

5/31/2005 ENR

The U.S. embassy under construction in Beijing is special. It doesn't use the standard embassy design prototype common to most of the new buildings in the program, and it's not a design-build job although the vast majority of the work is now being done that way. It's being handled by the "special projects" division of the State Dept.'s Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, meaning it has what staffers describe as "unique" security requirements.

The embassy compound is the largest in the world. It's being built in a new embassy area on the upper east side of Beijing with South Korean and Indian embassies right next door and more on the way.



Bagchi

Because a new Chinese embassy also is under construction in Washington, D.C., every aspect of project planning was negotiated as part of a bilateral agreement. "It involved permitting, fees, what status to give construction workers and how to bring materials into the country," says P.K. Bagchi, OBO's project director for the Beijing complex.



Compound will consolidate 20 different U.S. agencies doing business in Beijing.

The project consolidates 20 different U.S. government agencies doing business in Beijing from 11 different locations. All non-sensitive work will relocate to the new three-story administrative operations center. A two-story consulate will house ambassadorial functions, another building will house Marine security guards, and a three-story garage will offer parking. The eight-story high-rise is where "the most sensitive work will take place," and where most security comes into play, says Bagchi. The advantage of the compound is that it brings all the agencies and functions into a "protected environment," he adds.

The San Francisco office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill won a design competition for the commission. "The challenge of designing an American embassy is to create a work of architecture that respects the local context but also reflects American culture and values," says Craig Hartman, SOM design partner. Like an archeologist digging through layers of history and culture, Hartman says he created layers through the design—traditional Chinese gardens, courtyards and pools, followed by "unabashedly modern buildings with no false historicism."



Chinese subcontractor is building the foundations for what will be an eight-story high-security building, but the structure will be built by American crews using all-American materials.

The project's general contractor is Zachry-Caddell, a joint venture of Houston-based Zachry Construction Corp. and Montgomery, Ala.-based Caddell Construction Co. Inc. In phase one, subcontractor Beijing Construction Engineering Group is framing the administration building and building foundations for the high-rise.

"Then we will sterilize the site, removing all foreign workers and materials" to get ready for the two-year-long phase two, says Bagchi. "We will take extraordinary care to make sure foreign and American materials don't get mixed up."

Back in the states, Zachry-Caddell has been screening candidates for its force of 300 construction workers with top secret security clearance. Even so,

specialty teams will install certain items.

"You wouldn't believe how many workers you have to screen," says CEO Kirby Caddell. Bagchi describes "construction worker SWAT teams" who have clearance and go from project to project around the world. But with so many embassies, the pool is not big enough. He says Zachry-Caddell has used open houses to "draw new blood." But Bagchi acknowledges that it's an "expensive process" for the government and the contractor. It may take up to 5,000 interviews to clear a pool of 1,200 candidates. After they arrive on site, workers must maintain their clearance and can be sent home if they violate any strict behavior standards.

After the sensitive construction is finished, phase three will see a return of Chinese construction workers for finishing work, landscaping, and construction of the perimeter buildings and garage.

New to the Chinese workers have been safety measures that follow U.S. standards. Each worker was provided with steel-toed boots and eye protection. Working with architectural concrete was also a first for Chinese crews.

The embassy will open before the Olympics in the summer of 2008. Delay is not an option.

# U.S. Embassy Opens in Beijing as Olympic Games Begin

8/8/2008 ENR

08/08/2008

By Nadine M. Post

The U.S. Embassy in Beijing opened on Aug. 8. The dedication was timed to coincide with the commencement of the 2008 Olympic Games. The 500,000-sq-ft complex, which accommodates 600 employees in five buildings, is the second-largest embassy constructed in U.S. history.

Construction of the five-building complex, designed by the San Francisco office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLC, began on Feb. 10, 2004, under the direction of the Zachry Caddell Joint Venture, San Antonio.

The complex sits on a 10-acre site in Beijing's third diplomatic area in the Liang Ma He neighborhood. The buildings are separated from each other but linked by both indoor and outdoor paths. The spaces between buildings are organized as a series of outdoor rooms, courtyards, gardens and landscaped areas.



U.S. Embassy in Beijing is the second-largest ever constructed by the U.S. Dept. of State.

Each building has discrete functions. The buildings, ranging in height from two to eight stories, include an eight-story main chancery, a three-story office building, a consular building, a marine security guard quarters and recreation building, and a parking structure.

The arrangement of the buildings and the features of the landscape are based on ancient Chinese planning principles. Landscape architect Peter Walker and Associates, Berkeley, Calif., collaborated closely with SOM on gardens and courtyards throughout the complex. SOM's services included architecture, structural engineering, mechanical-electrical-plumbing engineering, interior design and environmental graphics.

"The most significant challenge and ultimately the inspiration was symbolism and physical place," says Craig W. Hartman, SOM's design partner on the project, in a press release. "As a sovereign U.S. presence on Chinese soil, it seemed especially important that our embassy's architecture reflect our cultural, social and political values while being respectful of China, a country with an ancient and extraordinarily rich culture."

Much of the labor was provided by Chinese subcontractors. Building materials are of both American and Chinese origin. The complex's planning and construction process was concurrent with planning for a new Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C., says the U.S. State Dept.

Former President George H. W. Bush, speaking at the opening ceremony he attended with his son, President George W. Bush, noted the changes that Beijing has undergone since his first visit 34 years ago. He said, "I feel the same sense of awe standing here to behold the transformation that our beloved embassy complex has undergone here."

"Barbara and I always welcome the chance we have to come back to China. In fact, I think this is my 19th or 20th visit since I left the presidency, since leaving the White House. But to be here at this special time, special time in China's history, to be back in the embassy where I was proud to have served, and to be here with the members of Bush family who share our love for China and its people, is particularly gratifying, particularly moving for me."

"In the 34 years since I first came to China, change has been one of the constants. Peking is now Beijing. The bicycles that used to dominate the roads have given way to more cars. And then when you come to this magnificent 'Bird's Nest,' the National Stadium, and the other architectural features that now dominate the landscape here, there can be no question that China has achieved something truly special in readying itself to host these Games. It is just simply remarkable."

Others at the ribbon cutting were U.S. Ambassador to China Clark T. Randt, Jr., and China's Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo.

## ZCJV to build largest State Department project on foreign soil

**BEIJING, China** The joint venture of Zachry and Caddell Construction Company (ZCJV) recently signed a contract to build the ten-acre U.S. Embassy compound in Beijing – the largest U.S. State Department project ever built on foreign soil. The eight building complex is scheduled to be complete just in time for the 2008 Olympic Games, which will be hosted by China.

Zachry has accumulated experience with the State Department. The company helped rebuild the \$190 million U.S. Embassy in Moscow. In addition, Zachry is currently executing a \$50 million contract with design partner PageSoutherlandPage to design and construct the new U.S. Embassy compound in Cambodia's capital city of Phnom Penh that is expected to open in January 2006.

Caddell, an Alabama-based contractor, also has extensive experience with the State Department. The company worked on a Hong Kong project for the lead U.S. foreign affairs agency, recently completed a new U.S. Consulate in Istanbul and is currently under contract to design and build new U.S. embassies in Cameroon, Guinea, Mali and Sierra Leone.

The Beijing complex will contain more than 500,000 square feet of floor space and provide office space for up to 700 diplomatic, consular and other U.S. Government employees. The complex will include Marine security guard housing, a gymnasium, cafeteria, parking garage and a mechanical and electrical plant that will support the facility.

In addition to the work that will be performed with the joint venture's employees and U.S. based subcontractors, ZCJV will hire Chinese subcontractors to perform a considerable portion of the project. At its peak, the project will employ more than 400 workers.



The ten-acre U.S. Embassy compound in Beijing, China, will be constructed by the joint venture of Zachry and Caddell Construction Company.

### The Beijing embassy project team, led by Project Director John Ollis:

Ron Almeter	technical security project engineer
Larry "Swede" Anderson	deputy project director
Mike Daley	construction manager
Art Frey	project security director
Mike Herring	commercial manager
Charlie Johnson	stateside support manager
Bill Scudder	stateside project controls manager
Larry Taylor	QA / QC manager

Project Director **John Ollis** has spent half his career – more than two decades – in international construction. He's worked all over the world, including Saudi Arabia and Thailand, and was hired by Zachry specifically for the Beijing project. Ollis will depart for Beijing shortly and looks forward to spending the next four years in China.

"It can be challenging working overseas so far from home," said Ollis. "But

*“ It can be challenging working overseas so far from home, but a great deal of preconstruction planning and preparation is taking place that will help us successfully execute this project. ”*

– **John Ollis**  
Project Director

a great deal of preconstruction planning and preparation is taking place that will help us successfully execute this project. We're pleased to work with the State Department and China to help construct a safe and enjoyable complex."

Any Zachry employees interested in working on this project should contact their supervisor and **Leanne King** at the home office. ■