



U.S. Embassy Athens, Greece

# MONTHLY UPDATE



## December 2019

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In November 2019, a former Department contracting officer was sentenced to 500 hours of community service and ordered to pay a \$2,500 fine, while another Department employee was sentenced to 250 hours of community service and ordered to pay a \$2,500 fine. These sentences were for their roles in a Procurement Integrity Act violation. The former Department employee had pleaded guilty in August to disclosing confidential bid proposal information to help a furniture company executive win a lucrative contract. The executive was sentenced to 3 months in prison and ordered to pay a \$5,000 fine. In addition, all three individuals were debarred from doing business with the U.S. Government for 3 years.

In November 2019, a former Senior Executive Service official serving as Chief Strategy Officer at the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) was sentenced to 3 months in prison and 3 years of supervised release and ordered to pay \$34,388 in restitution. He was also sentenced to 30 hours of community service, during which he will speak or write to senior level government employees to warn them about committing fraud against the government while in a position of trust. In June 2019, he pleaded guilty to stealing more than \$40,000 in government funds. After being alerted by USAGM leadership, OIG special agents investigated and confirmed the employee fraudulently obtained thousands of dollars by submitting falsified hotel invoices and inflated taxi and Uber receipts and by billing the government for personal travel and travel that had already been paid by third parties. Additionally, he admitted to creating a falsified letter that claimed he needed to fly business class because of medical reasons, resulting in costly flight upgrades at government expense.

In November 2019, a former employee of a Department grantee organization was debarred from doing business with the U.S. Government for 3 years. In May 2019, the former employee had been ordered to pay \$23,000 in restitution and was sentenced to probation and 50 hours of community service after entering a pre-trial diversion program through the State of New Jersey’s Office of the Attorney General. OIG special agents determined that the employee altered scholarship grantee payment information in a grant program database from October 2017 to April 2018. She then had payment checks mailed to herself, forged the grantees’ names, and endorsed the checks to herself.

In the February 2017 report, *Inspection of the Broadcasting Board of Governors’ Middle East Broadcasting Networks*, OIG recommended that the International Broadcasting Bureau’s Office of the Chief Financial Officer implement a schedule to review approximately \$6,226,940 in unliquidated obligations and de-obligate those funds

### RECOMMENDATIONS STATUS

as of November 29, 2019

**1,152**

Open Recommendations

**54**

Recommendations Closed During November

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that were no longer required. In response to the recommendation, the U.S. Agency for Global Media, formerly known as the Broadcasting Board of Governors, provided documentation showing its review of unliquidated obligations, resulting in \$6,024,949 being put to better use.

In the May 2018 report, *Inspection of Embassy Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*, OIG recommended that the embassy discontinue its support of the Lake Langanu recreational facility, put \$74,457 to better use, and require the American Employees’ Recreation Association to assume full responsibility for operation of the site. In response to the recommendation, Embassy Addis Ababa discontinued its operation of the facility, resulting in \$102,348 being put to better use.

In the October 2018 report, *Inspection of Embassy Nairobi, Kenya*, OIG recommended that the embassy reprogram one program-funded information management position to an International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) position in accordance with Department guidelines. In response to the recommendation, Embassy Nairobi worked with the Bureau of African Affairs and the Bureau of the Comptroller and Global Financial Services to reprogram an Information Management Officer position in ICASS, resulting in \$81,331 being put to better use.

In February 2016, OIG issued the report, *Audit of Bureau of Diplomatic Security Worldwide Protective Services Contract Task Order 3 – Baghdad Embassy Security Force*, in which OIG recommended that the Department recover \$14.1 million in deferred assessments and questioned costs from a contractor. The Department concurred with the recommendations and has now recovered that amount.

## SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

### **Annual Regional Grants Training Supported Mission-Managed Awards** (*Inspection of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, ISP-I-20-05*)

Beginning in 2014, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) started delivering grants training for employees who work at the bureau's 52 overseas embassies and consulates to improve management of foreign assistance and public diplomacy grants. The week-long training—held annually in either the Florida Regional Center in Ft. Lauderdale or at a regional embassy—covers the entire assistance life cycle. It includes presentations by WHA offices and Bureau of Administration staff responsible for grants policy and the State Award Management System used to issue and manage Federal assistance awards. During the 2019 training, 40 employees from 19 embassies and consulates attended. Training participants serve as grants officers or grants officer's representatives for mission-managed public diplomacy and foreign assistance awards, including awards supporting the Central America Regional Security Initiative and grants funded by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. As of May 2019, at least one other regional bureau planned to replicate WHA's model.

### **Saving Elephants to Promote Rule of Law, Counterterrorism, and Economic Development** (*Inspection of Embassy N'Djamena, Chad, ISP-I-20-02*)

Embassy N'Djamena's Political-Economic Section generated important collaboration between the United States and Chad in protecting the country's rapidly diminishing elephant population from further poaching. The program also sought to eliminate a potential source of financing for terrorism through poaching in Chad and the region and to further the U.S. National Strategy for Combatting Wildlife Trafficking. After the loss of 95 percent of Chad's native elephant population to poaching since 2005, the Political-Economic Section began working in 2016 with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Chadian Ministry of Environment, and N'Djamena University's environmental faculty and students to enable Chadian rangers and the university to track and monitor remaining elephant herds. After 3 years of planning, the United States provided funding for 2 ranger vehicles and 28 tracking collars as well as monitoring. The project formally launched in April 2019, when the first bull elephant was tranquilized and collared near Lake Chad. The ministers of environment and education, the provincial governor, local villagers, and embassy leaders attended the event, which received wide coverage in the press and social media. The project provided a model of collaboration between U.S. and local partners that furthers key U.S. regional priorities promoting rule of law, countering terrorism, and fostering economic development and environmental protection.

### **Regional Security Office Initiative Promoted Respect for Diversity in the Local Guard Force** (*Inspection of Embassy Nouakchott, Mauritania, ISP-I-20-04*)

With the help of the locally employed staff, Embassy Nouakchott's Regional Security Office convened female members of the local guard force and gave them a platform—the Women in Nouakchott (WIN) initiative—to voice their concerns, promote

respect for diversity in the guard force, and share strategies to resolve challenges in both the workplace and outside the embassy. WIN is composed of female guards, but its meetings are open to all guard force members. The WIN initiative identified and successfully resolved challenges related to inadequate restrooms and inappropriate uniforms and shoes for female local guards. The Regional Security Officer told OIG he planned to create a network for WIN members to communicate with their counterparts at other U.S. embassies in the region.

## REPORTS ISSUED

- *Inspection of Embassy N'Djamena, Chad* (ISP-I-20-02)
- *Audit of the Department of State's FY 2019 Implementation of the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014* (AUD-FM-20-05)
- *Lead Inspector General for Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines | Quarterly Report to the United States Congress | July 1, 2019 – September 30, 2019* (November 13, 2019)
- *Lead Inspector General for East Africa and North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operations | Quarterly Report to the United States Congress | July 1, 2019 – September 30, 2019\**
- *Lead Inspector General for Operation Yukon Journey | Quarterly Report to the United States Congress | July 1, 2019 – September 30, 2019\**
- *Review of Allegations of Politicized and Other Improper Personnel Practices Involving the Office of the Secretary* (ESP-20-01)
- *Inspection of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs* (ISP-I-20-05)
- *Lead Inspector General for Operation Inherent Resolve | Quarterly Report to the United States Congress | July 1, 2019 – October 25, 2019* (November 19, 2019)
- *Lead Inspector General for Operation Freedom's Sentinel | Quarterly Report to the United States Congress | July 1, 2019 – September 30, 2019* (November 20, 2019)
- *Independent Auditor's Report on the U.S. Agency for Global Media FY 2019 Financial Statements* (AUD-FM-IB-20-06)
- *Inspection of Embassy Nouakchott, Mauritania* (ISP-I-20-04)
- *Classified Inspection of Embassy Stockholm, Sweden* (ISP-S-20-06)\*
- *Information Report: United States Agency for Global Media 2019 Charge Card Risk Assessment* (AUD-CGI-IB-20-07)
- *Information Report: International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, U.S. Section, 2019 Charge Card Risk Assessment* (AUD-CGI-20-08)
- *Review of the Department of State's Organizational Reform Effort* (AUD-MERO-20-09)
- *Fiscal Year 2019 Inspector General Statement on the U.S. Agency for Global Media's Major Management and Performance Challenges* (November 2019)
- *Semiannual Report to the Congress* (April 1, 2019 to September 30, 2019)

\*Report is classified or Sensitive But Unclassified.