embassy's emergency radio network during a crisis.

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Kingston should store its emergency radio equipment at the alternate command center in an environmentally controlled room. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

### ***Incomplete and Untested Information Technology Contingency Plan***

Embassy Kingston had not updated and tested an IT contingency plan for the unclassified computer network due to competing priorities. The Bureau of Diplomatic Security's September 2015 computer security assessment also identified this deficiency. Department standards in 5

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<sup>3</sup> The high-frequency networks provide long-distance communication links to officials traveling in country, to Department missions in neighboring countries, and to military aircraft or ships in the vicinity, per 5 FAH-2 H-721.

FAM 851, however, require that every information system have a documented contingency plan that is tested annually. An incomplete and untested IT contingency plan increases the risk of ineffective responses to, or loss of critical communication during, an emergency or crisis.

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Kingston should update and test an information technology contingency plan for the unclassified information system in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

## Residential Security

OIG found that embassy residences generally met Department standards for safety and security. The Regional Security Office and General Services Office provided enhanced physical security protection at residences, including forced-entry grilles on doors and windows, safe havens, and intrusion alarms. The Regional Security Office assigned residential security guards to monitor every residence or residential compound, and mobile patrols visited each residential compound at least five times each shift. Additionally, new employees received a security briefing that outlined the critical crime threat environment in Jamaica, policies and directives related to personnel security restrictions, and advice on how to avoid becoming a crime victim.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

**Recommendation 1:** Embassy Kingston should test its high-frequency radio network in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

**Management Response:** In its June 2, 2017 response, Embassy Kingston concurred with this recommendation. The embassy noted that it started performing weekly checks and has established a regular weekly schedule to ensure the tests are carried out.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation of the high-frequency radio tests.

**Recommendation 2:** Embassy Kingston should ensure that all satellite phones are operational. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

**Management Response:** In its June 2, 2017, response, Embassy Kingston concurred with this recommendation. The embassy noted that the Information Resource Management Section will regularly check to ensure all agencies keep their systems up and operational and report the findings to the Management Counselor.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that all the satellite phones are operational.

**Recommendation 3:** Embassy Kingston should store its emergency radio equipment at the alternate command center in an environmentally controlled room. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

**Management Response:** In its June 2, 2017, response, Embassy Kingston concurred with this recommendation. The embassy noted it will move the emergency radio equipment into an adjacent climate controlled room and designate that room as part of the alternate command center. The estimated completion date of this project is July 1, 2017.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the emergency radio equipment is stored in a climate controlled room.

**Recommendation 4:** Embassy Kingston should update and test an information technology contingency plan for the unclassified information system in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

**Management Response:** In its June 2, 2017, response, Embassy Kingston concurred with this recommendation. The embassy estimated it would complete the IT contingency plan by July 1, 2017.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation of the tested information technology contingency plan for the unclassified information system.



## APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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This inspection was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by OIG for the Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980. Because OIG uses a risk-based approach to target its inspection resources on high-risk areas, this inspection focused on Embassy Kingston's emergency preparedness and residential security. The objectives for this targeted inspection were to determine if Embassy Kingston had developed, coordinated, and tested an emergency response plan to address a range of emergency situations, in particular natural disasters, and if so, if any such plan complied with applicable Department guidelines. OIG also sought to determine if the embassy's residential security program complied with applicable Department guidelines.

The inspection included a review of Embassy Kingston's Emergency Action Plan and consular preparedness documentation. OIG reviewed electronic responses to a brief questionnaire designed for U.S. and locally employed staff with assigned roles in emergency preparedness and crisis management, and for personnel occupying U.S. Government housing. The onsite portions of the inspection used physical examination and interviews to assess the embassy's emergency preparedness posture and its compliance with guidelines for residential security programs.

In conducting inspections, OIG reviews pertinent records; reviews, circulates, and compiles the results of survey instruments, as appropriate; conducts interviews; and reviews the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, organizations, and activities affected by the review. For this inspection, OIG conducted 32 documented interviews. OIG also reviewed 122 documents and 44 responses to personal questionnaires. OIG used professional judgment, along with physical, documentary, testimonial, and analytical evidence collected or generated, to develop findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations.

Scott Boswell (Team Leader), John Bush, Eric Chavera, and Darren Felsburg conducted this inspection.

## APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

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June 2, 2017

### UNCLASSIFIED

THRU: Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs – Francisco Palmieri, Acting Assistant Secretary

TO: OIG – Sandra Lewis, Assistant Inspector General for Inspections

FROM: Embassy Kingston – Paul Blakenship, Management Counselor

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – Inspection of Embassy Kingston

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

**OIG Recommendation 1:** Embassy Kingston should test its high-frequency (HF) radio network in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

**Management Response:** Embassy Kingston accepts the recommendation and recognizes weekly HF radio checks were not completed on a regular basis. Post management impressed upon our Information Programs Office the requirement to strictly adhere to this policy and reinforced with the Section this is a must requirement. Post is now performing the weekly checks, and has established a regular weekly schedule to ensure the tests are carried out.

**OIG Recommendation 2:** Embassy Kingston should ensure that all satellite phones are operational. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

**Management Response:** Embassy Kingston accepts the recommendation. Inspectors did inspect our satellite phones, some of which were operational while some lapsed call minutes. Since the inspection, a total of 13 working satellite phones have been identified and tested within the Mission. The Embassy has 8 operational phones, USAID has 3, and Peace Corps has 2. Six older systems we were keeping as spares, which we believe were the ones noted in the Recommendation as not in operation. The Information Resource Management Section will regularly check to ensure all agencies keep their systems (those listed in the attached inventory) up and operational and report to the Management Counselor the findings.

**OIG Recommendation 3:** Embassy Kingston should store its emergency radio equipment at the alternate command center in an environmentally controlled room. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

**Management Response:** Embassy Kingston accepts this recommendation. The radio base station, server-type rack, three repeaters and the alternate HF radio are the equipment referred to in this recommendation. They are currently located in a fan room which cannot be climate controlled. Post will move these systems into the adjacent climate controlled room which already has telephones and Open Net computers. Post will designate that room on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor as part of the alternate command center. The main room of the alternate command center will remain on the first floor. Tentative completion date is July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

**OIG Recommendation 4:** Embassy Kingston should update and test an information technology contingency plan for the unclassified information system in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Kingston)

**Management Response:** Embassy Kingston accepts this recommendation. Post is remiss in not having a contingency plan prepared. We do now have a good template to prepare this plan and we will work to have a finished product by July 1<sup>st</sup>. Post expects the return of our Information Management Officer in mid-June after a six month medevac. We ask that he also participate in formulating and testing this plan as he has more expertise than anyone currently at post. Hence the July 1<sup>st</sup> date requested for compliance. Post will send a copy to the inspector's office upon completion.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Paul W. Blankenship, Management Counselor, [blankenshippw@state.gov](mailto:blankenshippw@state.gov).

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