

## **Management Assistance Report: Support From the Under Secretary for Political Affairs Is Needed To Facilitate the Closure of Recommendations Addressed to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs**

**(AUD-AOQC-22-33, August 2022)**

### **Summary of Review**

The purpose of this Management Assistance Report is to facilitate the prompt closure of open Office of Inspector General (OIG) recommendations by bringing them to the attention of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (Under Secretary). As of March 31, 2022, 11 recommendations in 6 unclassified reports directed to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) for implementation were overdue for a compliance response and remained open. Compliance correspondence from NEA was 197 days or more overdue for four of six reports, including one response that was 310 days late. In addition to the delinquent correspondence, 9 of 11 recommendations had been open for more than 1,000 days, with 2 recommendations reaching nearly 2,000 days. Finally, prior compliance correspondence from NEA for 10 of the 11 recommendations did not include detailed action plans and specific estimated milestones for implementation, as required. In a further attempt to obtain compliance information for the four reports with the longest overdue compliance responses, in November and December 2021 OIG sent NEA additional compliance inquiries. NEA also did not reply to these OIG inquiries.

The six reports with open recommendations addressed to NEA concern deficiencies related to the Department of State's (Department) implementation of policies to counter violent extremism (CVE), the invoice review process used by NEA to support Contingency Operations in Iraq, food service contracts in Iraq, and NEA's management of contract oversight in Iraq. OIG acknowledges that the lack of implementation for many of these recommendations for the past 2 years was impacted by circumstances beyond NEA's control, such as the ordered departure of Department personnel from Iraq and the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, NEA must provide compliance correspondence regarding the status of implementation efforts for these 11 recommendations in accordance with Department policy. Without current information on the status of implementation, and in consideration of the time that the recommendations have remained opened, OIG has little assurance that NEA is taking or has taken corrective actions.

The Under Secretary for Political Affairs, who reports directly to the Secretary of State, serves as the day-to-day manager of overall regional and bilateral policy issues and oversees the bureaus, which includes NEA. Accordingly, the Under Secretary is responsible for the recommendations discussed in this report. Therefore, to facilitate the closure of the open recommendations addressed to NEA, OIG made two recommendations to the Under Secretary.

On the basis of the Under Secretary's response to a draft of this report, OIG considers both recommendations made to the Under Secretary resolved, pending further action. A synopsis of the Under Secretary's response, and OIG's reply, follow each recommendation in the Results section of this report. The Under Secretary's response to a draft of this report is

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reprinted in full in Appendix B. OIG greatly appreciates the Under Secretary's assistance in completing the actions necessary to implement and justify closing the open recommendations identified in this report.

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