



Office of Inspector General
United States Department of State

AUD-SI-21-28

Office of Audits

May 2021

**(U) Management Assistance Report:
Accountability of Official and Diplomatic
Passports of Separating Employees Needs
Improvement**

MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE REPORT

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(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.¹ 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.² 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.³ Department employees' entitlement to an official or diplomatic passport ends when they separate from the Department,⁴ and the passport must be surrendered for cancellation.⁵ (b) (4)

(b) (4)

(b) (4)

(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,⁸ OIG found that the former employee's diplomatic passport was listed as "issued" and had not been electronically cancelled by SIA.⁹ 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 134¹⁰ (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.

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

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

³ (U) 22 C.F.R. § 51.3(d).

⁴ (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.

⁵ (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.

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

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

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

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

¹⁰ (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.

(U) BACKGROUND

(U) Official and Diplomatic Passports

(U) CA is responsible for the adjudication and issuance of passports.¹¹ Within CA, SIA is responsible for issuing special-issuance passports, which includes most official passports¹² and all diplomatic passports.¹³

(U) SIA may issue an official passport to:

- An officer or employee of the U.S. Government traveling abroad to carry out official duties and family members of such persons;
- A U.S. Government PSC traveling abroad to carry out official duties on behalf of the U.S. Government;
- A non-PSC traveling abroad to carry out duties in support of and pursuant to a contract with the U.S. Government when the contractor is unable to carry out such duties using a regular or service¹⁴ passport; or
- An official or employee of a state, local, tribal, or territorial government traveling abroad to carry out official duties in support of the U.S. Government.¹⁵

¹¹ (U) 1 FAM 251.1(d), "Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs (CA)."

¹² (U) According to 8 FAM 503.1-8(b), the Passport Center in Charleston, SC, processes official passports for designated Department of Defense personnel.

¹³ (U) 7 Foreign Affairs Handbook-1 H-122.4-3, "Passport Agencies and Centers in the United States."

¹⁴ (U) According to 22 C.F.R. § 51.3(b), a service passport may be issued to a non-PSC traveling abroad to carry out duties in support of and pursuant to a contract with the U.S. Government, when exceptional circumstances make a service passport necessary to enable the individual to carry out his or her contractual duties.

¹⁵ (U) 22 C.F.R. § 51.3(c).

(U) SIA issues a diplomatic passport to a Foreign Service Officer or to a person having diplomatic or comparable status because they are traveling abroad to carry out diplomatic duties on behalf of the U.S. Government. Spouses and family members may also be issued diplomatic passports. A U.S. Government contractor may be issued a diplomatic passport when the contractor meets the eligibility requirements and the diplomatic passport is necessary to complete the contractual duties in support of the U.S. Government.¹⁶

(U) Unless limited to a shorter period, the period of validity of an official or diplomatic passport is 5 years from the date of issuance or so long as the bearer maintains their official or diplomatic status, whichever is shorter.¹⁷

(U) Passport Accountability Requirements

(U) Department bureaus and offices that participate in SIA's Special Issuance Passport Program must comply with program terms and conditions, which include having a policy and procedure to satisfy accountability requirements for special-issuance passports.¹⁸ An example of an accountability policy could be requiring that administrative personnel store and secure employees' special-issuance passports when they are not being used for official purposes, and an example of an accountability procedure could be assisting an employee who is separating with surrendering the special-issuance passport to be cancelled, destroyed, or transferred to another Federal agency.¹⁹

~~(SBU)~~ The Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) establishes that a valid special-issuance passport must be surrendered when entitlement to the passport ends.²⁰ (b) (4)

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¹⁶ (U) 22 C.F.R. § 51.3(d).

¹⁷ (U) 22 C.F.R. § 51.4(d) and (e).

¹⁸ (U) SIA's Special Issuance Passport Program includes requirements for authorizing officials, who are responsible for signing Letters of Authorization attesting to the fact that an applicant is traveling on behalf of the U.S. Government and needs a special-issuance passport, and couriers, who submit applications and pick up correspondence or completed passports at SIA's facility in Washington, DC.

¹⁹ (U) Federal Passport Agent's Reference Guide, "Special Issuance Passports," January 28, 2019.

²⁰ (U) 8 FAM 806.1-1(a), "Summary."

²¹ (U) 8 FAM 901.1-3(a).

²² (U) 8 FAM 901.1-5(C)(a) and (b).

²³ (U) Federal Passport Agent's Reference Guide, "Transfer and Retrieval of Passports," January 28, 2019.

(U) Management Assistance Report Purpose

(U) This Management Assistance Report is intended to provide early communication of deficiencies that OIG identified during an audit of CA's official and diplomatic passport records. The objective of the audit, which is currently underway, is to determine whether CA maintains accurate and complete records of official and diplomatic passports. OIG is reporting the deficiencies discussed in this Management Assistance Report in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. In performing the work related to these deficiencies, OIG interviewed CA officials, reviewed applicable criteria, and tested the accuracy of the official and diplomatic passport records for Department employees who separated from the Department between November 2017 and September 2020. OIG believes that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for the conclusions presented in this report.

(U) RESULTS

(U) Finding A: Accountability of Official and Diplomatic Passports Needs Improvement

(U) During an audit of CA's official and diplomatic passport records, 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.²⁴ According to the FAM, entitlement to an official or diplomatic passport ends when the employee separates from the Department, and the passport must be surrendered for cancellation.²⁵

(U) OIG found that the former employee's diplomatic passport was listed as "issued" in ACRQ and had not been electronically cancelled by SIA. Based on that information, OIG performed additional steps to determine whether SIA had cancelled other employees' official and diplomatic passports once separated from the Department. Specifically, OIG selected a sample of 134 official and diplomatic passports issued to employees who subsequently separated from the Department between November 2017 and September 2020. OIG found that 57 of 134 (43 percent) passports had not been electronically cancelled by SIA after the employee separated. Moreover, 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.

(U) One reason for the deficiencies identified is that Department 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

²⁴ (U) See Appendix A for details of this individual passport review.

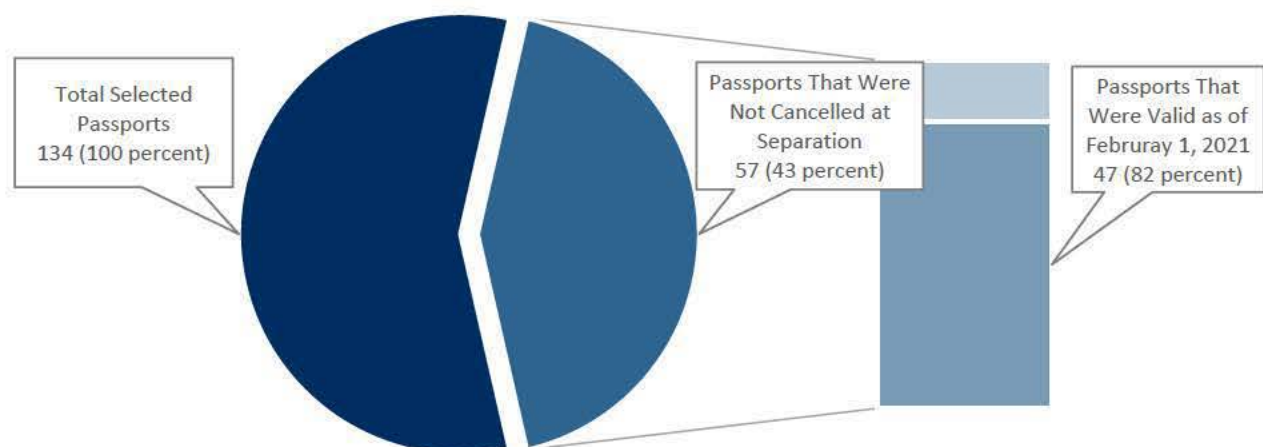
²⁵ (U) 8 FAM 806.2, "Surrender of Special-Issuance Passports."

individual could misuse the passport, such as misrepresenting themselves as a representative of the U.S. Government. Doing so is a criminal offense.²⁶

(U) Separated Employees' Official and Diplomatic Passports

(U) Based upon a Bureau of Global Talent Management list of employees who had separated from the Department between November 2017 and September 2020, OIG identified 4,714 official and diplomatic passports associated with those employees. OIG selected a sample of 134 passports to test.²⁷ OIG found that 57 of 134 (43 percent) passports had not been electronically cancelled by SIA. In addition, of those 57 passports, 47 (82 percent) had not expired, as of February 1, 2021, meaning they could still be valid.²⁸ For example, one employee separated from the Department in December 2017, but the employee's diplomatic passport was not scheduled to expire until April 2022—more than 4 years after separating from the Department. Figure 1 illustrates OIG's testing results.

(U) Figure 1: Testing Results of Sampled Passports for Separated Employees



(U) Source: Generated by OIG based on testing of data provided by CA involving separated employees.

(U) In addition to the selected official and diplomatic passports, OIG found that 48 of the separated employees included in the sample were issued more than one special-issuance passport, totaling 77 additional passports.²⁹ Specifically, OIG found that 19 of 77 (25 percent) secondary passports had not been electronically cancelled by SIA. In addition, 12 of these 19

²⁶ (U) Misuse of Passport, 18 United States Code § 1544 (2011) .

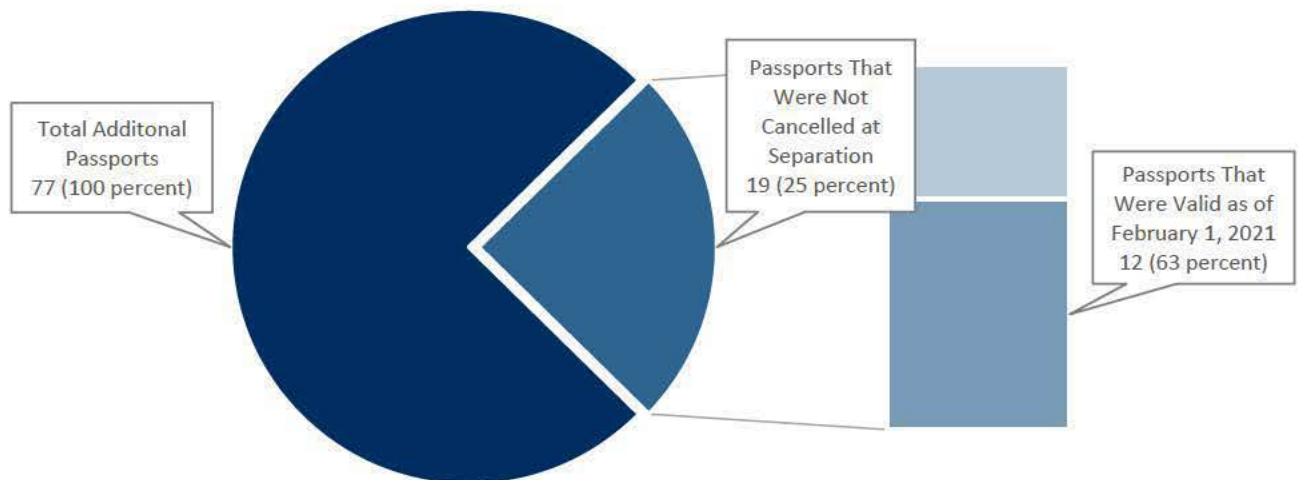
²⁷ (U) The sample was selected from a universe of 1,289 passports using a stratified statistical sampling design based on the bureau or office associated with the passport.

²⁸ (U) Of the remaining passports in the sample, 35 were cancelled; 24 were destroyed; 1 was lost; 11 had expired prior to separation; 1 was issued to a family member who, as a spouse, was still entitled to the passport after separating from the Department; and 5 were issued to employees, who after separating, were rehired as a PSC or non-PSC.

²⁹ (U) According to 8 FAM 504.1-3(1), (2), and (4), "Circumstances When the Department May Authorize a Second Passport," a second passport may be authorized for certain circumstances, such as a foreign country that will deny a visa or entry to the bearer of a passport with indications of travel to certain countries.

(63 percent) passports had not expired, as of February 1, 2021, meaning they could still be valid.³⁰ Figure 2 illustrates OIG's testing results for the additional passports.

(U) Figure 2: Testing Results of Additional Passports for Separated Employees



(U) Source: Generated by OIG based on testing of data provided by CA involving additional passports for separated employees.

(U) OIG Follow-Up

(U) OIG followed up with 3 bureaus and 1 office to determine whether 17 former Department employees had surrendered their passport(s)³¹ and whether the bureaus or office had requested that SIA cancel the passports in accordance with the FAM. Below are the results of OIG's follow-up with the bureaus and office.

- (U) OIG identified two former CA employees who had diplomatic passports listed as "issued" in ACRQ. According to CA's employee check-out list, employees are required to return special-issuance passports to SIA that were issued to them and to their family members upon separation and obtain the signature of an SIA staff member. SIA has no record of either of these two passports being returned for cancellation after the employees separated.
- (U) OIG identified two former Office of the Secretary employees who had diplomatic passports listed as "issued" in ACRQ. These two individuals had four passports issued to them. The Office of the Secretary's employee check-out form requires departing employees to return their special-issuance passports and have the form initialed by the

³⁰ (U) Of the remaining additional passports, 41 were cancelled, 12 were destroyed, 1 was lost, 1 had expired prior to separation, and 3 were issued to employees, who after separating, were rehired as a PSC or non-PSC.

³¹ (U) Some of the 17 Department employees had been issued multiple passports. Therefore, OIG followed up on a total of 24 passports.

Office of the Secretary's budget and travel office staff. An Office of the Secretary official stated that the office would have been in possession of three of the identified passports because the office maintains the diplomatic passports of people who travel with the Secretary of State. Because the three passports could not be found in the office, the official assumed that they were physically cancelled and returned to the individual. The Office of the Secretary could not provide information on the fourth passport. The Office of the Secretary official stated that a memorandum would have accompanied each passport to SIA for cancellation, but copies of the memoranda were not maintained.

- (U) OIG identified two former Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) employees who had diplomatic passports listed as "issued" in ACRQ. OES's employee check-out list requires that separating employees turn in their special-issuance passports to the bureau's human resources staff and obtain their signature. The employee check-out list also states that if a departing employee would like to keep the passport as a souvenir, the employee should take it to the Employee Services Center³² to be physically cancelled and show it to human resources staff during check-out. An OES official stated that one employee took her passport to SIA, where it was physically cancelled. OES provided a photocopy of the physically cancelled data page from the passport. For the other passport, an OES official stated that the physically cancelled passport was located in a secure OES storeroom. OES requested that SIA electronically cancel this passport on February 24, 2021.
- (U) OIG identified 11 former Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) employees who had diplomatic passports listed as "issued" in ACRQ. These 11 individuals had 16 passports issued to them, including 2 that were issued to a former Assistant Secretary. DS's employee check-out form requires employees to return to the Employee Services Center or contact SIA about special-issuance passports that were issued to them and to their family members upon separation. A DS official stated that the two passports issued to the former Assistant Secretary were collected before he separated from the Department, but DS had not returned them to SIA. The DS official stated that a former employee, who returned as a PSC, claimed to have lost one passport but there was no comment on her second passport and another employee's passport had been returned to CA. Three former DS employees had returned four passports in total to their DS offices; however, DS could not locate an additional passport for one of these individuals and an additional two passports for another of these individuals. The DS official further stated that DS did not have records for two of the people associated with two passports. DS may have facilitated the issuance of these passports, but they were not DS employees. DS did not provide information on the remaining 2 of 16 passports.

(U) One reason for the deficiencies identified is the Department bureaus and offices, including CA, did not always maintain proper accountability of official and diplomatic passports and could

³² (U) CA maintained a passport courtesy desk within the Employee Services Center. Due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Employee Services Center was closed, and employees were directed to contact SIA.

not confirm whether separated employees surrendered their passports for cancellation. Bureaus and offices are required to have policies and procedures for the accountability of passports. OIG reviewed several bureaus' and offices'³³ standard operating procedures (SOP) for collecting official and diplomatic passports from employees who are separating from the Department. OIG found that SOPs ranged from requiring the employee to return the passport to SIA to having the employee complete a passport cancellation form and submit it along with the passport(s) to bureau staff. OIG also found that not all bureaus require that passports be returned to SIA. For example, one bureau returns passports to CA's Human Resources office.

(SBU) OIG also determined that SIA staff did not always ascertain whether a separating employee had additional special-issuance passports when receiving a cancellation request. An SIA official stated that checking for additional passports is not part of SIA's SOP. (b) (4)

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(U) OIG acknowledges that CA has issued reminders to bureaus and offices about their accountability responsibilities, such as with the recent change in administration when SIA sent instructions regarding the cancellation of special-issuance passports issued to political appointees. However, more needs to be done to ensure that passports are cancelled in accordance with Department requirements. It is equally important to ensure that when an employee's entitlement to an official or diplomatic passport ends, it is surrendered to safeguard against misuse. OIG is therefore making the following recommendation to address the identified deficiencies.

Recommendation 1: (U) OIG recommends that the Bureau of Consular Affairs improve accountability over special-issuance passports by updating the Foreign Affairs Manual and any other relevant policy documents to require that (a) all Department of State bureaus and offices that participate in the Special Issuance Passport Program either (1) physically cancel special-issuance passports (including secondary passports) issued to a separating employee and email the Special Issuance Agency (SIA) a copy of the physically cancelled data page requesting that the passport(s) be electronically cancelled (along with returning the passport to SIA for destruction if not returned to the separating employee) or (2) if appropriate, file the special-issuance passport with SIA and (b) the Special Issuance Agency confirm that all special-issuance passports issued to the separating employee have been included in the cancellation request and electronically cancel all additional passport(s) as appropriate.

³³ (U) OIG requested that the following bureaus and offices provide their SOPs to OIG for review: the Office of the Secretary and the Bureaus of Consular Affairs; Diplomatic Security; Administration; Information Resource Management; Near Eastern Affairs; South and Central Asian Affairs; Global Talent Management; Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs; Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; Population, Refugees, and Migration; Overseas Buildings Operations; and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

³⁴ (U) 8 FAM 901.1-5(C)(a).

(U) Management Response: CA concurred with this recommendation, stating that it will propose updates to the FAM and to the Special Issuance Passport Program. CA will also update SIA's cancellation and destruction SOP to confirm that all special-issuance passports issued to a separating employee have been included in the cancellation request and electronically cancel all additional passports as appropriate.

(U) OIG Reply: On the basis of CA's concurrence with the recommendations and actions planned, OIG considers this recommendation resolved, pending further action. The recommendation will be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation demonstrating that the FAM and any other relevant policy documents have been updated in accordance with the recommendation.

(U) RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: (U) OIG recommends that the Bureau of Consular Affairs improve accountability over special-issuance passports by updating the Foreign Affairs Manual and any other relevant policy documents to require that (a) all Department of State bureaus and offices that participate in the Special Issuance Passport Program either (1) physically cancel special-issuance passports (including secondary passports) issued to a separating employee and email the Special Issuance Agency (SIA) a copy of the physically cancelled data page requesting that the passport(s) be electronically cancelled (along with returning the passport to SIA for destruction if not returned to the separating employee) or (2) if appropriate, file the special-issuance passport with SIA and (b) the Special Issuance Agency confirm that all special-issuance passports issued to the separating employee have been included in the cancellation request and electronically cancel all additional passport(s) as appropriate.

(U) APPENDIX A: INDIVIDIAL PASSPORT REVIEW

(U) In December 2020, after announcing an audit of official and diplomatic passport records, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) was alerted that a former Department of State (Department) employee, a political appointee, allegedly kept their diplomatic passport after separating from the Department and wanted to use it in their new role with another U.S. Government organization. Specifically:

(U) A politically appointed Senior Advisor separated from the Department in November 2019. In 2020, President Trump appointed the former advisor to a role with another U.S. government organization. A representative from the new organization contacted the appointee's former Department bureau because the political appointee was in possession of a diplomatic passport. The representative wanted to know whether the appointee could travel on behalf of the new organization using this diplomatic passport. The representative was informed by a bureau official that the appointee should not use the diplomatic passport.

(U) Using the American Citizen Record Query, a consular search engine,¹ OIG found that the former employee had been issued two diplomatic passports in 2018. The first passport issued to the individual was listed as "cancelled," but the second passport was listed as "issued," as of February 1, 2021 (i.e., it had not been electronically cancelled by the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Special Issuance Agency). OIG confirmed with Special Issuance Agency officials that Department employees' entitlement to an official or diplomatic passport ends when they separate from the Department and the passport must be surrendered for cancellation.²

(U) According to the former employee, they surrendered the first diplomatic passport (i.e., the one that was cancelled) when they separated from the Department. With respect to the second passport, the former employee stated that they were not in possession of it when they separated from the Department and that the passport was mailed to their residence in 2020. The former employee stated that they had not used that passport since separating from the Department. OIG confirmed that the passport had not been used and informed Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) in January 2021 that it remained listed in the American Citizen Record Query as "issued." CA confirmed that the individual was no longer entitled to the passport and electronically cancelled it.

¹ (U) 8 Foreign Affairs Manual 1201.1-3(a), "What are ACRO [American Citizen Record Query] and PIERS [Passport Information Electronic Records System]?"

² (U) According to 22 Code of Federal Regulations § 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.

(U) APPENDIX B: BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS RESPONSE



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

May 12, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: OIG/AUD/AT – Regina Meade, Director

FROM: CA – Ian G. Brownlee, Acting

SUBJECT: (U) CA Response to Management Assistance Report
 (MAR): Accountability of Official and Diplomatic
 Passports of Separating Employees Needs Improvement

(U) CA appreciates the opportunity to respond to the MAR regarding improvement on accountability of official and diplomatic passports of separating employees.

(U) Recommendation 1: OIG recommends CA improve accountability over special issuance passports by updating the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) and other relevant policy documents to require that (a) all Department of State bureaus and offices that participate in the Special Issuance Passport Program either (1) physically cancel special-issuance passports (including secondary passports) issued to a separating employee and email the Special Issuance Agency a copy of the physically cancelled data page requesting that the passport(s) be electronically cancelled (along with returning the passport to SIA for destruction if not returned to the separating employee) or (2) if appropriate, file the special issuance passport with SIA and (b) the Special Issuance Agency confirm all special issuance passports issued to the separating employee have been included in the cancellation request and electronically cancel all additional passports(s) as appropriate.

(U) CA concurs with this recommendation and proposes the following corrective actions:

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- Updates to the FAM to permit all Department bureaus/offices to cancel physically passport(s) upon separation or return the passport(s) for file and retrieval by the new agency;
- Updates to Special Issuance Passport Program (SIPP) template;
- Notice to Department bureaus/offices under SIPP of FAM update; and
- Updates to SIA's cancellation and destruction Standard Operating Procedure to confirm that all special issuance passport requests issued to the separating employee have been included in the cancellation request and electronically cancel all additional passports(s) as appropriate.

(U) CA proposes to submit a FAM revision for clearance and update its SIPP template and cancellation and destruction SOP within 30 days of OIG's concurrence with the proposed corrective actions. The Notice to Department bureaus/offices is dependent on the FAM update.

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Approved: CA – Ian G. Brownlee, Acting (IGB)

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