In June 2021, Rita M. Starliper, the former owner and chief executive officer (CEO) of a Government contracting firm, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit bribery and honest services mail fraud. She had participated in a bribery scheme with a former contracting officer (CO) for the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM). OIG and FBI special agents determined that from late 2014 to 2016, Starliper agreed to hire the contracting officer’s relative for a job involving minimal work that resulted in payments of more than $68,000. In exchange, the former CO took actions that benefited Starliper and her company, including the awarding of a professional staffing contract worth millions of dollars. Sentencing is scheduled for November. Previously in March 2021, Diane Sturgis, a former USAGM contracting officer, was sentenced to 2 years in prison and ordered to pay $45,000 in restitution and a $10,000 fine for engaging in the bribery and procurement fraud scheme.

In June 2021, a CEO and his grantee organization were debarred for 3 years for demonstrating a willful failure to perform in accordance with the terms of one or more public agreements or transactions. OIG special agents determined that from late 2014 to 2016, Starliper agreed to hire the contracting officer’s relative for a job involving minimal work that resulted in payments of more than $68,000. In exchange, the former CO took actions that benefited Starliper and her company, including the awarding of a professional staffing contract worth millions of dollars. Sentencing is scheduled for November. Previously in March 2021, Diane Sturgis, a former USAGM contracting officer, was sentenced to 2 years in prison and ordered to pay $45,000 in restitution and a $10,000 fine for engaging in the bribery and procurement fraud scheme.

In accordance with a Federal Acquisition Regulation, OIG was alerted to a mandatory disclosure by a subcontractor on a Department contract of the possible inclusion of margin on certain charges, in violation of the contract. Upon investigation, it was determined that the subcontractor was in fact paid approximately $78,388 in fees that should not have been charged. OIG coordinated with the Department to ensure resolution of this matter and learned the money has since been repaid.

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In June 2021, a supervisory contract specialist for USAGM was suspended for 30 days for failure to follow standards of ethical conduct and multiple Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) violations. OIG special agents determined the employee awarded a family member sole source contracts and failed to disclose the relationship.
The Office of Inspector General conducts independent oversight of the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for Global Media on behalf of American taxpayers to:

- Promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- Prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse.
- Identify vulnerabilities and recommend constructive solutions.

Report waste, fraud, or abuse 24 hours a day to the OIG hotline: www.stateoig.gov/HOTLINE

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**SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS**

**American Citizens Safely Evacuated; Efforts Lead to Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019 (Inspection of the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, ISP-I-21-20)**

The Bureau of Legislative Affairs’ (H Bureau) effective coordination with Congress contributed to the successful repatriation of more than 101,000 American citizens and legal permanent residents from 136 countries during the first 6 months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The bureau’s efforts earned the Department a bipartisan Senate resolution of commendation and hand-written thank you notes from Senators. These efforts advanced an important administration foreign policy goal of protecting U.S. citizens abroad. The bureau also helped to advance an administration foreign policy priority: the support of human rights and democracy in Hong Kong. When street protests in Hong Kong escalated in March 2019, congressional staff contacted H Bureau, which arranged a series of briefings and facilitated congressional travel to Hong Kong and Department testimony at congressional hearings. Additionally, the bureau’s Legislative Reference Unit worked with other Department bureaus and the Department of the Treasury, culminating in the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019.

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**NEW WORK STARTED**

- Capping Report on the Department of State’s Fuel Management

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**REPORTS ISSUED**

- Inspection of the Bureau of Legislative Affairs (ISP-I-21-20)
- Management Assistance Report: Department Can Take Further Steps to Improve Executive Direction of Overseas Missions (ISP-21-14)
- Inspection of the Office of Global Criminal Justice (ISP-I-21-27)
- Management Assistance Report: Support From the Under Secretary for Management Is Needed to Facilitate the Closure of Open Office of Audits Recommendations (AUD-AOQC-21-32)
- Audit of Foreign Per Diem Rates Established by the Department of State (AUD-FM-21-31)