

EAMIP PROJECT NO. MG04

TITLE: Improving Radio Communications

RESPONSIBILITY: Project Manager: MGT, Mr. D. Woods, Director
Project Officers: To be determined; see new person-year requirements section below.

PRESENT SITUATION:

Some Canadian diplomatic posts in specific areas of the world are still unable to communicate dependably with headquarters and their personnel outside the chancery during periods of social unrest and political insurrection. Such local crises frequently disrupt or close the commercial communications networks normally used by posts (e.g., telex, telephones, etc.). Consequently, headquarters and posts must rely on a back-up system such as radio. Other countries have extensive facilities in place at their diplomatic missions. On occasion (e.g. Grenada) the Department's official spokesmen and the Ministers have been unable to respond adequately to questions about the well-being of Canadian nationals caught in a dangerous local or regional conflict, because normal commercial communication links were cut and no back-up means were readily available. In some cases Canada has been forced to rely on other governments for civilian and military information.

In 1980 the heightened tensions in the Middle East (e.g. Tehran) led to the completion of a back-up network of radio communication between five Canadian posts. Since then, several back-up stations have been added, in an incremental and ad hoc fashion, at our posts in Warsaw, Lagos, Abidjan, Mexico and Guatemala. This work was done without a formal departmental policy or overall plan regarding emergency radio and radio teletype facilities and without additional person-year resources specifically assigned to manage and to implement these activities. The Treasury Board has allocated funds to the Department for the acquisition of radios and equipment; however, related requests for staff have not resulted in new person-years.

The Department now has in stock more emergency radios, radio teletype systems and related equipment than can currently be distributed or used; the actual deployment of existing equipment is not being reviewed and there is no comprehensive plan for a thoughtful extension of the radio services. In the meantime, steady demands from posts are being received and MGT (Telecommunications Division) cannot at present analyse these requests or put them into priority based upon need (most 1982 requests remain unanswered). The maintenance of existing equipment is also not as adequate as it should be. In short, the Department has the money to purchase and maintain radios of all types; but because of inadequate personnel resources, it is not currently planning, managing, or implementing an effective radio service.