



U.S. Embassy Vienna, Austria

December 2023

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In December, an individual was sentenced to 12 months in federal prison, 3 years supervised release, and a \$100 special assessment for falsifying his passport application. After he was charged with sexual assault of a child in Colorado, he was ordered to surrender his passport. OIG and Diplomatic Security special agents determined he falsely obtained a new passport after claiming on the application form that he lost the old passport. He was apprehended in South America after leaving the U.S. shortly before his plea hearing in Colorado.

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The owner of Montage, Inc., a construction company, was sentenced to 10 years in prison, and ordered to pay \$6,588,680 in restitution and forfeiture in the amount of \$17,795,098, stemming from his 25-year fraud on the U.S. government. In March 2023, he pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit wire and bank fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit bribery of a public official, and one count of aggravated identity theft for a fraud scheme against the government. Special agents from OIG, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, and the IRS determined the individual had made misrepresentations about his employees’ qualifications and his company’s ownership to induce the Department into awarding approximately \$100 million in lucrative construction contracts to his company. He also allegedly paid a Department employee bribes in exchange for confidential bidding information.

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An individual was sentenced to 8 months of home confinement, 5 years’ probation, and ordered to pay \$184,733 in restitution for conspiring to steal U.S. government property. Another member of the conspiracy is scheduled to be sentenced in January 2024. OIG, Defense Criminal Investigative Service, and the Department of the Army Criminal Investigation Division special agents determined the two subjects conspired to steal property at a U.S. military installation and sell them to prohibited international buyers.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS STATUS

as of December 31, 2023

1,043\*

Open  
Recommendations

44\*\*

Recommendations  
Closed During December

[View Recommendations](#)

\* Includes 53 recommendations associated with the U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC).

\*\* Includes 3 recommendations closed on OIG’s classified network.

### Reports

### Ongoing Work

A Department employee was suspended for 5 days for multiple instances of misconduct. OIG special agents determined the employee exceeded authorized access of an official database for personal use, attempted to influence the outcome of their spouse’s visa applications, and made false claims for reimbursement for educational expenses under the Special Needs Education Allowance program.

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A co-conspirator of a former U.S. Agency for Global Media Contracting Officer was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment, 3 years supervised release, and \$185,000 forfeiture for his role in the conspiracy. In November 2023, he pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit bribery and honest services wire fraud. OIG and FBI special agents had detected fraud involving the CO and two other individuals from late 2014 to 2016.

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In response to a recommendation in the 2020 report *Inspection of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (ISP-I-20-15)*, the Department ensured program offices had reconciled all outstanding unliquidated obligations, and de-obligated and closed all outstanding claims. This resulted in \$374,464.78 put to better use. OIG had recommended

action on those unliquidated obligations totaling \$3.3 million without activity for over 1 year, asking that such de-obligated funds be put to better use.

## SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

**Embassy's Engagement With Austria Leads to Relaunch of Resettlement Program** (*Inspection of Embassy Vienna, Austria, [ISP-I-24-04](#)*)

The ambassador and the Political-Economic Section led an embassy-wide effort to restart a program to bring persecuted religious minorities into the United States via Austria. The embassy engaged with the Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, the Office of the Legal Adviser, and the Austrian government to restart the Lautenberg Program after a 6-year hiatus. Austria suspended the program in 2017 after the U.S. altered its security vetting process and denied entry to 150 Iranians located in Austria. A new memorandum of understanding was signed in Vienna in March 2023. As many as 400,000 Iranians are potentially eligible for resettlement in the United States through the Lautenberg Program.

## REPORTS ISSUED

- *Semiannual Report to the Congress, April 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023* ([SAR](#))
- *Classified Inspection of Embassy Singapore* ([ISP-S-24-09](#))
- *Inspection of Embassy Vienna, Austria* ([ISP-I-24-04](#))
- *Inspection of the U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Vienna, Austria* ([ISP-I-24-10](#))
- *Inspection of the Bureau of Medical Services* ([ISP-I-24-08](#))

## NEW WORK STARTED

- *Audit of the Department of State Administration of Public-Private Partnerships*
- *Research for Proposed Office of Inspector General Audit of Department of State Efforts To Counter Iranian-Aligned Militia Groups*
- *Audit of Department of State's FY 2023 Compliance With the Payment Integrity Information Act of 2019*

## UKRAINE AND AFGHANISTAN OVERSIGHT

In *Inspection of the U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Vienna, Austria* ([ISP-I-24-10](#)), published in December, OIG found that Russia's campaign of disinformation and disruptive behavior in conference sessions, combined with the U.S. "no business as usual" policy, complicated efforts in all policy areas, adding to workload pressures for the mission. The mission's support to the International Atomic Energy Agency's response to urgent nuclear safety and security issues in Ukraine also increased the work of the mission without a commensurate increase in staffing.



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