

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
AND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN  
GEORGETOWN, GUYANA  
IN THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE CASE

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This study examines all aspects of the relationship between the People's Temple agricultural community in Guyana (commonly known as Jonestown) and the Department of State and the American Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana prior to the incidents of November 18, 1978. It was conducted at the request of the Secretary by Messrs. John Hugh Crimmins and Stanley S. Carpenter, both retired senior Foreign Service Officers.

The directive calling for the study requested that the following issues in particular be addressed:

- The extent of the Department's and the Embassy's knowledge of the activities and purposes of the People's Temple in Guyana.
- The actions of the Department and the Embassy in carrying out their responsibilities with regard to the members of the People's Temple in Guyana and the concerned relatives of People's Temple members.
- Inter-bureau and inter-agency coordination in Washington with regard to matters concerning the People's Temple in Guyana.
- The preparations made for Congressman Ryan's November visit to Guyana.

Two other questions were subsequently added:

- Was external political pressure exerted on the Department by the Jones group or others to prevent or limit any investigation into the group's activities before Congressman Ryan's visit?
- Was the Department (the Bureau of Consular Affairs, CA, in particular) approached by civil rights organizations with the request that CA not undertake any investigation of the group before Congressman Ryan's visit?

In the preparation of this study, interviews were conducted with Department and Embassy officers; officers of other agencies of the US Government; and the two staff members who accompanied Congressman Ryan to Guyana. No attempt was made to interview officials of the Guyanese

Government or surviving members and concerned relatives of members of the People's Temple. The extensive documentation available in the Embassy and the Department was examined. Material that has been made part of the current investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), that is subject to grand jury proceedings, or that is under the control of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), was not available.

The study covers the period from the time of the emigration of members of the Temple to Guyana until November 18, 1978.

## SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This examination of the manner in which the Department of State and the American Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana performed their duties in the People's Temple case up to November 18, 1978 reaches the prime conclusion that the principal determinant of that performance was the operation of an array of constraints that sharply limited the field of permissible action of the two organizations. There were other important factors that affected, for good and for ill, the way in which official responsibilities were carried out. Not a few of them reflect institutional weaknesses and human error of one kind or another. But the most powerful force shaping the performance was the pervasive and constant effect of the constraints.

In the People's Temple case, the choice of actions open to the Department and the Embassy was severely circumscribed in the first instance by their basic lack of police or investigative authority. At the heart of the other constraints was the fact that the two contending parties, the People's Temple and concerned relatives of Temple members, were American citizens. Each group had a right to official services; to each of them the Department and Embassy had responsibilities. Since both groups enjoyed the protection and facilities afforded by the First Amendment, the Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Department and the Embassy were obliged to follow a cautious policy that emphasized impartiality, adherence to strict legality, accuracy and insistence on hard evidence as the only basis for action. This last requirement was important not only as a feature of US policy but also as the prerequisite established by the Guyanese Government -- under whose jurisdiction and control the Americans resident at Jonestown fell -- for any action on its part against the People's Temple. Specifically, charges by ex-members of the Temple were not considered by Guyanese authorities to constitute firm evidence of wrongdoing.

Concern about the FOIA and those provisions of the Privacy Act that permit access by an individual to government files about himself reduced Embassy written reporting and led to an emphasis on the purely factual at the expense of the speculative and analytical.



The approach to the constitutional and statutory constraints by the Department and the Embassy was conscientious and consistent with existing guidelines. The constraints were not used as a device for evading responsibilities. With respect to another kind of constraint, neither the Department nor the Embassy was unduly sensitive to, or inhibited in their actions by, the possibility of adverse affects on the bilateral relationship with the Guyanese Government. At the same time, the Department and the Embassy were fully aware that the People's Temple had friends within the Guyanese Government to whom it resorted for support and assistance. The Embassy officials also knew that other Guyanese officials disliked or were hostile to the Temple.

The operation of the constitutional and statutory constraints and the policy that they shaped had the inevitable effect of increasing the burden of proof placed on the opponents of the People's Temple as the accusers and adding to the defenses of the Temple as the accused. Likewise, the official posture of equidistance by its very nature assured that concerned relatives would be highly dissatisfied with the actions and attitudes of the Department and Embassy, and that the already vivid suspicions of the People's Temple would be increased, even though inherently the policy represented an advantage for Jones and his followers.

On the basis of experience with official visits to Joenstown, the Department and the Embassy did not consider the People's Temple to be given to violence toward outsiders. This assessment helps explain the fact that neither Department briefers nor members of the Congressional Delegation raised the matter in their frequent exchanges before the departure of Congressman Ryan and his staff. With respect to the possibility of mass suicide by People's Temple members, the few officers of the Department and the Embassy who paid attention to the several references to such a threat gave them no credence.

Until May of 1978, the overall performance of the Department and the Embassy was generally good. After that time, the performance declined. Routine and specific operational matters continued to be managed effectively, but there were errors and lapses, including failures in the haphazard information-handling system, that hindered an accurate appreciation, particularly in the Department of what, in retrospect, was a fluid situation. As a result, Department



officers did not recognize that the People's Temple case was undergoing substantive changes. The Embassy had a better, if imperfect, "feel" for the evolving situation, but it did not transmit its concerns to the Department as effectively as it should have. The extremely inefficient handling by the Department of the May petition to the Secretary from concerned relatives and especially the careless and casual processing and superficial absorption of the information from the Temple defector Blakey caused gaps in the understanding of the Department and the Embassy -- and between them -- of the significance of developments at Jonestown.

The single most important substantive failure in the performance of the Department and the Embassy was the aborted effort by the Embassy in June 1978 to obtain authorization for an approach to the Guyanese Government requesting the exercise of "normal administrative jurisdiction" (really, greater control) over the practically autonomous People's Temple community in Jonestown. Although the exchange of telegrams was mishandled at both ends, the decision of the Ambassador not to pursue the issue was ultimately critical.

The general performance of the Department and the Embassy was not complicated by the so-called "consular-versus-political" syndrome. Rather than feeling resentment or uneasiness about leaving matters in the hands of the Office of Special Consular Service (CA/SCS), the political side of the Department (the Office of Caribbean Affairs, ARA/CAR) was in fact too passively content with the treatment of the case as a consular problem and failed to take useful initiatives at important moments. In contrast, the working relationship in the Embassy between the Consular Section and the leadership of the Embassy was excellent.

Concerning other more specific aspects of the performance of the Department and the Embassy:

- There were no important gaps in the information physically available on the critical aspects of the People's Temple, its purposes and activities. The information was not utilized as well as it could and should have been because of flaws in its dissemination, absorption and evaluation. In particular, there was no provision in the Department for the periodic, organized review

and assessment of information by all interested officers. At and above the office director level, there was extremely limited knowledge of the People's Temple. These problems did not exist in the Embassy, where the Chief of Mission and the Deputy Chief of Mission had a close working and supervisory relationship with the Consul.

- None of the officers involved in the case had psychological expertise relevant to the assessment of charges of mind-control or psychological coercion in Jonestown.
- Despite some lapses, the performance of the Department and the Embassy in the important Stoen custody case was competent and professional.
- The handling of welfare-and-whereabouts inquiries and the provision of other similar assistance to Americans caught up in the People's Temple case was excellent. The performance of Consul McCoy was particularly praiseworthy.
- The frequency and structure of the consular visits to Jonestown were, until the last trip in early November 1978, sensible and effective, due allowance being made for the constraints on the Embassy and Department. The Embassy was remiss in permitting the last visit to be delayed three months.
- The observations during the visits were made conscientiously and dispassionately. The visitors' generally positive impressions of conditions in Jonestown had significant impact on assessments in the Department and the Embassy but they were not regarded as definitive when examined against other more negative information.
- In the Department, coordination between CA/SCS and ARA/CAR lacked depth and closeness. Between the Department and the Embassy, coordination on policy and operational matters was generally

satisfactory. Within the Embassy, it was excellent.

- In terms of the Department's and the Embassy's understanding of the existing situation, briefings for the Congressional Delegation and advance preparations for its trip were thorough and conscientious. This net judgment is not shared by staff members of the Delegation, who received negative impressions from the emphasis by the Department and the Embassy on legal restraints and logistical difficulties.
- Department officers made known to the Delegation their concerns about the adverse effects on access to Jonestown of the inclusion of concerned relatives and media representatives in the visit to the community.
- Differences between the Department and the Congressional Delegation concerning the interpretation of the Privacy Act were not resolved in the exchanges in Washington and Georgetown.

Recommendations arising from the findings and conclusions of this study address, among other things, the issues of constitutional and statutory constraints, coordination between the Bureau of Consular Affairs and geographic bureaus, processing and control of information, basic training in psychology, and the importance of the consular function.

It was impossible to come to conclusions on certain central "what-if" questions:

- If the constraints upon the Department and the Embassy had been less binding, would the murders at the Port Kaituma airstrip and the suicides at Jonestown have been averted?
- If, even with the constraints, the Department and the Embassy had performed perfectly in all respects, would the tragedy of November 18 have been prevented?

- If a reversal of the Departments's denial of authorization for an approach to the Guyanese Government had been sought and obtained, would that Government have agreed to exercise closer control over Jonestown? Would such control have avoided the murders and the mass suicide? Would its imposition have precipitated the suicides?
- If the media representatives and concerned relatives had not accompanied the Congressional Delegation to Jonestown, would the killings at Port Kaituma and the suicides at Jonestown not have occurred?

To attempt replies to such questions at this time would be an exercise in pure speculation. And unless the current FBI investigation and possible trials resulting from the grand jury proceedings now under way provide much firmer evidence than is currently available, there may never be answers that are truly satisfactory.



## I SUMMARY OF MAJOR EVENTS

In late 1973, the People's Temple in San Francisco sent representatives to Guyana to explore the possibility of establishing an agricultural development community there. In February 1974 the Temple applied to the Guyanese Government for a long-term lease of 25,000 acres near Port Kaituma, approximately 150 miles northwest of Georgetown. This sparsely populated area, set in the tropical rain forest, is inaccessible by land from Georgetown. Development of the site by People's Temple members began some time in 1974, although the Guyanese Government did not formally grant a lease of 3,842 acres until February 1976.

The first recorded contact of the Embassy in Georgetown with the People's Temple occurred in June 1974 when two members of the Temple came to the Consular Section to sign on as crew on board the MS Cudjoe, which had been recently purchased by the Temple.

In July 1974, Embassy officials visited the community as well as a small cooperative (which later failed) in the same general area. At that time nine Americans were engaged in clearing the land at the People's Temple leasehold. The Embassy officials reported that the Temple expected to have approximately fifty members on the site by mid-1975.

With the gradual growth of the agricultural community there was regular contact of members of the group with the Embassy, as necessary, for routine consular services. At least two women members of the People's Temple administrative headquarters in Georgetown participated occasionally in the Georgetown American Women's Group. Ambassador Max V. Krebs met with some of the People's Temple members in early 1975 and visited the settlement on March 13, 1975. He reported that, at that time, there were fifteen to twenty persons living at the site and that several hundred acres were in various stages of being cleared.

In May 1976, the then Deputy Chief of Mission, Wade Matthews, paid a brief visit to the Temple site. About six rustic buildings and metal-roofed, open-sided sheds had been constructed and one hundred acres cleared. Some forty individuals appeared to be living in the community. In the course of that visit Matthews met Jim Jones, who was temporarily visiting from the Temple's headquarters in San Francisco.



In late December 1976, Lieutenant Governor Dymally of California visited Guyana accompanied by Jones. The two men met with Guyanese Prime Minister Burnham and other senior Guyanese officials as well as with the Charge of the Embassy, Richard A. McCoy. In the course of the meeting with the Charge, according to the latter's reporting telegram, Jones raised the concern of the Guyanese Government officials about CIA involvement in Guyana. He also mentioned a meeting he had had with Mrs. Rosalynn Carter and Vice President-elect Mondale in which he had been assured that the Carter Administration would not interfere in the domestic affairs of Guyana. He expressed the intention of passing this message to Prime Minister Burnham. In a press article regarding the Dymally visit, the Georgetown Chronicle quoted Dymally as praising the People's Temple agricultural community in Guyana and expressing his admiration for its progress. Jones was quoted as saying: "My people have found happiness and they want to contribute to the peace and progress of Guyana." According to the press article, he added: "Considering the situation today (apparently referring to the strained US-Government of Guyana relationship), your Government has been very tolerant in allowing Americans to settle here."

On March 31, 1977, the Embassy learned from the Guyanese Foreign Minister that the People's Temple in San Francisco had decided to move 380 of their members to Guyana on April 3 by two chartered planes. The Embassy was informed, according to its report, that the Guyanese Government had asked the People's Temple to postpone the arrival of these persons until April 7 to permit a review of their immigration applications by the Guyanese Embassy in Washington. In his request for Guyanese Government approval of this planned immigration, Jones reportedly had stated that the prospective immigrants "represent some of the most skilled and progressive elements of his organization and as such are most vulnerable to state repression on the part of American authorities." He also was said to have exhibited an envelope which, he claimed, contained a check for \$500,000 that he intended to deposit in the Bank of Guyana to help settle the intending immigrants. He also spoke of his intention to transfer all or most of the People's Temple's assets in the United States to Guyana.

Subsequently, the Guyanese Government granted the necessary permission for the immigration. While the record is not clear, it appears that the 380 intending immigrants travelled to Guyana in groups of 40 or 50 in the next several weeks. Jones apparently moved permanently to Guyana some time in July 1977, resigning his position as Chairman of

the San Francisco Housing Authority by letter (dictated by radio from Jonestown) received in the San Francisco Mayor's office on August 3, 1977.

During the summer of 1977, a series of news stories on the People's Temple appeared in West Coast publications. While some were favorable, a number centered on charges of abuses and wrongdoing within the Temple in San Francisco. The most prominent was published in the magazine, "New West". Copies of these critical pieces were received by the Department and the Embassy in Georgetown in the summer of 1977.

On August 22, 1977, Joseph Mazor, a private investigator, telephoned McCoy, who was then the Consul in the Embassy, stating that he had power of attorney and court orders issued by the State of California to return seven children to their parents in the United States from the People's Temple in Guyana. He also claimed that additional court orders would be issued for another twenty children to be returned to their parents from Guyana. He was advised by the Consul that the US court orders would have to be approved by Guyanese courts. Mazor was given the names of three Guyanese attorneys. The Consul subsequently discussed the matter with the Guyanese Attorney General and the Chief of Immigration, who confirmed the need for Mazor to retain a local attorney and proceed through the Guyanese courts. One of the Guyanese officials indicated concern that the large influx of People's Temple members might pose problems for Guyana.

On August 26, 1977, the US Customs Service issued a report of an on-going investigation of possible arms smuggling by the People's Temple in San Francisco to the agricultural community in Guyana. A copy was sent to the Department. Subsequent to the dissemination of this report, searches of Temple shipments in Miami by the Customs Service and in Georgetown by local customs inspectors had negative results. The investigation was terminated by the Customs Service in September 1977.

McCoy visited Jonestown for the first time on August 30, 1977 to conduct consular business and to tour the project. At Matthews Ridge en route to Jonestown he met Leon Broussard, who had just left the People's Temple in Jonestown and who requested assistance in returning to the United States. Before McCoy's arrival, Broussard, who had cuts on his upper back, had complained to a local official that he had been physically mistreated at Jonestown. To McCoy, however, he denied any mistreatment and claimed that the cuts on his back had occurred from working with heavy timber. When McCoy met with Jones later that day and raised the

matter of Broussard's return, Jones agreed to fund Broussard's travel.

At Jonestown McCoy was favorably impressed with the progress made in clearing the jungle and in establishing a settlement. He reported that the community consisted of more than 600 inhabitants, who appeared cheerful, friendly and reasonably healthy. He found no evidence of abuse or of individuals being held against their will. In his meeting with McCoy, Jones expressed concern about the unfavorable press reports in California, denied allegations that people in Jonestown were being held against their will and claimed that the US Government was harassing the People's Temple. He also showed McCoy numerous testimonials from California political and church leaders that had been sent to Prime Minister Burnham on behalf of the People's Temple.

By telegram of September 6, 1977, the Embassy raised with the Department the question of approximately 130-150 children in Jonestown who reportedly were wards of the State of California. It requested the Department to query California authorities regarding the legality of their removal from the United States. On the basis of telephone conversations with California officials, the Department replied on September 13, 1977 that state authorities had confirmed that it was illegal to remove such children from the state without court permission but had stated that they could not assist without names of children since records of wards of the state were maintained by the respective counties. The authorities said that they were not aware of any complaints about wards being removed from California by the Temple.

During the first week of September 1977, Jeffrey A. Haas, American attorney for Mrs. Grace Stoen, initiated proceedings in the Guyanese courts to regain custody of Mrs. Stoen's six-year-old son, John Victor Stoen. Timothy and Grace Stoen were former high-ranking People's Temple members who had left their son in the care of Jim Jones. Although the Stoens were separated, they were united in their desire to remove the child from Jonestown. Haas brought with him a California court order giving legal custody of the child to Mrs. Stoen. In two separate visits to Jonestown, Haas and a Guyanese court marshal were unable to serve a summons on Jones to appear in court with the Stoen child. In the second attempt, the marshal, as instructed by the court, tried to post copies of the summons on three separate buildings in Jonestown, but People's Temple members tore down the papers and threw them into the marshal's



vehicle. On September 10, 1977, the Guyanese Supreme Court Justice hearing the case issued an order for the arrest of the child in order to bring him into custody of the court and directed that Jones be summoned to appear in court to show cause why he should not be held in contempt. Throughout these successive events McCoy gave appropriate assistance to Haas, advising him on Guyanese court proceedings, helping him to obtain necessary appointments with Guyanese officials and coordinating arrangements for his visits to Jonestown.

On September 17, 1977, the Charge of the Embassy sent a formal note to the Guyanese Foreign Minister expressing concern that the Guyanese court order of September 10, 1977 had not been signed by court officials, apparently because of intervention by Guyanese Government authorities. The note stated that, while the Embassy was not taking sides in this dispute, it was concerned over the apparent intrusion of Guyanese Government authorities in a case that was solely a matter for the courts to decide. As a result of this representation, the Foreign Minister informed the Embassy on September 21, 1977 that the Government had decided to act on the court order.

In subsequent court hearings on September 23 and October 6, 1977, Jones' attorney requested that Joyce Touchette of the People's Temple be made a part of the custody proceedings since she had previously been given custody of John Victor Stoen by Mrs. Stoen. A valid, unrevoked custody order to this effect signed by Grace Stoen was submitted to the court. Grace Stoen's local attorney argued that Jones should bring the child to court before any consideration was given to adding additional claimants. In view of the outstanding custody order of Grace Stoen in favor of Touchette, the judge ruled against the motion of the Stoens' local attorney that John Stoen be brought before the court and that Jones be ordered to appear forthwith. (The basic arrest order against Jones, however, was left pending.) A court hearing was scheduled for November 18, 1977 (later deferred to January 1978) to permit Grace Stoen an opportunity to present additional affidavits to support her case.

During the fall of 1977, the initiation of the court proceedings in the Stoen case resulted in an extensive letter-writing campaign by the People's Temple to various US officials and members of Congress. This was countered by similar efforts by the Stoens and their lawyer. It was apparent that the threat posed by the Stoens to remove John Victor Stoen from Jonestown was a strong emotional issue for Jones and the People's Temple. The efforts

of both sides made the custody dispute a persistent problem for the Embassy and the Department.

On November 13, 1977, Steven Katsaris, father of People's Temple member, Maria Katsaris, met with his daughter in Georgetown through the good offices of the Guyanese Ambassador to the United States and with the active assistance of the Embassy. Katsaris was concerned about his daughter's welfare and had previously attempted, without success, to meet with her in Georgetown in September 1977. Despite earlier, friendly letters to her father, Maria, who was accompanied by three other People's Temple members, including a lawyer, was hostile to her father and uncommunicative. As a result of this meeting, Katsaris concluded that his daughter had been psychologically turned against him by the People's Temple.

On November 22, 1977, the Department received from Haas, the Stoens' attorney, a California court order assigning joint custody of John Stoen to both his parents and revoking any previous custody assignments signed by the father or mother. Haas also submitted a notarized statement from Mrs. Stoen revoking any and all previous powers of attorney or other authorizations granting custody of her son, and a similar statement from Mr. Stoen revoking parental consent and the power of attorney dated March 9, 1976 authorizing Joyce Touchette to act as guardian and Jim Jones et al to take any and all action deemed fit for the welfare of John Stoen. Copies of these documents were submitted also to the Guyanese court.

On December 2, 1977, the Department informed the Embassy of numerous Privacy Act requests which it had received through the Charles Garry law firm in San Francisco from members of the People's Temple. The Department asked the post to ascertain whether relevant material existed in its files. On receipt of an affirmative Embassy reply, the Department, on December 14, 1977, forwarded a list of the names of those persons making the requests. The Embassy submitted relevant material on March 23, 1978.

On December 19, 1977, the Social Security Administration (SSA) requested the Embassy to verify that social security beneficiaries in Jonestown were receiving their checks and that no assignment of the right to future monetary payments had been made. According to SSA records, a total of thirteen beneficiaries were then living in Jonestown. The SSA request was occasioned by allegations appearing



in West Coast publications from former Temple members that they had been coerced into transferring money and property to the Temple.

On December 23, 1977, Embassy officers met with Mr. and Mrs. Howard Oliver and their American attorney, Richard Holmes, who had traveled to Guyana in an attempt to meet with the Olivers' two sons resident in Jonestown. One son was over twenty-one and the other was to be eighteen on December 25, 1977. The Olivers had previously approached officials of the Guyanese Foreign Ministry, who had been unsuccessful in arranging a meeting. The Embassy Charge met with Foreign Ministry officials in the Olivers' behalf. The officials stated that under Guyanese law they could not compel the People's Temple to arrange a meeting of the boys with their parents and that the Ministry had been informed by the People's Temple that it would not permit the parents to enter Jonestown. The Olivers left Guyana on December 28, 1977 without seeing their sons, after receiving assurances from McCoy that, on his next visit to Jonestown, scheduled for January 1978, he would attempt to have a private meeting with the young men.

On December 30, 1977, Deputy Assistant Attorney General Robert L. Keuch of the Criminal Division, Department of Justice, transmitted to the Secretary of State a copy of a letter signed by the Chief of the General Crimes Section in the name of Assistant Attorney General Benjamin R. Civiletti addressed to Ms. Gwen Cole. Cole had written the Attorney General that her "loved one" (unnamed) and others were being held in bondage in Jonestown. The letter to Cole, after referring to the First Amendment's protection of religious freedom, stated that the Department of Justice could not conduct a general inquiry into the activities of any religious group. The letter added that any investigation must be based on allegations of a violation of federal law and that her allegation, by itself, did not indicate such a violation.

At a January 7, 1978 court hearing on the Stoen custody case, the People's Temple attorney argued that the court's order of arrest against Jones for evading process should be cancelled for lack of due diligence in serving the summons. He also argued that Haas lacked authority to represent Grace Stoen and that the court had no jurisdiction in the case since all of the disputants were Americans. The judge did not rule on the arrest order, but affirmed that the court had jurisdiction and that Haas had proper authority. At a subsequent hearing on January 10, 1978, the judge again reserved decision on the arrest order against Jones. The judge stated that he had received numerous telephone calls from individuals whose voices appeared to be Americans

inquiring about the case. He emphasized to all participants that he would decide the case solely on law and the facts presented in court.

On January 11, 1978, McCoy made his second visit to Jonestown to render necessary consular services. He conducted a number of interviews with individuals regarding whom the Department and the Embassy had received inquiries from concerned relatives. He also satisfied himself that social security beneficiaries were in fact receiving their monthly checks and that no illegal assignments of these checks were being made. He determined that there were 78 social security annuitants. As a result of this visit, and his previous one of August 30, 1977, McCoy concluded that it was improbable that anyone in Jonestown was being held in bondage or against his will.

On January 13, 1978, Grace and Timothy Stoen, who were in Georgetown in connection with the litigation over the custody of their son, were peremptorily informed by Guyanese officials of the cancellation of their visas and their expulsion from Guyana within twenty-four hours. On inquiries by the Embassy, it was learned that the expulsion order had been issued by a high-ranking Guyanese official. On January 14, 1978 the Embassy, in a formal diplomatic note, protested the expulsion order and requested that the Stoens be permitted to remain in Guyana until the court case was concluded. The Foreign Minister subsequently informed the Embassy that the order had been rescinded and that the Stoens would be allowed to stay in Guyana.

On January 16, 1978, People's Temple representatives presented to McCoy a copy of an affidavit allegedly signed by Timothy Stoen on February 6, 1972 to the effect that Jones was the natural father of John Victor Stoen. In response, Timothy Stoen subsequently insisted that he was the natural father.

On February 2, 1978, the Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission, John Blacken, and the Guyanese Desk Officer in the Department, Frank Tumminia, visited Jonestown. Their observations generally coincided with those of McCoy during his two visits. In their conversations with Jones, they noted particularly his strong feeling that there was a conspiracy in the United States against the People's Temple and his intense emotion about the court proceedings regarding John Victor Stoen. One member in the group around Jones remarked that they would die before giving up the child. Jones also stated that, while he believed in the teachings

of Christ, he had become an agnostic. (In a New York Times news story of September 1, 1977, Jones' wife had been reported as describing her husband as a Marxist who held religion's trappings to be useful chiefly for social and economic uplift.)

In the period of February to April 1978, the Department and the Embassy received numerous letters and inquiries from Congress on the Stoen custody case. Timothy Stoen intensified his efforts with members of Congress, and the People's Temple continued its letter-writing effort. Likewise, relatives of some Jonestown members, organized as "The Concerned Relatives," were increasing the number of their letters and petitions alleging physical abuse and the holding of persons against their will. The Guyanese judge hearing the Stoen case continued to delay rendering his decision. In response to Embassy inquiries, Guyanese judicial authorities pointed out that the delay was not excessive in Guyanese legal practice and that several months might elapse before any decision was handed down.

On May 10, 1978, McCoy and the Embassy's new Deputy Chief of Mission, Richard A. Dwyer, visited Jonestown to conduct consular business and to give Dwyer, who had recently arrived, an opportunity to tour the site and talk with the People's Temple members. Again, the Embassy officials found no evidence of mistreatment or of individuals being held against their will.

By letter of May 12, 1978, Stoen forwarded to the Secretary a petition from concerned relatives which requested the Secretary to take various actions to protect the human rights of American citizens in Jonestown. The letter also asked the Secretary to forward to Prime Minister Burnham another petition enclosed in the letter calling on the Prime Minister to stop Jones from further violations of the human rights of Jonestown members.

On May 12, 1978, Deborah Blakey, a member of the Jonestown inner circle, came to the Embassy and asked for assistance to return to the United States. Blakey stated that she had decided to sever her connection with the People's Temple and wished to leave Guyana as soon as possible. Blakey prepared an affidavit for an emergency passport and signed a statement concerning her declaration to McCoy that Jones would carry out a mass suicide of Jonestown members if the Guyanese courts decided to return John Victor Stoen to his parents. With the assistance of Embassy officials, Blakey departed for the United States on May 13, 1978. By coincidence, McCoy, who was returning for a consular



conference in the Department, traveled on the same airplane. During the trip, Blakey discussed with McCoy internal conditions at Jonestown, including her allegations of physical abuse, armed guards and the smuggling of weapons. She was urged by McCoy to go to a US law-enforcement agency with her story.

On May 25, 1978, the manager of the Pegasus Hotel in Georgetown requested Embassy assistance in facilitating the departure of an American citizen, Mrs. Katherine Hunter. Hunter had come to Guyana as a free-lance reporter to do a story on Jonestown. She had become ill, her visa had expired, and immigration authorities wanted her to depart as soon as she was able to travel. McCoy arranged for extension of her visa and the forwarding of additional funds from her husband. Hunter departed Guyana on May 28, 1978. During her stay, the hotel was plagued by several unexplained fires and telephoned bomb threats. Some Guyanese officials suspected People's Temple involvement.

On June 6, 1978, the Ambassador sent a telegram to the Department seeking an opinion by the Office of the Legal Adviser as to whether a host government could be obliged to extend its governmental control and the protection of its legal system over an individual alien or group of aliens residing within its territory. The Ambassador requested that, if the Legal Adviser's Office determined this to be the case, the Embassy be authorized to approach the Government of Guyana to discuss the People's Temple and to ask that the Government exercise normal administrative control over the community. On June 26, 1978, the Department concurred with the Embassy's view that a host government had jurisdiction over Americans and other aliens residing in its territory. It concluded, however, that an approach to the Government of Guyana might be construed as US Government interference, unless an American citizen or family requested assistance or there was evidence of lawlessness in the Jonestown community.

On June 15, 1978, Blakey signed an affidavit in California containing detailed allegations against Jonestown, some of which she had not mentioned to the Consul. Blakey requested that the US Government take adequate steps to safeguard the rights of Jonestown members, since she believed that their lives were in danger. Copies of the affidavit were sent to various officials in the Department.

On August 10, 1978, the Embassy informed the Department that the quarterly consular visit to Jonestown had to be postponed to a later date because of unusually heavy rains,

which had forced the closing of the Port Kaituma airstrip.

On August 16, 1978, the Guyanese High Court judge hearing the Stoen case announced that, because of pressure tactics, he was dissociating himself from the case and returning it to the Chief Justice for reassignment. He stated that there had been persistent efforts of an extra-legal or opprobrious nature, in the form of letters and other documents, as well as telephone calls, intended to influence the outcome of the proceedings. He characterized those actions as mean and despicable.

On September 15, 1978, Congressman Ryan, accompanied by Ms. Jackie Speier, met with the Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Viron Vaky, and members of his staff, regarding the Congressman's plans to visit Jonestown sometime after November 10, 1978 with a party of about eight persons, including a member of the press and possibly some relatives of Temple members. Department officials assured the Congressman that the Embassy and the Department would provide all possible assistance. McCoy, now the Desk Officer for Guyana, outlined the Embassy's past efforts concerning Jonestown and discussed his impressions based on three visits to the community. Department officials recommended that concerned relatives not be included in the visit to Jonestown.

On September 23, 1978, the American lawyer Mark Lane, retained by the People's Temple, held a press conference in Georgetown in which he alleged that the US Government was conspiring to destroy Jones and the People's Temple in Jonestown. He said he would file suits within ninety days for damages against the US Attorney General, the CIA, the FBI and the Department of State.

In a cable of September 23, 1978 on the proposed Ryan trip, the Ambassador stressed the need to inform Congressman Ryan fully regarding the physical difficulties of getting to Jonestown, the necessity of obtaining People's Temple agreement to the proposed visit and the constraints of the Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act in dealing with Jonestown.

On October 3, 1978, McCoy and Richard Belt of the Special Consular Services office met with Speier to discuss Jonestown and the proposed visit of Congressman Ryan.

On October 3, 1978, the Department received a cable from Timothy Stoen stating that he would retrieve his son by any means necessary and accusing the Department of ignoring the mass-suicide rehearsals documented in the Blakey affidavit. The Stoen cable was transmitted to the Embassy.



On October 10, 1978, the Embassy informed the Department by telegram that the Stoen custody case had been reassigned to another High Court justice and hearings would commence November 7, 1978. This information was passed to Stoen by the Department.

On October 25, 1978, McCoy met with Speier, James Schollaert and Thomas Smeeton, the latter two being staff members of the House International Relations Committee, to discuss Congressman Ryan's trip. Speier stated Congressman Derwinski would join Congressman Ryan, and the two, with approximately six staff members, would visit Guyana November 14-18. (Congressman Derwinski subsequently decided not to go.) McCoy raised again several potential problems, including logistics of the trip, the necessity to obtain the agreement of the People's Temple to the visit and the undesirability of including concerned relatives.

On November 7, 1978, Consul Ellice and Vice Consul Reece visited Jonestown to conduct consular business. The visit had been postponed from early August 1978. They toured the area and conducted a number of private interviews in response to relatives' inquiries. Jones, who met with them for lunch, appeared to be ill; they were informed he had recently suffered a heart attack.

On November 9, 1978, several Department officials, including members of the Office of the Legal Adviser, met with Speier and Schollaert to discuss legal constraints, such as the Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act, as well as aspects of international law affecting dealings with Jonestown.

On November 13, 1978, Department officials met with Congressman Ryan, the staff members of the delegation and three members of the concerned relatives group -- Blakey, Grace Stoen and Steven Katsaris. The meeting was largely devoted to Blakey's account of conditions in Jonestown.

In addition to the various face-to-face briefings of the Congressional Delegation by Department officials from September 15 to November 13, 1978, there were numerous telephone conversations on Jonestown and the trip preparations, largely between McCoy and Speier.

On November 14, 1978, the Congressional Delegation, consisting of Congressman Ryan and staff members, Speier and Schollaert, departed for Guyana. On the same airplane there were a number of media representatives and concerned relatives.

On arrival at the Georgetown airport, the Congressional Delegation was met by the Ambassador, the Deputy Chief of Mission and the General Services Officer. Those media representatives who had arrived without visas experienced some difficulty, but were eventually cleared by Guyanese immigration officials.

On November 15, 1978, the Ambassador and Embassy staff members met with Congressman Ryan and his staff for a general discussion of Jonestown and of the problem of gaining access to the community.

On November 16, 1978, the Ambassador and other Embassy officers met with Congressman Ryan, his staff and members of the concerned relatives group. This meeting was largely devoted to statements by the relatives about Jonestown and their inability to make contact with their relatives.

In the afternoon of November 17, 1978, Congressman Ryan and his party left Georgetown by chartered aircraft for Port Kaituma. As of the departure from Georgetown, the People's Temple had not yet granted the delegation permission to enter Jonestown.

On arrival at the Port Kaituma airstrip, the plane was met by about six People's Temple representatives with a large truck. After a conference between the Temple members and the two Temple lawyers, Lane and Garry, who had traveled from Georgetown with the Congressman, it was announced that the lawyers would proceed to Jonestown to confer with Jones concerning permission for the group to enter Jonestown. Shortly after they departed, the truck returned and the lawyers stated that Congressman Ryan, Speier and Dwyer could proceed to Jonestown. After arrival in Jonestown and a conference with Jones, it was agreed that the rest of the party, except for the National Enquirer reporter, could enter Jonestown.

During the evening of November 17, 1978, Congressman Ryan and Speier interviewed numerous Jonestown residents concerning whom they had received inquiries. After dinner, a musical performance was presented by Jonestown members, and cordial speeches were exchanged by Jones and Congressman Ryan. Late in the evening two Jonestown residents indicated a desire to leave Jonestown. Congressman Ryan, Speier and Dwyer spent the night in Jonestown, while the rest of the group returned to Port Kaituma to overnight.

On November 18, 1978, Congressman Ryan continued to interview more Jonestown residents. By late in the morning, several additional Temple members had expressed a desire to leave. Jones was becoming visibly more upset, and tension

was growing in the community. As the visitors prepared to leave, Congressman Ryan was attacked by a Jonestown resident armed with a knife. In the ensuing struggle, the attacker was cut by his own knife and Ryan's clothes spotted with blood. It was agreed that the Ryan group should depart immediately for Port Kaituma together with those residents who wished to leave Jonestown. Dwyer was to return to Jonestown to follow up on some pending cases of members who might wish to leave.

As the Ryan party was preparing to board two airplanes at the Port Kaituma airstrip, a tractor and trailer appeared with armed men who commenced firing at the group. Simultaneously, a man who had represented himself to be a defector and who was already on board one of the airplanes, fired a pistol at some of the other defectors inside the plane. In the gunfire, Congressman Ryan, Don Harris and Bob Brown of the NBC crew, Greg Robinson of the San Francisco Examiner, and Mrs. Patricia Parks, one of the Jonestown defectors, were killed. Several others in the group were wounded.



## II DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF MAJOR ISSUES

### A. THE EXTENT OF THE DEPARTMENT'S AND THE EMBASSY'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE ACTIVITIES AND PURPOSES OF THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE

The relevant questions here are: Prior to November 18, 1978, where did the Department and the Embassy obtain information concerning the People's Temple? What was the scope of that information? How was the information processed, absorbed and assessed? The answers to these questions are, of course, important in themselves. They have to be examined, however, against the constraints felt by the Department and the Embassy in order to determine perceptions concerning the complex of problems that constituted "the People's Temple case." These perceptions, in turn, shaped the actions of the Department and the Embassy in acquitting their responsibilities toward the Americans who were members of the People's Temple in Guyana and concerned relatives of some of its members. These perceptions and actions are addressed in II B, below.

1. Sources of Information: The extensive information available to the Department and the Embassy came from a variety of sources. On the private, non-official side, the People's Temple and concerned relatives were the most prolific sources for both the Department and the Embassy. Their material was received through personal interviews or telephone conversations, and through extensive correspondence, either direct to the Department and the Embassy or by way of transmittals from members of Congress who had been addressed by members or supporters of the People's Temple and by concerned relatives and their supporters. In addition, the Department and the Embassy received reports and articles in the printed media; these were usually made available by members of the People's Temple, concerned relatives and their respective supporters.

The flow of official information between the Department and the Embassy took the standard forms of telegrams, operations memoranda, memoranda of conversation or to the files, official-informal letters, texts of correspondence with interested parties, including members of Congress, and face-to-face or telephone conversations and briefings. Both the Department and the Embassy produced internal memoranda; such documents within the Department included briefing papers and proposals for replies to Congressional letters. Much of this officially generated information was based on material requested by or elicited from members of the Peoples' Temple and concerned relatives. Some of it came from Guyanese Government officials,

the great bulk having been gathered by the Embassy, with the Department producing only an insignificant amount.

The Department and the Embassy also received written and oral information from other US Government agencies, notably the Department of Justice and the Customs Service.

2. Scope of Information: The information accumulated by the Department and the Embassy between mid-1977 and November 1978 covered, in greater or less detail, all the critical aspects of the controversy over the People's Temple, its purposes and its activities. Principally from concerned relatives of members of the Temple and their supporters, the Department and the Embassy heard directly or indirectly all the allegations of: physical or psychological intimidation and mistreatment of People's Temple members in California and Guyana; mass-suicide rehearsals; concentration camp conditions in Jonestown; hostile actions and threats against persons unfriendly to the Temple and its head; large stocks of weapons in Jonestown; financial irregularities, some of them involving Social Security annuitants; Jones' growing mental instability and the "staging" of consular and other visits to Jonestown. Principally from members of the People's Temple and their supporters, the Department and the Embassy received allegations of the good works being done by the People's Temple and Jones, of the happiness and well-being of residents of Jonestown, of right-wing and USG harassment, and of USG interference in Guyanese Government internal processes involving the People's Temple. From each side there came to the Department and the Embassy documents rebutting the accusations of the other side and impugning its motives, ethics and morals.

In addition to incorporating these charges and counter-charges, the Department's and Embassy's fund of information was enlarged by written and oral reports by the Embassy of first-hand observation of conditions at the Jonestown community by USG visitors. The Department also received from the Embassy the results of face-to-face interviews by USG personnel of members of the People's Temple in Jonestown and Georgetown who either were the objects of specific inquiries by relatives in the United States or were representatives of Jones. The accounts of meetings of Embassy and Department officials with concerned relatives and their representatives also formed part of the official records. Another major component of the information available to the Department and Embassy concerned the attitudes, relationships and actions of Guyanese Government officials of various ranks

and responsibilities with regard to Jonestown, concerned relatives of People's Temple members, and specific issues arising from the presence of the Temple in Guyana.

In information available to the Embassy and the Department there also existed some material suggesting an interest by the People's Temple in the USSR and an association between the People's Temple and the Soviet and other communist Embassies in Georgetown.

In the period before November 18, 1978, the Embassy possessed somewhat more information of an operationally pertinent nature than the Department. The wide-ranging holdings of the two institutions were not, however, substantively different with respect to basic elements of the situation.

3. Absorption and Assessment of Information: The body of information that existed in the Department and the Embassy concerning the People's Temple question was clearly a prerequisite to responsible action. The Jonestown case demanded, of course, the other standard elements indispensable to the translation of information into action. Among them were the ability to process the information efficiently, that is, to disseminate it accurately and quickly to the right persons and to record its distribution for purposes of follow-up and retrieval; to recognize, absorb and retain the key features of the information; and to evaluate the information correctly.

Although the detailed play of these elements will be evident in the analysis in Section II B of specific actions taken by the Department and the Embassy to discharge their responsibilities, it is important to identify at this point major factors that affected, in a general and pervasive way, the dissemination, absorption and assessment of the available information. (Some of these factors are considered in greater detail below in Section III C, Coordination.)

- The depth of the information varied, sometimes greatly, from issue to issue. For example, there was a large amount of detailed, specific material on the Stoen custody case and only sparse and vague reports on contacts between the People's Temple and the USSR.
- No single person among the principal official actors held all the available information. In the Department, documentation was dispersed in varying depths among several offices.



- No provision was made in the Department for periodic, organized review of new information by all interested parties.
- An organization (Department, Embassy) or an action office often did not know with precision what information its counterpart held. This led to erroneous assumptions about the extent of shared knowledge.
- There was no fixed, routine system in the Department for dissemination and follow-up of information on the case. (As a general rule, this was not true of the small Embassy.)
- All of the principal actors, particularly in the Department, had extensive responsibilities that permitted only part-time attention to the flow of information on People's Temple matters.
- For the most part, only relatively junior officers of the Department were engaged in information-handling and evaluation. The People's Temple case penetrated only rarely and superficially above the desk/unit level until early September 1978. (At the Embassy, the Ambassador and Charges were directly involved.)
- Turnover of personnel and official absences in the Department and the Embassy produced gaps and lags in continuity of knowledge and collection and reporting of information.
- None of the officers most closely involved in the information process had psychological expertise relevant to the assessment of some components of the information.
- With respect to the information itself, much of it was conflicting, partisan, and emotional. A significant portion was the product of letter-generating campaigns.

B. ACTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY IN ACQUITTING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

Important as the questions of the availability of information and its processing are to the analysis of the performance of the Department and the Embassy in the People's Temple case, even more central is an examination of the diverse constraints under which the two entities operated or believed they operated. This is so because the constraints

worked in two directions. On the one hand, they inevitably influenced the impact and the interpretation of information. On the other, they powerfully shaped the evolving operational perceptions that successively determined the choice by the Department and the Embassy (and some other agencies of the Government) of the actions that appropriately could be taken in meeting the Government's responsibilities toward members of the People's Temple and concerned relatives of some of those members.

Accordingly, this section addresses first, the principal constraints; then the perceptions that progressively emerged as a result of the interaction of constraints and information; and, finally, the actions, affected by the constraints and perceptions, that were taken by the Embassy and the Department on major elements of the case.

1. Constraints: The constraints felt by the Department and the Embassy can be divided into three broad categories: (a) constitutional and statutory; (b) other substantive; and (c) administrative.

a. Constitutional and Statutory Constraints: Inasmuch as all the principal contending parties in the People's Temple case were American citizens, the Department and the Embassy considered themselves obliged to observe scrupulously the rights guaranteed under the First Amendment, the Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act. Lacking investigative or surveillance authority, diplomatic and consular missions of the United States have traditionally avoided monitoring or inquiring into the activities of private Americans abroad, absent firm evidence of illegal activity. This general orientation has only been reinforced by the existence of specific statutes and by the awareness of the national environment that gave rise to those statutes.

The sensitivity of the Department and the Embassy to privacy issues was heightened by the religious cast of the People's Temple. Embassy and Department officers were aware, at least by February 1978, of Jones' own disavowal of the religious nature of the Temple. (His emphasis on the social-action and socio-political purposes, socialist in character, of his community had been understood for a much longer time.) The religious aura was never dissipated completely, however. For example, the Temple apparently continued its membership in the Guyanese Council of Churches to the end. In any event, the First Amendment protections

extended to the right of association as well as to the unfettered exercise of religion. With respect to the religious dimension of the Temple, action officers in Special Consular Services (SCS) of the Department and in the Embassy attached considerable importance to the Department of Justice letter of December 30, 1977. In that letter, addressed to a woman who had requested an investigation on the grounds that persons were being held in bondage by Jones, the Chief of the General Crimes Section stated:

"Initially, I would like to point out that the First Amendment's protection of religious freedom is not limited to the traditional and well-established religions. This protection applies to all religions and embraces the right to maintain religious beliefs which are rank heresy to followers of traditional faiths. In view of these constitutional protections, the Department of Justice cannot conduct a general inquiry into the activities of any religious group. Any investigation must be based on allegations of a violation of Federal law.

"In your letter, you allege that a loved one and others are being held in bondage in Georgetown, Guyana by Pastor Jim Jones. This allegation, by itself, does not indicate a violation of Federal law. However, if you are in possession of any additional information which might indicate a Federal violation, I urge you to furnish this information to the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"Since your letter indicated that United States citizens are being held against their will in a foreign country, I am forwarding a copy of your letter to the Department of State."

A copy of the letter was transmitted to the Department, where it was sent to SCS and the Desk Officer for Guyana. The record shows that both SCS and the Desk Officer sent copies to the Embassy.

Linked to the First Amendment, the Privacy Act, and the way in which it was administered, had multiple constraining effects on the Department and the Embassy. In the first place, the Act had the general consequence of adding to existing obstacles to the investigation or surveillance of American citizens in the People's



Temple. Second, it strengthened the position that access to Jonestown by USG officials had to be on a voluntary basis. Third, it severely restricted the official disclosure to one side of information provided to the Embassy and Department officers by the other side. Fourth, it required consular officers to get releases, preferably written, from residents of Jonestown who were objects of inquiry by their relatives, and to withhold information when such releases were refused or not otherwise obtained. Fifth, the provisions of the Privacy Act permitting access by citizens to Department and Embassy files concerning themselves inhibited reporting and the approach to reporting by emphasizing the need to avoid recording speculative or potentially provocative characterizations and judgments. In this sense they buttressed the emphasis on the purely factual rather than the interpretative aspects of reporting, and they reduced the amount of reporting.

The existence of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) affected reporting in the same way as the "access" sections of the Privacy Act. (The series of requests in October-December 1977 by People's Temple members for access to records on them had actually invoked the FOIA, even though the Department processed the requests as Privacy Act cases because they sought access to files on the individuals making the requests.) The possibility that reports could be released at any time by virtue of either the Privacy Act or the FOIA was a concern continually present in the Embassy's and Department's thinking. In fact, the officers of the Embassy directly involved in the People's Temple case assumed from December 1977 on that the People's Temple requests had been or would be granted. People's Temple representatives in Georgetown indicated very clearly their intention to continue to seek documents under the FOIA; reports of official visits were specifically cited. This assumption and awareness of the continuing interest of the People's Temple had a significant impact on the nature and depth of Embassy reporting.

Along with these considerations arising from American constitutional, statutory and historical restrictions, the constraints of international law and practice also came into play. The fact that the members of Jonestown, as residents of Guyana, were subject to the authority of the Guyanese Government, to its laws and to its system of jurisprudence was a major element in the Stoen custody case. Beyond

that, however, respect for Guyanese authority over American residents in the community and awareness of the limitations of US authority were constants in the address to all aspects of the People's Temple case by the Department and the Embassy.

b. Other Substantive Constraints: Together with the complex of constitutional and legal issues, several other substantive considerations constrained the Department and the Embassy. Primary among them were the related facts that two sets of American citizens were, in effect, contending, that each group had a claim to official services, and that the Department and the Embassy had to discharge their responsibilities to both. Moreover, both groups had supporters, many of them of considerable stature and responsibility; both had enlisted the watchful interest of members of Congress.

A second important limiting set of circumstances concerned the kind of evidence that each side presented. Because of the starkly conflicting, emotional and, in some respects, bizarre nature of the information provided by the concerned relatives and the Temple, and because of the deep bitterness and suspicion that the two groups exhibited toward each other, doubts inevitably arose about the motives and credibility of either side. The difficulty of sorting out fact from blatant propaganda underlined the importance of obtaining "hard" evidence and increased the weight of the official reporting of conditions in Jonestown.

A third consideration operating in a restrictive sense on the Department and the Embassy was the sometimes paranoid touchiness of the parties, particularly the People's Temple (e.g., the repetitive accusations of massive USG conspiracies against the Temple, and the readiness, only occasionally qualified, of both sides to accuse the Embassy or the Department of partisanship or lack of interest). This attitude was not only a factor in assessing credibility but, at least as important, induced a spirit of caution among action officers. Along the same lines, the officers had to take into account the determination and skill with which both groups utilized the system to their advantage (e.g., the FOIA/Privacy Act requests by People's Temple members; lobbying with the Congress; use of the media).

In its dealings with the Temple, the Embassy confronted a constraint that might be described as

the need to keep on reasonably good working terms with Temple representatives. In addition to reflecting basic American legal concepts of the right to privacy, the presumption of innocence until guilt was proven beyond reasonable doubt and the right of citizens to obtain services from their government, this conscious and deliberate position was designed to preserve lines of communications and access in order to permit the furnishing of routine consular services to members of the Temple, to assure consular officers the opportunity to observe conditions in Jonestown, and to enable them to pursue inquiries from relatives about the whereabouts and well-being of individual members. This Embassy policy implied a certain care in treating with the always suspicious and often hostile representatives of the Temple. Although Washington understood and endorsed the approach, the Department did not experience a like constraint because of its very limited direct dealings with People's Temple personnel.

A fourth category of substantive constraints on the Department and the Embassy was formed by the many-faceted role and interest of the Government of Guyana in the case. In addition to the central fact already noted earlier that authority over Jonestown and members of the People's Temple resided in the Guyanese Government and that Guyanese law and jurisprudence were controlling, there were several other components of Guyanese involvement to which the Embassy and the Department had to pay attention. The first of these was the matter of official Guyanese attitudes toward Jones and his community. The general appreciation by the Embassy from an early date was that the Guyanese Government had welcomed the establishment of the agricultural settlement for a number of reasons. Among these were: the compatibility of the purported concept of the community with the Guyanese Government's espousal of "cooperative socialism"; the location of the settlement in an undeveloped region that was politically important to Guyana; the possibility that the development of the project would have a beneficial model-effect on surrounding areas; the racial composition of the community; the assurance of its self-financing; and the fact that the Temple had come recommended by personages of some standing in the United States. More specifically, both Washington and the Embassy were aware at an early stage that highly placed and influential figures in the Guyanese Government supported Jones and his community and appeared to be responsive to pressures from them. During 1977 and 1978, the Embassy, and through it the Department, learned that other high Guyanese officials



and some senior elements in the security and law enforcement agencies were suspicious and even hostile toward the People's Temple. This evident conflict within the Guyanese Government affected the environment in which the Embassy operated. When coupled with the generally favorable opinion of conditions at Jonestown held by Guyanese Government administrators in the immediate area of the community, it introduced a further dimension. Another significant operational element was the position of Guyanese Government officials that they could not take action solely on the basis of accusations by former members of the Temple and that, in general, they could not consider moving against the community in the absence of firm evidence of wrongdoing. Finally, some of these officials considered the People's Temple to be "a US problem."

On a higher plane, the desirability and usefulness of maintaining good relations with the Guyanese Government were factors that weighed in the balance as the Department and the Embassy dealt with the People's Temple case.

c. Administrative Constraints: These include two considerations mentioned above in a different context: (1) the absence of expertise in the Embassy and the action offices of the Department to permit even a moderately informed estimate of the psychological state of People's Temple members or of the use of mind-control techniques; and (2) the inability -- in the Department more than the Embassy -- to concentrate attention on the People's Temple case because of the press of other tasks on action officers. A third factor was the remoteness of Jonestown and the consequent difficulty of physical access.

2. Perceptions Held by Department and Embassy: The operational perceptions that resulted from the interaction of constraints and information and determined the actions of the Department and Embassy were, of course, not static. They changed as new or additional information was received. The extent of change varied, seeming to depend on the firmness of perception, the nature of the information, and its absorption and assessment.

As a general rule, the perceptions of the Embassy and the Department were congruent, but from time to time there were lags and gaps between the two. Some of these were very important; in the main they arose from differences in absorption of information. These instances are brought out in the following discussion of the major operational perceptions and in the section below on actions taken by the Department and the Embassy.

a. The Consular Nature of the Problem: Both the Department and the Embassy consistently looked upon their ramified involvement with the People's Temple and concerned relatives of its members as primarily a consular responsibility, one which became progressively more important from mid-1977 on. Both of the principal foci of action -- the Stoen custody case and the inquiries about the welfare of members of Jonestown -- were normal consular responsibilities. Another consideration was pertinent. The Department and the Embassy, particularly the latter, speculated from time to time on the possibility of the eventual collapse of the Jonestown community as a result of the death or departure of Jones, the sapping over time of the settlers' enthusiasm and dedication, or economic failure. In that contingency, which was the worst foreseen, the Embassy would be faced with a massive consular task of repatriating as many as one thousand Americans. For all these reasons, it was mutually and readily understood between the Department and the Embassy that basic responsibility for day-to-day attention and action lay in the Office of Special Consular Services (SCS) in Washington and the Consular Section in Georgetown. It was also mutually understood that the occasional movement of the problem into the "political" or "policy" area -- generally perceived as developments that involved the Guyanese Government directly and therefore the bilateral relationship -- would require shared responsibility, with the political side of the house having a large, if not preponderant, voice in any decisions.

In the Department, this quite standard allocation of responsibility meant that SCS, primarily its Welfare and Whereabouts Unit, performed the bulk of the work and took most of the actions. (SCS, as is its general practice, often consulted the office of the Assistant Legal Adviser for Consular Affairs, L/CA.) The Office of Caribbean Affairs (CAR) in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (ARA), and particularly the Desk Officer for Guyana, held what was essentially a watching brief. He involved himself directly only when a clearly political question presented itself. These occasions were fewer than they might have been because ARA/CAR was quite content to keep People's Temple matters within the "consular box" and, moreover, hoped that they would stay there, that is, that spill-over into the bilateral relationship would not occur. This bias in favor of a generally passive ARA/CAR role in the Department's address to problems associated with the People's Temple tended

to diminish when the former head of the Consular Section in the Embassy, who had had close association with the problem during his two-year tour in Georgetown, took over as Desk Officer for Guyana in August 1978. The arrival of the new Desk Officer and his greater role did not, however, change in any fundamental way the perception in the Department that it was dealing with a consular problem.

Although the Embassy shared this perception, its actual handling of questions arising from the presence of the People's Temple in Guyana was simpler, less compartmented and more comprehensive than that of the Department. The Chief of the Consular Section was the action officer, but the Chief of Mission (Ambassador or Chargé) and the Deputy Chief of Mission were constantly and directly involved in all aspects and phases. For all practical purposes, the distinction between consular and political features had little operational significance in the Embassy.

b. The Effect of the Stoen Case: The initiation in August 1977 of the bitter and crucial struggle between the Stoens and Jones for the custody of John Victor Stoen represented in a very real sense the beginning of concentrated official attention to the People's Temple. The custody case came to be the primary focus of the Department's and the Embassy's involvement in Temple matters for most of the period before November 18, 1978. Overall, it consumed considerably more than half the total time and effort devoted by officials to the entire array of questions revolving around the People's Temple. It produced two clear "penetrations" into the political and policy realms: the formal complaints in the Stoens' behalf by the Embassy to the Guyanese Foreign Ministry in September 1977 and January 1978. It also raised in unmistakable terms the persistent question, eminently political, of the extent of Jones' influence within the Guyanese Government. Many of the most far-reaching allegations and claims for and against Jones and Jonestown were made in the context of the Stoen case. It is noteworthy that the Blakey affidavit, a key document in the People's Temple case as a whole, was first transmitted to the Department as a means of pressing for further action in the custody case.

In the Department, concentration on the Stoen issue created perceptions in some officers that affected their attitudes toward other components of the People's



Temple case. From the perspective of these officers, who were at levels above the day-to-day action officers, there was no "People's Temple case" but rather "the Stoen case" and ancillary welfare-and-whereabouts cases. Central as the Stoen case undeniably was as a symbol, certainly for Jones and his followers and possibly for the Stoens, the relatives of other members of Jonestown had their own concerns focused on the welfare of their own kin and the Department had corresponding obligations to them. Although the mind-set that, in its early exclusive concentration on the Stoen case, saw only imperfectly the whole of the situation could have had negative consequences, it did not significantly affect the perceptions of SCS action officers, who as a result of their daily involvement were aware of the integral nature of the problem. Even more important, the Embassy's perspective embraced all aspects of the case; the Embassy saw the custody conflict as a very important segment of a large issue with many other parts.

c. The Need for Impartiality, Accuracy and Hard Evidence: Both the Department and the Embassy were mutually conscious of the fact that, in all phases of the People's Temple case, they were dealing with American citizens who were divided into two strongly opposed camps. Moreover, each of the two sides, neither of which inspired great confidence or trust in the Embassy and the Department, was seen as trying to enlist official support for its position. In this situation, already fraught with other constraints, the Department and the Embassy perceived that the need for impartiality, even-handedness and objectivity was very high. The corresponding operational precept was that the Department and Embassy would render services to all equally, would not take sides and would try to keep on good terms with all.

A corollary of this governing perception was the need for great accuracy in all transactions with or about the People's Temple, concerned relatives and any other interested elements. Speculative opinions were to be avoided. Any action would have to be legally substantiated or substantiatable. Measures interpretable as harassment were not to be taken. These standards were strongly and repeatedly emphasized within the Embassy by the Ambassador from the time of his arrival in Georgetown in September 1977. The Department supported and on occasion reinforced these criteria. Both institutions were influenced by their sensitivity to the FOIA and Privacy Act; by what was regarded as paranoid attitudes

among at least some of the contending parties and an accompanying cleverness in exploiting the system; and -- notably in the case of the Ambassador -- the US domestic political implications perceived to exist in the People's Temple case.

Another corollary that guided the Department and the Embassy together was the need for hard evidence about wrongdoing in Jonestown. This was considered a requirement not only because of its inherent importance, but principally because officials of the Guyanese Government, to which the Department and Embassy would have to resort in the last analysis, had made clear that they could not and would not act without such evidence. What would constitute hard evidence was not defined either in Washington or Georgetown. It was understood, however, that allegations of abuses against members of the community were not, by themselves, a sufficient basis for either the Embassy and the Department or the Guyanese Government. In the absence of evidence considered adequately firm, the Department and the Embassy were constantly interested in some kind of handle -- for example, the existence of an investigation by a US law enforcement agency -- that might permit a request to the Guyanese Government for some action that might at least help resolve the uncertainty about conditions in Jonestown.

Those uncertainties were created by nagging doubts about the full validity of the impressions official visitors received when those not unfavorable observations were compared with the flow of allegations of gross illegalities and with the continued and even growing resistance of Jones to opening up the Jonestown community, which was perceived as being, in a practical sense, autonomous. Although there was a built-in bias in favor of the official observations, no one in the Department or the Embassy discounted unduly the countervailing factors.

d. Limited Field of Action: Frustrated by their inability to come up with hard evidence that might persuade the Guyanese Government at least to consider taking some measures, aware that US federal and state agencies with the legal and judicial authority that they did not possess were not investigating the Temple in the United States, and troubled by continuing uncertainty about the real situation in Jonestown, the Department and the Embassy, during 1978, perceived their area of acceptable action as remaining severely circumscribed by a thicket of constraints. They could continue

to monitor the progress of the Stoen case and to be alert to the provision of due process by the Guyanese legal system. The Embassy could continue to make consular visits so as to interview privately the members of Jonestown who were the objects of inquiry and to observe conditions in the community. The Department and the Embassy could continue to urge People's Temple representatives, including Jones, to open up the settlement in their own best interest. Beyond the extension of these existing measures, the Department and the Embassy saw little room for maneuver.

3. Actions on Major Elements of the Case: This section examines the question: Within the framework of their perceptions shaped by the play of constraints and information, how did the Department and the Embassy deal with the major features of the People's Temple case that directly involved the discharge of official responsibilities toward the American citizens on both sides of the case?

a. The Stoen Custody Case: The Department and the Embassy followed three basic guidelines during the struggle for the custody of John Victor Stoen: (a) consistent with normal practice in such disputes between American claimants, the US Government could not and would not take sides or judge the merits of the contending claims; (b) the issues had to be decided by the Guyanese courts which rightfully had jurisdiction; and (c) the Department and the Embassy had a responsibility to follow the development of the case in order to make sure that due process was being followed and that justice was not being denied. These criteria controlling US official actions were made known clearly and repeatedly to both sides and to the Guyanese Government as well. The Embassy also made high GOG officials aware of the interest of both the Department and members of Congress in the case.

In carrying out these guidelines, the Department and the Embassy invested a great deal of time and effort, almost all of it in behalf of the Stoens and their attorneys. In the case of the Embassy, the actions covered a broad gamut of assistance: the facilitation of access by the Stoens and their American lawyer to senior Guyanese officials, including ministers; frequent consultation by Embassy officers with Guyanese officials and Guyanese attorneys for both sides about the evolution and prospects of the case; the presence of consular officers at court hearings in the terms



permitted by Guyanese law and custom; formal and informal representation to the Guyanese Government when some derogation of the rights of the Stoens or their American attorney was evident or even suspected, with one such intervention bordering on an ex parte act (the diplomatic note of September 16, 1977); and the provision of a flow of reports on the progress of the case to the Stoens and their American counsel, either directly or via the Department.

In addition to taking these measures, which in some respects went beyond the norm for custody cases involving Americans, the Embassy Charge in February 1978, in response to a charge by Jones of Embassy partisanship, raised with Jones the question of his alleged exercise of influence on the Guyanese Government in connection with the custody suit. (Jones denied it.) In other dealings with the People's Temple on the case, the Embassy, in early September 1977, stressed to representatives the importance, in Jones' own interest, of his conforming to the court order requiring his presence. (In effect, this advice cut both ways.) To Temple complaints of Embassy bias favoring the Stoens, the Embassy always emphasized its impartiality and neutrality. Whenever Temple representatives in meetings with the Consul attacked the Stoens as unfit, the Consul pointed out that these accusations were immaterial to him in the performance of his duties and that such arguments should be advanced in the court. In reply to occasional inquiries from the People's Temple about the status of the case, the Consul would provide appropriate information. For its part, the Department adhered closely to the general guidelines in private to both sides and in public correspondence. In its concern about due process and in its pursuit of proposals from the Stoen side, the Department on several occasions inquired of the Embassy about the impartiality of the court, the pace of the proceedings and the desirability of obtaining a guarantee of the execution of any decision. The Department invariably accepted the Embassy's judgments, often made on the basis of expert advice, that in the opinion of the Embassy the court would be impartial, that the delays encountered were not unusual in the Guyanese judicial system and that the seeking of a guarantee would be unwise and unnecessary. The Department was sensitive to suggestions by the Embassy that some proposed courses of action would create suspicions about the seriousness of the policy of neutrality.

The Department followed the practice of keeping the Stoens and their lawyer informed, often by telephone, of the status of the case and the results of Embassy inquiries. In at least one important instance, however, the Department failed to maintain proper communication with them. The Stoens' attorney was never given a reply to his inquiry, made originally in March 1978 and repeated in his June 15 transmittal of the Blakey affidavit (see below), concerning standards of international law for determining denial of justice.

Even if such incidents had not occurred, it is not surprising that the Stoens and their representatives, in spite of occasional praise for official performance, considered the Department's and Embassy's actions in general to be totally inadequate. Such dissatisfaction was an inevitable consequence of the clash between the Stoens' naturally strong desire to regain custody of the child and the Department's and the Embassy's need to follow a neutral course. The relationship, inherently incompatible, was complicated by the personal style of the Stoens' attorney, his threats to begin a press campaign against the Department, Embassy and Guyanese Government, and his interest in taking direct action to retrieve the child. This course was forcefully suggested by Timothy Stoen himself in a telegram of October 3, 1978 to Secretary Vance in which Stoen described the Department's conduct as "inexcusable". Concerning Stoen, some officers dealing with the case felt a degree of wariness and uncertainty about whether he had purposes beyond his parental concerns.

If the Stoen side believed that the Department was unresponsive, the People's Temple claimed that the official position and Embassy actions under it were anti-Jones and pro-Stoen. Temple representatives tried to elicit support for their case and impress upon Embassy officers Jones' and the community's determination to resist the giving up of the boy to the Stoens. The first direct reference to mass suicide in the Embassy's experience was made in January 1978 by a People's Temple representative, who said in effect that members of the community would all commit suicide before they would let the Stoen boy go. Embassy officers called the statement nonsense and repeated earlier statements that if the court favored the Stoens, the Temple would have to accept the outcome.

The extent to which the Embassy went to avoid even the appearance of partiality is indicated by the fact that one of the reasons for the Ambassador's decision not to visit Jonestown was the lack of resolution of the custody case. The concern was that his presence at the community might be interpreted as taking sides in the case.

b. Welfare-and-Whereabouts Inquiries and Requests for Other Assistance: The first inquiry concerning the welfare of a member of the People's Temple in Guyana was made by the Embassy in August 1977 at the request of a relative. From that time on, a fairly steady stream of such requests from concerned relatives came to the Embassy. Some of them were addressed, in the first instance, to the Embassy; others came via the Department. Not all the requests from relatives were directed specifically at the whereabouts, well-being or conditions of life at Jonestown (including forced detention) of their kin. Some involved the delivery of letters, notifications of availability of airplane tickets, etc. The latter kind of service was used, however, by consular officers as occasions to put questions to the persons involved about their situation. In all, the Embassy conducted about forty-five inquiries, with about two-thirds of them being in response to requests of the first kind.

The inquiries were made in personal, private interviews during visits by Embassy officers to Jonestown. (Please see the following section.) A very few of the requests, usually of a more routine nature, were handled initially by checks with the People's Temple office in Georgetown; even in those cases the practice was to follow up with the person in Jonestown to verify that he had received the message. In preparation for face-to-face contact in Jonestown, the consular officers would notify the People's Temple of their proposed visits and provide the names of some but not all the persons they wished to interview. As a rule, the names of persons alleged to have been abused were held back so as to permit the Consul to determine for himself whether they had been mistreated. The only exception to the keeping of a "reserved" list was made in the final visit of November 7, 1978, when the community was given the names of all members to be interviewed. The reasons for this were to assure that all persons would be available in view of the relatively large backlog of cases (eleven) that had accumulated and the desire to get up to date before the arrival of Congressman Ryan.



Advance notice of the visits was considered necessary in order to assure access to the community, which had to be on a consensual basis. Prior notification of some of the persons to be interviewed was desired lest the Temple, at the time of the visit, state that the individual was not available. This risk was obviously assessed as acceptable in the cases of the withheld names. In any event, the consular officers saw all the persons on their lists, open or reserved, with the exception of one during the final visit of November 7, 1978. On that occasion, arrangements were made to see her in Georgetown.

In Jonestown, the consular officers always conducted the interviews privately. In most instances they took the persons apart from other Jonestown members. The norm was to confirm identities by the presentation of passports. With the exception of the final November 7, 1978 visit, arrangements were made to use a Guyanese vehicle for entry into the community so as to avoid dependence on the People's Temple in the event a member wished to leave. In the November visit, the Consul had to use a Temple truck because the Guyanese Land Rover could not negotiate the road into the community, which had become (or been allowed to become) intransitable.

The usual interviewing technique was to put a series of questions to the Temple member. According to the Consul (McCoy) who made three of the five visits between August 1977 and November 1978, the questions were along these lines: How are you? What are you doing? Are you being well-treated? Do you wish to leave? Are you being held here against your will? Have you been mistreated in any way? What are your plans for the future? Have you heard from your family in the United States? Have you written your family in the United States? Are you satisfied with your present life in Jonestown? The Consul did not put all the questions to everyone interviewed, but tailored them to the particular concerns expressed by the inquiring relative. In the course of the questioning the consular officer had an opportunity to observe the physical condition of the person interviewed. Many of the same questions were asked of other members of the community who were not involved in specific inquiries. The Consul devised opportunities to hold brief random and individual conversations with persons he encountered with the purpose of trying to ascertain whether their answers were forced.

The Consul also made clear to Jones himself during the August 1977 visit that: consular visits would continue as long as requests were received from concerned relatives about the well-being of members of the settlement; these inquiries were the normal procedure of the Department; if members of Jonestown were to indicate to the Consul a desire to leave, they would be allowed to do so; and the Consul would not be conducting a witch hunt or taking a hostile position, but simply trying to ascertain the facts. The Consul reminded Jones that, although the Jonestown residents, as American citizens, were entitled to their right to privacy, they must also understand that they were subject to Guyanese law by which they would have to abide. In his May 1978 visit, the Consul repeated to Jones the point about the continuation of consular visits as long as the allegations of abuse continued.

In addition to carrying out this aspect of their responsibilities, consular officers of the Embassy performed other related tasks. In the January 11, 1978 visit, the Consul checked, through personal interviews, on the concerns of the Social Security Administration that social security recipients may have signed their checks over to the People's Temple. (In all cases persons interviewed stated that there had been no pressure on them to do so and that they were free to donate as much as they wished to the Temple.) Earlier, during his first visit in August of 1977, the Consul had arranged with Jones the funding of the repatriation of Leon Broussard, who had left Jonestown under unclear circumstances. (Details are set out in Part I, Summary of Major Events.)

In Georgetown, consular officers extended assistance to various Americans who, in one way or another, were caught up in the People's Temple case. For example, the Consul had a facilitative role in the interview between Steven Katsaris and his daughter, Maria, and subsequently he took advantage of an opportunity to tell Maria privately that he was holding a plane ticket that her father had provided in the event she should sometime decide to leave the Temple. The Consul also assisted the Olivers in their meetings with Guyanese officials concerning their desire to see their sons who were in Jonestown. In the May 1978 case of Mrs. Hunter who had fallen afoul of the People's Temple as a result of her interest in Jones and Jonestown, the Consul was instrumental in getting her stay in Georgetown extended and in arranging for funds for

her from the United States. The Consul's intercession with Guyanese authorities in July 1978 had the effect of extending the stay in Guyana of two National Enquirer journalists interested in doing a story on the People's Temple, one of whom was an American.

The role of the Department in the welfare-and-whereabouts process was essentially to receive requests, either by telephone or letter, forward them expeditiously to the Embassy (with standard cautions about obtaining Privacy Act releases), and assure that the results of the Embassy's inquiries were transmitted to the originator of the request. Interested members of Congress were kept informed. The Department also received concerned relatives and advised them of what the Department and the Embassy could and could not do. (Steven Katsaris is a case in point.)

c. The Visits to Jonestown: The five visits in 1977 and 1978 to Jonestown had purposes beyond the pursuit of welfare-and-whereabouts cases and the other somewhat similar problems. They were used to provide routine consular services to the inhabitants and to acquaint non-consular officers (the DCM and the Desk Officer for Guyana) with the community that they had known only second hand. Of more immediate relevance to the People's Temple case, the visits afforded all the official visitors the chance to observe the settlement with a certain amount of continuity. They also permitted consultations with Guyanese Government officers in the area so as to get their impressions.

The results of these observations were disseminated in different ways. (For a summary of the results, please see the following section.) It was the unvarying practice of the Embassy for the visitors to give the Ambassador, the DCM and sometimes other Embassy officers a briefing on the trips very soon after their return. For consumers in the Department, formal reports on the August 30, 1977, January 11, 1978 and November 7, 1978 visits were prepared and forwarded to Washington. (The report on the November 7, 1978 trip was written and transmitted after the events of November 18.) Oral reports of the February 2, 1978 and May 10, 1978 visits were made to some of the interested officers in the Department by, respectively, the Desk Officer for Guyana and the Consul of the Embassy, who had come to the Department for a consular conference shortly after the May visit.



The sensitivity of both the Embassy and the Department to possible interpretations of visits was reflected in the exchange of telegrams in January 1978 concerning their frequency. At the end of a report on the Consul's first two visits (August 1977 and January 1978), the Embassy expressed the belief that to return continually to Jonestown to "investigate allegations of Americans held against their will" (quotation as in the Embassy's text) could open the Embassy and the Department to charges of harassment. The Embassy then said that, unless the Department directed otherwise, it planned to have a consular officer visit Jonestown quarterly to perform routine consular services, at which times the officer could follow up on any welfare/whereabouts inquiries with members, relay family greetings, etc. The Department quickly replied, concurring in the quarterly visits, with the proviso that there would have to be a legitimate consular need for the trip. The Department added that it did not want to create the impression that the US Government was "checking up on Jones or the People's Temple" (quotation as in the Department's text). The telegram stated in conclusion that visits for no apparent purpose would serve only to reinforce the suspicions that Jones already harbored. (During the two visits Jones had displayed his belief -- already well known to the Embassy and the Department -- that there were conspiracies against him and that allegations such as those in the inquiries from relatives had been fabricated as part of them. In the first visit Jones had described the Consul's presence as a direct result of the lies and had asked if it were true that the US Government had requested the Guyanese Government to expel the Temple. Even more explicit and vehement charges that the consular visits were a harassment were rather frequently made by People's Temple representatives in Georgetown in the course of 1978.)

Despite the plan for quarterly visits, there was a six-months' gap between the May 1978 trip and the one in November 1978. Originally scheduled in the quarterly rhythm for early August in order to permit the departing Consul to accompany his successor, the visit was repeatedly postponed for a number of reasons. The Embassy has cited a rolling series of events as frustrating trips successively scheduled in the August to November period: closing of the airport at Port Kaituma in early August; lack of a suitable aircraft in late August; requests by the People's Temple in early and mid-September to delay

the visit in order that it might coincide with the projected arrival in Jonestown of the People's Temple lawyer, who was supposed to be bringing depositions requiring consular notarization; absence in mid-September of the Consul at a consular conference; the subsequent departure of the chartered aircraft from Guyana; inability of the commercial airlines to confirm return space from Matthews Ridge in late September; shortage of staff throughout October because of a labor conference outside Guyana attended by the officer who had been designated to accompany the new Consul and because of a long-scheduled recreation and rehabilitation leave.

The Ambassador was kept informed of the delays, and he discussed the trip with the DCM every week or ten days. The two candidates for the trip did not sense, however, that they were under intense pressure from the Embassy "front office". Neither SCS nor the Guyana Desk in the Department raised the long delay with the Embassy. Neither did they press for an immediate report of the visit when it was finally made one week before Congressman Ryan's departure from New York. At the Embassy, the two officers who had gone to Jonestown were expected to submit a written report to the Department, but no special effort was made to get it to Washington before the Congressman left. In the November 16 briefing at the Embassy, the Ambassador made the two officers available for questioning, but only a few questions were asked. The Ambassador himself mentioned separately to Congressman Ryan the officers' comments about Jones' health.

From time to time within the Embassy, the question of a visit by the Ambassador to Jonestown came up. The Ambassador's decision not to make the trip was based on two specific considerations: the risk that, while the Stoen case was pending, the People's Temple might try to turn the visit to its advantage in the court action; and a broader concern that the People's Temple might exploit the visit in its propaganda. The Ambassador did not give much weight to the possible effects of a visit in heightening the Temple's paranoia about "conspiracies" since he had been invited in June by Mrs. Jones to see the settlement. Next to no thought was given in the Department to either the desirability or the utility of an ambassadorial visit to the community.

d. Observation and Assessment of Conditions in Jonestown: By visual observation, planned interviews and general conversations, the Embassy officers (and in one case a Department officer) who visited Jonestown in 1977 and 1978 formed impressions and opinions of the physical conditions of the settlement and of the welfare and attitudes of its leader and its inhabitants. These judgments were recognized by all concerned, including those who made them, as providing only a partial insight into the complicated problem of the People's Temple. Even though the reports, written and oral, of observations made during visits were not considered definitive, they carried very considerable weight: they were official, and they were the only descriptions of conditions within Jonestown that were not the direct or indirect product of strong advocates or denigrators.

Taken together, the impressions and opinions of the official visitors were not unfavorable to the People's Temple in Jonestown. To put it another way, they did not give much support to the dramatic charges made by some concerned relatives. Set out below are summaries of visit-by-visit impressions concerning the principal allegations against Jonestown. Unless otherwise indicated, the impressions are recollections summoned up between seven and sixteen months after the actual visit.\*

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\*In September 1977, there was a visit to Jonestown by a US official (the AID Rural Development Officer) as part of a broader trip in the region. That visit is not included in this breakdown because it had little to do with the basic issues and because the trip report, prepared shortly after the visit, was not known in the Department nor very widely in the Embassy before November 18. In his report, the AID officer said in part: "Farm operations are good. Crops have been planted and harvested of all indigenous foods, with good, practical applications of processing and preserving of food products...the level of operations, the quality of field work performed and results being achieved will serve as a model for similar development efforts in the hinterland." Before 1977, there were three visits by US officials to the People's Temple settlement: by the Vice Consul in July 1974; by the Ambassador in March 1975; and by the DCM in May 1976. In general, they recollect that their impressions at the time were favorable.



(1) Visit of August 30, 1977 by the Consul:  
In his telegraphic report of the visit, sent promptly on his return to Georgetown, the Consul stated that his initial impression was that the community had made surprising progress in three years in clearing the surrounding jungle and establishing a settlement. The Consul added that he had not been able to determine from his short stay whether he had been subjected to a gigantic "put-on" by Jones or whether Jones' adherents were truly dedicated to their mission of constructing a thriving, productive agricultural community. He went on to say that all members had appeared cheerful and friendly and looked reasonably healthy.

Details not described in the official report included the following: when Jones introduced him as the Consul to a large group of elderly women and asked whether they were happy and satisfied, not surprisingly they answered yes. In showing the Consul a very large hole being used as a refuse dump, Jones said that one of the lies appearing in the press was that members of the community had been forced to dig the hole as punishment. Jones indicated that the hole had been excavated by a backhoe. Although the explanation appeared reasonable to the Consul since the walls of the hole were smooth, indicating the use of mechanical means, he was aware that the work could have been done just before he arrived.

The young woman whom the Consul interviewed as a result of her family's concern that she was being held against her will stated that she had been neither physically nor psychologically intimidated to remain in Jonestown. She was told by the Consul that if she wished she could leave immediately in the company of the Guyanese official accompanying the Consul and that no one would stop her. She said that she did not want to leave, that she was not living in fear and that she was very happy.

(2) Visit of January 11, 1978 by the Consul:  
The week after his second visit the Consul transmitted to the Department a telegram on conditions in Jonestown that contained his impressions from the two trips. These are pertinent excerpts:  
"The Consul is convinced on the basis of his

personal observations and conversations with People's Temple members and Guyanese Government officials that it is improbable that anyone is being held against their will in Jonestown. At no time during his conversations with People's Temple members did he sense that individuals were fearful, or under duress or pressure. They appeared adequately fed and expressed satisfaction with their lives. Some were engaged in hard, physical labor repairing heavy equipment and clearing fields, but this is normal work on farms... There are competent X-ray technicians at the site. The Consul was alert to possibility that attempt might have been made to stage a favorable scenario for his visit, but given conditions at the community, does not believe that this could have been done. Work and life appeared to be going on in a normal fashion. Persons with whom he talked in private -- some of whom were those allegedly held against their will -- appeared spontaneous and free in their conversation and responses to Consul's questions. Also local GOG officials who visit the community frequently and often without advance notice told Consul that they have never received the impression that anything strange was occurring in the community. In short, there is no hard evidence available."

Pertinent details of the second visit not contained in the telegram follow: the Consul used his normal line of questioning with twelve members about whom there had been specific allegations that the Temple was holding them against their will. Their answers were all negative. The Consul asked the same general questions of other members he approached on his own. Jones appeared somewhat disconcerted by these spontaneous contacts, but on no occasion did the Consul get the impression that the negative replies he received were rehearsed. All of the elderly people with whom the Consul talked on social security matters were neatly dressed and expressed satisfaction with their life in Jonestown. The Consul did not at any time have the feeling that the older members with whom he chatted were in any way apprehensive about talking to him. The only hostility during his visit came when the Consul tried to pass letters to members from relatives and when he sought Privacy Act releases. At all times during the visit life seemed to be continuing, with

residents at their various tasks; the Consul could not sense anyone acting abnormally.

On the basis of his observations, the Consul considered it improbable that persons were being held against their will. He did think that Temple members may have been intimidated from attempting to leave by the difficulty in arranging transportation to Georgetown from such a remote site and that, of course, Jones may have been exerting strong influence on members to stay. The Consul could not believe that any inhabitant, especially young adults, could not simply find opportunity to fade into the jungle, make their way to Port Kaituma or Matthews Ridge and request onward assistance. (After he left Jonestown, the Consul emphasized to Guyanese officials that, should any Jonestown residents manage to get to Matthews Ridge or Port Kaituma, the officials should help them arrange onward transportation, notifying the Consul so that he could have them met in Georgetown and assist in their repatriation.)

(3) Visit of February 2, 1978 by the DCM (Blacken) and the Department Desk Officer for Guyana: The DCM had the following impressions: the children he saw appeared healthy and normal; overall appearance of the settlement was tidy and neat; he saw no evidence of maltreatment or beatings, although he realized that anyone recently beaten could have been kept out of sight; the food seemed simple but wholesome; the replies and appearance of the two persons with whom the DCM talked in response to concerns expressed by relatives were satisfactory to him. The visit to Jonestown and his rather long conversations with Jones did not permit firm conclusions that anyone was being held against his will. On the other hand, he could not be certain that in spite of assertions to the contrary by Jones and a number of others, members were free to leave if they so wished. The neatness of the community and the hard work that had gone into the placing of 600 acres of cleared jungle under cultivation were impressive. Jones had demonstrated signs of paranoia but had not appeared to be totally irrational. He obviously was the leader around whom the community revolved.



The Desk Officer for Guyana recollected the following: Jones appeared quite natural although he exhibited a distinct persecution complex; there was little opportunity to determine whether or not the two visitors were seeing the real thing since the tour of the settlement was made in the company of Jones and some of his close advisers; the Desk Officer's general impression of the facility, which contrasted vividly with the surrounding area, was favorable; the Desk Officer could not detect any sign of violence, indications that people were being held against their will, or the presence of weapons.

The Desk Officer was struck by the feeling that many of the persons with whom he met and spoke appeared drugged or robot-like in their reactions to questions and, generally, in their behavior toward the visitors. Noting his short stay -- four hours -- in the settlement and his lack of training in what would amount to a psychiatric skill, he qualified the statement by saying it was a personal reaction probably influenced by reading about religious brain-washing. The DCM recalled that he and the Desk Officer had discussed this impression but could reach no definite conclusions to substantiate these suspicions; the DCM speculated that the members in question might have been tired from their field work. The matter was discussed at the briefing in the Embassy given by the two visitors on their return. At that meeting, the DCM expressed doubt about the validity of the Desk Officer's impression. When he returned to the Department, the Desk Officer mentioned the point to the Director of ARA/CAR and a Deputy Assistant Secretary in ARA; their reaction, he recalls, was skeptical.

(4) Visit of May 10, 1978 by the DCM (Dwyer) and the Consul: The six persons the Consul specifically interviewed privately in connection with family inquiries all replied negatively to questions about their being held against their will and being mistreated. Three of them confirmed that they had received the messages that the Consul had passed to them through the People's Temple office in Georgetown.

It was again the Consul's general impression that the community was thriving, with more land having been cleared and more buildings erected.

The DCM described his impression briefly in this way: "In summary, although there were certain aspects of this introductory visit to Jonestown which were plainly staged for the visitors (craft displays, certain individuals, band music with lunch, carefully selected tour guides with carefully prepared spiels), Jonestown appeared to be much more than a Potemkin village."

On take-off from the airstrip at Port Kaituma, the plane carrying the DCM and the Consul circled slowly over the community in order to permit the DCM to take photographs at an angle to try to locate any roadways or buildings constructed at the settlement's periphery that would be obscured by the jungle from a plane flying overhead. When the films were developed, no such buildings were apparent.

Since the May visit was the final one for the Consul (McCoy), it is pertinent to note some of his general observations covering all three of his trips to Jonestown: He always saw every individual he wished to see; he never noticed any sign of physical abuse; in every instance, the persons interviewed said that they were not being held against their will or mistreated; while he was concerned about the genuineness of the answers and possible intimidation, there was simply no way he could prove otherwise; he found it difficult to believe that the visits were stage-managed because he had free access to any place he wished to go and he never thought that he was being prevented from viewing certain areas; on no occasion did he ever have the impression that answers to questions he put to persons he had approached unexpectedly were other than spontaneous.

(5) Visit of November 7, 1978 by the Consul (Ellice) and the Political Officer (Reece):  
According to the joint report of the visit, prepared three to four weeks after the event, and additional comments by them another two months later, the two officers at no time saw any barbed wire, any guards, armed or otherwise, or any other physical sign that persons were being held against their will, nor did any of their conversations with Jonestown residents reveal any indication that the members of the community were receiving anything below normal Guyanese standards of food,

clothing, shelter and medical assistance. The members whom the two officers met appeared to be in good health, mentally alert and generally happy to be at Jonestown. They all seemed to be absorbed in their various duties. No one indicated a desire to return to the United States. Their replies to questions seemed genuine, although possibly influenced by peer and group pressures.

Jones appeared to be ill and, according to some Jonestown residents, had suffered a heart attack and had a fever of 105 degrees. The two officers were agreed that he did not have the outward signs of such a high fever. Jones' speech was markedly slurred and he had difficulty in spelling out a word, eventually giving up the effort in confusion. He seemed to be either intoxicated, drugged, or the victim of a stroke. He did not appear to be dissembling.

The observations of Jonestown by official visitors and the consequent evaluations the visitors advanced from time to time were very important to the Embassy and the Department because they were official and because they were disinterested. Given the fact that they were about the only reasonably solid pieces of information the Department and the Embassy could cling to, they were constantly cited in letters to interested Congressmen and in other public correspondence. It is noteworthy, however, that their importance was not so great in practice as it might have been expected to be. Operationally the results of the visits were not treated as conclusive. Rather, they were looked upon as a major element of judgment to be used in dealing with the question of Jonestown; they did not settle the question. They were a significant part, but not the whole story.

There were many reasons for this attitude, which was shared by the visitors and the recipients of their reporting. High among them was the impossibility of ever being sure that the key observations and impressions were truly accurate. Here there arose such nagging considerations as the visitors' lack of knowledge to permit a really definitive judgment about the extent of psychological coercion or the existence and effectiveness of sophisticated mind-control techniques. Then there was the chance of intricately stage-managed visits, "a gigantic 'put-on'". Although the visitors doubted, even strongly doubted, this possibility, they could



not provide conclusive proof of their beliefs.

Supplementing these factors related directly to the evidentiary value of the visits, broader negative features of Jonestown and its leader had to be put alongside the results of the visits. The salient aspects included: the general "strangeness" of the group; its secretiveness; its paranoid tendencies; its deviousness; the fanatic dedication of some of its members; its self-imposed and growing isolation, giving it practical autonomy; its acts of harassment, unproven, but suspected, against its opponents; and its suspected manipulation of its friends and supporters in the Guyanese Government.

A make-weight element among the negative aspects of Jonestown and Jones was the Embassy's awareness in a general way of contacts between the People's Temple and personnel of the Soviet and other communist Embassies in Georgetown, including visits by Soviet Embassy officials to Jonestown. The content and purpose of the contacts were not known, although rumors were plentiful in Georgetown. The Embassy made no effort to monitor the associations of the American citizens involved.

In late May 1978, the Consul, in the course of a meeting with People's Temple representatives in which he referred to reports of Temple involvement in the Hunter case, mentioned that he had heard that People's Temple members were in touch with the Soviet Embassy. He asked why were they involving themselves with foreign missions, if their organization were such a peaceful one and wanted only to be left alone. He went on to say that, as far as he was concerned, they could talk to whom they pleased and invite to Jonestown whom they pleased but that this activity simply did not jibe with what they had been telling him.

The People's Temple itself described Soviet interest in Jonestown in a March 14, 1978 letter to all Senators and Congressmen. That document, which was principally a complaint of harassment by agencies of the Federal Government, stated:

"Even Russia's New Times magazine has praised this work and done so in spite of our strong support of Russian people of Jewish descent,

an obvious disagreement. We receive letters weekly from Russia, as well as from people in other parts of the world who have heard of the project, offering advice and assistance. In fact, several overtures have been made from Russia, which sees our current harassment as a form of political persecution. We do not want to take assistance from any people nor do we want to become an international issue. We also do not intend to be starved out by having our legitimately earned income cut off through the efforts of Trotskyite people and embittered malcontents. We have no political aspirations whatsoever... It seems cruel that anyone would want to escalate this type of bureaucratic harassment into an international issue, but it is equally evident that people cannot forever be continually harassed and beleaguered by such tactics without seeking alternatives that have been presented. I can say without hesitation that we are devoted to a decision that it is better even to die than to be constantly harassed from one continent to the next."

All of these disturbing components of the Jonestown situation, together with the insistent allegations by concerned relatives, acted as offsets to the information gained from the visits. The net effect, particularly among the officers most closely involved in the case, was a persistent uneasiness, a fear that something -- undefined -- was wrong and a concern that there was really no hard evidence to go on.

e. The Handling of the May Petition of Concerned Relatives: On May 12, 1978 Timothy Stoen sent the following letter to Secretary Vance:

"Re 'Concerned Relatives' -- Petition in re Human Rights Abuses of United States Citizens

"Dear Mr. Vance:

"I have been asked by Concerned Relatives to forward to you the following documents dated May 10, 1978:

- "1. Petition Entreating Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Protect the Human Rights of United States Citizens in 'Jonestown', Guyana; and
- "2. Petition Entreating Prime Minister Forbes Burnham to Stop Rev. James Warren Jones From Further Violations of the Human Rights of Our Relatives in Guyana.

"We are asking you to immediately transmit to Prime Minister Burnham the petition addressed to him. We are asking you, inter alia, to launch a continuing investigation of Jonestown by ordering Ambassador John Burke to station US Embassy personnel on the premises around the clock so as to protect the legal rights of the US citizens there.

"I wish there were some way to convince you that the situation in Jonestown is desperate. Unlike Jones in his mass barrage of letters to you, we are not exaggerating in pointing out the particular acts he is guilty of. We cite article and section number of the laws being violated.

"Please advise as to when you have transmitted the petition to Mr. Burnham and as to your response to our request for an investigation.

"Thank you.

"Sincerely,

"Timothy Oliver Stoen"

The petition to the Secretary from fifty-seven parents and relatives of eighty-two members of Jonestown recited charges that Jonestown had turned into a "concentration camp" as evidenced by strict controls over residents, including the stationing of guards to prevent departures without Jones' permission, the censoring of mail and the prohibition against leaving the People's Temple under threat of death. According to the petition, these facts were documented by enclosed, notarized affidavits by Steven Katsaris and Yolanda Crawford. The petition noted parenthetically that the concerned relatives had been advised and believed, but needed an investigation to verify, that Jones had installed barbed-wire fences and a closed-circuit television system for internal surveillance. (In contrast to the



qualified statements in the petition about barbed-wire fences, literature distributed by concerned relatives a month earlier had flatly asserted their presence in Jonestown.)

The petition asked the Secretary to take the following actions:

- Immediately transmit to Prime Minister Burnham the petition addressed to him and ask him to take the action requested in the petition;
- Immediately order the American Ambassador in Georgetown to launch an official investigation of Jonestown, including the placement of Embassy personnel in Jonestown to protect the legal rights of the American citizens there;
- Request all international agencies concerned with human rights to investigate and monitor Jones' activities that violated such rights;
- Notify the concerned relatives' spokesman, Steven Katsaris, of the Secretary's willingness to take the actions requested.

In the petition to Burnham, the charges made against Jones and Jonestown were similar to those set forth in the document to the Secretary, but included the accusations that: Jones had left the United States for Guyana as he was about to be exposed in the press for fraud, brutality to children, and taking property under false pretenses, that he had never returned to answer these charges, and that Jones was employing psychological coercion as part of a mind-programming campaign. In addition, the petition called attention to Jones' "initiation of a threat so chilling as to be incomprehensible to the average decent person." The petition then referred to language concerning a decision to die in two current People's Temple documents. The first quotation, from the March 14, 1978 letter on Temple stationery to all US Senators and members of Congress (signed by one Alice Morton, although the petition does not identify the sender) stated, as noted earlier: "I can say without hesitation that we are devoted to a decision that it is better even to die than to be constantly harassed from one continent to the next." (The Department received the March 14 letter.) The second quotation, according to the petition,

was taken from a People's Temple press release of April 18 that had been prompted by an "Accusation" by concerned relatives directed against violations of human rights by Jones. (The "Accusation", dated April 1, laid special emphasis on the threat of a decision to die and demanded that Jones publicly promise Secretary Vance and Prime Minister Burnham never to encourage or solicit the death of any person at Jonestown, whether individually or collectively, for any reason whatsoever. The Department received the April 11 "Accusation".) The April 18 excerpt read: "And we, likewise, affirm that before we will submit quietly to the interminable plotting and persecution of this politically motivated conspiracy, we will resist actively, putting our lives on the line, if it comes to that. This has been the unanimous vote of the collective community here in Guyana."

The petition asked the Prime Minister immediately to:

- order an ongoing official investigation into Jones' violations of Guyana's laws and constitution;
- order Jones to cease unlawful acts and particularly to put an end to specific measures that kept Jonestown closed;
- order Jones to permit and encourage members of the community to return to the United States for a one-week home leave;
- order Jones to abide by the order of US courts with respect to custody of relatives; (Note: This is a reference to the Stoen case.)
- expel Jones from Guyana if he refused to abide by the Prime Minister's orders.

In the Department, the petition to the Secretary received very little attention. It arrived in SCS on May 18 and was sent to the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit. On May 23, the Unit sent a copy to L/CA for advice on the response to be made. (Although SCS records do not show that ARA was sent a copy, the Desk Officer for Guyana did in some manner receive a copy which he read.) The head of L/CA scanned it and understood that SCS was seeking advice. He then passed it to his associate, who often handled SCS matters. The associate does not recall having received

it or read it. In the search of the Department's files after the events of November 18, a copy was found in the files of the associate. SCS did not follow up its request to L/CA for advice, and no action was taken in the Department to reply to the petition.

As for the Embassy, the Consul saw the petition in May while he was in the Department for a consular conference. On his return to Georgetown, he mentioned the petition to the Ambassador, who did not see it. The Consul also showed a copy to a vice consul, who read it. In July, the Consul saw a copy of the petition to Prime Minister Burnham on the desk of a Guyanese official. When the Consul said that he had received a copy also, the official stated that he had received the document from the Prime Minister's office and did not know what he was going to do about it. In August the Consul mentioned the petition to his successor in the process of changeover.

The most that can be said for the handling of the petition was that at the working level in SCS and in the Consular Section in Georgetown it was read and thereby added to their general fund of information.

f. The Blakey defection, statement and affidavit:  
On the morning of May 12, 1978, Deborah Layton Blakey called on the Consul in the Embassy. (Along with several members of her family, Blakey had been a member of the People's Temple for nearly eight years and had been in Jonestown and then in the Georgetown office since December 1977, a good part of the time as financial secretary.) In a very nervous state, Blakey asked for assistance in leaving Guyana. She explained that she was afraid that if the People's Temple members were to become aware of her plans, they would prevent her departure. The Embassy gave Blakey very considerable assistance in assuring her safe departure, including the issuance of an emergency passport for the preparation of which she executed a sworn statement. Before she left Georgetown on May 13 on an early afternoon flight to New York, Blakey made declarations to the Consul about conditions in Jonestown, and she signed a statement prepared by the Consul about her references to mass-suicide rehearsals. By coincidence, the Consul, who was going to Washington to attend a consular conference, was a passenger on the same plane as Blakey. During the flight, Blakey made additional statements to the Consul about Jonestown and the People's Temple in general, and the two discussed



what should be done with her information. There was another exchange concerning the best use of her information when, in the week after her return to the United States, Blakey telephoned the Consul in Washington.

On June 15, Blakey executed an affidavit in San Francisco concerning conditions in Jonestown. In letters dated that same day, copies of the affidavit were sent to three officers of the Department by the lawyer for Grace and Timothy Stoen. The lawyer called attention to the affidavit as an element in the pending custody case, asserting that in the affidavit Blakey made clear that delay in the case was caused by Jones' threat of mass suicide. Copies of the affidavit were subsequently sent by various concerned relatives to other addressees in the Government, including the Embassy in Georgetown.

On November 13, Blakey was brought by Congressman Ryan to a meeting in the Department where she described her experiences and conditions in the People's Temple community.

In the interest of clarity, this examination of the handling of the Blakey component of the People's Temple case is broken into two parts: events in the period before the receipt in the Department of the June 15 affidavit, and those in the period after.

(1) Before the Affidavit: In her conversations in the Embassy, Blakey told the Consul that, although she harbored no ill will toward the Temple, a number of bizarre and frightening developments were starting to take place in Jonestown. She said that all the consular visits had been stage-managed and that there had been mass-suicide rehearsals. In response to a question, she stated that she did not know whether the rehearsals were just another form of Jones' psychological control but that she just had to get out.

The Consul informed the Ambassador of the references by Blakey to mass suicide. The Ambassador directed that, instead of the Consul's preparing a memorandum that would be only hearsay, Blakey be asked to make a sworn statement, which would be accurate and would protect Embassy officers against being accused of quoting her incorrectly, in the event she were to recant. The Consul wrote out in long-hand a statement relating to

mass-suicide rehearsals that Blakey signed on the morning of May 13 at her hotel in the presence of the Vice Consul. He told her that she was free to sign or not sign; she signed without objection. The Vice Consul did not swear her. When he returned from the airport after seeing Blakey off, the Vice Consul placed the document in a safe in the Embassy. It remained there until early November, when it was sent to the Department in connection with a freedom-of-information case.

As the desire to get Blakey's signature on a document suggests, the Embassy was concerned in the beginning that Blakey's defection might be a provocation arranged by the People's Temple, whose deviousness, even wiliness, was known. In addition, there was a more persistent preoccupation, at least on the Ambassador's part, that Blakey might have left the Temple because of a family dispute (her mother, brother and husband were still with the Temple), and that, in that case, her defection might be based on personal reasons. Therefore, the Embassy, in keeping with the Ambassador's policy of strict accuracy and adherence to legal standards, felt obliged to move carefully.

During the flight to New York, Blakey and the Consul had a long conversation about the activities of the People's Temple in Guyana. Blakey referred to the smuggling of firearms, the diversion of funds to foreign banks, and the multi-millions of assets held by the Temple. She talked of the total control that Jones seemed to have over all his followers; she said that even if some members wished to get out, they could not. When asked by the Consul why someone wishing to leave could not slip out through the jungle to Matthews Ridge, she cited as reasons the presence of armed guards ringing Jonestown, Jones' success in convincing members that the Guyanese would return any defectors, and the isolation of the site. Blakey declared that, even when the visit of a consular officer presented an opportunity, there was not enough confidence in the ability of one individual to take them out to warrant the risks. Replying to a question about how persons allowed themselves to be brought to Guyana, Blakey said that a few were drugged throughout the trip, others came because of peer pressure, but most came willingly.

Blakey asked the Consul what she should do; should she go to the press with her information? The Consul answered that he did not see why she should go to the press since previous press reports had not accomplished anything. He went on to say that she should go to law-enforcement agencies, mentioning the Customs Service and the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Control Bureau of the Treasury Department. He explained that official corroboration of allegations of unusual activity was needed so that the Department of State could request the Guyanese Government through the Embassy to conduct an official investigation of conditions at Jonestown. The Consul explained further that the greatest problem in this respect was getting confirmation of statements such as hers, a very difficult task because of the restrictions on how much an Embassy could do in investigating American citizens.

In a telephone call to the Consul in Washington between May 16 and 18, Blakey said that she simply could not remain quiet and asked again about going to the press. Saying that in the last analysis she would have to decide for herself what was best, the Consul repeated essentially what he had told her on the plane.

A careful check of Federal law-enforcement and investigative agencies has established that Blakey approached none of them. As will be seen shortly, she did go to the press in mid-June.

The Consul considered going himself to such agencies to report Blakey's statements. His reasons for deciding against that course were his awareness that his account would be second-hand and therefore evidentially weak or valueless; concerns arising from the position of the Department of Justice regarding First Amendment rights and from the Privacy Act; and his belief that Blakey's credibility would be tested by leaving action to her. For essentially the same reasons, the Consul decided not to go to law-enforcement and investigative agencies to request that they seek out Blakey and get her story. No one in the Department and the Embassy suggested, or considered suggesting, to the Consul that he take either of these courses, a fact that indicates the embedded nature of constraints.



While he was in the Department, the Consul spoke to officers in SCS, including the Office Director, and to the Desk Officer for Guyana about the Blakey defection and at least some of her statements (as well as his May 10 visit to Jonestown). In addition, he informed some of his interlocutors of his having urged her to give her information to law-enforcement agencies. Although it is not possible to reconstruct how much was told to whom about the Blakey defection and statements, the impact was spotty and limited. Some of the officers do not remember being told anything by the Consul; others remember vague details; others considered the Blakey statements as repetitions of earlier allegations, nothing really new, and as difficult to judge as the Stoen charges. One officer does recall that the Consul was seriously concerned by Blakey's story, which, he believed, could not be disregarded. A specific exchange on the mass-suicide question took place in a meeting between the Consul and members of the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit. When he was asked his opinion about such statements, he described them again as nonsense.

On his return to Georgetown on May 23, the Consul informed the Ambassador of his conversation with Blakey on the plane, his advice to her to tell her story to law-enforcement agencies, and his briefing of officers in the Department. On or about June 1, he told a senior Guyanese official of Blakey's statements. The attitude of the official, who was suspicious of the People's Temple, was: we have heard the allegations; what have you found? This response was consistent with the Guyana Government's position that statements by ex-members of the Temple were not sufficient to trigger action but that official information from US Government sources about Temple activities in the United States would have greater force.

The impact on the Embassy of the Blakey defection and her account to the Consul of conditions in Jonestown was greater than it had been on the Department. The effect on the Embassy was not dramatic, however. Certainly the Embassy devoted much more thought and attention to the Blakey episode than did the Department. Against the judgment that Blakey's charges were another in a series of allegations was set the fact that

she was the first fresh defector the Embassy had seen. Even though her charges were not accepted at face value and doubts about her motives lingered, there was present in the Embassy the thought: what if she is telling the truth?

This attitude of heightened uneasiness did not carry over to the Embassy's handling of the statement on mass-suicide rehearsals that Blakey had signed on May 13. The Embassy took no conscious decision to forward or not forward the document to the Department. The fact is that it was not sent up, and it languished in an Embassy safe until early November. The argument that the statement had little legal value because of imperfections in its preparation is beside the point because, in the first place, there is no evidence that even this consideration was weighed by the Embassy at the time. Much more important, the document did not have to be impeccably legal to serve the purpose of raising the Department's consciousness by means of an official written communication transmitting the text -- with all necessary caveats as to its evidentiary worth -- and describing the circumstances under which it had been given. That consciousness had not been notably stimulated by the uneven or unevenly absorbed oral briefing of the Consul nor by the telegram of the Embassy reporting the fact of the defection but not the statement by Blakey in the Embassy.

(2) After the Affidavit: On June 15, 1978 in San Francisco, Blakey executed an affidavit concerning her experiences with the People's Temple in the United States and Guyana and conditions in Jonestown. In the document, which was entitled "Affidavit... Re the Threat and Possibility of Mass-suicide by Members of the People's Temple", she said that its purpose was to call to the attention of the US Government the existence of a situation which threatened the lives of American citizens living in Jonestown. The affidavit contained a sweeping array of charges, many of them similar to those that had been appearing for some time in concerned relatives' literature. There were new or more fully elaborated allegations of special relevance to the Department and the Embassy, among them:

-- The statement that in September 1977 Blakey and another person in the San Francisco Temple had been instructed by Jones to call a high-ranking Guyanese official, who was visiting the United States, and threaten that, unless the Guyanese Government took immediate steps to stall court action in the Stoen custody case, the entire population of Jonestown would extinguish itself in a mass suicide by 5:30 p.m. that same day. Blakey stated that she had been informed later that Temple members in Guyana had placed similar calls to other Guyanese officials. She also declared that subsequent radio messages from Jonestown reported that the case had been stalled and that the suicide threat had been called off.

-- A detailed description of rehearsals for mass suicide for socialism.

After expressing gratitude to the Consul and Vice Consul of the Embassy for the assistance given her, Blakey in her affidavit said that the efforts made to investigate conditions in Jonestown were inadequate because the infrequent visits were always announced and arranged; acting in fear for their lives, Temple members responded as they were told; and although members appeared to speak freely to US representatives, they were in fact thoroughly drilled prior to each visit on what questions to expect and how to respond.

Concluding her affidavit, Blakey urged, on behalf of the population of Jonestown, that the US Government take adequate steps to safeguard their rights. She stated that she believed their lives were in danger.

It should be noted that Blakey did not tell the Consul of the mass-suicide threat to Guyanese officials. Aside from that important point, the affidavit was generally consistent with, but more dramatically couched, than Blakey's statement to the Consul.



In letters dated June 15, 1978, the Stoens' attorney sent copies of the affidavit (unsigned and undated but textually the same as copies published later) to the Chief of the Emergency and Protection Division of SCS, to the former head of the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit of the Division (who had left the Unit in late April) and to the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations (H). The letters were received, according to date-time stamps, on June 27, June 23 and July 18, respectively. (The last date suggests that the letter was sent considerably after its June 15 date). The letters to H and to the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit had identical texts; the letter to the Division Chief was different from them only in a first paragraph referring to a letter of April 14 from the Division Chief on the Stoen case. The language common to all three letters contained statements that Blakey was extremely concerned for the welfare of not only the Stoen boy but also the other residents of Jonestown; that the failure of the Guyanese judge to act for almost five months on the habeas corpus petition in the case constituted excessive delay; and that Blakey made it clear that Jones' threats of mass suicide were the cause of delay. The letter repeated a request for assistance in reaching a solution to the case and noted in effect that the lawyer was still awaiting promised word from the Legal Adviser of the Department concerning the interpretation of international law governing the case.

No reply to the letter was ever sent. SCS expected the letter to be answered by the Office of the Legal Adviser and sent a copy of the letter to L/CA. The officer in L/CA who was indicated by SCS as the addressee of a copy does not recall having received the letter or the enclosed affidavit. There is no record of follow-up by SCS with L/CA.

In spite of the unmistakably "political" nature of some parts of the affidavit, above all the reference to the mass-suicide threat to Guyanese officials, there is no record in SCS of transmittal of the letter or the affidavit to ARA/CAR, but a copy of the affidavit was found in the files of ARA/CAR in the post-November 18 period. This copy may have been received by ARA/CAR as an attachment to a communication

from a concerned relative since copies were sometimes included in relatives' letters to US officials. The letters often enclosed press clippings from West Coast newspapers containing articles stimulated by the affidavit and interviews of Blakey. It was in this way, in fact, that the Embassy in Georgetown received a copy of the affidavit in mid-or late August. There is no indication in the record that any office in the Department forwarded the affidavit to Georgetown.

This extraordinary record of the mechanical handling of the affidavit is only slightly mitigated by the fact that the document was received under cover of a communication on the Stoen legal dispute and therefore could have fallen victim to the nearly exclusive concentration on the custody case by some SCS officers. In any event, that record was, if anything, surpassed in inefficiency by the attention given the substance of the affidavit. The Division Chief in SCS who received one of the letters from the Stoens' lawyer read the letter and referred it to L/CA, but he did not read the affidavit. As noted above, no one in L/CA recalls either receiving or reading the affidavit. Some officers in the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit did at least skim the affidavit and were generally familiar with its contents. (The situation in this working-level organization was complicated by the fact that it had three chiefs in the space of four months, and information-transfer from one head to another was incomplete.) In ARA/CAR, the Desk Officer for Guyana did not see the affidavit nor did his superiors in the office.

The widespread failure in the Department to absorb knowledge of the existence, let alone the content, of the affidavit was apparent in the processing of the October 3 threat by Timothy Stoen to take direct action to get John Victor Stoen out of Jonestown. Although his telegram referred specifically to the affidavit and mass suicide, only one officer (in the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit) of the four involved understood the allusions or related them to the specific Blakey document. Since that officer assumed that other participants were familiar with the affidavit, she did not make a special point of the matter, nor did any of the others

inquire about the citations.

The bleak picture of the handling and attention given the Blakey affidavit itself in the Department was relieved only by the fact that over time the thrust of some of her information rubbed off in a partial way on some officers. The Welfare and Whereabouts Unit had had some benefit of the Consul's oral briefing and at least some of its members were acquainted with the later affidavit. The Desk Officer for Guyana had also talked to the Consul in May, although the mass-suicide element was either not mentioned by the Consul or not taken in by the Desk Officer. After the Consul took over as Desk Officer in late August, he briefed the Deputy Director of ARA/CAR, referring to Blakey and the strong effect on him of her defection and statements in increasing his concern that something was wrong in the unhealthy Jonestown situation. Similarly, the new Desk Officer during the October preparations for the Congressional visit talked at some length to the new head of the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit about Blakey during a general conversation on Jonestown. Also in October, the Desk Officer talked to the lawyer in L/CA directly involved in the People's Temple case, at the latter's request, about the situation in general. The Desk Officer discussed Blakey's statements.

Nevertheless, the net effect on almost all sectors of the Department of information from Blakey, no matter the form in which it was imparted, was slight. This inescapable fact was illustrated by reactions to her presentation at the meeting in the Department arranged by Congressman Ryan on the eve of his departure for Guyana. Almost all the officers of the Department over whose desks the affidavit had passed, in whose files the document rested, or who had been told at least something of Blakey's story were definitely impressed, though not fully persuaded, by her account, particularly her references to practice for mass suicide. Even if allowance were made for the important differences in impact of cold print and live, face-to-face exposition, such responses betrayed major deficiencies in the Department's dissemination and absorption of the information originating with Blakey.



At the Embassy, the situation was markedly better, if far from optimal. The affidavit was not received until the latter part of August and then as an enclosure to a letter from a concerned relative. (The Consul, who had first dealt with Blakey, had left Georgetown by the time the affidavit arrived and did not see it until it was published in the press after the Jonestown killings.) The Ambassador saw and read the affidavit soon after August 30, on which date he returned from home leave and consultation in the Department, where no one had brought it to his attention. The DCM saw it at about the same time as the Ambassador. The new Consul, who received it in the concerned relative's letter, had already seen it in the SCS files during his preparations for his new assignment. He had not given much credence to the references to mass suicide, in part because the files he was reviewing held other such suggestions. The Ambassador and the DCM were already well informed about Blakey's statements during her defection and on the flight to New York. The new Consul had also been briefed in considerable detail about Blakey by his predecessor. The Ambassador's reaction to the affidavit, which he considered much more detailed and precise than her statements to the Consul in May, was that it was good that Blakey seemed to be moving toward filing a complaint because now the Embassy would get instructions from the Department. The Ambassador had in mind his experiences in June when the kind of instructions he wanted were not given him.

g. June Exchange of Telegrams: On June 6, 1978, the Embassy sent to the Department a telegram, of routine precedence, divided into a section entitled "Discussion" and a final paragraph labeled "Recommendation". The salient points of the "Discussion" section were these (the paragraphing conforms to the text of the telegram):

(1) As the Department knew, considerable public, press and Congressional interest had been directed to the People's Temple settlement. Preponderant attention had centered on the question of the welfare and whereabouts of individual members of the community raised by their next-of-kin in the United States either directly or through the intermediation

of various Senators and Congressmen.

(2) Responding to this interest, the Embassy had established the system of quarterly consular visits, which seemed to be working satisfactorily.

(3) During the consular visits, it had been observed that the local Guyanese administration exercised little or no control over the community, whose autonomy seemed virtually total. Among the reasons for this situation was the understandable lack of interest on the part of local officials in bothering with an apparently self-sufficient community of non-Guyanese who obviously were not actively seeking any extensive contact with the Guyanese environment.

(4) What we had, therefore, was a community of American citizens that existed as a self-contained and self-governing unit in a foreign land and that, for all intents and purposes, was furnishing to its residents all of the community services such as civil administration, police and fire protection, education, and health care provided within its territory by a central government.

(5) Given the nature of many of the inquiries, both private and Congressional, concerning welfare and whereabouts of various members Jonestown, as well as many of the press articles that had alleged that individuals were being held in the community against their will, the lack of any objective elected or appointed political presence in Jonestown raised a legal question that the Embassy was not qualified to answer.

(6) The Embassy was not, of course, in a position to exercise any control over private American citizens. Private Americans travelling to or resident in a foreign country were expected, however, to observe and conform to the laws of the host government. Conversely, could the host government be obliged to extend its governmental control and the protection of its legal system over an individual or group of aliens residing within its territory?

The telegram concluded:

"RECOMMENDATION: It is requested that the Office of the Legal Adviser review the situation described above, as well as other pertinent data concerning the People's Temple and the Jonestown community which are available in CA/SCS in the Department. If, after such review, and assuming that the answer to the question posed in the preceding paragraph is affirmative, it is requested that we be instructed to approach the Government of Guyana at an appropriate level to discuss the People's Temple community and request that the Government exercise normal administrative jurisdiction over the community, particularly to insure that all of its residents are informed and understand that they are subject to the laws and authority of the GOG and that they enjoy the protection of the Guyanese legal system."

This telegram had been prepared with great thought and care by the Ambassador, with some contributions by the DCM and the Consul, who were consulted during the drafting and who cleared the final text. The Ambassador had come to the conclusion that an accumulation of factors made it desirable and timely to get guidance from the Department. The more immediate factors included the Blakey defection and statements, which constituted in the Ambassador's reckoning about one-fourth of the motivation of the telegram, and the growth of Congressional interest that increased as the Jonestown community expanded. In a longer-term sense, the Ambassador was concerned by the persistence and size of the consular problems created by the People's Temple case and, in this respect, had constantly in mind the contingency of a collapse of the Temple.

In light of these factors, the Ambassador wanted the guidance from Washington to address the responsibilities of the Embassy and the role of the Guyanese Government. Concerning the first, the questions were: Is the Embassy's understanding of what it can and cannot do correct? Is it doing the right things? Is there more that it should and could do? Specifically, what is the proper role of consular officers and their responsibilities toward the members of Jonestown? Do they have the responsibility (and authority) to



probe and, if so, how deeply? With respect to the Guyanese role, the basic questions were: Is the Embassy correct in understanding that the Guyanese Government has responsibility for the governance of Jonestown? Is it permissible in international law to request the Guyanese Government to exercise normal administrative control over Jonestown? For these questions the Ambassador wanted a careful legal determination concurred in by L, CA, ARA, and H at an appropriately high level in each of the bureaus.

The Ambassador's expectation was that the answer to the two sets of inquiries would be affirmative, that is, the Department would reply that the Embassy's interpretations of its responsibilities and those of the Guyanese Government were correct and that it was legally permissible to request the Guyanese Government to take the action indicated. The last answer was to clear the way for an approach to the Guyanese Government whose features the Ambassador foresaw more or less as follows:

- Involvement in successive stages of the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Home Affairs. and, if made necessary by earlier negative responses, the Prime Minister;
- An oral presentation, the first part of which would be the rehearsal of such things as the history of the problem, press articles on the People's Temple, the level of Congressional interest, and the consular visits;
- Then, a reference to the difficulties of the Guyanese Government in exercising adequate administrative jurisdiction over Jonestown;
- A suggestion that the Government establish a system of regular, unannounced visitations to Jonestown by Guyanese police, health and education officials to make certain that the same controls exercised over Guyanese citizens were being applied to American residents since the settlement in Jonestown seemed to enjoy an autonomy no other community in Guyana had.

The Ambassador believed that a presentation of this kind, made orally, would be entirely defensible against charges by the People's Temple of harassment because he would simply be asking that Jonestown be treated in the same way as any other community in Guyana.

In drafting the telegram, the Ambassador consciously put the issues in legal terms, using as careful and judicious language as he could. Assuming that the telegram would get into the hands of the People's Temple in one way or another and having specifically in mind the FOIA, the Ambassador prepared the telegram with the purpose of having it stand absolutely by itself.

Because of the importance of the telegram to the Ambassador (and to the other officers who had a hand in it), the Ambassador, by telephone, called it to the attention of the Desk Officer for Guyana requesting that it receive careful consideration. (The Desk Officer does not remember the call.) The Ambassador chose not to slug the telegram for particular officers because he expected a number of them would be involved in its consideration.

On June 26, the Department sent the following reply to the Embassy:

"Department can appreciate the uniqueness of the situation described in reftel and the problems post has encountered in attempting to deal with this situation.

"We agree with post's position set forth in paragraph 6 of reftel and concur that host government has governmental jurisdiction over US citizens and other aliens residing within its boundaries. Department assumes that both the Guyanese Government and the leader of the People's Temple are aware that the community is under the jurisdiction of the GOG and that all members of the community are subject to the laws and authority of the GOG. Department at present of view that any action initiated by the Embassy to approach the GOG concerning matters raised in reftel could be construed by some as US Government interference, unless Amcit member or family requests assistance or there is evidence of lawlessness within the community of Jonestown."

This reply was drafted by the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit of SCS on the basis of guidance from the Director of SCS and the Chief of the Division which includes the Unit. It was cleared by L/CA, which made some changes in the original draft, and approved for transmission by the SCS Division Chief. SCS did not submit the reply to ARA for clearance.

Within SCS (the office assigned action) and L/CA, the Embassy's telegram puzzled and somewhat annoyed the officers handling it. No one was quite sure what the Embassy was driving at and why it was asking questions in paragraph 6 (one implicit and the other explicit), the answers to which the Embassy already knew. There was some suspicion that the Embassy was making a record for self-protective purposes. The Director of SCS, who shared some of these reactions, questioned the necessity of the action for which the Embassy was requesting authority on the grounds that the approach should not be undertaken unless there were evidence of lawlessness. The Chief of the Division questioned the propriety of the approach since the area was under the control of the Guyanese Government and there might be a charge of interference. On the basis of notes to this effect on a copy of the incoming telegram, a junior officer in the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit prepared a draft, which was checked with L/CA on June 23 by the Chief of the Unit. The officer of L/CA asked the Unit Chief about the nature of the problem and the degree of Congressional interest, receiving general answers that satisfied him that there was nothing substantial amiss. The L/CA officer made some changes in the draft presented to him; their nature is no longer clear. In any event, he considered the outgoing telegram as it finally was written to be a straight-forward response to a routine request. At some stage in the drafting process the phrase "at present" was inserted at the beginning of the penultimate sentence to signal to the Embassy that, should a new situation arise, the Department would be prepared to take another look. The new text was approved by the Division Chief and dispatched.

It is clear from this brief account of the process of drafting the reply that SCS and L/CA had not the slightest notion of what lay behind the Embassy's telegram or what the Embassy in its exquisitely careful way was trying to say. That this basic inability to divine the Embassy's intent was not the only problem in the handling of the incoming telegram is



indicated by the fact that some of the officers involved interpreted "interference" in the Department's reply to mean interference in the affairs of the Guyanese Government and others read it as referring to interference with the People's Temple.

The Desk Officer for Guyana did have a better grasp of the Embassy's purpose. In fact, ARA/CAR showed unwonted interest in the Embassy's telegram: the Office Director considered that the telegram was a policy matter, and he and the Desk Officer discussed it. The Director's role ceased at that point. As for the Desk Officer, he assumed that behind the telegram lay the Blakey defection and her statements and the durability of the Stoen case. He believed that the concern of the Embassy about the People's Temple case was rising and that the incoming telegram was a development both logical and salutary since it was good that the Embassy was going on record and trying to force the hand of the Department. In his opinion, the Embassy was asking: What action can we take? With these thoughts in his own mind, the Desk Officer told SCS that prompt action was needed. There is no evidence, however, that he transmitted his opinions to SCS or inquired about the SCS understanding of the telegram. Moreover, he took no exception to the Department's reply even though perturbed by the failure of SCS to clear it with him before dispatch.

When the Department's reply arrived in Georgetown, the reaction was one of disappointment and dissatisfaction. The Ambassador was not pleased by the reply but was somewhat philosophical about it; he accepted it resignedly. There was some discussion of going back to the Department, but it was concluded that the Embassy's telegram had been clear, the reply was clear and the matter was settled for the time being.

The Ambassador departed Georgetown for home leave in the United States and consultation in the Department about July 7. His recollection is that, within the following ten days, he met with at least the Director of ARA/CAR in the Department, although his formal consultations did not take place until mid-August. In any case, he did not discuss the exchange of telegrams with anyone in the Department. The only Embassy reference after June 26 to the exchange occurred in a telegram of September 26 from the Ambassador addressed to the Director of ARA/CAR. In the message, the Ambassador noted a statement in a telegram from the Department

on the September 15 meeting with Congressman Ryan that the Congressman had the impression that the Embassy's handling of the People's Temple matter had been satisfactory up to then but stronger measures were now required. The Ambassador then expressed the belief that it was important that the Director review the June exchange carefully. The Director recalled the general tenor of the exchange so did not look at the telegrams themselves.

From this examination of the way in which the major elements of the People's Temple case were handled, it is possible to identify certain features of the performance by the Department and the Embassy of their responsibilities toward the American citizens on both sides of the question:

- The central fact was the operation of a range of constraints that severely limited the scope of action of the Department and the Embassy. Among these constraints, all of which were legitimate, the controlling one was the American citizenship of all the parties. From this fact flowed the application of constitutional and statutory criteria that produced the conscientious and pervasive emphasis on impartiality, accuracy and strict legality in all the Department's and Embassy's actions.
- The net effect of all the constraints and the operating principles that resulted from them was an attitude of marked caution. The fervor with which the contending sides advanced their positions and claims helped to confirm the strong predisposition to caution. It also generated skepticism about the motives and credibility of both sides.
- The burden of proof already borne by the opponents of Jones and Jonestown as accusers was made all the greater by the operation of these factors. Probably most telling in this respect was the stress laid by both the US and Guyanese Government on the need for "hard evidence" as the only basis for action. The inability of official observers of conditions in Jonestown to verify claims of mistreatment and forced detention only increased the inherent disadvantages of concerned relatives.
- Although officers of the Department and Embassy did not consider the observations during visits

to Jonestown to be truly conclusive, no one could grasp the idea of mass suicide and it was given no credence. This attitude of rejection and disbelief is part of the explanation for the limited attention paid to information from Blakey.

- There were, however, other reasons for this treatment. The processing of Blakey's information was careless and casual. Its substance was all but ignored in the Department.
- The same attitude marred the handling and absorption of the May petition from concerned relatives.
- Important as the petition and Blakey's information were in the evaluation of the People's Temple case, the June exchange of telegrams had considerably more potential substantive significance. The powerful effect of the constraints was most evident in the language of the Embassy's telegram that was so cautious that its intended import was obscured. That original handicap helps explain the low-level and routine preparation of the simplistic reply. The decision of the disappointed Ambassador not to pursue the matter removed whatever chance there might have been of obtaining action by the Guyanese Government.
- The constraints were felt by the Department and the Embassy, but not so keenly, in carrying out actions that were more mechanical or more concrete; for example, the pursuit of welfare-and-whereabouts inquiries, the associated visits to Jonestown, and the conduct of the Stoen custody case. In fact, the Department and the Embassy occasionally tended, in the Stoen litigation, to push the constraints to the limit, producing something of a "tilt" that bent the line between even-handedness and advocacy.
- The overall policy of respecting and living with the valid restrictions on their field of action meant that the Department and the Embassy could never satisfy either side in the People's Temple case. The posture of neutrality and even-handedness made the frustration, irritation and indignation of the Stoens and other concerned relatives inevitable. By the same token, the already lively suspicions of the People's Temple toward the Department and Embassy could only be nurtured, even though it, as "defendant", derived some inherent advantage from the operation of the constraints.



C. INTER-BUREAU AND INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

1. Within the Department: The offices most directly engaged in the People's Temple case were the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit in the Office of Special Consular Services (CA/SCS) of the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) and the Guyanese Desk in the Office of Caribbean Affairs (ARA/CAR) in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (ARA). In view of the basically consular nature of the case, the primary action office for most of the Temple developments was CA/SCS, although occasionally some matters touching on political or policy issues were assigned to ARA/CAR for action. Regardless of the action designation, information copies of incoming telegraphic traffic were normally sent to ARA/CAR or CA/SCS when action was assigned to the other. Other bureaus of the Department rarely became involved in the People's Temple traffic except for the preparations for the visit of Congressman Ryan, which brought the Bureau of Congressional Relations (H) into the picture, though somewhat peripherally. In one instance, the Munitions Control Office of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs (PM/MC) was a transmittal agent for the report of another agency. In a continuing advisory capacity, the small Consular Affairs unit (L/CA) in the Office of the Legal Adviser (L) was in direct operational contact with CA/SCS on many of the Temple developments. Information copies of incoming telegrams on the People's Temple were distributed to L.

The great bulk of out-going telegrams to Embassy Georgetown on the People's Temple was prepared in CA/SCS, with input from L/CA when legal issues were involved. By mutual agreement between CA/SCS and ARA/CAR, copies of telegrams of a routine nature were sent to ARA/CAR after dispatch. It was generally understood that telegrams of more than routine importance would be cleared in advance by ARA/CAR or, if drafted by the latter, with CA/SCS. While there were occasional lapses in this established system, the coordination of telegraphic traffic between these two areas, at least on the working level, was generally close, if somewhat mechanical. The only major breakdown occurred in the handling of Georgetown's message of June 6, 1978. The Department's reply of June 20, 1978, drafted in CA/SCS with L/CA assistance, was not cleared in advance with ARA/CAR. The lapse was not substantively significant, however, since the Desk Officer for Guyana in ARA/CAR, although disturbed by not being consulted, informed CA/SCS after he had received his information copy that he had had no difficulty with the contents of the telegram.

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In the larger area of general exchange of information and views between CA/SCS and ARA/CAR, the situation was considerably looser. Both offices were receiving various non-telegraphic communications in the form of letters from members of the People's Temple and concerned relatives and memoranda from Embassy officials. There were also visits to the Department by interested private parties on each side of the case. From time to time the Consul, and less often the Ambassador, would return to Washington from Georgetown and both of them discussed Jonestown in ARA and CA. While there were frequent telephone conversations and occasional meetings of CA/SCS officers and the Desk Officer for Guyana concerning operational problems on Jonestown, there was no provision for systematic and periodic sessions between the two for purposes of exchanging information and taking stock. The treatment of the Blakey defection and affidavit and of the concerned relatives' petition illustrates the effects of this lack.

This kind of flaw in the coordination process was brought about by several factors that have already been identified. Foremost among them was the uniform perception of the People's Temple issue as a consular problem. Another was the attitude in some sectors that the People's Temple case was summed up in the Stoen custody problem. The burden of many other responsibilities on the Desk Officer for Guyana and on CA/SCS officers also contributed to looseness of coordination. This is indicated by the evidence that the Desk Officer did not attach high priority or special importance to Jonestown matters in relation to his other tasks and that, by and large, he waited for CA/SCS to consult as necessary or required from its standpoint rather than inserting himself with some vigor into the process. For their part, CA/SCS officers, faced with a heavy volume of operational problems world-wide, understanding that the consular nature of the case gave them primary responsibility and aware of the relative passivity of the Desk Officer, made no particular effort to establish truly systematic consultation with the desk.

The question of coordination between ARA/CAR and CA/SCS was a matter of concern to the Ambassador in Georgetown. He recalled that on two occasions he raised the subject orally with the Desk Officer, once when the Ambassador was in the Department at the end of 1977 and the second time when the Desk Officer visited Guyana in early February 1978. The Ambassador also recollected mentioning the coordination question when he talked to the CA Assistant Secretary and/or SCS officers while in the Department at the end of 1977. The matter was also brought up in a letter by the Consul



dated February 14, 1978 to the Chief of the SCS Welfare and Whereabouts Unit. Referring to the drafting of Departmental replies to Congressional inquiries, the Consul stated: "Our Ambassador would appreciate that all such responses to Congressmen et al on the Stoen custody case or other People's Temple matters be cleared by ARA/CAR. As you can imagine, he is very concerned about the entire problem and believes there is need for tight coordination between the Desk and your office." The Consul believes that the Desk was sent an information copy of this letter. The Desk Officer did not recall the Ambassador's raising the subject orally nor did either he or CA/SCS officers remember the Consul's letter.

With respect to the echelon at which the People's Temple case was handled within the Department, it has already been noted that, prior to the preparations for Congressman Ryan's visit, action responsibility emerged above the desk officer level in ARA/CAR only rarely and to the office director level in SCS only somewhat more frequently. Instances of its penetrating to the sixth-floor level (i.e., the bureau level) in ARA were extremely limited. Consistent with the view that the People's Temple case was consular in nature, the involvement of the CA "front office," though small, was considerably greater.

One such occasion in ARA was the preparation of a briefing paper on the People's Temple volunteered by the Desk Officer for Guyana for a trip in late 1977 to the Caribbean, including Guyana, by the then ARA Assistant Secretary. The latter did not recall reading this paper, which was included in a large briefing book on the area. Neither did he remember any mention of the People's Temple in his staff meetings. Similarly, the evidence shows that the People's Temple problems seldom surfaced in the CA Assistant Secretary's staff meetings. There was one specific discussion of the Stoen case between Consul McCoy and the Assistant Secretary at the Trinidad Consular Conference of September 1977. McCoy also saw her on September 7, 1978, after he had become Desk Officer for Guyana. They discussed coordination between SCS and ARA/CAR in addition to general aspects of the Temple and the Stoen case. The Ambassador also met with the CA Assistant Secretary on February 23, 1978 in the Department to discuss the Stoen case. While the record is unclear, he may have discussed Jonestown briefly with her on one or two other occasions.

At the Deputy Assistant Secretary level the situation was much the same. One ARA Deputy Assistant Secretary recalls a brief conversation with the then Foreign Minister

of Guyana in September 1977 regarding the People's Temple community. His interest was aroused sufficiently that he arranged for himself a general briefing by the Desk Officer. In late December 1977 and January 1978, there was an exchange of memoranda on the Stoen custody case between the Senior CA Deputy Assistant Secretary and the ARA Deputy Assistant Secretary with responsibility for the Caribbean area. The Guyanese Desk Officer also talked to the latter about his February 2, 1978 visit to Jonestown upon his return to the Department. On September 29, 1978, the new ARA Deputy Assistant Secretary was briefed in general terms on the Temple by the Desk Officer in connection with preparations for the Ryan visit. The Deputy recalls mention of mass suicide. The senior CA Deputy Assistant Secretary maintained a general interest in the Temple problem and was knowledgeable of the larger issues.

At the Office Director level in both ARA and CA, there was a greater involvement in People's Temple affairs, but it was general, unspecific and sporadic. The Director of ARA/CAR had responsibility for a number of Caribbean countries with a striking variety of problems. The Director of SCS was burdened with a daily operational workload of protection and welfare cases around the world. In the case of both office directors, the fact that questions concerning the People's Temple were brought to them only infrequently and piecemeal meant that their attention and time were necessarily devoted elsewhere.

With the announcement of Congressman Ryan's plans to visit Guyana, the respective Assistant Secretaries and their Deputies did become involved. On the ARA side, the Assistant Secretary chaired the first briefing session for Congressman Ryan and his staff, with the appropriate Deputy Assistant Secretary present. The CA Assistant Secretary was kept generally informed of the various briefings and preparations. As a result, Jonestown and at least some of the problems associated with it engaged the attention of the sixth-floor level with some force for the first time.

When analyzed against the evolution of the People's Temple case, the fact that the issues were addressed almost exclusively at the working level, i.e., the unit/desk level, had marginal substantive implications until about May 1978. The rapid series of events in May and June -- the Blakey defection, the petition of the concerned relatives, the Blakey affidavit, and especially the June exchange of telegrams between the Embassy and the Department -- did represent,

however, a sharpening of the substantive issues. At that point, the case fully warranted the active involvement of offices above the working level.

2. Between the Department and the Embassy: On the plane of policy, the key difference between the Embassy and the Department occurred over the June 1978 exchange of telegrams, which is examined in detail in II B3g above. That analysis demonstrates that in this significant instance there was a breakdown of coordination and communication in the broad sense and the result was that there was a large gap, never filled, between what the Ambassador intended to request and what the Department understood the request to be. Moreover, the details of the Blakey defection, an important element in the motivation for the June 6 telegram, were much better known in the Embassy than in the Department. The failure of the Embassy to transmit the statement on the mass-suicide threat signed by Blakey contributed to this disparity.

With this very great exception, coordination between Washington and Georgetown was normal. There was a general agreement on the fundamental issues, a good sharing of information, and a rather full understanding of the ramified People's Temple case. There were some differences of opinion on tactics, such as the desirability of the Embassy's contracting for legal counsel or pressing the Guyanese Government for a commitment that any court decision awarding John Victor Stoen to the Stoens would be speedily enforced. In those cases, the Embassy effectively persuaded the Department that such courses of action would not be advisable.

3. Inter-agency: As far as coordination between the Department and other government agencies is concerned, there was little involvement by other agencies in the People's Temple case.

a. Customs Service: Beginning in February 1977, the US Customs Service conducted an investigation into allegations of arms smuggling by the Temple in San Francisco to Jonestown. An interim report of the continuing investigation was issued by Customs on August 26, 1977, and the investigation was terminated on September 21, 1977 for lack of sufficient evidence. According to the Customs Service, while the investigation was in progress, the existence of the investigation was made known, in early April 1977, by a Customs official in San Francisco to a Department officer in the San Francisco Field Office of the Office of Security. The Department officer recalls a meeting



in early April 1977 on the People's Temple with a Customs official but does not recall any details. He states that, in any case, he would have advised the Customs official that, while any evidence of possible passport fraud would be of direct concern to his own office, other areas of the Department would be interested in the results of the smuggling investigation and therefore copies of any reports should be forwarded through Customs Service channels to the Department.

A copy of the August 26 Customs Service report was forwarded to the Munitions Control Office of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/MC). PM/MC, in turn, forwarded it under cover of a memorandum dated September 6, 1977, to the Office of Regional Political Programs in ARA (ARA/RPP). The evidence is not clear, but presumably RPP sent the document to ARA/CAR, since a copy was found in its files. No further action appears to have been taken by ARA. A PM/MC officer recalls that Customs advised him by telephone that a search of household effects of People's Temple members being exported through Miami had failed to uncover firearms. According to the Customs Service, a random search of 90 crates was conducted in Miami on August 19, 1977 with negative results.

The Government of Guyana was informed by the Customs Service through Interpol. As a result, Guyanese Customs officials also searched incoming People's Temple shipments without discovering any contraband. On January 31, 1978, the Guyanese authorities advised Interpol of the negative results; Interpol informed the US Customs Service. Embassy officers became aware of the Guyanese investigation through comments of local officials and members of the People's Temple, but they did not know of the August 26 report of the US Customs Service. Since that interim report was inconclusive and the investigation was terminated shortly after its receipt by the Department, ignorance of the report by the Embassy was not of major operational significance. It is possible, however, that knowledge of the report and of the investigation would have helped the Embassy's efforts to focus the attention of Guyanese officials on Jonestown.

b. Department of Justice: On December 30, 1977, the Department of Justice transmitted to the Department a copy of a letter to a concerned relative who had alleged that a loved one was held in bondage in Jonestown. For details, please see II B2.

The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informed the Secretary on November 24, 1978 that the Bureau had not investigated the activities of the People's Temple Church. FBI records show that in June 1978 the Bureau received a communication from Senator Hayakawa transmitting a letter of complaint about conditions in Jonestown. In reply, it was suggested to Senator Hayakawa that he get in touch with the Department of State. The originator of the letter of complaint was subsequently interviewed by the FBI, which found no basis for further action.

c. Social Security Administration: On December 19, 1977, the Social Security Administration (SSA) wrote directly to the Embassy regarding press allegations that members of the People's Temple were being coerced into transferring money and property to the Temple. It requested the Embassy to verify that social security beneficiaries of the Temple were receiving their social security checks and that they were making no assignments of their right to future SSA monthly payments. During his next visit to Jonestown on January 11, 1978, the Consul verified that recipients were receiving their checks and that no assignments for future checks were being made. He determined that there were 78 such recipients instead of the 13 listed in the SSA letter.

Again, by letter of October 13, 1978, SSA, referring to press reports of Blakey's allegations, requested the Department to verify that each People's Temple beneficiary was alive, free of physical restraint, and able to direct the use of his social security benefits. The request of SSA, which had been forwarded to the Embassy on October 24, 1978, was still outstanding as of November 18, 1978.

d. Federal Communications Commission: The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in April 1977 began to receive complaints from amateur short-wave radio operators that the use of the Temple's radio station in San Francisco was not in conformity with FCC rules for amateur operators. FCC commenced monitoring the Temple's broadcasts and verified a number of infractions, including failure to give call signs at stated intervals, use of broadcasts for business purposes, and transmitting false or deceptive call-signs. To these were subsequently added operating out-of-band and failure to keep message logs. A series of violation notices were sent by

FCC from May to September 1977. In each instance the registered operator assured the FCC that corrective action would be taken.

In the fall of 1977, FCC headquarters in Washington received a telephone call from Timothy Stoen, who complained of violations of FCC regulations by the Temple's radio station. During the conversation Stoen discussed his background and his efforts to regain custody of his son. FCC advised him to file a written complaint on the alleged violations if he wished to pursue the matter. FCC heard nothing more from Stoen.

In November 1977, the FCC San Francisco office sent the file to FCC headquarters with a recommendation that the operator's license be revoked. Headquarters decided that there were not sufficient grounds to revoke the license. On May 9, 1978, FCC clarified for the operator the prohibitions on business usage and cautioned him that continued violations could lead to revocation of his license. This communication in turn provoked a large number of letters from Temple members extolling the Temple and complaining of harassment. Subsequently, the operator was cited for transmitting in code and using a frequency out of the amateur band. This resulted in another apologetic letter, with the operator turning in his license and a new operator taking over. The final FCC action was a violation notice, dated October 30, 1978, of failure to identify by call sign and use of broadcasts for business purposes.

In keeping with its practice, FCC notified the Government of Guyana of the violations through standard international procedures. It received no reply. FCC did not inform the Department, nor does it normally do so in such cases.

e. Intelligence Agencies: Because of the American citizenship of the members of Jonestown, no intelligence agency made an effort to follow or prepare reports on the community's activities in the period before November 18, 1978.

D. PREPARATIONS MADE FOR CONGRESSMAN RYAN'S NOVEMBER VISIT TO GUYANA

The preparations for Congressman Ryan's visit to Guyana commenced with a meeting September 15, 1978 among Ryan, accompanied by his legislative assistant, Ms. Speier, the Assistant Secretary and three other members of the



Department's Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (ARA): Ms. Sally Shelton, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Ashley Hewitt, Director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs and McCoy, the Desk Officer for Guyana. At this initial meeting, according to Department records, the Congressman expressed his concern that People's Temple members were being held against their will and outlined his plan to visit Jonestown sometime after November 10, 1978 with a party of about eight. He stated that this group would include a member of the press and possibly some relatives of Temple members. He asked for the support and assistance of the Department and the Embassy. The Department officials, in turn, assured the Congressman of all possible assistance, outlined the Embassy's past efforts to cope with the problems of Jonestown and counseled the Congressman against including relatives in his group on the grounds that their presence would create problems in gaining access to Jonestown. The Department officials also suggested including a clinical psychologist in the Ryan group in view of the allegations of mind control in Jonestown. This suggestion was favorably received by Congressman Ryan but was discarded later when such a specialist known to him was not available for the trip. Congressman Ryan found no fault with the Embassy's handling of the Jonestown problems but indicated that in his opinion stronger measures were now required. When Ryan asked about the mass-suicide threat as alleged by Blakey, one Department officer characterized it as nonsense.

The Department promptly informed the Embassy of the proposed visit and requested an assessment of potential problems that could arise from the trip. In reply, the Ambassador stressed the practical logistical difficulties of travelling from Georgetown to Jonestown, the need for Ryan to obtain agreement from the People's Temple for the visit, the unlikelihood that the Guyanese Government would force entry into Jonestown for Congressman Ryan if the Temple were unwilling to receive him, and the constraints of the Privacy and the Freedom of Information Acts in dealing with Jonestown. Because of the importance of the latter consideration, the Ambassador proposed sending a Department lawyer with the Congressional Delegation. In a subsequent telegram a day later, the Ambassador, referring to Ryan's statement that stronger measures were now required, called the Department's attention to the June 1978 cable exchange on the possibility of approaching the Guyanese Government regarding Jonestown.

On October 3, 1978, McCoy and Richard Belt, an SCS officer, met with Speier to discuss the proposed visit further. The Department officers emphasized the points

made by the Ambassador, particularly the difficulties in traveling to Jonestown and the need to obtain People's Temple agreement to the visit in advance. According to the Department's reporting telegram, Speier was uncertain whether Congressman Ryan would agree to contact the Temple in advance because of his concern about psychological intimidation of Temple members prior to the arrival of visitors.

Another meeting was held October 25, 1978 among McCoy, Speier, and James Schollaert and Thomas Smeeton, the last two being staff members of the House International Relations Committee. According to the Department's telegram to the Embassy, Speier stated that Congressman Derwinski would accompany Congressman Ryan to Jonestown and that the trip was tentatively scheduled for November 14-18, 1978. She indicated that Congressman Ryan would notify the Temple in advance of his visit. There was a further discussion of logistical problems and the question of access to Jonestown.

In addition to these scheduled meetings in September and October, there were a number of telephone conversations on specific matters regarding the trip. According to the Department's records, in one of these in late October, Speier stated that Congressman Ryan was planning to request the Temple to make available about 29 members, including John Victor Stoen and Maria Katsaris, for private interviews in Georgetown with the Congressional Delegation. McCoy cautioned that such a request would be viewed with suspicion by the Temple and that the Delegation could well be told that the individuals declined to travel to Georgetown. Speier said she would discuss the matter further with Congressman Ryan.

McCoy learned about this time from Speier that some eighteen concerned relatives, including the Stoens and Steven Katsaris, were requesting Congressman Ryan either to include them in the party or have the Embassy arrange transportation and guarantee them access to Jonestown. Speier was informed by McCoy that he believed the Temple would not agree to any visit that included members of the concerned relatives and that it would not be appropriate for the Embassy to arrange transportation or request assistance from the Government of Guyana for private citizens. He added that, while the Embassy would be pleased to assist a private group with information and advice about the area and the availability of air transportation, it could not try to force the Temple to receive them. Speier stated that Congressman Ryan would not be including any private citizens in his delegation and that she understood the Embassy's limitations in assisting private visits. The

Department reported the substance of these telephone conversations by telegram to the Embassy.

On November 1, 1978, the Department was informed that Congressman Derwinski would not accompany Congressman Ryan. The Department also forwarded to the Embassy the text of a telegram sent by Congressman Ryan to Jones regarding his trip. In the telegram Ryan referred on the one hand to concerns expressed to him by relatives in his constituency regarding loved ones in Jonestown and on the other to laudatory statements on the Temple's work by other constituents. He stated that in an effort to be responsive to both those groups he intended to visit Guyana and, in particular, Jonestown. He asked Jones to communicate with the Ambassador regarding details of the trip.

On receipt of the text of the telegram, the Embassy talked to the Georgetown office of the Temple to ascertain whether the message had been received by the Temple and to encourage the Temple to receive the Congressional Delegation. Although the telegram had not yet been received, the general reaction to the visit by the local Temple representative appeared to be favorable. In a telegram reporting this contact, the Ambassador stressed again his view that a Department lawyer should accompany the Ryan group in view of the possible implications of the visit with respect to the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. He pointed out that it was quite possible for frictions to occur between the delegation and the Jonestown community unless agreement to the visit was obtained from the Temple prior to arrival of the delegation.

Regarding the recommendation by the Ambassador about a lawyer, the Department's Office of the Legal Adviser decided that it was unable to send a lawyer with the delegation because of its heavy workload and serious restrictions on travel. Instead, a meeting was arranged at the request of Speier to brief her and Schollaert on constitutional and other legal considerations, including the applicability of international law and practice, in dealing with Jonestown. This briefing, held November 9, 1978, was attended by a number of Department officers from the Legal Adviser's office and the Office of Special Consular Services. According to the Department's records, the Legal Adviser's representatives explained in some detail that the Congressional Delegation would have no official authority in Guyana and that neither the Delegation nor the Embassy had a legal right to demand access to Jonestown. Any contacts between the Delegation and the People's Temple would have to be arranged on a



voluntary, consensual basis. It was further explained that the Government of Guyana might, as a matter of comity, assist in making contact with Temple members but that it was under no obligation to do so.

With regard to the Privacy Act, the Department's legal officers stated that disclosure of Embassy files on individuals was permitted pursuant to an official request from a Committee or Subcommittee of Congress as distinguished from a request from an individual Congressman. It was explained that the Committee request must be in writing, must identify with as much specificity as possible the information sought, explain why the information was needed, and contain assurances that any documents disclosed to the Committee would be held in confidence and not passed on to other persons. In response to a question from Schollaert as to whether any Temple members had waived their rights under the Privacy Act, the Department officers replied that there had been some signed waivers but that these permitted disclosure only to specified persons, usually relatives. (In this respect, Department officers were in error. A number of signed releases had authorized disclosure to members of Congress.)

According to Speier, the Congressional staff members expressed the view that the Department's interpretation of the Privacy Act was overly strict in insisting on a written communication by a Committee or Sub-committee Chairman. They believed that the basic Privacy Act provision in this regard could be handled in a less formal manner. They did, however, indicate that they would consider obtaining such a letter. They were also disappointed that the Department briefers did not make available legal reference material to the staffers which they eventually had to obtain from the Legislative Research Office. They received the general impression that the Department was negative in its discussion of legal constraints.

Meanwhile, in Georgetown on November 4 the Ambassador had discussed Congressman Ryan's trip with Laurence Mann, the Guyanese Ambassador to Washington, who was well regarded by Jonestown. The Embassy had just been informed by Temple representatives that the Congressional Delegation would not be received at Jonestown. Ambassador Mann had also learned of this decision, which the Temple justified on the grounds that the Ryan group was hostile toward the Temple and would exploit the visit in a way to confirm its "prejudiced" view. Mann said Temple officials had cited the NBC camera team, which was arriving coincident with the Delegation, as proof of the Delegation's "bad faith." According to a telegraphed report from the Embassy,

the Ambassador made the following points to Mann: (1) the visit by the Congressional Delegation gave Congressman Ryan an opportunity to familiarize himself personally with a community which had generated great interest among his constituents; (2) Ryan had made no secret of his intentions, and, in fact, had sent a message directly to the Temple asking for permission to visit Jonestown; (3) the visit would provide an excellent opportunity for the Temple to respond to criticism about the community while a refusal to receive the Delegation would have the opposite effect, and (4) it was the Embassy's understanding that Congressman Ryan had not invited the NBC team, which was coming on its own and which would have to clear any trip to Jonestown with the Temple and with the Guyanese Government. Ambassador Mann indicated that he understood all of the statements made by the Ambassador but the Guyanese Government was powerless to force the Temple to receive the Ryan group if the Temple was adamantly against it. He emphasized that the Guyanese Government would welcome the Delegation's visit to Guyana and that senior Guyanese officials would be pleased to receive Congressman Ryan.

Within an hour of this conversation, a Temple representative telephoned the Consul to state that there had been a misunderstanding, that the Temple had not definitely decided against the visit, but that it would insist on three conditions:

- The Delegation must have balance, i.e., it should include representation sympathetically disposed to the Temple;
- There should be no media coverage associated with the visit; and
- Attorney Mark Lane should participate in the visit.

The Temple's representative further indicated that the Temple's response to Congressman Ryan's telegram would be communicated through attorney Mark Lane.

The Department gave the Congressional Delegation the Ambassador's report of the above conversation with Ambassador Mann and the reaction of the Temple. The Embassy was subsequently informed by the Department that Mark Lane would not be able to adjust his schedule to make the trip and that the Delegation would come as scheduled even if it was unable to visit Jonestown.

On November 13, 1978, Congressman Ryan arranged for a final meeting with various Department officials, primarily to enable them to hear the allegations against Jonestown by Deborah Blakey. Also present were Grace Stoen and Steven

Katsaris. The Department officials were generally impressed with Blakey's story. Some of them were disturbed by the content of her statements. On the other hand, one of the staff members of the Congressional Delegation considered the meeting "flat", with Department officials reacting passively. The other staff member believed, however, that Blakey had had a considerable impact on the Department officers.

The question of media participation came to a head on November 14, 1978, the day of the Delegation's departure for Georgetown. The Embassy cabled that it had been informed that, in addition to the NBC team from San Francisco, two and perhaps three other journalists from Bay area newspapers might be accompanying Ryan. The Embassy was getting its information on possible press participation from the People's Temple, which seemed to have fuller and more accurate information than either the Department or the Embassy. As it turned out a few hours later, a total of nine media representatives arrived on the same airplane with Congressman Ryan all of whom, with the exception of the NBC team, had no Guyanese visas.

There are indications, however, that even the staff members on the Congressional Delegation had been unaware of the extent of media participation in the trip until they boarded the airplane in New York. If there was more precise information on media plans available in Congressman Ryan's district office in California, it was not fully shared with the Washington office.

As of the departure of the Delegation on November 14, 1978, there were differences of view between the staff members accompanying Ryan and Department officials concerning the quality of the pre-departure briefings. In the Department, it was believed that the Delegation had been more fully briefed than most Congressional delegations when the total of five structured meetings and numerous telephone conversations were considered. Department officers recall the stress placed by the Department on the formidable logistical difficulties, the importance of obtaining access to Jonestown by pre-arrangement with the People's Temple, the inability of the Guyanese Government to force the Temple to let the Delegation into Jonestown, the undesirability, in terms of the access problem, of participation by media and concerned relatives, and the constraints imposed by constitutional and legal provisions. On the other hand, the Congressional staff members state that most of the briefings were instigated by them, that the Department, by emphasizing the logistical and other difficulties, including constraints, gave the



impression of a negative attitude toward the Congressional trip. The staff members also point out that very few, if any, cables or other Department documents on Jonestown were made available to them. It is certainly true that by the time the staffers left Washington, the differences of opinion on interpretation of the Privacy Act had become for them a matter of principle which they hoped to resolve in Georgetown.

On the question whether Congressman Ryan received any warning by Department officials on the possibility of violence by Temple members toward him or his party, there are no indications either from the written record or from interviews of officers involved in the briefings that any such warning was given. Department and Embassy officers point out that there was nothing in their dealings with Jonestown to warrant such a caution. Many persons including Embassy and Guyanese officials, as well as private individuals, had visited Jonestown over an extended period of time without any incident. Even in the November 13 meeting at which Blakey made her presentation at Congressman Ryan's request, the question of violence toward outsiders did not arise. The record does demonstrate that Congressman Ryan and his staff members were clearly advised that the presence of concerned relatives might cause friction with Jonestown about access. While the record is less clear on the subject of press participation, McCoy did indicate to Speier that any such participation might complicate gaining entry to Jonestown.

Notwithstanding the lack of any specific cautions by the Department on the possibility of violence, the two staff members on the Delegation were uneasy at the time of departure. One of them discussed with airline officials in New York the possibility of searching the airplane and baggage for explosives before takeoff. This was discarded since it would have been time-consuming. The mere thought of such preventive action indicates, however, that at least one person in the Delegation was concerned about possible violence.

On arrival shortly after midnight November 15, 1978 at Timehri airport in Guyana, the Delegation was met by the Ambassador, the Deputy Chief of Mission and the Embassy's General Services Officer. Problems immediately arose in that, aside from the four members of the NBC crew, the five press representatives did not have Guyanese visas. With the exception of Ron Javers of the San Francisco Chronicle, the group, with Embassy assistance, managed to clear immigration.

Javers, who not only lacked a visa but also possessed Guyanese currency contrary to local law, was detained at the airport. During the rest of the night Embassy officials made repeated representations on his behalf with high Guyanese officials, eventually securing his release the next morning.

From the airport Speier and Schollaert rode into Georgetown with the Deputy Chief of Mission, Richard Dwyer; Congressman Ryan travelled with the Ambassador to his residence where the Congressman would stay while in Georgetown. In the Deputy's vehicle an exchange occurred immediately after the two staff members entered the car. Dwyer rather sharply pointed out to Schollaert, whom he had known some years before, that the unexpected arrival of a number of media representatives was creating problems for the Embassy. He added that it would have been helpful if an advance man for the Delegation had been sent to Georgetown to make more concrete arrangements. These remarks, which one of the staff characterized as "pugnacious," annoyed the staff members at the start of their stay in Georgetown.

The Embassy, in a telegram on November 15, 1978, reported the difficulties experienced in getting the media representatives admitted into Guyana. It pointed out that the Embassy could have been more helpful if it had been informed in advance of the names and affiliations of the journalists. The Department replied that it had understood that the journalists and the NBC television team were not accompanying the Congressional Delegation even though they might be in Georgetown at the same time. The Department authorized the Embassy to make the following statement available to media and concerned relatives on an "if asked" basis (a draft of this statement had been proposed by the Ambassador in order to reduce the possibility of friction with the press and concerned relatives about the limits of the Embassy's authority):

"The People's Temple community at Jonestown is a group of private American citizens who have chosen to come to Guyana as permanent or semi-permanent residents. As with private Americans residing anywhere abroad, they are subject to the laws and regulations of the host country, in this case Guyana. The American Embassy in Georgetown has no official contact with the People's Temple other than the provision of normal consular services to the individual members of the community on a regular basis. These services include renewal of passports, registration of births, etc. The Embassy has no official authority over the community or its individual members. Except as provided for in the

Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and in the Bilateral Consular Convention that is in force between our two countries, the Embassy does not have any legal right to demand access to any private American citizen in Guyana. In the light of this, the Embassy has no authority to require contacts between members of the People's Temple and persons whom they do not wish to receive. The members of the People's Temple are protected by the Privacy Act of 1974, as are all American citizens."

On November 15, 1978, the Ambassador and key Embassy staff members met with Congressman Ryan and his staff assistants for a general briefing on Jonestown and on the still unresolved problem of obtaining Temple agreement for the Delegation to visit Jonestown. Color slides of Dwyer's visit to Jonestown in May 1978 were shown. The Ambassador introduced Consular Officers Ellice and Reece, noting that they had very recently (November 7) visited Jonestown. Few if any questions were directed to them. There was a general discussion of the constraints of the Privacy Act with regard to Jonestown in the course of which Speier stated that she disagreed with the Department's and the Embassy's interpretation of the Privacy Act. A subsequent meeting was arranged for her to discuss the matter with Dwyer. A principal topic of discussion was the text of a People's Temple press release issued that day to the effect that the Temple would not agree to Congressman Ryan's visit since he had not met the three conditions they had stipulated. The release stated that the inclusion of news media representatives and concerned relatives in the Ryan party would make the visit a contrived "media event" and "staged for the purpose of manufacturing adverse publicity for the Jonestown community." The Ambassador suggested at the meeting that the Delegation work directly with the People's Temple representatives in Georgetown in an effort to persuade the Temple to receive the group in Jonestown. Schollaert was designated by Congressman Ryan to contact the Temple office immediately after the meeting.

In spite of the differences of view in interpretation of the Privacy Act, Embassy officials and the two Congressional staff members have characterized this briefing as "affable" and "positive".

Later on November 15, Congressman Ryan lunched with the Ambassador, paid a courtesy call on the Guyanese Foreign Minister in the afternoon, and joined the Ambassador for cocktails and a small dinner party that evening. After



dinner, he met with his staff and some of the others who had accompanied him to Georgetown at the Pegasus Hotel. Later he went unannounced to the Georgetown house of the People's Temple and met with Temple member Sharon Amos.

On the morning of November 16, 1978, Congressman Ryan held an informal press conference at the Pegasus Hotel, which was attended by the Embassy's public affairs officer. The Temple still had not agreed to accept the visit to Jonestown.

Meanwhile, the concerned relatives had requested a meeting with the Ambassador; they wanted press and media representatives to be present. Because of Privacy Act restrictions, the Ambassador refused to permit press participation other than a photo opportunity but said he would be pleased to meet with the relatives that afternoon. Before that meeting Speier and Schollaert saw Dwyer to continue discussions of the problem of interpretation of the Privacy Act. This session did not resolve the differences since Dwyer maintained that the Embassy was not in a position to change the Department's rulings.

The Ambassador's meeting with fourteen concerned relatives, which was attended by Congressman Ryan and his two staff members, largely consisted of an emotional recital by several relatives of allegations of physical abuse of their kin in Jonestown and their difficulties in making contact with their relatives in the community. One of the speakers was heard to state that the relatives would get their kin out of Jonestown one way or another, if necessary by force. The Ambassador explained that the Embassy was caught between two groups of Americans -- the relatives on the one hand and the Temple members on the other. In the course of the discussion, one of the relatives asserted that the Temple's Georgetown representative had told him to go to the Embassy if he wanted to see his relative in Jonestown. The implication was that a relative needed Embassy permission prior to dealing with the Temple regarding his kin. On learning this, the Ambassador telephoned the Georgetown house during the meeting and informed the Temple representative he spoke to that the Temple should cease making any such statements, which were obviously incorrect. The meeting concluded with the Ambassador suggesting that the Consul meet with the relatives individually if they desired him to make inquiries regarding a family member during his next trip to Jonestown.

From all accounts, this meeting was helpful to all parties: the relatives had an opportunity to air their grievances and allegations; the Ambassador was able to explain the Embassy's position; and the Congressional staff members were impressed with the Ambassador's forthrightness in telephoning the Temple's local representatives and correcting their misleading statement. Congressman Ryan stated to the Ambassador that he thought the meeting had gone well, considering the nature of the group.

That evening Congressman Ryan gave a dinner for the journalists and the concerned relatives at the Pegasus Hotel. He told the Ambassador later that some of the relatives had, apparently by coincidence, met family members from Jonestown while taking a walk along the sea wall. He also said that some of the American journalists had discussed with him their concerns about possible hostility of the Temple if and when they went to Jonestown and the risks of flying in over the jungle. He gave the Ambassador the impression that he had assured the press that there would be no problem.

By late morning of November 17, Congressman Ryan had decided to proceed to Jonestown even though the Temple had not agreed to the visit. By that time Mark Lane and Charles Garry had arrived; they were to accompany the Ryan party. Since it was agreed that all the journalists would go on the plane with the Congressman, there was space for only four of the concerned relatives; these were selected by the relatives themselves. When the plane left in mid-afternoon, the passengers consisted of Congressman Ryan, Speier, Dwyer, a Guyanese Ministry of Information official, Garry, Lane, the NBC television crew (Bob Flick, Bob Brown, Don Harris and Steve Sung), Charles Krause from the Washington Post, Ron Javers from the San Francisco Chronicle, Greg Robinson and Tim Reiterman of the San Francisco Examiner, Gordon Lindsay of the National Enquirer, and four members of the concerned relatives group (Mrs. Oliver, Carol Boyd, Jim Cobb, and Anthony Katsaris).

On arrival at the Port Kaituma airstrip, the party was met by about six Temple representatives with a large truck. After a conference with the two lawyers, the Temple members announced that Lane and Garry would proceed to Jonestown to confer with Jones regarding permission for the group to enter Jonestown. Shortly after they departed, the lawyers returned on the truck and stated that Congressman Ryan, Speier and Dwyer could proceed to Jonestown. After arrival in Jonestown and a discussion with Jones, it was agreed that the rest of the group, except Lindsay of the National Enquirer, could enter Jonestown.

With the arrival of the entire group (except Lindsay) in Jonestown, the Embassy's contact with the party was through Dwyer on the scene by way of the Temple's short-wave radio to its house in Georgetown and occasional telephone messages from the Guyana district officer in Port Kaituma. During the evening of November 17, 1978, one Embassy officer was posted at the Temple's Georgetown house to assist in relaying messages between Jonestown and the Embassy. By November 18, 1978, this officer, having learned the frequency being used on the short-wave link, was able to use his own radio at home to check on the broadcasts in order to be sure that the messages being passed to and from the Embassy were accurate. The bulk of the message traffic referred to the logistics necessary to take care of the increasing number of Jonestown residents who wished to leave. Late in the afternoon of November 18, the Jonestown radio started to broadcast in code and shortly thereafter went dead. At about this time, the Ambassador was urgently summoned by Prime Minister Burnham with the news of the tragedy at the Port Kaituma airstrip.

Just as the views of the Department officials and the staff members of the Congressional Delegation differed concerning the adequacy and content of Departmental briefings for the group, so do those of Embassy officers and Speier and Schollaert with respect to the Embassy's part in the preparation of the Delegation. Embassy officials are firm in the opinion that, considering the difficulties of gaining access to Jonestown, the consequently unstructured and uncertain schedule for the trip, and the lack of precise information on the participation of the media and concerned relatives, their briefings and assistance were effective and covered the situation well.

The judgments of Speier and Schollaert are quite different from the Embassy's. Their initial conversation with Dwyer at the Timehri airport reinforced previous misgivings that Department and possibly Embassy officials were less than enthusiastic about the visit; that they were "doing their duty" without a great amount of inspiration. More important, the continued difference of view on the Privacy Act interpretation prejudiced their assessment of Embassy assistance. While by the time they reached Georgetown they were not particularly interested in Embassy files on Jonestown members and probably would not have had the time to study them, the lack of access to these files was still a matter of principle to them.

In addition to those two factors which certainly influenced them unfavorably, there is a third negative consideration,



which actually arose after the tragedy. It was only then that they became aware of the large amount of documentation in the Department on the People's Temple, independent of material protected by the Privacy Act. They believe that at least some of this information should have been made available to them.

On the other hand, both staff members appear to have been impressed with the Ambassador's handling of the concerned relatives, particularly his willingness to telephone promptly the Georgetown Temple house during his meeting with them. Finally, Speier certainly acknowledges the courageous role played by Dwyer in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy.

Based on all the evidence available, the briefings of the Congressional Delegation -- both in the Department and the Embassy -- were handled conscientiously and well. The negative impressions of the Congressional staff members largely arose from the constraints of the Privacy Act, as interpreted by the Department, which limited the free flow of information so desired by the Delegation. A strong contributing factor to the staffers' unfavorable reaction was their awareness of the concerns of the Department and the Embassy that the presence of concerned relatives and media representatives would complicate logistics and access to Jonestown.

#### E. POLITICAL PRESSURE TO PREVENT OR LIMIT INVESTIGATION

The specific question to be examined is: Was external political pressure exerted on the Department by the Jones group or others to prevent or limit any investigation into the group's activities before Congressman Ryan's visit?

A major characteristic of the People's Temple was its persistent and broad-scale utilization of communications of all kinds to extoll its virtues, attack its enemies and complain about interference or harassment by US Government agencies. Favorite addressees of such communications, whether pin-pointed or broadcast, were members of both Houses of Congress and officials of the Executive Branch. A common technique was to unleash massive letter-writing campaigns directed toward specific individuals. In many of its communications, especially brochures and pamphlets, the People's Temple was wont to drop the names of prominent persons, including political figures, who were supposed to have made favorable statements or remarks about the Temple or Jones. In an interesting application of this device, Jones showed the visiting Consul a file of letters from California political figures who had written to Prime Minister Burnham in favor of Jones and the Temple.

The list of US Government agencies which the Temple at one time or another publicly accused of harassment is a long one. It would include the Customs Service, the FBI, the FCC, the IRS, the SSA, the Postal Service, the Department of State, and the Embassy in Georgetown. The Consul was often charged with "bugging" the Temple by making his visits to Jonestown. Although the paranoid tendencies of the Temple and its leader were certainly in play here, it is logical to infer from the record a desire to prevent or limit any investigation.

This study uncovered no evidence that, even though there was some awareness of a domestic political dimension, this kind of rather heavy-handed pressure had any measurable effect on the Department or the Embassy in their approach to the People's Temple case. Neither institution has investigative authority. The impulse to investigate did exist, and in some respects and at times observation activities came very close to breaching the line. These instances aside, the impulse was thwarted, not by any bending to political pressure from the Temple or any one else, but by the recognition that the Department and the Embassy had no legal power to give the impulse rein.

#### F. APPROACHES BY CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

The question to be addressed is: Was the Department (the Bureau of Consular Affairs, CA, in particular) approached by civil rights organizations with the request that CA not undertake any investigation of the group before Congressman Ryan's visit?

This study found no evidence of such approaches by such organizations to CA or to any other component of the Department or the Embassy.

Attention is invited to the general comment concerning the Department's and Embassy's lack of investigative authority in II E, above.

### III FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Under the "General" rubric are judgments relating to the overall performance of the Department and the Embassy or to factors that cut across the various elements in that performance. The judgments presented under the heading "Specific" deal with detailed aspects of the performance of the Department and the Embassy. They are arranged according to the issues set forth in the directive calling for this study. Of necessity there is some overlap between the two sets of findings and conclusions; they should be viewed as a whole.

#### A. GENERAL

1. The field of action open to the Department and the Embassy was severely circumscribed not only by their basic lack of police or investigative authority but also by an array of constraints, primarily constitutional and statutory in nature.

a. At the heart of the constraints was the fact that the two contending groups, the People's Temple and concerned relatives of Temple members, were American citizens. Both groups had a right to official services; the Department and the Embassy had responsibilities to each of them.

b. Since both groups enjoyed the protection and facilities of the First Amendment, the Privacy Act and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Department and the Embassy were obliged throughout the People's Temple case to follow a cautious policy that stressed impartiality, objectivity, accuracy, adherence to strict legality, and insistence on hard evidence as the only basis for action.

c. Concern about the FOIA and the provisions of the Privacy Act permitting access by an individual to government files about himself reduced Embassy reporting and led to an emphasis on the purely factual at the expense of the speculative and analytical.

2. The approach to the constitutional and statutory constraints by the Department and the Embassy was conscientious and consistent with existing guidelines. The constraints were not used as a means of evading responsibilities.



3. Neither the Embassy nor the Department was unduly sensitive to, or inhibited in taking action by, the possibility of adverse effects on the bilateral relationship with the Guyanese Government. On another plane, there was, of course, full appreciation of the fact that jurisdiction over the Americans at Jonestown resided in the Guyanese Government and of that Government's position that it could not act against Jonestown without hard evidence of wrongdoing.

4. The operation of constitutional and statutory constraints had perforce the effect of increasing the burden of proof placed on the opponents of Jones and Jonestown as the accusers and adding to the defenses of the People's Temple as the accused.

5. The policy of impartiality and neutrality made it inevitable that the Stoens and other concerned relatives became highly dissatisfied with the actions and attitudes of the Department and the Embassy. Similarly, the suspicions of the People's Temple, always at a high pitch anyway, were heightened by the equidistant posture of the Department and the Embassy, even though inherently it represented an advantage for the Temple.

6. On the basis of experience with official visits to Jonestown, the Department and the Embassy did not consider the People's Temple to be given to violence toward outsiders. That assessment helps explain the fact that neither Department briefers nor members of the Congressional Delegation raised the matter in pre-departure exchanges.

7. The few officers in the Department and the Embassy who paid attention to references to mass suicide gave them no credence.

8. The substantive changes in the People's Temple case that occurred in the May-June 1978 period were not recognized by Department officers. The Embassy did have a better, if imprecise, "feel" for the evolving situation but did not transmit its concerns as effectively as it should have to the Department.

9. Until May 1978, the performance of the Department and the Embassy in dealing with the People's Temple case was generally good. After that time the quality of the overall performance declined. Routine and specific operational matters continued to be managed effectively, but there were errors and lapses, including failures in the haphazard information-handling system, that hindered an accurate appreciation, particularly in the Department, of what, in retrospect, was a changing situation.

10. The ineffectual handling of the May petition to the Secretary from concerned relatives and especially the Blakey information caused gaps in the understanding of the Department and the Embassy (and between them) of the evolving situation in Jonestown.

11. There was an imperfect grasp of the potential significance of Jones' emotional imbalance, the mass-suicide threat and the siege mentality of the Temple in spite of numerous indicators of these factors in the actions and written statements of the Temple, as well, of course, as in allegations by concerned relatives.

12. The single most important substantive failure in the performance of the Department and the Embassy was the aborted effort by the Embassy to obtain authorization for an approach to the Guyanese Government. Although the June exchange of telegrams was mishandled at both ends, the decision of the Ambassador not to pursue the issue was ultimately critical.

13. The performance of the Department and the Embassy was not complicated by a "consular-versus-political" syndrome. The People's Temple case was readily accepted as being primarily a consular problem, and there was no resentment or uneasiness on the political side of the Department about leaving the matter in the hands of the consular side. On the contrary, the political side was too passively content with the arrangement and failed to insert itself in the case at important moments. In the Embassy, the working relationship between the Embassy's Consular Section and the "front office" (the Ambassador or Charge, and the Deputy Chief of Mission) was very close and productive.

It was impossible to come to conclusions on central "what-if" questions of a general nature:

- If the Department and the Embassy had had greater freedom of action, that is, if the constraints had been fewer and less binding, would the tragedy at the Port Kaituma airstrip and the suicides at Jonestown have been averted?
- If, even within the constraints, the Embassy had performed perfectly in all respects, would the tragedy of November 18 have been prevented?
- If a reversal of the Department's denial of authorization for an approach to the Guyanese Government had been sought and obtained, would

that Government have agreed to exercise closer administrative control over Jonestown? Would the imposition of that control have avoided the murders and mass suicide? Would it have precipitated the suicides?

- If the media representatives and concerned relatives had not accompanied the Congressional Delegation to Jonestown, would the killings at Port Kaituma and the suicides at Jonestown not have occurred?

To attempt replies to such questions at this time is an exercise in pure speculation. And unless the current FBI investigation and possible trials resulting from grand jury proceedings now under way provide much firmer data than are currently available, there may never be answers that are truly satisfactory.

#### B. SPECIFIC

##### KNOWLEDGE OF THE ACTIVITIES AND PURPOSES OF THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE

1. The information physically available in the Department and the Embassy covered, in greater or less detail, all the critical aspects of the controversy over the People's Temple, its purposes and its activities.

2. The Department and the Embassy did not utilize this fund of information as well as they could and should have. There were flaws in the dissemination and recording of information, in its absorption and in its evaluation within the Department and, to a much less degree, in the Embassy.

a. In the Department and the Embassy considered as a unit, no single office or person held, or had ready access to, all the available information. In the Department, documentation was dispersed in varying depths among several offices, with CA/SCS having the bulk of it. In the Embassy, the information was concentrated in the Consular Section.

b. In the Department there was no single officer tasked with following, absorbing and evaluating the flow of information. All of the principal actors had extensive responsibilities that permitted only part-time attention to the information. In the Embassy,



the Consul performed this task effectively even though he too could not devote full time to People's Temple matters.

c. In the Department no provision was made for the periodic, organized review and evaluation of new information by all interested officers. In the Embassy, the close working relationship among the Chief of Mission (COM), the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) and the Consul met this need.

d. For the most part, only relatively junior officers of the Department were engaged in information-handling and evaluation. At and above the office director level, there was extremely limited knowledge of the People's Temple problem. In the Embassy, the COM and the DCM were directly and constantly involved, along with the Consul.

e. None of the officers most closely involved in the information process had psychological expertise relevant to the assessment of some important components of the information.

3. In spite of these handicaps, the haphazard information-processing system was adequate to permit effective work in the more mechanical or concrete aspects of the problem such as the pursuit of welfare-and-whereabouts inquiries and the handling of the Stoen custody case.

4. When, beginning in May 1978, the People's Temple case took on broader and more substantive aspects, the flaws in the system resulted in serious mishandling of information.

#### ACTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY IN CARRYING OUT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES TO AMERICAN CITIZENS

1. The fact that the Department and the Embassy looked upon the People's Temple case as primarily a consular problem was natural and normal. This perception did, however, reinforce the tendency toward passivity on the political side of the Department, which was content to have the problem remain in the consular realm. This, in turn, created a sluggishness in reacting to major developments. This problem did not exist in the Embassy.

2. Despite some lapses, management of the Stoen custody case by the Department and the Embassy was competent and professional. In some respects, there was a "tilt" toward

the Stoens' position in early official actions. The considerable amount of effort devoted to the case skewed the perspective of some officers in the Department by leading them to depreciate the broad aspects of the People's Temple problem.

3. In his careful and compassionate handling of welfare-and-whereabouts inquiries and in providing other similar assistance to Americans involved in the People's Temple case, Consul McCoy in Georgetown performed in an outstanding manner. His exercise of initiative was well beyond the norm. In the Department, the Welfare and Whereabouts Unit of CA/SCS carried out its part of these tasks efficiently.

4. The frequency and structure of the consular visits to Jonestown were, until the last trip in early November 1978, sensible and effective when account is taken of the constraints operating on the Embassy and the Department. Both institutions were conscious of the need to observe the fine line between keeping informed and harassment. Advance notice of the visits was indispensable to the performance of consular duties, and the Consul took reasonable precautions against the possibility that the People's Temple would thwart the purposes of the visits.

5. The observations during the visits were made conscientiously and dispassionately. The generally positive impressions of conditions in Jonestown that the official visitors received and reported had a significant impact on the assessments of the Department and the Embassy, but they were not considered to be definitive when examined against other more negative information, which created uneasiness.

6. The Embassy was remiss in not taking energetic steps to have the last consular visit made close to the quarterly schedule. The three-months' delay came at an important time in the evolution of the case. To a less degree, the Department deserves criticism for failing to prod the Embassy.

7. Similarly, the Embassy should have made the extra effort to get the report of the last visit to Washington before the departure of Congressman Ryan. The Department should also have been alert enough to make sure that the Embassy accelerated the transmission of the report.

8. The handling by the Department of the May petition of concerned relatives to the Secretary can only be described as extremely inefficient.

9. The assistance given by the Embassy to Blakey at the time of her defection was prompt, efficient and supportive.

10. The Department, and in less degree, the Embassy, gravely erred in their careless and casual processing and in their superficial absorption of the information provided by Blakey in various forms.

11. The Consul's advice to Blakey to tell her story to law-enforcement agencies was sound.

12. The exchange of telegrams in June between the Embassy and the Department came to naught because of a series of errors.

a. The incoming telegram, which sought authorization for an approach to the Guyanese Government requesting closer oversight of Jonestown, was worded so very cautiously (because of concerns created by the constraints) that its real intent was not discernible to the action office (CA/SCS).

b. Officers in CA/SCS and ARA/CAR made no effort to ascertain from the Embassy what the telegram really intended and what lay behind it.

c. The telegram was given a routine and narrow negative reply prepared at a low level in CA/SCS and L/CA.

d. Despite their general belief that the incoming telegram was important, neither the Director of ARA/CAR nor the Desk Officer for Guyana took any initiative to make inputs.

e. Although the Ambassador considered the reply disappointing, he made no effort to clarify his telegram's purpose or to seek reconsideration of the Department's position, even though he was in the Department soon after his receipt of the Department's telegram.

#### INTER-BUREAU AND INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

1. While mechanically correct in the handling of routine operational message traffic, the coordination between CA/SCS and ARA/CAR on the People's Temple case was significantly lacking in depth and closeness.



2. The coordination between the Department and the Embassy on policy and operational issues was generally satisfactory. The only significant lapses revolved around the exchange of telegrams in June 1978, which was essentially a breakdown in communications, and the failure of the Embassy to forward promptly the statement signed by Blakey on May 13, 1978.

#### PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONGRESSIONAL VISIT

1. In terms of the Department's understanding of the existing situation, the briefings for the Congressional visit were quite thorough in content and scope although the net effect of the emphasis on legal constraints and logistical difficulties produced a negative impression on the Ryan party.

2. The briefings and the advance preparations of the Embassy were conscientious and effective. Here again, however, the staff members of the Delegation gained an impression that the Embassy was cool toward the visit and was "doing its duty".

#### POLITICAL PRESSURE ON THE DEPARTMENT TO PREVENT OR LIMIT INVESTIGATION

1. The charges by the People's Temple of conspiracies and of harassment by a long list of US Government agencies logically implied a desire to prevent or limit any investigation into the activities of the Temple. This kind of pressure did not have any effect on the Department's and Embassy's approach.

2. Although an impulse to investigate existed in the Department and particularly the Embassy, it was thwarted not by any bending to political pressure from the People's Temple or any other quarter but by the recognition that the Department and the Embassy had no legal power to give the impulse rein.

#### APPROACHES BY CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS TO PREVENT INVESTIGATION

1. No approaches of this kind were made by civil rights organizations to any component of the Department or the Embassy.

#### IV RECOMMENDATIONS

A. The Department should undertake urgently a thorough, high-level review of the entire problem of constitutional and statutory constraints as they affect the performance by the Department and its missions of their responsibilities toward Americans abroad.

The review should be chaired by the Counselor and include L, CA, PA and two geographic bureaus with significant and representative problems in the area of constraints. The review, which should have the benefit of contributions from selected field missions having extensive experience with the effects of constraints, should examine and resolve such questions as:

- The correctness of the Department's current interpretation of the Privacy Act and the FOIA.
- The adequacy of current guidance to Department and mission personnel (including the recent useful but ambiguous circular instruction designed to sensitize missions to Jonestown-like situations).
- The utility and nature of a public information program to heighten awareness among American citizens abroad or with relatives abroad of the limits of permissible official action.
- The necessity and practicality of seeking amendment of the statutes.
- The utility and practicality of an inter-agency address to the problem, which extends beyond the Department of State.
- The utility and practicality of the formation of a blue-ribbon commission, composed of distinguished constitutional authorities, eminent laymen, members of Congress and representatives of Cabinet Departments, to study the problem, which ultimately affects large numbers of American citizens.

B. The Department should take immediate steps to improve coordination and information handling among CA/OCS (formerly CA/SCS), L/CA and the geographic bureaus. Although

there are a number of possible ways to avoid the serious mistakes in these areas that occurred in the Jonestown case, we recommend the following:

- The establishment of periodic and structured meetings between personnel of CA/OCS and L/CA and desk officers of individual geographical bureaus for the purpose of reviewing in depth outstanding or foreseeable problems involving Americans or groups of Americans abroad. These reviews should occur at least monthly. They should not, of course, replace consultation on fast-breaking or immediate problems, which is strongly encouraged. The meetings should be used to create mutual understanding of one another's problems; to assure that all officers are working from the same information base to share and examine new data; to exchange and concert opinions about the nature and importance of each problem reviewed; and to agree on any necessary actions. The agenda and minutes of each meeting should be sent to DCM's and senior consular officers of missions in the field. An eventual by-product of such meetings might be a greater geographical specialization on the part of CA/OCS personnel, a long-sought goal that has been difficult to achieve because of personnel limitations.
- The preparation, on the basis of these working-level review sessions, of a monthly memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of CA to the Assistant Secretary of each geographical bureau listing briefly by country significant problems involving Americans that are outstanding or foreseeable and, where appropriate, the actions being taken to deal with them. This memorandum would serve several purposes: to strengthen the relationship between CA and the geographical bureaus; to make sure that each geographical Assistant Secretary is knowledgeable of at least major consular issues involving Americans; to guard against the failure of the alerting or "trip-wire" function of the desk officer and office director; and to provide senior officers in the geographical bureaus the opportunity to insert themselves and their experience into important situations affecting Americans abroad.



C. The Department should strengthen and accelerate its efforts to improve the quality of its consular personnel, to expand and enrich their training and to provide challenging career opportunities that would encourage high-quality officers to enter and remain in the consular service. Measures to these ends are set forth in the Secretary's report of December 16, 1977 to the Congress, entitled "Report of the Consular Functions of the Department of State". The course of the People's Temple case dramatically illustrates the heavy and diverse responsibilities now being placed on consular officers, who, these days, have duties and tasks akin to those of lawyer, psychologist, family and personal counselor and ombudsman.

D. The Department should assure that, careful account being taken of American citizens' right to privacy, the training of all consular officers include familiarization with the indicators of behavior induced by techniques of psychological coercion or mind-control. Training should also give more emphasis to the exercise of consular responsibilities in terms of existing constitutional and statutory constraints. Realistic and practical courses on these two subjects should be included in basic training at Consulate General Rosslyn for new consular officers. More senior consular officers should receive such instruction while in Washington on home leave or between assignments or in conjunction with training in other consular courses. It is also important that deputy chiefs of mission, as the usual supervisors of chiefs of consular sections, receive such training in the present DCM course.

E. The Department should expand its efforts in the public information area to inform the American public fully of the limitations on consular assistance to Americans travelling or residing abroad. Given the often unrealistic expectations about such assistance, it is important that the public understand at least equally clearly what consular officers cannot do as what they can do for Americans overseas.

F. The Department should immediately increase the staff of the Assistant Legal Adviser for Consular Affairs (L/CA) in order to provide more effective support for the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

G. The Department should strengthen its support for Congressional delegations travelling overseas. We endorse the current efforts of the Department to provide: (1) more definitive threat assessments in areas to be visited by Congressional groups; (2) more structured briefing opportunities

for Congressional members of such delegations prior to departure overseas; (3) the development of a computerized system for determining the whereabouts of a Congressman outside the US at all times; and (4) possible use of portable communications equipment by Congressional delegations in remote areas.