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Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

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ISP-I-21-17

Office of Inspections

September 2021

# **Inspection of the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Passport Services Directorate**

DOMESTIC OPERATIONS

UNCLASSIFIED



# HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

ISP-I-21-17

## What OIG Inspected

OIG inspected the headquarters operations of the Passport Services Directorate, which is part of the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

## What OIG Recommends

OIG made 3 recommendations to the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

In its comments on the draft report, the Bureau of Consular Affairs concurred with all 3 recommendations. OIG considers all 3 recommendations resolved. The Bureau of Consular Affairs' response to each recommendation, and OIG's reply, can be found in the Recommendations section of this report. The bureau's formal written response is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.

September 2021  
OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS  
DOMESTIC OPERATIONS

## Inspection of the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Passport Services Directorate

### What OIG Found

- The Passport Services Directorate's leadership was committed to implementing reforms, including a well-received core values initiative centered around people rather than production.
- The directorate's dependence on the Office of Consular Systems and Technology for management of IT modernization initiatives resulted in delays in the Online Passport Renewal and Next Generation Passport systems.
- Delays in passport IT modernization initiatives required the Passport Services Directorate's personnel to work in a paper-based environment, preventing passport adjudication by telework during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Passport Services Directorate had effective processes covering the issuance of adjudication guidance on citizenship and passport issues. However, the directorate did not comply with Department requirements that such guidance be searchable and readily retrievable.
- Spotlight on Success: Directorate employees used a collaborative process and "change champions" to define five directorate core operational values and drive the integration of values throughout the organization.

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## CONTEXT

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The Bureau of Consular Affairs' (CA) mission is to deliver consular services that protect U.S. citizens, ensure national security, and facilitate legitimate travel. Within CA, the Passport Services Directorate (CA/PPT) accepts passport applications, adjudicates U.S. citizenship and passport entitlement decisions, and produces and issues passport documents to eligible U.S. citizens and U.S. nationals to facilitate trade, travel, and tourism. Passport services are among the Department of State's (Department) most visible domestic public service programs.

Approximately 45 percent of U.S. citizens—more than 148 million people—have passport books, the premier document for proof of U.S. citizenship and identity. In addition to passport books, CA/PPT issues passport cards travelers can use to enter the United States from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda at land border crossings or seaports of entry.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected CA/PPT's operations and funding. On March 20, 2020, the Department restricted passport operations to protect the health and safety of CA employees, limiting on-site work in passport agencies and centers to mission-critical operations.<sup>1</sup> These restrictions, which continued until June 11, 2020, reduced operations, resulting in a decrease in passport issuances and reduced revenue.<sup>2</sup> In May 2020, issuances reached a low of 13,002 passports, compared to nearly 1.8 million issuances in May 2019. In line with fee revenue declines, CA/PPT reduced its FY 2021 budget request by 24 percent, from \$852 million to \$646 million.

CA's Functional Bureau Strategy identifies as key bureau goals ensuring timely processing of passport applications and delivering superior customer service. To help improve both efficiency and consistency across services, the bureau is modernizing its IT systems under the ConsularOne<sup>3</sup> program, initiated in 2009. The two major IT modernization initiatives under ConsularOne that significantly affect CA/PPT's operations are the Online Passport Renewal and the Next Generation Passport systems.<sup>4</sup> As both a stakeholder and customer, CA/PPT relies

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<sup>1</sup> The Department defined mission-critical operations as: life/death emergency passport appointments at passport agency public service counters for persons travelling within 72 hours, and personnel working on existing caseload at passport agencies, including communications to applicants.

<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of staff at passport agencies were unable to telework during the pandemic because the passport adjudication process is paper based and CA/PPT's IT infrastructure did not support telework for passport adjudication. To safeguard against accidentally divulging personally identifiable information, staff could adjudicate passport applications only in the office.

<sup>3</sup> ConsularOne is the bureau's modernization initiative launched in 2009. ConsularOne is designed to modernize, consolidate, or replace functionality currently delivered by more than 90 discrete systems. ConsularOne also provides Consular Affairs with the opportunity to take an in-depth look at existing business processes, with the goal of improving efficiency, security, and consistency across consular services.

<sup>4</sup> The Online Passport Renewal system includes the development of front-end capabilities that will allow customers to complete and pay for a passport renewal application online, and back-end capabilities for internal users to receive and adjudicate the application. Through the Next Generation Passport program, CA/PPT is coordinating with CA's Office of Consular Systems and Technology to modernize passport printers and sustain document security by enhancing the physical security measures of the U.S. passport.

on CA's Office of Consular Systems and Technology (CA/CST), which has lead responsibility within CA for implementing IT modernization initiatives.

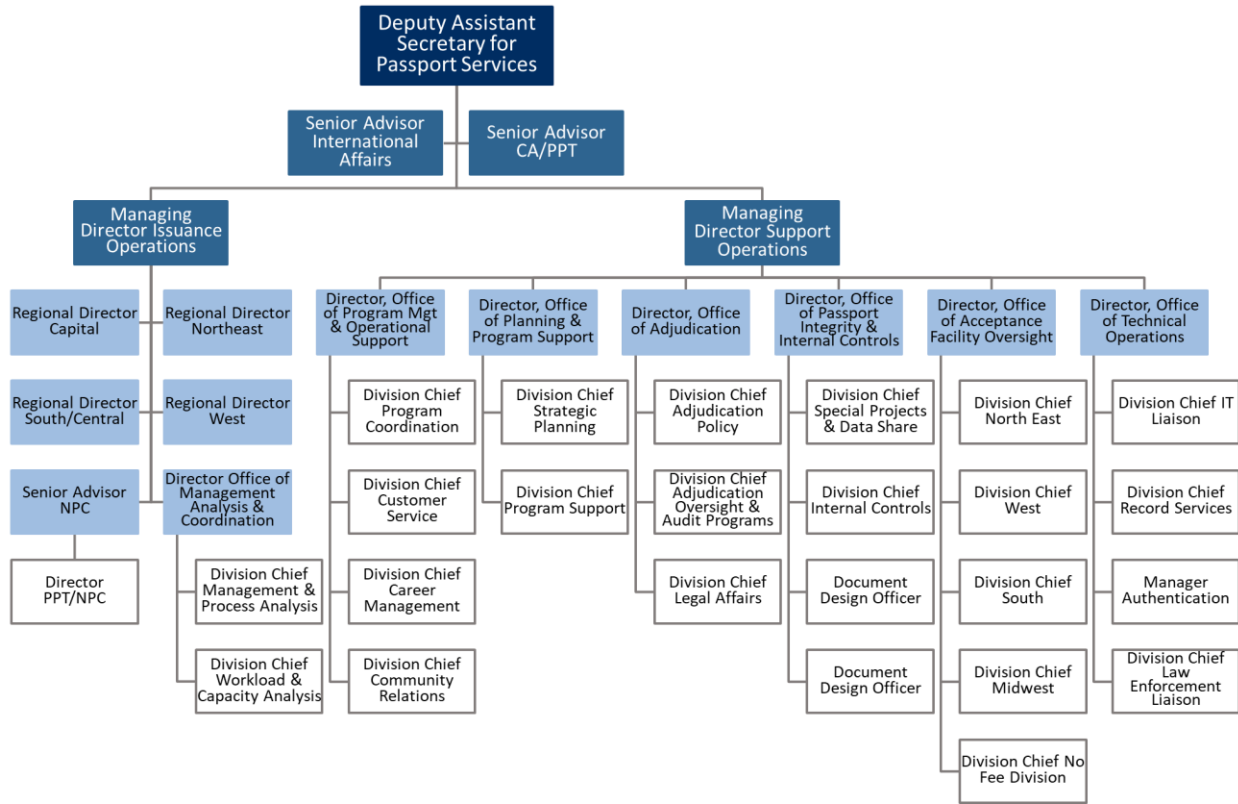
CA/PPT headquarters oversees a complex, geographically dispersed organization. CA/PPT employs more than 4,500 staff, including 1,981 direct-hire employees and 2,542 third-party contractors. CA/PPT's headquarters staff of 245 Civil Service employees and 3 Foreign Service officers develop and disseminate passport policy, coordinate the work of 2 passport print facilities, 3 passport centers, and 24 passport agencies in 27 cities throughout the United States, and conduct oversight and training of the more than 40,000 active acceptance agents<sup>5</sup> working in 8,200 facilities. These passport acceptance facilities—principally the United States Postal Service network, public libraries, and clerks of courts—serve as the primary channel for U.S. citizens to submit passport applications. CA/PPT also operates call centers—the National Passport Information Center—in Arizona and Michigan that responded to 5.5 million public inquiries about passports in FY 2019. Overseas, CA/PPT provides policy guidance to 235 U.S. embassies, consulates, and consular agencies that accept passport applications, adjudicate passports, issue emergency passports, and facilitate delivery of passports. CA/PPT also conducts audits for quality oversight of overseas passport adjudications.

As shown in Figure 1 below, the headquarters office is divided into issuance and support functions, each led by a managing director. The Issuance Managing Director oversees the operation of passport centers, passport agencies, and document printing facilities and uses regional directors to provide management and direction for the passport center and passport agency directors. The Managing Director for Support Operations oversees the headquarters offices responsible for supporting issuance operations.

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<sup>5</sup> Acceptance agents are permanent employees of a designated facility who accept and execute passport applications and ensure all materials needed to process the application are correctly submitted and included.

Figure 1: Passport Services Directorate Headquarters Organization Chart



Source: OIG generated from information obtained from CA/PPT.

For this inspection, OIG focused on the headquarters operations of CA/PPT and, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act, evaluated its executive direction, information management, and operational effectiveness and program implementation.<sup>6</sup>

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

OIG assessed CA/PPT’s leadership based on interviews with office leaders and staff, questionnaires completed by CA/PPT personnel, document reviews, and observation of directorate events during the inspection. OIG also conducted interviews with Department, interagency, and nongovernmental organization partners that elicited comments on CA/PPT’s performance in the interagency process.

### Tone at the Top and Standards of Conduct

#### *Directorate Leadership Committed to Implementing Reform Initiatives*

The Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) assumed leadership of CA/PPT in October 2018. Before becoming DAS, she served as CA’s Comptroller for 6 years. She joined the Department in 1992 as a budget analyst and previously served as an office director in CA/PPT. The acting Managing

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A.

Director for Issuance Operations assumed his position in July 2020. He previously served as Managing Director for Support Operations for 10 years; prior to that he was the Director of the Office of Passport Integrity and Internal Controls. The acting Managing Director for Support Operations assumed her position in July 2020. Previously, she was Director of CA's Office of Technical Operations.

OIG found the DAS was committed to implementing reforms to abide by and reinforce CA and Department leadership principles<sup>7</sup> throughout the organization. In 2018, OIG conducted a review of the National Passport Center that found retaliation, harassment, and bullying in that organization.<sup>8</sup> A subsequent compliance follow-up review<sup>9</sup> in 2020 found CA had taken action to implement most recommendations contained in OIG's 2018 report. However, two deficiencies related to personnel administrative policies that OIG previously identified had yet to be fully addressed.

CA/PPT staff described the DAS as experienced and knowledgeable and her operating style as decisive, strategic, and goal oriented. They said she was driving change and showing openness to new ideas, consistent with 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 1214b(2) and (3). For example, upon her arrival in CA/PPT in 2018, the DAS reviewed the organization's operations and determined the directorate had not adopted practices to fully implement CA's Leadership and Management Tenets, which emphasize employee team building, communication, and professional development. She initiated a survey of CA/PPT employees that asked what they believed CA/PPT's values should be and what they actually were in practice. After the survey showed that staff did not believe CA/PPT's culture valued people, the DAS launched a values initiative to reinforce the importance of the Leadership and Management Tenets related to employee welfare.

Staff told OIG the DAS made a strong effort to pursue her values initiative, emphasizing it in meetings and videos and visiting several passport agencies to speak about the initiative. Staff told OIG they appreciated the shift in values and believed significant progress had been made before the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted normal operations and slowed the initiative.

### **Spotlight on Success: Core-Values Initiative Drove Change Within Passport Services Directorate**

In April 2019, CA/PPT received input from more than 3,500 staff and contract personnel in response to a campaign launched by the new DAS to define the values that should drive organizational change. The campaign was prompted by responses to an employee survey initiated by the DAS that found "valuing people" was not among the top 15 results to a question about current organizational values. What did appear in the top 15 were

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<sup>7</sup> CA leadership and management principles are outlined in 7 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-1 H-241. The Department's leadership principles are described in 3 FAM 1214.

<sup>8</sup> OIG, *Targeted Review of Leadership and Management at the National Passport Center* (ISP-I-19-13, November 2018).

<sup>9</sup> OIG, *Compliance Follow-Up Review: Targeted Inspection of the Leadership and Management of the National Passport Center* (ISP-C-20-27, June 2020).

“hierarchy” and “rules.” As a result, CA/PPT employees developed and defined five core operational values for the directorate: Our People, Effective Leadership, Professionalism, Integrity, and Collaboration. A values steering committee,<sup>10</sup> working through volunteer “change champions” at each of CA/PPT’s 29 passport agencies, centers, and production facilities, and at headquarters, was tasked with instilling the core operational values throughout the directorate. The “change champions” scheduled local meetings and participated in a monthly directorate-wide teleconference to strategize and discuss progress. To ensure these core values were considered when developing new initiatives or changes to directorate-wide policies, all decision memos to the DAS required a “values alignment paragraph” explaining how the proposed initiative or change supported one or more of the new core organizational values. Staff interviewed by OIG consistently expressed appreciation for the values initiative.

### ***Staff Expressed Concern About Leadership’s Communication Style***

Although CA/PPT staff welcomed the DAS’ values initiative, OIG found that staff were concerned about the DAS’ communication style. During OIG interviews, staff described the DAS as being publicly critical of employees in meetings—sometimes harshly—and said she was sometimes unpredictable and inconsistent in her dealings with staff. Some staff members told OIG they believed this behavior was unintentional and that she was unaware of how her behavior could affect subordinates. Nonetheless, several staff members told OIG the DAS’ communication style caused some employees to remain silent in meetings rather than speak up and risk a negative reaction, thereby depriving CA/PPT leaders of full discussions and accurate information on issues and problems. When OIG brought the staff’s concerns to her attention, the DAS said she had not previously received feedback on her communication style, expressed concern, and committed to seeking coaching to remedy the problem.

### **Execution of Policy Goals and Objectives**

CA/PPT is a large and geographically dispersed organization that presents many leadership and operational challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting need for as many staff as possible to work from home in 2020 further complicated the directorate’s work. Despite these challenges, OIG found that CA/PPT successfully carried out its core mission of accepting and adjudicating passport applications and issuing passport documents to eligible U.S. citizens and nationals. CA/PPT eliminated a large backlog of pending passport applications by September 2020 and was issuing 200,000 to 250,000 passports per week by mid-December 2020, with processing times approaching the bureau’s normal timeliness guidelines.

Although CA/PPT succeeded in accomplishing its overall mission, it was unable to achieve its IT modernization goals. This contributed to the directorate’s inability to operate effectively and continue to meet its mission when in-office work was suspended due to COVID-19. However, the IT modernization efforts are not fully under the directorate’s control because they are

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<sup>10</sup> The values steering committee consisted of 38 members representing each passport agency and each office at CA/PPT headquarters.



managed primarily by CA/CST, which was outside the scope of this inspection. OIG's findings and recommendations related to IT modernization are discussed in the Information Management section of this report.

## **Adherence to Internal Controls**

OIG found that CA/PPT had a well-established system of internal controls to detect and deter malfeasance. The directorate's Office of Passport Integrity and Internal Controls oversaw and coordinated the emergency management and internal controls programs; developed policies, processes, and procedures to protect personally identifiable information contained in passport records; managed data-sharing programs; conducted internal control reviews; and reported incidents of internal fraud and malfeasance at the passport agencies and centers.

## **INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

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OIG assessed CA/PPT's information management operations by reviewing IT projects, programs, and work performed by CA/PPT employees. OIG also reviewed progress on CA/PPT's IT modernization goals as stated in the FY 2020-2022 Passport Services Strategic Plan and previous strategic plans, all of which cited as a goal modernization of IT business processes through the deployment of the ConsularOne program. CA initiated the ConsularOne IT modernization program in 2009 and, as of December 2020, had expended \$59 million on the passport-related aspects of the program. As discussed below, OIG determined that CA/PPT's dependence on CA/CST management for the IT modernization program affected key CA/PPT initiatives. In addition, OIG found that CA/PPT did not effectively manage its responsibilities related to the passport IT modernization activities and that the directorate's SharePoint site contained outdated information and did not comply with Department standards.

### ***Dependence on the Office of Consular Systems and Technology's Management of Information Technology Modernization Delayed Key Directorate Initiatives***

OIG found that CA/PPT's dependence on CA/CST for managing IT modernization projects delayed two key initiatives. At the time of the inspection, little progress had been made in implementing the priority Online Passport Renewal and Next Generation Passport systems projects. OIG found that the FY 2020-2022 Passport Services' Strategic Plan outlined objectives for these systems that were essentially unchanged from plans going back to FY 2010, underscoring that virtually no progress had been achieved on these initiatives during the past decade.

With respect to the Online Passport Renewal system, CA/CST had yet to establish a sufficient test environment configured to support multiple scenarios, delaying progress. In addition, CA/PPT staff told OIG that CA/CST started system development using the Agile software development methodology, which required continuous development and testing to meet business requirements. However, CA/PPT staff said CA/CST software developers determined at some point that the Agile approach would not work for the Online Passport Renewal system, and so returned to a phased, sequential process of software development. As a result, product

development and testing occurred at a much slower pace. Had the Online Passport Renewal system been available, CA/PPT could have pivoted to remote work and kept a greater portion of the incoming passport applications moving throughout the COVID-19 pandemic-related maximum telework orders in 2020. However, since the system was unavailable, CA/PPT staff were required to return to the office sooner than other Department employees to address the backlog of passport applications that accumulated during the pandemic's first few months. Finally, delays in implementing the Online Passport Renewal system resulted in inconvenience to the public because applicants must continue to submit paper, rather than online, applications.

Regarding the Next Generation Passport system, OIG found the biggest challenge has been the printers used to print the passport books. CA/PPT staff told OIG the equipment used to print passports had reached the end of their life. However, CA/CST delays in developing the software required to interface with the new printers, which will print upgraded and more secure passports, caused repeated postponements of the launch of the Next Generation Passport pilot. At the time of the inspection, the pilot was scheduled to begin in March 2021.<sup>11</sup>

Due to its responsibility for managing IT modernization projects, CA/CST also had primary responsibility for most aspects of passport IT systems development, including budgeting, project schedule, prioritization, development, testing, and deployment. A review of CA/CST's operations was outside the scope of this inspection. However, in light of the issues with repeated delays in IT modernization raised during this inspection, OIG launched an inspection of the ConsularOne program and CA/CST's IT modernization plans in spring 2021.

### ***Directorate's Management of Modernization Project Did Not Adhere to Department Standards***

Although CA/CST had primary responsibility for IT modernization, OIG determined that CA/PPT did not effectively manage its responsibilities related to passport IT modernization activities in two areas. First, OIG found that CA/PPT lacked project management processes,<sup>12</sup> including a collaborative performance evaluation plan,<sup>13</sup> communication plan,<sup>14</sup> and risk management strategy<sup>15</sup> for the directorate's IT modernization projects. In addition, OIG found CA/PPT staff were unfamiliar with project communication plans and could not provide documentation that identified single points of contact for the different IT modernization projects.<sup>16</sup> Second, CA/PPT and CA/CST did not coordinate the resolution of interdependent project tasks, which delayed key implementation decisions.

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<sup>11</sup> CA launched the pilot on March 24, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> 5 FAH-5 H-200, "Project Management."

<sup>13</sup> 18 FAM 301.4-4(E), "Collaborating with Other Bureaus, Offices, Agencies and Organizations on Evaluations."

<sup>14</sup> 5 FAH-5 H-112c, "Roles and Responsibilities."

<sup>15</sup> 5 FAM 618c, "Project Risk Management," and 5 FAH-5 H-116a, "Risk Management."

<sup>16</sup> 5 FAM 617.4, "Sponsor."

Furthermore, OIG assessed that communication and planning between CA/PPT and CA/CST was insufficient. CA/PPT staff reported a lack of follow-up effort by CA/CST to complete projects in accordance with schedules and that CA/CST could not provide project timelines and milestones.

The FAM and Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)<sup>17</sup> list the elements involved in effective management of project requirements, including risk management. Furthermore, 1 FAM 253.2-5(b-c) states that CA/PPT's Office of Technical Operations should direct the development and support of passport systems requirements and manage and coordinate with CA/CST the development and implementation of activities for automated systems. Without the use of project management processes and improved communication between CA/PPT and CA/CST, passport IT modernization projects are at risk of continued delays, which could result in reduced service and inconvenience to the American public.

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should implement project management processes for the Passport Services Directorate's information technology modernization projects in accordance with Department standards. (Action: CA)

### ***Directorate SharePoint Site Was Outdated and Ineffective***

CA/PPT's SharePoint site contained outdated information and broken hyperlinks and did not comply with Department standards in 5 FAM 776.2b. For example, OIG found CA/PPT performance award information located on the landing page had not been updated since 2015. Additionally, CA/PPT staff told OIG that features such as "PPT Answers"—a forum for frequently asked questions by passport managers and adjudicators on a variety of policy and procedural issues—had not functioned since a 2018 upgrade to all Department SharePoint sites. According to 5 FAM 776.2b, content managers are required to ensure that information published on websites, including internal SharePoint sites, is current, relevant, and accurate. CA/PPT staff told OIG the directorate had assigned content managers but were unable to confirm whether they regularly reviewed or updated the site. CA/PPT's SharePoint site serves as an important repository for guidance, standard operating procedures, checklists, and training materials for staff to use in performing their consular programs and duties. Absent regular content reviews and updates, CA/PPT cannot guarantee Department employees are accessing current and accurate information.

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should implement procedures to regularly update the content of the Passport Services Directorate's SharePoint site. (Action: CA)

## **OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

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OIG reviewed CA/PPT's citizenship adjudication and passport policy guidance, as well as its personnel management, training, and professional development activities for its staff.

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<sup>17</sup> See 5 FAM 617.4, 5 FAM 618c, 18 FAM 301.4-4(E), 5 FAH-5 H-112c, 5 FAH-5 H-116a, and 5 FAH-5 H-200.

### ***Citizenship Adjudication and Passport Policy Guidance Generally Met Department Standards***

In 2017, CA consolidated all responsibilities for citizenship adjudication and passport policy guidance in CA/PPT's Office of Adjudication. This reorganization involved transferring responsibilities for providing policy guidance on citizenship adjudication for overseas missions from CA's Office of Overseas Citizens Services to CA/PPT, resulting in a significant workload increase for the Office of Adjudication. For example, in 2019, the Office of Adjudication received 26,329 emails worldwide, of which 9,261 were unique inquiries or requests related to passport adjudication policies, regulations, and the interpretation and application of citizenship acquisition and nationality laws. Approximately 75 percent of these inquiries for adjudication policy guidance were from overseas missions, even though they accounted for only 3 percent of passport issuances annually.

Despite this increased workload, OIG found the Office of Adjudication had effective processes in place to issue responsive, timely, and consistent adjudication guidance, as required by 8 FAH-1 H-102.4-2(3), (8), and (10). Additionally, the office generally met internal service standards, resolving at least 80 percent of 9,261 inquiries within 2 business days. Thus, OIG concluded that CA/PPT generally met Department standards with respect to citizenship adjudication and passport policy guidance, with the exception discussed below.

### ***Directorate Lacked Process for Handling Archived Advisory Opinions to Efficiently Support Adjudications***

OIG found that CA/PPT lacked an efficient process for its adjudication staff to search and retrieve archived advisory opinions. Program analysts in CA/PPT's Office of Adjudication used an archive of hundreds of Outlook email folders and sub-folders, catalogued by topic, to respond to adjudication inquiries. These ad hoc folders, created over time, sometimes left analysts unclear as to where particular email strings were filed, forcing them to open multiple folders to find the information they sought. Guidance in 8 FAH-1 H-102.4-2(3), (8), and (10) stipulates that the Office of Adjudication should formulate policies and procedures on passport and U.S. citizenship adjudication and organize its guidance so it can be searched in the future. The office's current approach does not meet these standards because the archive of email folders and sub-folders cannot be efficiently searched by topic or key word, nor can the most recent guidance be easily located. Without an organized, searchable catalogue of archived adjudication advisory opinions, CA/PPT's Office of Adjudication is at risk of providing incomplete, inconsistent, or outdated responses to adjudication inquiries.

**Recommendation 3:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should implement a process to store the Passport Services Directorate's archived advisory opinions, so they are easily searchable and retrievable in accordance with Department standards. (Action: CA)

### ***Directorate Had Effective Training and Professional Development Programs***

Based on interviews and reviews of documentation, OIG found that managers and supervisors throughout CA/PPT had effective processes in place to deliver staff training and professional development activities, particularly for those serving in leadership and management positions.

OIG confirmed that managers, from branch and division chiefs up to office directors, participated in leadership training. Additionally, CA/PPT's Office of Program Management and Operational Support, through the Career Management Division, delivered a comprehensive range of basic, intermediate, and advanced training for passport adjudication and supervisory adjudication specialists throughout the 29 passport agencies and centers. The Customer Service Division also delivered training, the majority of which was online, for the network of 8,200 passport acceptance facilities, whose approximately 40,000 acceptance agents undergo annual mandatory recertification. Finally, the Office of Acceptance Facility Oversight offered training for analysts performing inspections of passport acceptance facilities, which included a review of a written manual of standard operating procedures, peer mentoring, and supervisor-led training. These training programs were supplemented by best practices shared during biannual meetings.

***Inconsistent and Informal Onboarding and Orientation Inhibited Employees' Familiarization With Directorate's Mission***

OIG found that few offices in CA/PPT had formal onboarding programs for new employees, with staff reporting that the quality of their onboarding and orientation was inconsistent and informal. Virtually all staff surveyed and interviewed said the principal vehicles for orienting new employees to their duties and the directorate's mission were on-the-job training; informal consultations with supervisors, co-workers, and division chiefs; and self-directed study. Staff generally found the CA training officer's entry-on-duty program useful, although it was geared to all new CA employees and not specifically to new CA/PPT staff. Staff told OIG they wanted a more structured familiarization with CA/PPT's culture, work practices, and individual employees' role within the directorate, and more broadly, within CA. Guidance in 13 FAM 101.2-2(E) states that managers and supervisors should have effective processes in place to ensure training and professional development. OIG determined that onboarding materials for new employees such as manuals, guidelines, or standard operating procedures often were outdated or not made available to new employees until well after they had settled into their duties. However, OIG also noted that several CA/PPT offices had made concerted efforts to update relevant job aids shortly before or during the inspection.

As a result of this inconsistency, newly hired employees' acclimatization to their jobs and CA/PPT was delayed and required employees to rely disproportionately on the availability and goodwill of individual supervisors or more experienced colleagues. However, during the inspection, CA/PPT released New Employee Welcome Handbook packets. CA/PPT told OIG that each office was to update packet templates with specialized information and provide customized copies to new staff. The handbook packets' standardized format facilitated individualized onboarding while providing new employees with necessary context on the directorate's overall mission. In addition, the Career Management Division's new employee orientation e-learning tools, planned for late summer 2021, were designed to provide a structured onboarding orientation. Because of CA/PPT's actions, taken and planned, to improve the onboarding of new employees, OIG did not make a recommendation to address this issue.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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OIG provided a draft of this report to Department stakeholders for their review and comment on the findings and recommendations. OIG issued the following recommendations to the Bureau of Consular Affairs. The bureau's complete responses can be found in Appendix B.<sup>1</sup> The bureau also provided technical comments that were incorporated into the report, as appropriate.

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should implement project management processes for the Passport Services Directorate's information technology modernization projects in accordance with Department standards. (Action: CA)

**Management Response:** In its July 29, 2021, response, the Bureau of Consular Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Consular Affairs implemented project management processes for the Passport Services Directorate's information technology modernization projects in accordance with Department standards.

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should implement procedures to regularly update the content of the Passport Services Directorate's SharePoint site. (Action: CA)

**Management Response:** In its July 29, 2021, response, the Bureau of Consular Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Consular Affairs implemented procedures to regularly update the content of the Passport Services Directorate's SharePoint site.

**Recommendation 3:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should implement a process to store the Passport Services Directorate's archived advisory opinions, so they are easily searchable and retrievable in accordance with Department standards. (Action: CA)

**Management Response:** In its July 29, 2021, response, the Bureau of Consular Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Consular Affairs

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<sup>1</sup> OIG faced delays in completing this work because of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting operational challenges. These challenges included the inability to conduct most in-person meetings, limitations on our presence at the workplace, difficulty accessing certain information, prohibitions on travel, and related difficulties within the agencies we oversee, which also affected their ability to respond to our requests.

implemented a process to store the Passport Services Directorate's archived advisory opinions, so they are easily searchable and retrievable in accordance with Department standards.

## PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

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Title	Name	Arrival Date
<b>Deputy Assistant Secretary for Passport Services</b>		
	Rachel Arndt	8/2018
<b>Managing Directors:</b>		
Issuance Operations (acting)	Barry Conway	7/2020
Support Operations (acting)	Amanda Jones	7/2020
<b>Office Directors and Senior Advisors:</b>		
Acceptance Facility Oversight	Daniel Bilow	
Planning and Program Support	Winnie Fuentes	
Passport Integrity and Internal Controls	Madelynn McDonald	
Program Management and Operational Support	Daniel Alessandrini	
Technical Operations (acting)	Brykyta Shelton	
Adjudication	Paul Peek	
Management Analysis and Coordination	Bill Wood	
Senior Advisor for International Affairs	Darryl Brile	
<b>Regional Directors:</b>		
Capital Region	Mark Meznar	
South/Central	Jacqueline Harley-Bell	
Northeast	Tyrone Shelton	
West	Tom Reid	
Senior Advisor for National Passport Center	Don Jacobson	

Source: Generated by OIG from data provided by the Bureau of Consular Affairs.



## APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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This inspection was conducted from August 31, 2020, to February 23, 2021, in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspections Handbook, as issued by OIG for the Department and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

### Objectives and Scope

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive Officer of USAGM, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and USAGM. Inspections cover three broad areas, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980:

- **Policy Implementation:** whether policy goals and objectives are being effectively achieved, and whether all elements of an office or mission are being adequately coordinated.
- **Resource Management:** whether resources are being used and managed with maximum efficiency, effectiveness, and economy and whether financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- **Management Controls:** whether the administration of activities and operations meets the requirements of applicable laws and regulations; whether internal management controls have been instituted to ensure quality of performance and reduce the likelihood of mismanagement; and whether instance of fraud, waste, or abuse exist; and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

OIG's specific objectives for this inspection of the Bureau of Consular Affairs' (CA) Passport Services Directorate (CA/PPT) were to determine whether:

- CA/PPT's Deputy Assistant Secretary cultivated the leadership and management principles, particularly with respect to communication between leadership and staff.
- CA/PPT remained committed to implementing organizational reform to reinforce CA and Department leadership principles based on recommendations in the 2018 OIG inspection report of the National Passport Center<sup>1</sup> and feedback from CA/PPT's internal staff surveys.
- CA/PPT developed and implemented a content management process to ensure that SharePoint content is current and relevant.
- CA/PPT managed records and documentation in accordance with Department standards.
- The support CA/PPT provided to its managers with respect to hiring actions complied with Department standards.

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<sup>1</sup> OIG, *Targeted Review of Leadership and Management at the National Passport Center* (ISP-I-19-13, November 2018).

- CA/PPT provided the required adjudication policy guidance.
- CA/PPT had effective processes in place to ensure training and professional development, particularly for leadership and management.

## **Methodology**

OIG used a risk-based approach to prepare for this inspection. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and taking into consideration relevant guidance, OIG largely conducted this inspection remotely and relied on audio- and video-conferencing tools in lieu of in-person interviews with Department and other appropriate personnel. OIG also reviewed pertinent records; circulated surveys and compiled the results, as appropriate; and reviewed the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, and organizations affected by the review. OIG used professional judgment, along with physical, documentary, testimonial, and analytical evidence collected or generated, to develop the findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations included in this report.

## APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

July 29, 2021

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THRU: CA – Acting Assistant Secretary Douglass Benning

TO: OIG – Sandra Lewis, Assistant Inspector General for Inspections

FROM: CA/PPT – Rachel M. Arndt, Deputy Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – Inspection of the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Passport Services Directorate

Bureau of Consular Affairs Passport Services has reviewed the draft OIG inspection report. We provide the following comments in response to the recommendations provided by OIG:

**OIG Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should implement project management processes for the Passport Services Directorate's information technology modernization projects in accordance with Department standards. (Action: CA)

**Management Response:** CA/PPT concurs with this recommendation. The Department's standards for its IT project management processes (PMP) are primarily geared to IT departments. However, CA/PPT acknowledges it has a very important role in all IT projects that directly affect its programs and mission. CA/PPT is dedicating additional training and mentorship of its staff towards their roles as program managers and how they align with the project management efforts of the Office of Consular Systems and Technology (CA/CST). In collaboration with CA/CST, CA/PPT is also applying PMP best practices toward the Next Generation Passport (NGP) and Online Passport Renewal (OPR) projects to meet or exceed Department IT project management standards.

**OIG Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should implement procedures to regularly update the content of the Passport Services Directorate's SharePoint site. (Action: CA)

**Management Response:** CA/PPT concurs with this recommendation. PPT will assign content managers to PPT's Directorate SharePoint site who will manage and update content. PPT's Technical Operations, Information Technology Liaison SharePoint group will provide technical support to those designated content managers. The group will coordinate with the Bureau of Information Resource Management for resolution of recurring enterprise issues, SharePoint upgrades, and the availability of SharePoint design and development tools.

**OIG Recommendation 3:** The Bureau of Consular Affairs should implement a process to store the Passport Services Directorate's archived guidance, so it is easily searchable and retrievable in accordance with Department standards. (Action: CA)

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**Management Response:** CA/PPT concurs with this recommendation. The Office of Adjudication (CA/PPT/S/A) will consult with the Office of Technical Operations (CA/PPT/S/TO) on the design of an archive system that can manage archived advisory opinions (guidance) from the Office of Adjudication (CA/PPT/S/A) that can be searchable and retrievable. The completion date is predicated on designing a viable system that adheres to the Department's software standards.

CA/PPT is attempting to manage the archival and retrieval issues by reducing the total volume of advisory opinions needed. CA/PPT routinely updates the 8 FAM/FAH to clarify guidance. The 8 FAM/FAH website has a built-in search function and is available to all Department users, thereby reducing the need for passport agencies/centers and posts to contact CA/PPT/S/A. In addition, CA/PPT ensures that 8 FAM/FAH updates are shared with the Foreign Service Institute and CA/PPT's Career Management Division to keep training up to date. However, some level of advisory opinions will always be required because, for example, the language in court orders varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and judge to judge.

The current Outlook-based software is, as noted, insufficient for CA/PPT/S/A's purposes. Capacity limitations on .ost files prevent more than a few years' worth of responses from being readily available and searchable.

CA/PPT/S/A has researched a SharePoint-based solution, but found it to be inadequate, because size limitations on SharePoint sites would require creating a new SharePoint archive roughly every two months, which is even more restrictive than the current Outlook-based solution. In addition, there are concerns about storing applicants' personally identifiable information (PII) on SharePoint.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Madelynn McDonald.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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CA	Bureau of Consular Affairs
CA/CST	Office of Consular Systems and Technology
CA/PPT	Passport Services Directorate
DAS	Deputy Assistant Secretary
FAH	Foreign Affairs Handbook
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual

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