
**AUDIT
OF
THE CANADIAN EMBASSY**

ALGIERS

January 2000

Audit Division (SIV)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An audit of the Administration and Consular Programs in Algiers was conducted from March 14 to 18, 1999. A previous audit of the Administration and Consular Programs took place in February 1993.

ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

Algiers is an exceptionally difficult environment where Canada-based staff (CBS) are required to live and work on a Compound and where movement is restricted ***. The Administration Program, despite this environment, has responded well to Program needs and is providing a good level of support. The Management and Consular Officer (MCO), who arrived in 1998, faced the formidable task of dealing with the numerous problems brought about by the new Compound which was only occupied in May 1998. These problems have consumed most of her time. ***

The new Compound and its recurring problems have placed considerable strain on the in-house technical resources. The Mission has also had to use \$60,000 of its own budget to redress some of these issues. Much remains to be done. A series of projects have been identified that are needed to "right" the situation with the Compound. The notion of adding a PPMO, at least for the short term, to analyse problems and train staff may be worth consideration. The quality of the MSG housing, which is far below that offered to other CBS, is an issue requiring resolution. The heavy focus on the Compound has not allowed Administration to focus on the day-to-day requirements of property management such as updating PRIME, completing inventories and preparing Occupancy Agreements.

The Mission has several personnel issues to deal with, all of which were in the process of being completed at the time of audit. These include bringing up to date LES employee appraisals; completing a salary survey; preparing a training plan; finalizing the regularization of 21 contracts, including 18 security guards; and, completing the update of the Post Report and LES Handbook. In addition, the length of posting for MSGs and the size of the MSG complement, both of which impinge on the MSG housing issue, need to be re-evaluated. The Mission's visiting policy also needs to be re-assessed to ensure it is fair and transparent and universally applied.

The MCO is actively involved with the accounts and has good control of the Mission budget despite unexpected expenses related to the construction of the new Diplex. *** Good controls are needed to ensure that all revenues collected are

recorded properly and that the Immigration and Consular cash register is balanced each day.

CONSULAR PROGRAM

The Consular Program is managed by the MCO. The Mission is in the process of re-assigning the Consular responsibilities to the LE Administrative Assistant. The current LE Consular Assistant is also the Systems Administrator and he is no longer able to cope with the demands of both busy programs. The Mission's passport control systems are well in place and the Mission is in the process of updating its Contingency Plan.

ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

1.1 Management of the Program

1.1.1 The Management and Consular Officer (MCO), an AS-04 and a new arrival the summer of 1998, has a very good grip of the requirements of the Mission. *** The move to the new Compound, and all the problems associated with it, has resulted in the bulk of her time being devoted to the property, security and personnel issues facing the Mission.

1.1.2 The HOM has been found to be very supportive of the MCO and has taken a keen interest in Administration, particularly as it relates to the personal safety and well-being of his staff. His background in security at HQ serves him well in his capacity as HOM in an environment charged with security concerns. ***

1.1.3 Administration priorities have dealt (as they should) with the need to: ensure the smooth move into the new Compound facilities; maintain a high level of security awareness; develop and maintain short and long term maintenance and repair plans for the new Compound; and, continue to complete, change and commission various facets of the new facilities. The audit team believes that, while these goals are indeed ambitious under the most normal of circumstances, the MCO, under the very trying conditions and exigencies that exist in Algiers, is effectively meeting this challenge.

1.1.4 The HOM and the MCO recognize the teething problems with the move to a new Compound which denies privacy and where movement is severely restricted. As a result, the MCO has prepared a workplan which identifies a series of projects to redress these problems. Some of these issues deal with the physical side of the Compound while others deal with the more sensitive issue of living conditions and staff morale.

Goals and Objectives

1.1.5 The Mission has not formally set goals and objectives for the various sections in administration. This would better ensure that staff have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and allow criteria to be established against which performance can be measured. The MCO has a lot of work on her plate and would benefit from delegating as much responsibility as possible to LES, particularly with respect to filing. The MCO has already set out a plan of action to bring leave and attendance, property and other administrative related files into the open area and to delegate responsibilities for filing to the LES Administrative Assistant.

Recommendation for Mission

- 1.1.6 Goals and objectives should be set for each division within administration and delegation of responsibilities to local staff increased.**

Mission Response

- 1.1.6 Agreed. The MCO plans to institute regular meetings in November, once summer turnover, and once the installations of and training for IMS and SIGNET 2000 are complete.**

The crisis management approach required here since the move to the Diplex has resulted in a re-active rather than pro-active approach: planning is constantly being set aside by emergency situations involving building plant, staff health and comfort, and housing.

1.2 Human Resources Management

- 1.2.1 Overall, the personnel function is managed effectively by the MCO. As part of the audit of the management of human resources the audit team examined a number of personnel, staffing, and leave and attendance files and interviewed both CBS and LES employees.**

LES Appraisals

- 1.2.2 Appraisals were completed up to and including 1997. Other appraisal reports are in progress and the team would encourage the Mission to ensure that all appraisal reports are completed. No increments were being held back as a result of appraisals not being completed.**

LES Handbook

- 1.2.3 The current LES handbook indicates that the entitlement for the two fifteen minute breaks should be accumulated and taken with the lunch hour which is not allowable under the current LES Regulations. The Mission indicated that it would take corrective action to discontinue the practice and update the handbook.**

Recommendation for Mission

- 1.2.4 The practice of adding two fifteen minute breaks onto the lunch hour should be discontinued and the LES Handbook modified.**

Mission Response

- 1.2.4 This has been removed from the LES Handbook; Program Managers have been advised that the practice is not permitted. However, as many LES go home for lunch (local practice), an hour is required and the Mission will continue to permit the practice on a case-by-case basis.**

Post Report

- 1.2.5 The last Post Report for the Mission was completed in 1993. The MCO, in endeavouring to make the Report current, has circulated the previous Post Report to the Program Managers for updating and is awaiting feedback. An up-to-date Post Report will greatly assist in informing any Canadian who is entertaining the possibility of a posting to Algiers on the peculiarities and difficulties of this assignment.

Recommendation for Mission

- 1.2.6 The Mission should complete the Post Report as soon as possible.**

Mission Response

- 1.2.6 The Post Report was completed, approved and forwarded to SERV in English and to TRAN for the French translation in April 1999. The French version was forwarded to SERV in early June 1999.**

Salary survey

- 1.2.7 The MCO is currently undertaking a salary survey for the Mission to ensure that Mission salaries and compensation packages are in line with local markers. She will be submitting the results of the survey to Headquarters (HQ) for their review shortly. One case in particular that the Mission must address involves the Official Residence staff cook. The incumbent in this position was SOS in 1993 only to be taken on contract so that she could be paid in foreign currency (French Francs). Agreement was obtained from HQ on the basis of the case brought forward by the Mission at that time. The Mission explained that no other equally qualified person could be found to take on the work as the cook at the Official Residence. The position was regularized in 1994 and, since that time, the cook has been paid an amount in French Francs (which is converted into local currency). This is the only position where this exception has been made. More recently, exchange rate fluctuations are such that upon conversion, the cook is being paid the equivalent of a level 9-1 position. In the interests of transparency and fairness, the MCO needs to survey local markers to see whether any similar cases exist. Further, the Mission needs to assess whether or not the market has changed significantly so that the position can be filled by paying according to scale.

Recommendation for Mission

- 1.2.8 Salary survey should be submitted and a detailed review of the position of the O.R. cook should be carried out.**

Mission Response

- 1.2.8 The salary survey was completed and forwarded. Increases of 16.5 percent for levels 7, 8 and 9, and 12.5 percent for all other office and non-office staff were awarded effective April 1, 1999. These increases have been implemented.**

The availability of competent cooks capable of preparing more than basic Algerian foods is poor. The Mission has been talking with staff of various hotels, many of whom have been trained in Europe or with a large hotel chain, who have submitted resumes to us. Unfortunately, when one looks at what these people are earning, our cook's salary is very low. The Mission plans to undertake a salary survey of mission and hotel cooks/chefs with comparable responsibilities to determine how best to bring this position in line with other LES but without losing the current incumbent.

Training

- 1.2.9 There is no formal training plan in place at the Mission. The MCO did explain that a number of staff members have been identified for official language training. The audit team would encourage the MCO to prepare a formal training plan, jointly with other Program Managers, to ensure that the needs of all staff are addressed. This would serve as an incentive for staff and form an integral part of the performance evaluation process.**

Recommendation for Mission

- 1.2.10 A formal training plan should be prepared in consultation between the MCO and the Program Managers.**

Mission Response

- 1.2.10 While it is correct that no formal training plan exists, the amount of training which both LES and CBS have been undergoing as a result of new systems, procedures, and ways of doing business prevents further training from happening at this time. A number of LES have signed up for after-hours English language courses at reputable local schools for which they will be re-imbursed. Once we get**

through the arrival of IMS and SIGNET 2000, and once all new staff are in place, a training plan will be formulated.

Regularization of positions

1.2.11 The Mission is in the process of regularizing a total of 21 positions, 18 of which are LES security guards. The other three include maintenance support positions and the mechanic, who have been working with the Mission on contract for a short period of time.

Recommendation for Mission

1.2.12 Regularization of positions should be finalized.

Mission Response

1.2.12 The 18 positions were applied for urgently in November 1998. The Mission has converted \$209,000 from operations to salaries in order to obtain these positions, which were received in May 1999, retroactive to April 1, 1999. The three remaining positions will be finalized, we hope, by the Fall. Unfortunately, the removal of RO 25 funds from the Mission's budget may mean Algiers is unable to fund the purchase of these additional LES positions (Mechanic and two General Labourers).

Accompaniment

1.2.13 Algiers is currently identified as an "unaccompanied Mission". Discussions were held between the audit team and various members of the staff on this subject. The audit team spoke with representatives of three other missions concerning two particular issues. The first issue concerned escorting of home-based staff to all appointments by an armed military security guard. It was confirmed that all official visits conducted by home-based staff in the three missions surveyed provided armed military escorts. Where they differed with the Canadian Mission was on the subject of social outings. One mission has allowed their home-based staff to travel unescorted to the few "approved" restaurants and hotels (where security is provided). The two others did not allow their staff to travel unescorted at any time. Elections were to be held later in April and this may impact on the security situation in Algeria. The Mission needs to revisit the escort policy sometime following the elections, not only in conjunction with other missions but also with ISR and in consultation with the geographic desk, who regularly consults with the various foreign ministries of countries represented in Algiers.

1.2.15 The second area of concern deals with the policy of overnight visits. At the moment, the Mission, being an unaccompanied post, means overnight visitors are not allowed. Staff are allowed to receive guests *** anytime during the day and in the evenings. Staff posted to Algiers are not permitted to bring spouses or dependants to the post nor are relatives allowed to visit the Mission at any time. To compensate for the stress that can be caused by living in a mission such as this one, an allowance of \$850 is provided to allow for travel out of the post every six weeks. This is a non-cumulative benefit and staff must use their own vacation leave allowance. Each CBS and MSG have their own particular circumstances and their views on the overnight policy vary significantly.

Recommendations for Mission

- 1.2.16 **The escort policy should be revisited in consultation with ISR taking into consideration how other missions in Algiers are handling this problem.**
- 1.2.17 **The overnight policy should be revisited regularly by the Mission and a consensus should be established with all staff. The policy should be applied transparently, universally and fairly.**

Mission Responses

- 1.2.16 **The Mission has been dealing regularly with ISR on solving the escort problem, and a number of alternatives are being explored.**
- 1.2.17 **Agreed, and this policy is currently under discussion. A consensus will wait until the new staff are in place (as six of twelve are departing). In the interim, the policy has been explained to all incoming staff, and has been incorporated into the updated Post Report.**

Recommendation for ISR

- 1.2.18 ***

ISR Response

- 1.2.18 ***

Recommendation for ISR

1.2.20 ***

ISR Response

1.2.20 ***

1.3 Physical Resources

1.3.1 The Physical Resources Section is comprised of 11 LES and two contract staff. A Materiel/Purchasing Clerk supervises two Cleaners, four Chauffeurs, a Messenger and the two General Labourers on contract. There is also an Electrician, Handyman and Painter who report directly to the MCO. Approximately 60 percent of the MCO's time has been devoted to physical resources since her arrival.

1.3.2 Most administrative problems at this Mission have been brought about as a result of the move to the new Compound, which took place in May 1998. These problems have placed considerable strain on the in-house technical resources and have resulted in contracting some outside resources for major repairs. Formerly the landlords attended to most of the SQ repairs.

1.3.3 Since the move, the Mission has expended \$60,000 out of its own budget to address some of the deficiencies with the Compound. There remains, however, several things to do to improve the facilities, as indicated by continuing problems with leaks in waterlines, Chancery and OR basement flooding and leaks in roofs.

1.3.4 The Mission has identified a series of projects that are needed to "right" the situation with this Compound. The most serious issues concern the HVAC system, fire panel system and the gensets. The Mission indicated that air circulation problems in the Chancery have resulted in a significant increase in employee absenteeism. A team from Black and MacDonald, mechanical and electrical specialists from Ottawa, visited the Mission at the end of March 1999 to correct the problems. Two previous visits have proven unsuccessful. The Mission believes that problems with these systems will be mitigated if they are serviced regularly.

1.3.5 Because of the Compound's highly sophisticated systems and technical knowledge required to service these systems, which is not readily available locally, the recent SRP visit proposed that a maintenance contract be entered into with Black and MacDonald to provide spare parts, manuals and training to staff. The notion of adding a PPMO position to resolve ongoing maintenance issues, as has been done in other locations, e.g. Haiti, is also an option. In this case, however, housing for a PPMO is a factor unless the tour is for a short term, in which case the individual could stay in a hotel.

1.3.6 The HVAC system has had a profound impact on employee absenteeism. The system has also had an impact on the electricity costs. Prior to the move to the new Compound, the electricity bill for the Chancery, OR and SQs for the whole fiscal year 1997-98, totalled \$11,000. The electricity bills for the Chancery alone for one month are now \$5,000, all because of the HVAC system. The Mission is now considering converting to natural gas for economical reasons.

1.3.7 The Chancery is a sealed building and LES complained to the audit team that "we are working in conditions we are not accustomed to". In the old Chancery, windows could be opened and staff could benefit from the steady breezes for which Algeria is blessed. Opening windows would help not only for health reasons but also from a morale perspective. Fortunately, in the case of SQs, inserts were added at the last minute allowing occupants to open their windows. Most occupants never turn on their HVAC preferring, instead, to keep the windows open to keep their SQs cool. The Mission, itself, is prepared to fund the windows in the Chancery. It is currently seeking the costs and technical information on these windows.

Recommendations for SRP (Information: RAM)

1.3.8 SRP should consider adding a PPMO to Algiers, at least for the short term, to analyze problems and to train staff. Following this initial period, the Mission and SRP will be better positioned to assess if a full-time technical expert is required. The appointment of a PPMO would obviate any requirement to enter into a maintenance contract with private mechanical and electrical experts.

1.3.9 Inserts should be considered for the Chancery to allow staff to open windows and rely less on the HVAC system.

SRP Responses

1.3.8 Canmet Technical Resources have been at the mission from July 1999 through to November. They have commissioned the systems, trained the local staff, ordered parts and resolved many outstanding technical problems. There have been no reported mechanical failures in the last two months and during a recent SRSF visit the systems were operating as per design. SRSF is now arranging a contract to have Johnson Controls make a visit to resolve outstanding control problems. A local contractor, who is the McQuay Manufacturing (the equipment supplier) representative, has been contracted to perform the routine inspection and maintenance of the various mechanical systems.

It is not within SRD's mandate to add a PPMO position to the Mission establishment. Rather, if Algiers wishes to add such a position to their establishment, it is a Mission initiative. The Bureau has taken a pro-active position on this question, especially in terms of providing continuity of service and training for staff.

- 1.3.9 The Chancery was designed as a sealed, centrally cooled building. During a recent SRSF visit the building was being maintained at 22C when the outside air was 42C. As each area or office has its own control, the temperatures were being set by the various occupants indicating that they were enjoying the central cooling. If windows were to be opened, then the central A/C would have to be turned off or there would be a serious problem with condensation (cold air meeting hot air). There would also be a large increase in energy costs where the central system was trying to cool large amounts of outside air.**

Recreational Facility

- 1.3.10 Administration's involvement with the Compound has precluded it from attending to day-to-day operations such as updating PRIME, preparing Occupancy Agreements, inventorying the fine art and completing distribution accounts for the Chancery, OR and the SQs. The MCO has identified these tasks as a priority for Administration. Storerooms and storage areas are neatly organized and well maintained. The MCO did hold a sale of its surplus assets in December 1998. Sales were made to LES and contract staff under sealed bid and sales amounted to DA 333,577 (\$8400). The security situation in Algiers prevented a public sale from taking place and there was no interest shown from other embassies.**

Recommendation for Mission

- 1.3.11 The Mission should update its PRIME, complete the distribution accounts for the Chancery, OR and SQs and have all CB employees on Compound sign their Occupancy Agreements.**

Mission Response

- 1.3.11 Agreed and the MCO is slowly working its way through this administrative backlog as time and situation permit. Refer to response under 1.1.6**
- 1.3.12 At the moment, the Mission has both a pool and a tennis court facility. Although the tennis court had at the time of the visit not yet been opened, it was expected to open shortly. The pool, on the other hand, is used by the staff extensively**

in the summer months. Visitors are allowed at the pool on weekends, but at the moment there are neither washroom nor changing facilities for guests and staff to use. During a visit earlier this year by SRP, the possibility of building this type of facility was discussed. The audit team would encourage the Mission to pursue this actively with SRD.

Recommendation for Mission

1.3.13 The Mission should explore options with SRP to add a change room and washroom for people using the pool and tennis court facilities.

Mission Response

1.3.13 There are toilets and showers under the Chancery which have been used by visitors. These, however, are some distance from the pool area. The difficulty with installing such facilities at the pool is the lack of space in which to do so, and the plumbing requirements.

MSG Housing

1.3.14 The living conditions of the military personnel (MSGs) is an issue that must be attended to. While the MOU between DFAIT and DND calls for comparable accommodation standards for both DFAIT and DND employees serving in Algiers, MSGs are currently living in sub-standard housing (this is the housing agreed to by the geographic bureau and ISD). MSGs are now required to double-up in trailers that offer approximately 70m² of space.

1.3.15 Pre-Compound days saw military personnel each assigned to and housed with a DFAIT employee. This accommodation was of a much higher standard than the current trailers. At that time, there was no requirement to pay a shelter share. Now that they live in trailers, they are being asked to pay a shelter share of \$107.50 per month (MSG claim they were not apprised of this expense prior to their posting). There are a litany of problems with these trailers including, inter alia, limited living space, warped floors and ceiling that have been poorly joined, and thin interior and exterior walls that are inadequately soundproofed.

1.3.16 There is a need for the Department, in collaboration with DND, to revisit the requirement for these MSGs to pay a shelter share. The Mission had earlier recommended a 100 percent Accommodation Deficiency Adjustment (ADA). A recent SRP report proposed that these trailers be replaced, stating that "given that medium to long term requirements for housing exist, consideration perhaps be given to manufactured housing". The Department must consider that, should security risks lessen in Algiers and the need for maintaining the current MSG security force diminish, Canada-based presence may grow and housing some of the CB staff off-Compound

may be an option. The MCO believes there is a market for the trailers should they be put up for sale.

Recommendation for SBM

- 1.3.17 The Department, in collaboration with DND, should reconsider waiving the shelter share in its entirety for those MSGs living in Algiers.**

SBM Response

- 1.3.17 DND advised DFAIT in November 1999 that they will reimburse four military members their shelter share since arrival at post and will waive shelter share until their departure from post or move to better quality staff quarters.**

Recommendation for SRD

- 1.3.18 SRD, together with ISD, should carefully evaluate all options for MSG housing, particularly in the event security concerns lessen, to resolve their housing problems.**

SRD Response

- 1.3.18 Prior to determining a course of action on the above issue, SRD will need to know with greater assurance from the Mission and the Geographic Branch if and when the MSG positions would be replaced by DFAIT and/or OGD Program Canada-based officers once the security situation in Algeria settles down. Additionally, SRD would require from the branch confirmation on the potential family configuration of the MSG replacements and length of tours of duty in order to properly establish the revised SQ inventory mix which should be obtained to properly house the expanded mission complement.**

It is SRD's view that if a decision is taken to move towards the construction of more permanent housing structures for MSGs, such construction should, either use off-the-shelf modular units made in Canada or villas built using mostly local construction and local materials.

In keeping with the above approach, SRD has requested the assistance of the HOM to gather and provide information on local construction costs which might be obtained from recently completed

construction projects undertaken by friendly embassies using local workers and materials.

SIV Comment

SIV has received word from the Mission that NDHQ will replace trailers with proper housing.

Official Vehicles

1.3.19 ***. CBS serving in Algiers are restricted from bringing their own PVM ***. The Mission employs a mechanic on contract who reports to the MCO through the Warrant Officer.

1.3.20 The MCO has plans to regularize the mechanic's position and to construct a full mechanical workshop. The contract mechanic was able to recently update his skills through a visit from the DND mechanic in Moscow. Repair costs at this Mission have been significantly reduced with the introduction of a full bumper-to-bumper inspection ***. This preventive maintenance program has dramatically decreased the frequency *** for repairs. Equipping the Mission with a workshop and tools will, according to the Mission, *** save approximately \$30,000 ***. The Mission will need to assess the environmental impact of building a workshop before it proceeds.

1.3.21 The Mission is able to purchase up to 800,000 litres of coupons annually split between gasoline and diesel. While there is a record of the coupons issued to the drivers by the Materiel/Purchasing Clerk, he maintains no perpetual inventory of the coupons on hand. In consequence, it is not possible to reconcile the coupons that should be on hand. Moreover, there are no vehicle operating reports or vehicle logs retained for each of the vehicles. As a result, there is no record of each vehicle's gasoline/diesel consumption which would allow for the vehicle's efficiency to be determined. The MCO realizes this and has set this out as one of her priorities.

Recommendation for Mission

1.3.22 Proper records should be maintained of all gasoline/diesel coupons ordered and distributed by the Materiel/Purchasing Clerk. The MCO should conduct periodic counts of the coupons on hand and reconcile them to the records.

1.3.23 Motor vehicle operating reports and vehicle logs should be maintained for all official vehicles.

Mission Responses

1.3.22 **These records are now in place and maintained by the Materiel/Purchasing Clerk and the Accountant. The MCO checks the totals before and after each purchase.**

1.3.23 **The vehicle logs are in all vehicles and are completed by either the Driver or CBS passenger; the operating logs are completed by the mechanic and checked by either the MCO or the Warrant Officer.**

1.4 Financial management

1.4.1 The Management Consular Officer (MCO) is also the mission's financial officer. The Finance Section consists of a senior accountant and an assistant accountant who have been at the mission since 1993 and 1995 respectively. Occupational segregation is clearly demonstrated in their work descriptions. They receive some correspondence in English from Headquarters, which they sometimes have difficulty understanding. Steps should be taken to ensure that all correspondence sent to the Finance Section be written in French. The two accountants have received training on Mission Finex : the senior accountant was trained in French, while the assistant was obliged to attend training sessions in English only. The mission has two accounts in dinars, the local currency, at the Banque extérieure d'Algérie. One of these is in convertible currency, and the other, non-convertible. The Accounts Office is very well organized and the files are in good order. The office has a steady workload, and the accountants are doing a satisfactory job. The mission staff indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of services provided by the Finance Section.

1.4.2 Since this is a spoke mission, the data is inputted into its financial system, namely the Mission Finex, by the parent mission in Tunis, Tunisia. However, the Finance Section in Algiers is capable of reading the data in the Finex system.

1.4.3 ***

1.4.4 The Accounts Office generates monthly budget reports that are remitted to the MCO for budgetary control purposes. Although the construction of the new chancery and residences gave rise to unexpected expenses, the MCO was in a position to properly manage the allocated budget. On the whole, the mission has solid financial management and the Accounts Office is doing its job correctly. However, the audit did produce a few observations concerning the office hours, mission cash receipts and revenue, signing authority under section 33 of the FAA and payroll expenditures.

1.4.5 Under a local law governing the depositing of dinars in Algerian bank accounts, the source of the currency must be clearly determined. Since most of the

dinars paid to the mission consist of immigration and consular fees, a *detailed statement of immigration and consular fees* was commonly attached to each deposit showing the kinds of visas for which funds were collected from clients.

Recommendation for the mission

1.4.6 ***

Mission response

1.4.6 Mission has raised suggestion with CIC Paris some time ago as CIC Ottawa are the ones that approve. Mission continues to await response. Mission agrees that it would simplify the processes and is willing to make the change but do not yet have the authority to do so.

1.4.7 For a period of about a year, the mission used the dinars accumulated at the mission to pay in cash the contractors doing work related to the new Chancery. ***

Recommendation for the mission

1.4.9 The mission should attach a detailed statement of the immigration and consular fees to all deposits in order to comply with local laws.

Mission response

1.4.9 We will resume the practice of sending the detailed statement indicating the various sources of revenue and the amounts. Up until the account was frozen, there had been no problem with this method, other than the underlying question as to the bank's right to insist that a diplomatic mission divulge its sources of revenue.

Recommendation for the mission

1.4.11 ***

Mission response

1.4.11 ***

Finance Section hours of operation

1.4.12 Access to the Accounts Office is well controlled, with only authorized persons allowed in. However, the accountants are constantly being disturbed by people with questions, albeit quite legitimate ones, or by telephone calls, at all hours of the day. In order to be able to correctly make the accounting entries in the mission's books and to transmit accurate financial data, the Office should have a period during which the financial tasks related to the Section's duties can be done without disturbances.

Recommendation for the mission

1.4.13 The mission should set aside a time during which the Finance Section is closed each day, and inform all mission personnel of this.

Mission response

1.4.13 Effective April 1999, the Accounts Office is closed every afternoon. This permits the accountants time to work without interruption, and has been necessary to permit them time for IMS training.

Recommendation for mission

1.4.15 Please see response to 1.4.13. In addition, the accountants may close their office any time.

Cash register and immigration funds

1.4.16 The person working at the cash register collects the immigration and consular revenues. This employee's wicket is located not within the main Chancery building but in an area close to the main entrance giving access to the area within the Embassy walls. This place is also used by the Canadian and locally-engaged security guards. At the close of each shift ending at noon, it would be good accounting practice for the Canadian employee responsible for the cash to take the final cash register total. In this way the funds collected and the data to be entered on form EXT-1203A could be reconciled. However, the team noted that the final total for the cash was not being taken on a daily basis. Often it was only done once a week, thereby delaying the credit entries in the mission's financial system and the finalization of the reports on the periods in question.

Recommendation for the mission

1.4.17 The mission should ensure that the cash total is taken at the end of each work period.

Mission response

1.4.17 ***

1.4.18 ***The funds are remitted to the Finance Section, which counts them immediately. An official receipt is issued immediately in the name of the person responsible for the sum received. If the final cash total was taken by the Canadian employee responsible for it, the EXT-1203A is remitted to the accountant. If the total has not been taken, the accountant cannot finalize the transaction and keeps the data to be entered in the financial system until the final cash total is provided. The final cash total must be taken so that the Finance Section can ensure that the final count of the transactions registered by the cash matches the data on form EXT-1203A.

Recommendations for the mission

1.4.19 ***

1.4.20 ***

1.4.21 ***

Mission Responses

1.4.19 ***

1.4.20 ***

1.4.21 ***

Expenditures

1.4.22 One of the principles of accounting holds that all expenditures should appear in the financial period in which a transaction was made. The review of mission accounts by SIXP indicated that a number of requests for payments were not entered in the Mission Finex in the period in which the expense was paid. Some expenses appeared two or three months after payment was made.

Recommendation for the mission

1.4.23 The mission should ensure that all financial transactions appear in the financial period in which they were incurred.

Mission response

1.4.23 The Accounting Section has received clear instructions. Payments are now made in the proper accounting period in which the expense was paid.

1.4.24 Most of the payments under section 34 of the FAA are authorized by the MCO. However, section 33 is signed off by the accountant. An examination of the specimen signature cards (EXT-53) shows that the two accountants have obtained the current head of mission's payment authority. The Financial Management Manual, Chapter 28, indicates that payment authority may be delegated to the following individuals only: the head of mission, the deputy head of mission, the designated financial management officer of the mission and the financial management advisor for the aid program.

Recommendation for the mission

1.4.25 The mission should review the payment authority being given to the accountants and determine whether section 33 could be signed in accordance with the instructions set out in the Financial Management Manual.

Mission response

1.4.25 Section 33 is now signed off by one of the other three CBS with this authority.

Paylist

1.4.29 At the present time, employees who acknowledge receipt of their pay by signing the paylist can see what their colleagues are earning. There needs to be a more discreet way of signing the paylist. The accountant suggested using a window-envelope where only the employee concerned might see the details on his or her salary. The details on salary and the related deductions are personal, and measures need to be taken to protect this information.

Recommendation for the mission

1.4.30 The mission should ensure that the information on LES salaries are protected and that the paylists are signed so that only the data pertaining to the person receiving the payment can be seen when the list is being signed.

Mission response

1.4.30 The window-envelope seems to be working very well.

Contracts

1.4.31 The Finance Section has a file for each contract awarded by the mission. The contracts audited were prepared and signed correctly by those responsible. However, the team observed that 11 security guards were receiving remuneration even though their contracts had expired more than two months ago. The mission has no method of control, such as a list of active contractors, to enable it to see at a glance when the expiry date for a contract is approaching.

Recommendations for the mission

1.4.32 The mission should review the 11 contracts that have expired and prepare new ones.

1.4.33 The mission should produce a list showing in advance the expiry dates of the contracts.

Mission responses

1.4.32 These 11 guard contracts have been regularized - please see our response under 1.2.12

1.4.33 This is underway, manually, as we do not want to have to recreate all this after the arrival of the new systems.

Reimbursement for right of landing

1.4.34 The applications for right of landing submitted to the mission by clients are sent to our Paris mission for processing. The payment requests therefore come from the Immigration Section in Paris, which advises the mission when payment is due. In its review of mission accounts, SIXP noted that the Immigration Program Manager was not authorizing, as per section 34 of the FAA, the requests related to payment for right of landing fees that are an integral part of his program. The signature in section 34 was that of the MCO.

1.4.35 The supporting documents remitted to the Finance Section to be attached to the payment requests do not indicate whether payment has already been made and whether the payment is legitimate. For example, the supporting document attached to a payment request for August 1998 is a photocopy of a letter dated October 5, 1995, sent by Paris to the applicant. The letter asked the client to pay the fees pertaining to the request. For control purposes, the Finance Section made a photocopy of the client's identification papers before remitting the funds and requesting acknowledgement of receipt of the funds. The signature of the Immigration Program Manager does not

appear on any of the documents. The name of the person who made the request from Paris is also unknown.

1.4.36 The MCO and the Immigration Program Manager should combine their efforts to introduce a procedure whereby the legitimacy of the amounts reimbursed to clients might be established beyond any doubt. Steps must be taken to ensure that the signature of the Immigration Program Manager is on all of the payment requests in question.

Recommendation for the mission

1.4.37 The mission should ensure that all payment requests sent to the Finance Section have proper justification in order to determine the legitimacy of the payments.

Mission response

1.4.37 Previously, the IMM Program Manager did sign these payment requests. The Manager agrees with the recommendation and is prepared to resume signing these requests.

Language training

1.4.38 *** cannot speak, write or read English. A good deal of the correspondence from Headquarters is in English only, making it difficult to understand. Even though Arabic and French are the working languages in Algiers, English-language training would be of benefit to the organization. The Headquarters divisions should also make an effort to send more correspondence in French to the Finance Section. It is strongly recommended that the accountants receive English-language training to assist them with their work. The MCO should make sure that the contents of any English correspondence have been clearly understood.

Recommendation for the mission

1.4.39 The mission should take measures to make English-language courses available.

Mission response

1.4.39 * are currently taking after-hours English courses, on their own initiative, for which they will be re-imbursed. Please see also our response under 1.2.10**

Emergency funds

1.4.40 There seems to be a problem with the financial system that is preventing advances from being transferred to the appropriate custodian.

Recommendation for SBRA

1.4.41 SBRA should transmit clear, specific instructions to the mission for transfer of custody. Since Algiers is a satellite mission, the data will be entered from Tunis.

SBRA's response

1.4.41 SBRA will contact the Mission and advise them how to make the necessary entries in the system so that IMS reflects the appropriate custodian.

1.5 Information management

1.5.1 The mission has a system administrator (SA), a position being filled by an LES. The work description for the position includes consular tasks. The team recommended that the mission change the work description so that the consular tasks are no longer a part of the SA's daily duties. The mission staff indicated to the team that they were satisfied with the services being provided by the SA.

Recommendation for the mission

1.5.2 The mission should modify the SA's work description so that consular tasks are no longer a part of the incumbent's duties.

Mission response

1.5.2 The MCO is in the process of re-organizing her section, including the transfer of Consular duties from the SA to the Admin and Consular Assistant (currently a secretarial position). The current incumbent of the secretarial position has indicated she will be leaving shortly, and it seems logical to carry out the transfer following her departure.

1.5.3 In January 1998 the SA received three weeks' training at Headquarters for Signet and one week for Octel. Only basic training was provided, a decision having been made at Headquarters not to provide intermediate training, since the mission would be migrating to Signet 2000+ in 1999, the year following. The migration was planned for the fall. In April 1998 the Softel telephone call management system was

installed in the mission. The training received by the SA was short-term. He was given an instruction manual to assist in solving minor problems. The Softel system has not been programmed to analyse the source and direction of calls. Proper programming would show whether there is any abuse on the part of users. The SA indicated that a good measure of cooperation had been received from the Regional Systems Manager (RSM) in Paris and the EL technician in Rome. The SA expressed confidence in being able to resolve any serious problems with the systems with the aid of the RSM and the EL.

Recommendation for the mission

1.5.4 The mission should ensure that the Softel system is programmed so that telephone calls can be analysed.

Mission response

1.5.4 Up until the arrival of SIGNET 2000, we were tracking all calls as required. Unfortunately, this is no longer possible because the laptop PC in use for Softel is not Y2K compliant nor can it handle the increased memory requirements and the mission does not have the funds to purchase a new Y2K compliant PC. We have been advised that this PC is not a responsibility of SIGNET renewal and we doubt funds will be available before FY00/01.

1.5.5 The SA is performing his duties satisfactorily. Among other things, he makes sure a number of times daily that the network users are not having problems with their systems or printers, and that the daily backup for the main server has been properly done. The room where the two servers are located is very well maintained and orderly. It contains the computer equipment that will eventually be loaned to the mission staff. The hard drives have been erased and loaded with the appropriate software. A form containing the terms and conditions for the loan has been prepared and will be used when the loan is made. The SA also procures training when required. For example, he organizes and gives training to the employees who wish to know how to operate a piece of software such as WordPerfect for word processing, the QuattroPro electronic spreadsheet, or any new piece of equipment, such as a scanner.

Octel

1.5.6 The OCTEL electronic messaging system works very well on Mitnet. However, it does not work on the local telephone system. Thus the services of a receptionist are required for local calls. OCTEL often crashes because of the frequent blackouts in Algiers. The system must be started up again each time this occurs.

Year 2000

1.5.7 The existing servers are not Year 2000 compliant. The Signet 2000+ system will be introduced at the mission in the fall of 1999. The SA has placed the required stickers on all the pieces of electronic equipment that are Year 2000 compliant. The MCO and the SA have completed and have sent to Headquarters the information required in the Year 2000 Compliance Kit.

Protected communications

1.5.8 The mission uses the PSAT as a secure fax. Tests are conducted frequently to ensure that it is operating properly. The mission has five STU111 telephones.

File registry

1.5.9 On account of the political climate the mission keeps only the minimum number of files required for its operations . A number of important files were sent to Headquarters before the Embassy moved to its new premises.

CONSULAR PROGRAM

2.1 Management of the Program

2.1.1 The Consular Program is managed by the MCO. There is little Consular activity at this Mission and many of the dual nationals are not recognized as Canadians by the local government. The MCO is currently working on, and has nearly completed, the update of the contingency plan. The control measures in place for securing documents (such as passports and labels) are effective.

2.1.2 Because of security concerns, Canadians visiting the Mission tend to make appointments before travelling to the Compound and are then escorted onto the premises to receive Consular services.

2.1.3 The division of responsibilities is somewhat unusual with the locally engaged Systems Administrator doing the Consular work. The MCO plans to replace the Administrative Assistant this summer and to delegate Consular responsibilities to the new incumbent. The only exception will be the ROCA responsibilities which continue to be carried out by the Receptionist. A request for Consular training for this new Administrative Assistant will be made by the MCO.

Recommendation for Mission

2.1.4 Responsibilities for support of the Consular program should be transferred from the LES SA position to the Administrative Assistant position as soon as possible.

Mission Response

2.1.4 The current Administrative Assistant has indicated she will be leaving the Mission shortly, and it seems logical to carry out the transfer following her departure.

MISSION RESOURCES FACT SHEET

Personnel (FTEs)

PROGRAMS	CBS	LES	Total
HOM Office (including domestic staff)	2	4	6
Commercial	1		1
Consular		1	1
Administration	1	14	15
Immigration	1		1
Development	1		1
DND	6		6
Total	12	19	31

Physical Resources

ASSETS	OWNED	LEASED
Chancery	1	---
OR	1	---
SQs	5	---
Vehicles	10	---

Financial Information 1997/1998

LES Salaries	\$ 207,900
Operational	1,283,000
CBS Overtime	20,000
Capital	127,200
Total	\$1,638,100