

**(U) Management Assistance Report: Accountability of Official and Diplomatic Passports of Separating Employees Needs Improvement, AUD-SI-21-28, May 2021**

**(U) Summary of Review**

~~(SBU)~~ The Department of State (Department), Bureau of Consular Affairs' (CA) Special Issuance Agency (SIA), is responsible for providing special-issuance passports, such as official and diplomatic passports.<sup>1</sup> SIA may issue official passports to several categories of individuals, such as U.S. Government employees; personal services contractors (PSC); and state, local, tribal, or territorial Government officials, who are traveling overseas to execute official duties on behalf or in support of the U.S. Government.<sup>2</sup> SIA issues diplomatic passports to Foreign Service Officers or to a person having diplomatic status who is traveling overseas to execute diplomatic duties on behalf of the U.S. Government.<sup>3</sup> Department employees' entitlement to an official or diplomatic passport ends when they separate from the Department,<sup>4</sup> and the passport must be surrendered for cancellation.<sup>5</sup> ~~(b) (4)~~

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(U) During an audit of CA's official and diplomatic passport records, which is currently underway, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) was alerted that a former Department employee had allegedly not surrendered their diplomatic passport upon separation from the Department and wanted to use it in a new role with another U.S. Government organization. Using the American Citizen Record Query (ACRQ), a consular search engine,<sup>8</sup> OIG found that the former employee's diplomatic passport was listed as "issued" and had not been electronically cancelled by SIA.<sup>9</sup> Based on that information, OIG performed additional steps to determine whether SIA had cancelled other diplomatic or official passports once an employee had separated from the Department. OIG found that 57 of 134<sup>10</sup> (43 percent) passports tested had not been electronically cancelled by SIA after the employee separated. In addition, of the 57 that had not been electronically cancelled, 47 (82 percent) of the passports had not expired as of February 1, 2021, meaning they could still be valid.

<sup>1</sup> (U) 8 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 503.1-8(a), "Adjudication of Special-Issuance Passport Applications."

<sup>2</sup> (U) 22 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R) § 51.3(c).

<sup>3</sup> (U) 22 C.F.R. § 51.3(d).

<sup>4</sup> (U) There are some exceptions, such as when the separating employee is a spouse or other family member of another official or diplomatic passport holder and their entitlement to the passport is tied to their status as a family member rather than their employment status.

<sup>5</sup> (U) According to 22 C.F.R. § 51.7, a passport remains the property of the United States at all times and must be returned to the U.S. Government upon demand.

<sup>6</sup> (U) 8 FAM 901.1-3(a), "Cancellation of Regular and No-Fee Regular Passport Books."

<sup>7</sup> (U) 8 FAM 901.1-5(C)(a) and (b), "Cancellation Requests for Diplomatic, Official, or Service Passport Books."

<sup>8</sup> (U) 8 FAM 1201.1-3(a), "What are ACRQ and PIERS [Passport Information Electronic Records System]?"

<sup>9</sup> (U) Passport statuses in ACRQ include "issued," "cancelled," "lost," and "destroyed."

<sup>10</sup> (U) OIG selected a statistical sample of 134 passports that were issued to employees who subsequently separated from the Department between November 2017 and September 2020.

(U) One reason for the deficiencies identified is that bureaus and offices did not always maintain proper accountability of passports and could not confirm whether separating employees had surrendered their passports for cancellation. When an employee's entitlement to an official or diplomatic passport ends, but the passport is not surrendered or cancelled, the individual could misuse the passport, such as misrepresenting themselves as a representative of the U.S. Government.

(U) OIG made one recommendation that is intended to address the deficiencies identified in this report. In response to a draft of this report, CA concurred with the recommendation and proposed corrective actions to address the recommendation. On the basis of CA's concurrence with the recommendation and the actions planned, OIG considers the recommendation resolved, pending further action. A synopsis of CA's response to the recommendation offered and OIG's reply follows the recommendation in the Results section of this report. CA's response to a draft of this report is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.