



## Office of Inspector General United States Department of State

ISP-I-21-23

Office of Inspections

August 2021

# (U) Inspection of the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs

## DOMESTIC OPERATIONS

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# HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

ISP-I-21-23

## **(U) What OIG Inspected**

(U) OIG inspected the executive direction, policy implementation, foreign assistance management, resource management, and information management operations of the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

## **(U) What OIG Recommends**

(U) OIG made 12 recommendations to the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs.

(U) In its comments on the draft report, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs concurred with 9 recommendations and disagreed with 3 recommendations. OIG considers 9 recommendations resolved and 3 recommendations unresolved. The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific 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.

**(U) August 2021**

**(U) OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS**

**(U) DOMESTIC OPERATIONS**

## **(U) Inspection of the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs**

### **(U) What OIG Found**

- (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs successfully supported Department of State policies.
- (U) Frequent leadership changes and vacancies within the bureau had an adverse effect on employee effectiveness and morale.
- (U) Bureau leadership successfully handled the management challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and working in a maximum telework environment.
- (U) The bureau did not have clearly specified roles and responsibilities for coordinating Arctic issues with the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region.
- (U) Chronic understaffing impeded the mission of the Office of Space and Advanced Technology.
- (U) The bureau lacked procedures to systematically identify and reclassify foreign assistance funds which led to the return of nearly \$5.4 million in canceled foreign assistance funds to the Department of the Treasury.
- (U) Spotlight on Success: The bureau made effective use of online platforms to support U.S. international environmental priorities.
- (U) Spotlight on Success: The bureau's efforts secured international support to build a \$10 billion supercollider project in Japan.

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## (U) CONTEXT

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(U) In 1973, Congress established the Department of State's (Department) Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES).<sup>1</sup> Since then, the Department has refined and expanded the bureau's mandate to include responsibilities for sustainable development; polar issues; foreign policy aspects of outer space and other fields of advanced technology; and international health issues.<sup>2</sup> OES identifies its mission as advancing America's security and prosperity through international leadership on oceans, environmental, science, outer space, and health issues. OES's work supports U.S. industries—including marine fisheries, satellites, air pollution control, forest products, and chemicals—representing several hundred billion dollars in annual sales and millions of employees.

(U) The bureau's 2018 Functional Bureau Strategy comprises five strategic goals that reflect its broad mission:

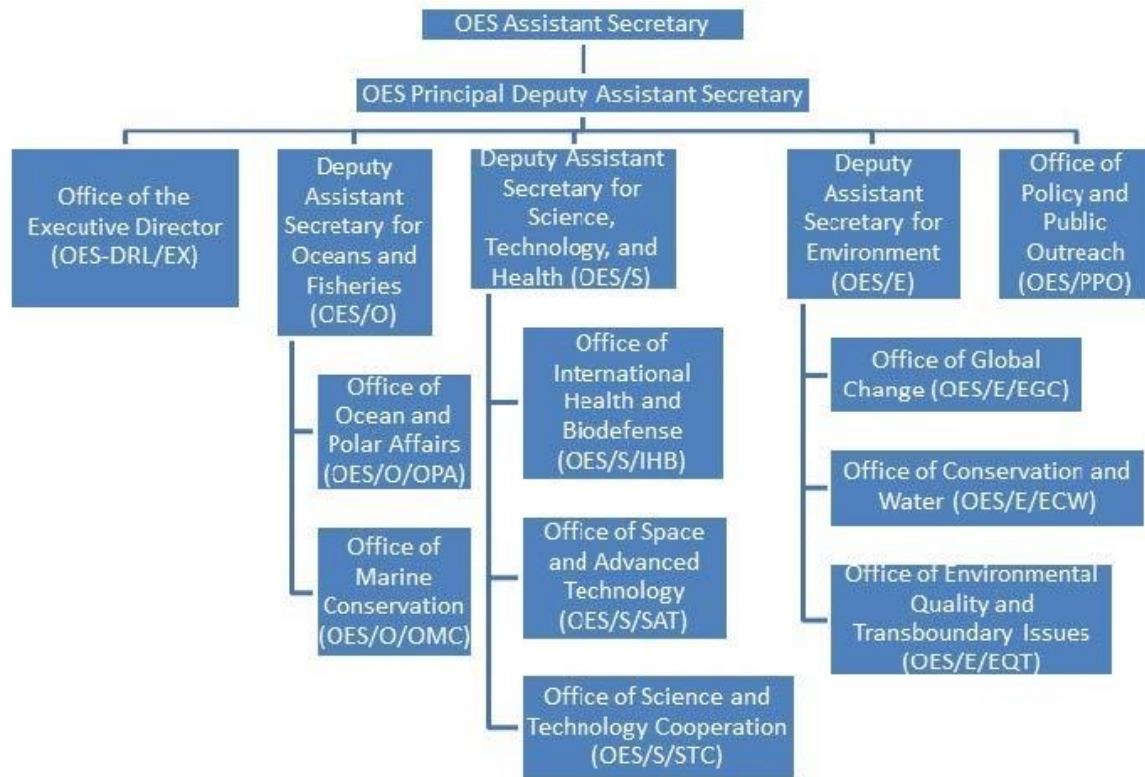
- (U) Counter the drivers of instability at the intersection of the OES mission, including addressing conservation crimes; natural resource governance; and conflict and instability related to environmental degradation.
- (U) Increase U.S. economic growth and job creation through oceans, environmental, science, technology, space, and health-related engagement.
- (U) Advance American space leadership.
- (U) Protect the American public's health at home and abroad.
- (U) Safeguard U.S. security, environmental, and economic interests in the Arctic.

(U) An Acting Assistant Secretary and four Deputy Assistant Secretaries (DAS) lead the bureau, with eight offices in three directorates carrying out diplomatic engagement and foreign assistance programs. The Office of Policy and Public Outreach handles public diplomacy, while the Executive Office provides administrative support to OES, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and three other independent offices. OES's FY 2020 authorized staffing levels included 47 Foreign Service and 169 Civil Service positions. The bureau also had 45 contractors at the time of the inspection. In addition, OES supports 12 Regional Environmental-Science-Technology-Health offices located in embassies throughout all Department regional bureaus, which address transboundary environmental issues covering more than 170 countries. In FY 2020, the bureau managed \$62.7 million in contributions to international fisheries commissions and marine conservation organizations and \$59.2 million in foreign assistance projects.

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<sup>1</sup> (U) 22 U.S. Code § 2655a.

<sup>2</sup> (U) 1 FAM 541.1(2), (5), (7), and (8), "Responsibilities."

**(U) Figure 1: OES Organization Chart**

**(U) Source:** 1 Foreign Affairs Manual Exhibit 541.2.

(U) OIG evaluated the bureau's executive direction, policy implementation, resource management, and information management operations, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980.<sup>3</sup>

## **(U) EXECUTIVE DIRECTION**

(U) OIG assessed OES leadership based on interviews with staff, questionnaires completed by staff and contractors, and a review of documents as well as observations of bureau activities during the inspection. OIG also conducted interviews within the Department and the interagency community, and with U.S. business and nongovernmental organization partners that elicited comments on OES's performance on policy and program management.

### **(U) Tone at the Top and Standards of Conduct**

(U) The Acting Assistant Secretary, who arrived as the Senior Bureau Official in March 2020, is a career Senior Foreign Service officer. Prior to his appointment, he served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) in the Bureau of International Organizations. The OES PDAS, also a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, arrived in August 2020. She previously served as

<sup>3</sup> (U) See Appendix A.

the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

(U) OIG found the Acting Assistant Secretary and PDAS generally modeled the Department's leadership and management principles in 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 1214. Early in his tenure, for example, he prominently displayed the Department's Ethos Statement in the Front Office and elsewhere in the bureau. In meetings, counseling sessions, and comments to staff, he encouraged appropriate attention to ethical conduct by all OES employees. Additionally, staff cited as positive the Acting Assistant Secretary's strategic vision and understanding of policy, for example, he refocused bureau priorities in the 2020 Senior Strategy and Resource Review. A majority of staff characterized both senior officials as approachable and open to staff input, and as employing appropriate methods of communication with staff. Examples included frequent PDAS and DAS meetings, weekly senior staff meetings, several town halls, an awards ceremony, and participation in office-level staff meetings. Beyond this, the Acting Assistant Secretary and the PDAS both maintained "open office hours," when they encouraged employees to speak directly with them on any topic. DASes also made themselves available to staff through regular office and team meetings and one-on-one conversations. During weekly senior staff, DAS, and office director meetings, OIG observed open communication and constructive dialog among OES leadership and other senior staff. Additionally, staff commented favorably on bureau leadership's handling of the management challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Many staff members commented on their timely and continuous efforts to communicate with employees about the virus' effect on bureau operations while the Department was on maximum telework status.

***(U) Frequent Leadership Changes and Vacancies Affected Bureau Effectiveness and Morale***

(U) Through interviews with staff and information from OIG survey questionnaires completed by bureau employees and contractors, OIG found that frequent leadership changes and vacancies had an adverse effect on employee effectiveness and morale. At the time of the inspection, OES had been without a confirmed Assistant Secretary since 2014.<sup>4</sup> In the six years prior to the inspection, a series of senior officers filled the role of Acting Assistant Secretary while concurrently serving as PDAS. Furthermore, according to information provided by the bureau, extended vacancies also occurred in the DAS positions. In one instance, from July 2019 until September 2020, acting DASes managed each of the three directorates. Notably, one official had served as acting DAS for Science, Technology, and Health since 2011. A similar pattern occurred among office directors. At the time of the inspection, acting office directors encumbered three of the nine office director positions, having taken on these responsibilities in addition to their regular assignments. In the Office of Space and Advanced Technology, for example, 5 of 15 authorized full-time leadership positions were vacant, including the office director and two team leads, with the deputy office director filling three of the office's four leadership roles.

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<sup>4</sup> (U) In September 2020, then-President Trump nominated an Assistant Secretary for OES. The Senate had not taken action on the nomination at the time of the inspection.

(U) Staff told OIG that the persistent staffing and leadership gaps in offices led to reduced effectiveness. For example, staff members highlighted the bureau's lack of consistent policy guidance and occasional conflicting requests from leadership, including from new officials unfamiliar with the bureau. Furthermore, some stakeholders questioned the effectiveness of a bureau without a confirmed Assistant Secretary to engage on a senior level in the Department and the interagency community. The Acting Assistant Secretary told OIG he recognized the vacancy issue and said his aim was to fill the positions deliberately but not in haste, recognizing that policy priorities and, therefore, staffing needs change under a confirmed Assistant Secretary.

(U) Additionally, OIG learned that some supervisors did not comport with leadership principles in 3 FAM 1214 and presented their views in a manner that was either intimidating or dismissive of staff input. The Acting Assistant Secretary told OIG that he had begun counseling senior officials regarding these leadership issues.

### **(U) Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity**

(U) OIG found the Acting Assistant Secretary, through his professional conduct and actions, cultivated the leadership and management principles under 3 FAM 1214 to promote equal opportunity in accordance with 3 FAM 1212.1c and 3 FAM 1212.2c. OIG also found that the Acting Assistant Secretary promoted the creation of a diversity and inclusion council to provide an environment in which OES employees could share concerns and best practices.

### **(U) Execution of Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives**

(U) OIG found that stakeholders within and outside of the Department noted OES's skill at policy formulation and implementation. Stakeholders credited the Front Office and bureau officials at all levels for developing productive relationships with counterparts in the interagency community, with foreign governments, with U.S. business, and with nongovernmental organizations. Stakeholders interviewed by OIG praised OES's role in negotiating the Artemis Accords on Space Exploration<sup>5</sup> and the bureau's role in securing international support for the International Linear Collider (ILC) project in Japan,<sup>6</sup> both important priorities for the administration. In addition, the Acting Assistant Secretary identified a senior adviser to undertake outreach and encourage partnerships with regional and functional bureaus, which strengthened OES's communications with the Department.

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<sup>5</sup> (U) The Artemis Accords are a single document describing principles grounded in the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 to facilitate exploration, science, and commercial activities in space. On October 13, 2020, the United States signed the Accords with Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom.

<sup>6</sup> (U) In 2019, the Office of Science and Technology mobilized the interagency community on a coordinated, broad-based diplomatic effort with key institutions in Japan and Europe on the proposal to build the ILC in Japan. In June 2020, the European Organization for Nuclear Research announced its support for locating the ILC in Japan.

### ***(U) Strategic Planning Responsibility Inconsistent With Department Guidance***

(U) OIG found that a senior adviser in the Front Office led the bureau's strategic planning and received support from the Office of Policy and Public Outreach. However, guidance in 1 FAM 542.3b states that the Office of Policy and Public Outreach is responsible for coordinating OES bureau-wide strategic planning efforts. OES completed the Department-mandated annual review and update of its Functional Bureau Strategy<sup>7</sup> in March 2020. OES further reviewed bureau goals and objectives in June 2020 in preparation for the Department's annual Senior Strategy and Resource Reviews, during which OES received input and analysis from all bureau offices, in accordance with strategic planning principles in 18 FAM 301.2. OIG advised OES to update the 1 FAM 542.3b to reflect the bureau's arrangement of strategic planning resources and responsibilities, which it agreed to do.

### **(U) Adherence to Internal Controls**

(U) OIG found that the Acting Assistant Secretary, in preparing the bureau's 2020 Annual Management Controls Statement of Assurance, carried out his responsibilities under 2 FAM 024d to review the effectiveness of internal controls. For example, the process for preparing the statement included steps required under Department guidelines, such as office-level reviews of internal controls risks related to fraud, personal property, and contract management. However, during the inspection, OIG found internal control concerns in foreign assistance and information management, which are described in the Foreign Assistance and Information Management sections of this report.

## **(U) POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

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(U) OIG reviewed the leadership, management, and policy implementation work of OES's nine policy offices<sup>8</sup> and reviewed the bureau's policy support for its 12 regional Environmental-Science-Technology-Health offices located overseas. In an OIG survey, these regional officers largely expressed satisfaction with policy guidance, support, and communication from the bureau.

(U) In interviews with OIG, Department and other agency officials and representatives of nongovernmental organizations and the private sector cited OES subject matter expertise, transparent communication, balanced treatment of different constituencies, and negotiating effectiveness with external audiences. However, stakeholders also told OIG that OES could do a better job of articulating issues in the context of Department policy interests by improving its engagement with offices and bureaus across the Department. Some OES personnel identified a

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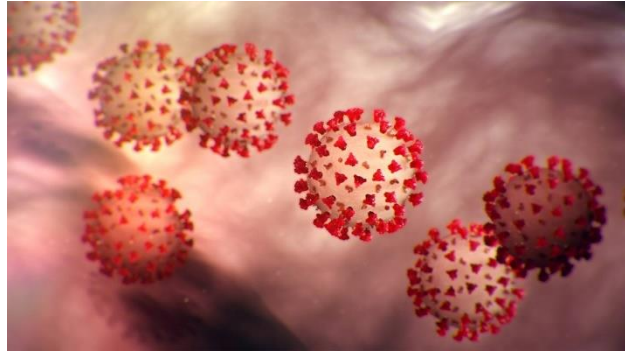
<sup>7</sup> (U) The Functional Bureau Strategy, developed in 2018, is the bureau's central strategic document.

<sup>8</sup> (U) The nine offices are the Office of Oceans and Polar Affairs and Office of Marine Conservation in the Oceans and Fisheries Directorate; the Office of Conservation and Water, the Office of Environmental Quality, and the Office of Global Change in the Environment Directorate; and the Office of International Health and Biodefense, the Office of Science and Technology Cooperation, and the Office of Space and Advanced Technology in the Science, Space, and Health Directorate; and the Office of Policy and Public Outreach.

lack of communication among policy offices, or “stovepiping,” as limiting coordination, although they also noted efforts by some OES staff to strengthen information flow among offices. OIG found that the nine inspected offices generally met requirements for policy implementation, with additional observations and exceptions noted below.

***(U) Office of International Health and Biodefense Led Department’s Initial Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Outbreak***

(U) OIG determined that OES consistently supported the Department and U.S. Government interagency community during its response to the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. OES leads Department efforts to assist international partner nations in preparation for, and reaction to, disease outbreaks and pandemics. Within OES, the Office of International Health and Biodefense (IHB) serves as the lead for such efforts, helping to protect the health of the American public by building partner capacity to prepare for disease outbreaks. During outbreaks, IHB helps to meet U.S. priorities and assist countries through diplomatic engagement and coordination of the U.S. Government’s international response, including multilateral activities.



**(U) Figure 2:** COVID-19 illustration. (Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

(U) The Department’s initial response to the pandemic began in early January when IHB began coordinating and sharing information with the Department of Health and Human Services, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and with other U.S. Government interagency partners following China’s initial report of a novel pneumonia outbreak in Wuhan. In mid-January, as the potential threat to the United States became clearer, IHB and the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs established a Department public health working group focused on interagency policy coordination. This coincided with a National Security Council-led process in which senior OES leaders participated. In early February, the Coronavirus Global Response Coordinating Unit replaced the working group with the goal of coordinating the Department’s COVID-19 efforts and staffing the Deputy Secretary’s participation in National Security Council meetings. IHB helped establish the Coordinating Unit and embedded one of its employees as IHB’s liaison to provide the unit with public health expertise. IHB also worked with the interagency community to acquire personal protective equipment from overseas sources.

(U) In mid-2020, IHB shifted its focus to the future availability of a COVID-19 vaccine for other countries. This included a proposed action plan for an international framework to accelerate the development and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics. OES leadership approved three additional positions and foreign assistance funding for IHB in FY 2022 to fulfill its responsibilities related to COVID-19 and pandemic response capacity building overseas.

***(U) Arctic Policy Roles and Responsibilities Require Clarification***

(U) OIG found uncertainty within the Department about the respective roles of the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region and OES's Office of Oceans and Polar Affairs (OPA) for managing Arctic affairs. Increased Department attention to the Arctic—including a focus on Russian and Chinese activities and the Secretary's participation in the May 2019 Arctic Council<sup>9</sup> meeting in Finland—raised the profile of Arctic issues across the Department, but also generated friction among Department offices about Arctic policy roles and responsibilities. This led to the appointment of a Coordinator, reporting to the Deputy Secretary, to guide, coordinate, and direct the Department's Arctic efforts. However, according to 1 FAM 543.1, OPA develops and coordinates U.S. policy affecting the Arctic region. Although Department personnel OIG interviewed cited good working relations between OPA and the Coordinator, OES could not provide OIG with any written documents defining their respective roles, including on Arctic Council issues.

(U) The Government Accountability Office *Standards for Internal Controls in the Federal Government*, Principle 3,<sup>10</sup> includes assigning responsibilities and understanding how units interact as attributes of an effective organizational structure. In addition, guidance in 1 FAM 014.8 details the role of functional statements in defining areas of responsibility to eliminate potential overlap and duplication between offices. At the time of the inspection, it was unclear to Department personnel and OIG if an Arctic diplomatic engagement strategy being drafted by the Coordinator would address specific roles and responsibilities. However, without such a written definition, there is increased risk of overlapping or misplaced roles and responsibilities on Arctic issues.

**Recommendation 1:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, in coordination with the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region, should specify the bureau's role and related responsibilities on Arctic issues, communicate that information to all appropriate Department stakeholders, and submit the bureau's functional statement on Arctic issues in accordance with Department guidance. (Action: OES, in coordination with S/AR)

***(U) Limited Staffing Impeded Operations of the Office of Space and Advanced Technology***

(U) The Office of Space and Advanced Technology (SAT) consistently had been short-staffed since 2016 due to frequent staff turnover and unfilled vacancies, including in office leadership. This limited the office's ability to manage its workload and meet its responsibilities. At the time of the inspection, 5 of SAT's 15 authorized full-time positions were vacant, including the office director and two team leads, with the deputy director assuming three of the four leadership

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<sup>9</sup> (U) The Arctic Council is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic Indigenous peoples, and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, particularly on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. It was formally established in 1996.

<sup>10</sup> (U) Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* 27-28 (GAO-14-704G, September 2014).

roles in the office. Interagency staff told OIG this situation led to the office's inability to assume some assignments, less frequent communication, and slower responses, which diminished SAT's effectiveness in advancing its policy responsibilities. In addition, SAT staff confirmed that the staffing shortages contributed to the late submission of two mandatory reports to the President<sup>11</sup> and Congress.<sup>12</sup> Department objectives for organizational structures in 1 FAM 014.1 include effective employee utilization, mission needs, meeting Department priorities, and improving service delivery. Without sufficient staff, SAT will continue to struggle to manage its heavy workload, assume additional responsibilities under its mandate, and execute tasks in a timely manner. OES leadership told OIG the bureau had hired an outside consultant to review SAT's office staffing, management, and organizational issues, with a final report expected in March 2021. As a result of OES's actions, OIG did not make a recommendation to address this issue.

***(U) The Office of Conservation and Water Did Not Comply With Department Organizational Standards***

(U) OIG found that the Office of Conservation and Water (ECW) did not conform to Department organizational structure requirements, which led to inefficient office management and uneven distribution of work. A series of position transfers due to changing office priorities left the ECW's Biodiversity Unit with only three positions, including that of unit chief. As a result, the Biodiversity Unit was below the Department's minimum staffing requirement and had too few employees to manage its work. Instead of rotating staff to the Biodiversity Unit, ECW leadership reassigned the Biodiversity Unit's tasks to the other units and to a Biodiversity Unit member on long-term detail to another bureau. These actions dispersed responsibilities and chain of command across the office. Organizational principles in 1 FAM 014.7d(2) state that sub-office work units should have a minimum of six full-time or part-time permanent positions to maintain effective and efficient span of control. The current ECW organizational structure created inefficient delegation and implementation of responsibilities and put the office at risk for ineffective management of staff and workload priorities.

**Recommendation 2:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should align the organizational structure of the Office of Conservation and Water in accordance with Department guidelines. (Action: OES)

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<sup>11</sup> (U) Section 4 of the April 6, 2020, Executive Order on Encouraging International Support for the Recovery and Use of Space Resources (E.O. 13914) requires the Secretary of State to report to the President activities carried out under the order no later than 180 days after the date of the order.

<sup>12</sup> (U) The Report to Congress on Efforts to Support the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space is required by Senate Report 116-126, which accompanies Division G of the Further Appropriations Act FY 2020, Public Law 116-94.

### **(U) Spotlight on Success: Bureau Made Effective Use of Online Platform to Support U.S. International Environmental Priorities**

(U) The Office of Environmental Quality and Transboundary Issues developed and managed thematic intranet sites at Communities@State<sup>13</sup> on air quality, mercury abatement, and marine litter and waste management—all issues identified by the National Security Council as U.S. international environmental priorities. The office used the sites as resources for embassies in their engagement with foreign governments and the public. The sites contained extensive information drawn from varied sources and were clearly organized, easy to navigate, and frequently updated. The marine litter and waste management site included a workshop consisting of four webinars to inform Department domestic and overseas staff on how to improve management of marine plastic pollution and other waste, with speakers drawn from several U.S. Government agencies. Staff completing these webinars earned training credit from the Department's Foreign Service Institute.

### **(U) Spotlight on Success: Bureau Efforts Secured International Support to Build \$10 Billion International Linear Collider in Japan**

(U) OES, and specifically the Department's Office of Science and Technology, led a diplomatic whole-of-government U.S. engagement strategy with international partners that secured support for the U.S. proposal to build the ILC in Japan over a competing Chinese proposal to locate it in China.

(U) In 2019, the Office of Science and Technology mobilized the interagency community on a coordinated, broad-based diplomatic effort with key institutions in Japan and Europe on the proposal to build the ILC in Japan. Working with the Department of Energy and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the office organized senior-level engagement and demarches with European Organization for Nuclear Research member states as well as letters from the Deputy Secretary of State and Secretary of Energy to the Japanese Government. This extensive outreach—which highlighted the collider's importance to the United States and allies' national and economic security and continued dominance in the physical sciences—led to Japan's willingness in early 2020 to begin international discussions on the collider. In June 2020, the European Organization for Nuclear Research announced its support for locating the ILC in Japan. In response, China announced in August 2020 that it would discontinue its separate supercollider project. OES intends to use this success as a model for engagement on other major projects, particularly those in fusion energy, high-intensity lasers, and other radiation sources where China may be a competing investor.

## **(U) FOREIGN ASSISTANCE**

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(U) OES managed \$59.2 million in foreign assistance funds in FY 2020 to support programs advancing the bureau's oceans, environment, space, science, technology, and health policy priorities. OES's foreign assistance programming reinforced the bureau's policy objectives by

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<sup>13</sup> (U) Communities@State is a Department intranet platform to facilitate interaction among staff across the organization on common, work-related subjects.

supporting balanced engagement, broader ties, and stronger relationships that enable the Department to achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives.

(U) OIG reviewed OES's management of foreign assistance, including its administration of Federal assistance awards and interagency agreements.<sup>14</sup> OIG determined that OES foreign assistance programs were well-aligned with, and had been adapted to reflect, OES's evolving policy priorities. However, OIG found a lack of communication, or "stovepiping," among OES offices that managed foreign assistance programs and a lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities related to foreign assistance management. This resulted in inconsistent management practices and contributed to issues in OES's management of foreign assistance agreements and funds, as described below.

***(U) Foreign Assistance Roles and Responsibilities Not Clearly Defined, Leading to Inconsistent Management***

(U) OIG found that OES lacked clearly defined roles and responsibilities related to its management of foreign assistance, which led to inconsistent management practices. At the time of the inspection, seven OES offices<sup>15</sup> managed foreign assistance programs, with some having multiple functional teams separately managing programs related to their specialized areas of expertise.<sup>16</sup> In addition, in interviews with OIG, OES employees who manage foreign assistance said they lacked visibility into other offices' foreign assistance programs, including the techniques offices used to manage their programs. They also told OIG that the Office of the Executive Director (EX) provides differing levels of foreign assistance management support to OES offices, which contributed to confusion about how responsibilities were divided between program offices and EX, as described below. Following audits conducted in FY 2012<sup>17</sup> and FY 2013,<sup>18</sup> OES, and the Office of Global Change in particular, took steps to strengthen its management of foreign assistance, including systematically tracking the receipt of performance and financial reporting. Despite these improvements, OIG found that the management techniques which the offices used to monitor and evaluate their foreign assistance programs remained inconsistent. For example, not all offices tracked the timely receipt and review of the

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<sup>14</sup> (U) Federal assistance issued by the Department includes grants, cooperative agreements, awards to individuals, and property grants as well as grants or other funding agreements with Foreign Public Entities. Interagency agreements, made between two Federal agencies, define the support (goods or services) the serving agency provides to the requesting agency (in this case, the Department).

<sup>15</sup> (U) OES offices with responsibility for managing foreign assistance include the Offices of Conservation and Water, Global Change, Environmental Quality and Transboundary Issues, Marine Conservation, Ocean and Polar Affairs, Policy and Public Affairs, and Science and Technology Cooperation.

<sup>16</sup> (U) For example, staff in the Office of Conservation and Water are organized into four separate teams specializing in a different subject matter area (water, wildlife, biodiversity, and forests/genetic resources) and independently managing foreign assistance resources. Staff told OIG they had little visibility into the other teams' management of foreign assistance.

<sup>17</sup> (U) OIG, *Audit of Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Administration and Oversight of Funds Dedicated to Address Global Climate Change* (AUD-CG-12-40, July 2012).

<sup>18</sup> (U) OIG, *Compliance Follow-up Audit of the Bureau of Oceans, International Environmental and Scientific Affairs' Administration and Oversight of Funds Dedicated to Address Global Climate Change* (AUD-ACF-14-16, December 2013).

reporting by implementing partners. In addition, the bureau lacked consistent reporting templates. These inconsistencies contributed to the shortcomings in OES's management of Federal assistance awards and interagency agreements described later in this report.

(U) As described in 1 FAM 014.1a(2) and 1 FAM 014.1b(1) and (3), Department operations should strive to achieve proper balance among efficient operations, Department priorities, and improved internal management. In addition, the *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, Principle 14.01,<sup>19</sup> requires Federal leaders to communicate information to enable personnel to perform key roles in achieving objectives, addressing risks, and supporting the internal control system. The inconsistencies described above occurred because OES used a decentralized model for managing its foreign assistance and did not clearly define roles and responsibilities. Although OES employees told OIG this structure ensured better linkages between programs and policy, it also limited OES's flexibility to effectively deploy foreign assistance in response to evolving priorities. The decentralized model also posed a risk of increased costs to the bureau because most offices maintained separate contract support to assist with its management of foreign assistance programs. The lack of a well-defined structure for managing its foreign assistance increases the risk that resources will be improperly managed.

**Recommendation 3:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should conduct an analysis of its foreign assistance management structure and clarify roles and responsibilities related to the administration of foreign assistance. (Action: OES)

***(U) Bureau Did Not Properly Manage Federal Assistance Awards and Interagency Agreements***

(U) OIG found that OES did not manage its Federal assistance awards and interagency agreements in accordance with the Department's Federal Assistance Directive<sup>20</sup> and OES's standard operating procedures for managing interagency agreements. OIG reviewed 15 Federal assistance awards funded in FY 2018 and FY 2019 with a total value of \$55.3 million. OIG structured its review of awards to ensure that the sample included awards managed by all offices with active foreign assistance projects.<sup>21</sup> OIG determined that 2 of the 15 Federal assistance award files reviewed did not include the required risk assessment and monitoring

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<sup>19</sup> (U) GAO-14-704G, September 2014, at 60.

<sup>20</sup> (U) The Department of State Federal Assistance Directive establishes internal guidance, policies, and procedures for administering Federal financial assistance for all Department domestic and overseas grant-making bureaus, offices, and posts.

<sup>21</sup> (U) OIG's sample included the bureau's largest dollar value awards for each office funded in FY 2018 and FY 2019. During this period, OES obligated \$44.8 million and \$72.1 million, respectively, on such agreements. The sample did not include awards overseen by the Office of International Health and Biodefense because it issued its active awards shortly before OIG's inspection and implementer performance had yet to be established. The sample also excluded grants attributed to the Office of Policy and Public Outreach as overseas posts are responsible for issuing and managing these awards.

plans.<sup>22</sup> In addition, one award file showed insufficient performance reporting and two award files lacked sufficient documentation to show whether the grants officer representatives conducted required reviews of the performance and financial reports submitted by the award recipients.<sup>23</sup> OIG also reviewed 14 active interagency agreements totaling \$35.9 million. Although OES generally managed its interagency agreements in accordance with applicable requirements, OIG found that one agreement file contained no documentation of monitoring, which is required under OES's standard operating procedures.

(U) Despite these issues, OIG did not find any evidence that the work called for in the Federal assistance awards and interagency agreements was not completed. These issues occurred, in part, because of the inconsistencies in OES's foreign assistance management practices, described above. Failure to adhere to Department standards for managing Federal assistance awards and interagency agreements could lead to the misuse or misappropriation of Department funds or an inability to achieve program objectives.

**Recommendation 4:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should manage its Federal assistance awards and interagency agreements in accordance with Department and bureau guidance. (Action: OES)

***(U) Bureau Lacked Procedures to Minimize Foreign Assistance Funds Returned to Treasury***

(U) OIG found that OES returned nearly \$5.4 million in canceled foreign assistance funds to the Department of the Treasury between FY 2018 and FY 2020. This happened because the bureau lacked procedures to systematically identify and reclassify foreign assistance funds<sup>24</sup> and despite the bureau having statutory reclassification authority to extend the period of availability for most foreign assistance appropriations.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, bureau employees told OIG that programmatic delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic created additional risk that the bureau would be unable to fully expend other foreign assistance funds before they cancel and are returned to the Treasury. As outlined in 4 FAM 084.2, allotments must be managed to provide for effective and efficient funds management in carrying out the intent of Congress. Several bureau staff members responsible for managing Federal assistance awards told OIG they were unaware of their ability to reclassify funding. Other employees told OIG that OES did not always use the reclassification authority because the process was too time consuming and

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<sup>22</sup> (U) *Federal Assistance Directive*, Chapter 4, Section D, Monitoring and Reporting (May 20, 2017, and later revisions). OIG previously identified a global pattern of issues related to risk assessments and monitoring plans in its *Management Assistance Report: Improved Oversight Needed to Standardize the Use of Risk Assessments and Monitoring Plans for Overseas Grants* (ISP-17-33, July 2017).

<sup>23</sup> (U) *Federal Assistance Directive*, Chapter 4, Section D, (May 20, 2017, and later revisions).

<sup>24</sup> (U) Appropriations expire if unobligated at the end of their period of availability. Consistent with 31 U.S.C. § 1552, the appropriations are canceled on September 30 of the fifth fiscal year after the period of availability for obligation ends. At that time, any unexpended balances are returned to the Treasury general fund.

<sup>25</sup> (U) Most foreign assistance appropriations contain a statutory authority enabling the Department to extend the period of availability using a process called reclassification. If used fully, reclassification can minimize or eliminate the need to return foreign assistance funds to the Treasury, allowing for more efficient use of funding.

reclassified funds could be diverted to other bureaus. In the absence of a systematic process to reclassify canceling funds, OES is unable to make full use of its foreign assistance resources.

**Recommendation 5:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should develop and implement a process to identify and reclassify foreign assistance funds before they cancel, in accordance with Department guidance. (Action: OES)

## **(U) RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

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(U) The Office of the Executive Director provides support to one other bureau in addition to OES and three independent offices.<sup>26</sup> EX supports financial management, general services operations, human resources, and information management functions within OES. In addition, its Central Programming Unit supports OES offices that manage foreign assistance. In this inspection, OIG reviewed only those EX functions related to OES.<sup>27</sup> Specifically, OIG reviewed OES internal controls, Civil Service performance appraisals, position management and staffing, time and attendance procedures, mandatory training, contractor oversight and monitoring, property management, the purchase card program, travel operations, and unliquidated obligations. OIG found that EX generally implemented processes and procedures in accordance with applicable laws and Department guidance, with the exceptions noted below. In addition, the EX Financial Management Division corrected one management control issue during the inspection by deobligating invalid obligations as required in 4 FAM 225d.

### ***(U) Bureau Staff Did Not Comply With Mandatory Training Requirements***

(U) OIG reviewed Department training records for 16 mandatory Department security and supervisory courses and found that only 5.8 percent of the 207 OES direct-hire staff members had completed all applicable mandatory courses at the time of the inspection. Additionally, only 49 percent of bureau supervisors had completed the mandatory PT 230 Fundamentals of Supervision course. At the time of the inspection, EX sent mandatory training status updates to office directors twice a year and periodically forwarded Department training notices to employees. However, OES supervisors did not make certain that their employees conformed with training deadlines, as required by 13 FAM 101.2-2(C)(1) and (E)(7). The bureau's failure to effectively enforce mandatory training for its staff could put the bureau at risk of mishandling security and personnel-related issues.

**Recommendation 6:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should comply with mandatory employee training requirements in accordance with Department standards. (Action: OES)

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<sup>26</sup> (U) The Executive Office provides support to both OES and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor as well as the Offices of the Science and Technology Adviser to the Secretary, the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, and International Religious Freedom.

<sup>27</sup> (U) OIG inspected EX functions related to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor in 2018. OIG, *Inspection of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor* (ISP-I-19-11, October 2018).

***(U) Bureau's Timekeeping Processes Did Not Comply With Department Requirements***

(U) OES conducted an in-house audit of its time and attendance process (completed April 2020 and covering the years 2016, 2017, and 2018), and found inconsistencies and multiple instances of non-compliance with standards in 4 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-3 for leave, compensatory time, and overtime. These issues included required documentation that was incomplete, unsigned, or entirely missing from files. Numerous factors contributed to this issue, including a lack of supervisory oversight and lack of employee compliance with requirements. In addition, OIG found that OES failed to comply with management controls for payroll processing in 4 FAH-3 H-519.1c that include "all applicable laws, regulations and policies are being complied with" and "accurate and reliable accounting information is being generated." In addition, OES did not:

- (U) Have complete, accurate, and easily accessible documents for the use of all persons involved in payroll processing (4 FAH-3 H-519.3-1).
- (U) Implement procedures to ensure the timekeeping function is carried out effectively and accurately (4 FAH-3 H-519.3-5).
- (U) Establish controls to ensure accurate and timely recording of time and attendance (4 FAH-3 H-525.1-2).
- (U) Hold supervisors accountable for the accuracy of time and attendance reports and require them to review and approve reports for the employees for whom they are responsible (4 FAH-3 H-525.2-2 and 4 FAH-3 H-525.2-3).

(U) During the inspection, OES provided OIG with a draft copy of a standard operating procedure that was under consideration and a bureau notice, issued during the inspection, regarding requesting overtime and compensatory time. However, OIG found that, despite informal follow-up by individual offices, OES did not issue any formal messaging or bureau-wide initiative to address the full range of issues identified in the audit. Taken in the aggregate, the bureau's internal audit findings of non-compliance with Department requirements, and the lack of mitigation noted at the time of inspection creates a potential for waste, fraud, or mismanagement.

**Recommendation 7:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should develop, disseminate, and enforce mandatory standard operating procedures detailing the bureau's required processes for documenting, tracking, and reporting employee time and attendance. (Action: OES)

## **(U) INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

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(U) OIG reviewed the bureau's management of unclassified computer operations; emergency action preparedness; policies and procedures of bureau-developed information systems; and records management.<sup>28</sup> OIG found that OES generally complied with Department standards,

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<sup>28</sup> (U) Because the Bureau of Information Resource Management provided consolidated support for network and desktop management, OIG did not review those services.

with the exceptions discussed below. During the inspection, bureau staff corrected issues regarding its emergency action plan, which was out of date, and an unregistered dedicated internet network.

~~(SBU)~~ [REDACTED]

[illegible]

**Recommendation 8:** ~~(SBU)~~ The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Information Resource Management,

(Action: OES, in coordination with IRM)

***(U) Bureau Did Not Use Required Methodology for Research Application Tracking System Modernization Project***

(U) OES did not use the Department's preferred Managing State Projects methodology<sup>31</sup> or comparable methodology, as required in 5 FAM 621g and 5 FAH-5 H-211a, for the Research Application Tracking System Modernization Project (RATSc). In 2018, the bureau began the RATSc project to modernize the legacy RATS application. OES obligated \$249,000 for a contract and completed approximately 85 percent of the application's development prior to the inspection. However, bureau staff told OIG that the project stalled because they failed to reach an agreement with the Bureau of Information Resource Management regarding a suitable

29 (SBU) [REDACTED]

<sup>30</sup> (U) An authorization to operate is the official management decision given by a senior organization official to authorize operation of an information system and to explicitly accept the risk to organization's operations, assets, individuals, other organizations, and the nation, based on the implementation of an agreed-upon set of security controls.

<sup>31</sup> (U) “Managing State Projects” is the Department’s preferred systems development lifecycle framework for developing, maintaining, and replacing information technology systems.

deployment platform. OIG determined that if OES had used the required project management methodology, OES would have identified, at one of the control gates called for in the methodology, the lack of a suitable platform as a deficiency before committing resources to the project. Failure to implement the Department's preferred Managing State Projects methodology or comparable methodology risks timely project completion and cost overages.

**Recommendation 9:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should implement Managing State Projects methodology or comparable methodology for the Research Application Tracking System Modernization Project, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: OES)

***(U) Bureau Network Shared Drive Included Personally Identifiable Information***

(U) OIG found personally identifiable information (PII) on the bureau's network shared drive, in violation of Department standards. According to 5 FAM 469.4c(1), PII should not be stored in shared electronic or network folders or files that can be accessed by staff without a "need to know." OIG found multiple instances of PII on the bureau's network shared drive, including employee medical documents and eQIP<sup>32</sup> background investigation-related files. While the bureau delineated access control to folders on the shared drive by office, this approach still allowed everyone in each office to access all information in the shared drive, including the PII that OIG identified.

(U) OIG found the bureau lacked standard operating procedures to implement the Department's rules of behavior for protecting PII, as described in 5 FAM 469, or to control access to PII stored on the bureau's network shared drive. Furthermore, the bureau did not conduct routine checks of the shared drive for PII as required by 5 FAH-11 H-110. Failure to develop and implement bureau standard operating procedures to secure and control access to PII put the Department at risk that unauthorized individuals could access this sensitive information.

**Recommendation 10:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should implement standard operating procedures to secure and control access to personally identifiable information, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: OES)

***(U) Bureau Lacked Information Technology Contingency Plans***

(U) OES lacked IT contingency plans for continuance of essential mission and business functions during unplanned system outages or disruptions, as required by 12 FAH-10 H-232.1-1a-b. OIG found the bureau did not complete its IT contingency plans because bureau leadership believed

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<sup>32</sup> (U) e-QIP (Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing) is the Office of Personnel Management's secure, web-based automated system designed to facilitate the sharing of employees' personal investigative data used for the conduct of background investigations for Federal security, suitability, fitness, and credentialing purposes.

that it was a Bureau of Information Resource Management function. The lack of IT contingency plans placed at risk the bureau's ability to support IT functions after an unplanned disruption.

**Recommendation 11:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should establish information technology contingency plans, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: OES)

***(U) Bureau Did Not Establish a Records Management Program***

(U) OES did not establish a records management program to institute controls over records creation, maintenance, and disposition, as required by Department standards. OIG determined this occurred because bureau leadership did not designate a records coordinator with responsibility for implementing a records management program. Guidance in 5 FAM 414.8(1) requires that all Department employees preserve documentary materials meeting the definition of a record under the Federal Records Act. In addition, 5 FAM 414.4a assigns responsibility to Department bureaus and offices to implement and administer records policies, standards, systems, and procedures issued by the Department's Records Officer. The lack of an effective records management program increases the risk of loss of important data for historical insight into policy analysis, decision making, and archival research.

**Recommendation 12:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should establish a records management program that complies with Department standards. (Action: OES)

## (U) RECOMMENDATIONS

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(U) 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 Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs' complete response can be found in Appendix B.<sup>1</sup> The bureau also provided technical comments that were incorporated into this report, as appropriate.

**Recommendation 1:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, in coordination with the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region, should specify the bureau's role and related responsibilities on Arctic issues, communicate that information to all appropriate Department stakeholders, and submit the bureau's functional statement on Arctic issues in accordance with Department guidance. (Action: OES, in coordination with S/AR)

**Management Response:** (U) In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs concurred with this recommendation. The bureau noted an estimated completion date of December 2021.

**OIG Reply:** (U) OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs specified its role and related responsibilities on Arctic issues, communicated that information to all appropriate Department stakeholders, and submitted the bureau's functional statement on Arctic issues in accordance with Department guidance.

**Recommendation 2:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should align the organizational structure of the Office of Conservation and Water in accordance with Department guidelines. (Action: OES)

**Management Response:** (U) In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs concurred with this recommendation. The bureau noted an estimated completion date of September 2021.

**OIG Reply:** (U) OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs aligned the organizational structure of the Office of Conservation and Water in accordance with Department guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> (U) 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.

**Recommendation 3:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should conduct an analysis of its foreign assistance management structure and clarify roles and responsibilities related to the administration of foreign assistance. (Action: OES)

**Management Response:** (U) In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs concurred with this recommendation. The bureau noted an estimated completion date of May 1, 2022.

**OIG Reply:** (U) OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs conducted an analysis of its foreign assistance management structure and clarified roles and responsibilities related to the administration of foreign assistance.

**Recommendation 4:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should manage its Federal assistance awards and interagency agreements in accordance with Department and bureau guidance. (Action: OES)

**Management Response:** (U) In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs concurred with this recommendation. The bureau noted an estimated completion date of May 1, 2022.

**OIG Reply:** (U) OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs managed its Federal assistance awards and interagency agreements in accordance with Department and bureau guidance.

**Recommendation 5:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should develop and implement a process to identify and reclassify foreign assistance funds before they cancel, in accordance with Department guidance. (Action: OES)

**Management Response:** (U) In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs concurred with this recommendation. The bureau noted an estimated completion date of May 1, 2022.

**OIG Reply:** (U) OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs developed and implemented a process to identify and reclassify foreign assistance funds before they cancel, in accordance with Department guidance.

**Recommendation 6:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should comply with mandatory employee training requirements in accordance with Department standards. (Action: OES)

**Management Response:** (U) In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs concurred with this recommendation. The bureau noted an estimated completion date of December 2021.

**OIG Reply:** (U) OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs complied with mandatory employee training requirements in accordance with Department standards.

**Recommendation 7:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should develop, disseminate, and enforce mandatory standard operating procedures detailing the bureau's required processes for documenting, tracking, and reporting employee time and attendance. (Action: OES)

**Management Response:** (U) In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

**OIG Reply:** (U) OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs developed, disseminated, and enforced mandatory standard operating procedures detailing the bureau's required processes for documenting, tracking, and reporting employee time and attendance.

**Recommendation 8:** ~~(SBU)~~ The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Information Resource Management, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (Action: OES, in coordination with IRM)

**Management Response:** ~~(SBU)~~ In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs disagreed with this recommendation as written and requested a revision. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Management Response:** (U) In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs concurred with this recommendation. The bureau noted an estimated completion date of June 28, 2021.

**OIG Reply:** (U) OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs implemented standard operating procedures to secure and control access to personally identifiable information, in accordance with Department standards.

**Recommendation 11:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should establish information technology contingency plans, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: OES)

**Management Response:** (U) In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs disagreed with this recommendation. The bureau noted that 12 FAH-10 H-232.1-1b(1) states, "The application/information system owner must develop a contingency plan for the system under their authority." The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs is a consolidated bureau that pays for service under the Department's IRM IT support structure. It does not hold system authority to OpenNet nor is it a stakeholder on any decision boards regarding OpenNet. Additionally, the bureau does not own any physical file servers throughout the entire OpenNet network structure and does not connect to OpenNet via a separate bureau-owned router, domain server, hub, or modem. Additionally, the bureau does not hold an OpenNet network system identification in iMatrix or Xacta, which would require a contingency plan per the ATO process. The bureau noted it owns two systems: iStix and RATS. It has an established contingency plan for iStix. RATS, as the bureau noted in its response to recommendations 8 and 9, is under development and will adhere to the Department's project management framework and IRM ATO process. The bureau will develop a contingency plan for systems under its authority in compliance with the mandatory function of the ATO process.

**OIG Reply:** (U) OIG considers the recommendation unresolved. Although IRM may handle most of the technical responsibilities for the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Department standards in 12 FAH-10 H-232.1-1a requires domestic consolidated bureaus to coordinate with the Enterprise Server Operations Center on the development of contingency plans.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, as an application system owner for RATS, the bureau is required to complete a contingency plan for RATS. The recommendation can be

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<sup>2</sup> (U) Department standards in 12 FAH-10 H-232.1-1a state, "Posts, domestic non-consolidated bureaus and the domestic consolidated bureaus, in coordination with the Enterprise Server Operations Center (IRM/OPS/SIO/ESOC), must: (1) identify essential mission, business functions, and associated contingency requirements; (2) provide restoration priorities; (3) identify critical information system assets supporting essential missions and business functions; (4) define a time period when essential mission and business functions must be resumed following contingency plan activation; (5) conduct capacity planning so that necessary capacity for information processing, telecommunications, and environmental support exists during contingency operations; (6) define a time period when all mission and business functions must be resumed following contingency plan activation; and (7) plan for the continuance of essential mission and business functions with little or no loss of operational continuity and sustains continuity until full information system restoration at primary processing and/or storage sites."

closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs established information technology contingency plans, in accordance with Department standards.

**Recommendation 12:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should establish a records management program that complies with Department standards. (Action: OES)

**Management Response:** (U) In its June 28, 2021, response, the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs concurred with this recommendation. The bureau noted an estimated completion date of June 2021.

**OIG Reply:** (U) OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs established a records management program that complies with Department standards.

## (U) PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

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Title	Name	Arrival Date
<b>Assistant Secretary</b>		
Acting	Jonathan Moore	4/2020
<b>Deputy Assistant Secretaries:</b>		
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary	Melissa Kehoe	9/2020
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science, Space, and Health	Jonathan Margolis	2/2011
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans, Fisheries, and Polar Affairs	Benjamin S. Purser III	9/2020
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Environment	John Thompson	10/2019

(U) **Source:** Generated by OIG from data provided by OES.

## (U) APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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(U) This inspection was conducted from August 31, 2020, to January 29, 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).

### (U) Objectives and Scope

(U) 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.

(U) The specific objectives for this inspection were to determine whether:

- (1) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) Front Office conveyed strategic priorities and managed bureau responsibilities, consistent with 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 1214 principles.
- (2) The Front Office promoted mentoring and professional development for staff, as required by 13 FAM 32.
- (3) The Front Office led strategically on priority issues consistent with the Bureau Functional Strategy.
- (4) OES Had established effective internal processes to link Functional Bureau Strategy goals with those reflecting the current Administration's priorities.
- (5) OES used sound strategic planning principles found in 18 FAM 301.2 to guide OES policy and programming decisions.
- (6) OES had established systems and applications that are sufficient to meet bureau objectives during periods of maximum telework.
- (7) OES met the objectives outlined in the Functional Bureau Strategy for addressing epidemics and global pandemics.

- (8) OES Conducted the statement of assurance review process such that it incorporated the review of contracts, grants, and IT processes and associated internal controls, as required by Department guidelines.
- (9) OES and the U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region had clearly identified roles and responsibilities regarding the formulation and implementation of Arctic policies, as required by 18 FAM 301.2-4(B).
- (10) The Office of Science, Technology, Space, and Health (OES/S) exercised appropriate management and program oversight to monitor and direct the use of staff and other resources in accordance with 18 FAM 301.1-4 to achieve OES's program goals and objectives.
- (11) OES/S leadership followed the tenets outlined in 3 FAM 1214 by leading by example and fostering employee morale and productivity.
- (12) The Office of Conservation and Water leadership followed the tenets outlined in 3 FAM 1214 by leading through example, fostering employee morale and productivity, and being self-aware.
- (13) OES and the Office of Environmental Quality and Transboundary Issues adjusted procedures and staffing to reflect the elimination of the responsibility to conduct environmental impact reviews.
- (14) OES and the Office of Global Climate Change effectively implemented the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change while continuing to participate and meet U.S. obligations in other multilateral climate agreements and fora.
- (15) OES provided appropriate policy direction, oversight, and administrative support to the Regional Environmental Science-Technology-Health Officers program, consistent with its responsibilities under 1 FAM 542.3c.
- (16) OES managed its foreign assistance agreements in a manner consistent with Department guidance and the bureau's standard operating procedures.
- (17) The bureau adhered to Department guidelines outlined in 4 FAM 084.2 and had policies and procedures in place to identify and reclassify foreign assistance funds to minimize funds returned to the Treasury.
- (18) OES met the requirements outlined in 1 FAM 014.1a(2), and 1 FAM 014.1b(1) and (3), which require that Department operations be organized to support efficient operations, meet Department priorities, and improve internal management.
- (19) Contracting officer's representatives monitored the contractor's expenditures of resources related to the contract in accordance with 14 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-2 H-142.
- (20) Contracting officer's representatives assessed OES's contracts using deliverables measured against contract work requirements in accordance with 14 FAH-2 H-523.
- (21) Contractors did not perform inherently governmental tasks, as required by 14 FAH-2 H-115.
- (22) Contracting officer's representatives are completed Form DS-4208, to ensure that contractors were not performing inherently governmental functions and that there was an oversight strategy for monitoring contractor performance when contractors performed closely associated functions, in accordance with 14 FAH-2 H-142.

- (23) OES had an effective personnel strategy for meeting its policy and oversight obligations consistent with 1 FAM 014 and 1 FAM Exhibit 014.6.
- (24) The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor-OES/Executive Office human resources staff and hiring managers met applicable deadlines in the Office of Personnel Management 80-Day End-to-End Hiring Initiative.
- (25) Position descriptions needed to be reclassified due to the shift in personnel responsibilities because of major reorganizations, in accordance with 3 FAM 2636.8-10.
- (26) The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor-OES/Executive Office identified training needs in accordance with 13 FAM 101.2-2(C) and 13 FAM 101.2-2(E), and monitoring compliance with mandatory training.
- (27) The bureau's travel office implemented and followed standard operating procedures that comply with travel regulations contained in 14 FAM 500.
- (28) The bureau complied with authorization and voucher processing times in accordance with FAM 460.
- (29) The bureau's justification and supporting documentation for premium-class travel met requirements outlined in 15 FAM 560.
- (30) OES reconciled unliquidated obligations in accordance with guidance in 4 FAM 225 - Accounting Control and Obligation Management.
- (31) The bureau had an IT governance process to determine IT program information resource needs and develop strategies, systems, and capabilities to meet and comply with those needs in accordance with 5 FAM 115.7.
- (32) Roles and responsibilities of Information Management Division staff were clearly defined in accordance with 1 FAM 014.7.
- (33) IT managers demonstrated adherence to leadership and management principles outlined in 3 FAM 1214.
- (34) The IT staff were involved in any IT acquisitions for the bureau/office and were performing responsibilities in accordance with 5 FAM 915.1 and 5 FAM 915.2.
- (35) The records coordinator had established guidance and procedures to ensure management of the records held within each section in accordance with 5 FAM 400 and 5 FAH-4.
- (36) The records coordinator had verified that each unit has assigned and trained personnel responsible for managing records in accordance with 5 FAH-4 H-215.3-2(b).
- (37) The bureau's information system security officer duties were being performed in accordance with 5 FAM 824.1.
- (38) There was a defined and documented information systems development life cycle process for development, implementation, and operation of any locally developed applications, in accordance with 5 FAH-5 H-212 and 5 FAH-5 H-213.
- (39) Access to networks, systems, and dedicated internet networks was granted based on roles, in accordance with 12 FAH-10 H-112.1-1.
- (40) Physical security of computer and server rooms was practiced in accordance with 12 FAH-10 H-272.2-1.

## **(U) Methodology**

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

## (U) APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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**United States Department of State**  
*Bureau of Oceans and International  
Environmental and Scientific Affairs*  
Washington, D.C. 20520

June 28, 2021

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

FROM:       OES – Marcia S. Bernicat, Acting

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – Inspection of the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs

(U) Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report of the recent inspection. We have provided reactions to the draft recommendations with proposed revisions where noted, and one edit below:

### (U) OES Responses

**Recommendation 1:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, in coordination with the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region, should specify the bureau's role and related responsibilities on Arctic issues, communicate that information to all appropriate Department stakeholders, and submit the bureau's functional statement on Arctic issues in accordance with Department guidance. (Action: OES, in coordination with S/AR)

**Response 1:** (U) OES concurs with the recommendation. OES is currently working closely with the Office of the U.S. Coordinator for the Arctic Region (S/AR) to clarify roles and related responsibilities on Arctic issues, communicate that information to all appropriate Department stakeholders, and develop a functional statement on Arctic issues in accordance with Department guidance.

(U) This recommendation is particularly timely given the increasing geostrategic interest in the Arctic, in response to which OES has already converted and

upgraded the Senior Arctic Official to an OC-level Senior Foreign Service position. OES will continue to work with GTM to ensure that the position descriptions of the SAO position and the S/AR are clearly delineated.

(U) The expected completion date is no later than December 2021.

**Recommendation 2:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should align the organizational structure of the Office of Conservation and Water in accordance with Department guidelines. (Action: OES)

**Response 2:** (U) OES concurs with the recommendation and has identified an approach to align the organization structure of the Office of Conservation and Water in accordance with Department guidelines and is working to implement that approach. This will require working with GTM and DS.

(U) The expected completion date is no later than September 2021.

(U) The OES Bureau believes the edits tracked below more accurately reflect the actions taken and results of those actions that led to a situation in which the organization structure of the Office of Conservation and Water does not align with Departmental guidelines.

(U) OIG found that the Office of Conservation and Water (ECW) did not conform to Department organizational structure requirements, ~~which led to inefficient office management and uneven distribution of work.~~ A series of position transfers due to changing **Departmental and Bureau (as set out in the OES Functional Bureau Strategy)** office priorities left the ECW's Biodiversity Unit with only three positions, including that of unit chief. As a result, the Biodiversity Unit was below the Department's minimum staffing requirement. ~~and had too few employees to manage its work. Unable to add staff to the~~ Instead of adding staff to the Biodiversity Unit **due to hiring freezes and overall FTE limitations**, ECW leadership reassigned the Biodiversity Unit's tasks to the other units ~~and to a Biodiversity Unit member on long term detail to another bureau.~~ These actions dispersed responsibilities and chain of command across the office, **streamlining reporting chains and ensuring workloads were more evenly distributed and better aligned with responsibilities of the other units.** It also allowed a **Biodiversity Unit member to pursue a career development detail to another bureau.** Organizational principles in 1 FAM 014.7d(2) state that sub-office work units should have a minimum of six full-time or part-time permanent

positions to maintain effective and efficient span of control. ~~The current ECW organizational structure created inefficient delegation and implementation of responsibilities and put the office at risk for ineffective management of staff and workload priorities~~

**Recommendation 3:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should conduct an analysis of its foreign assistance management structure and clarify roles and responsibilities related to the administration of foreign assistance. (Action: OES)

**Response 3:** (U) OES concurs with the recommendation. In consultation with the OES Front Office, the OES Executive Office will conduct an analysis of the OES foreign assistance management structure and further articulate the roles and responsibilities between the Central Programming Unit and Bureau offices that manage foreign assistance programs. Specifically, OES will:

- Establish uniform guidelines and support to OES offices;
- Systematize management techniques to ensure uniform tracking of performance and financial reports; and
- Develop capacity-building training to underscore requirements during pre-award, award, and post-award management to establish consistency across the program offices.

Currently, OES is ensuring that all federal assistance instruments contain a risk assessment and monitoring plan and will continue to comply by coordinating with offices to ensure all monitoring documentation is present in the instrument file.

(U) The expected completion date is May 1, 2022.

**Recommendation 4:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should manage its Federal assistance awards and interagency agreements in accordance with Department and bureau guidance. (Action: OES)

**Response 4:** (U) OES concurs with the recommendation. OES will continue to rely on the Federal Assistance Directive (FAD) as the basis for managing federal assistance awards and on the Procurement Executive's Public Information Bulletin (PIB) 2014-05 and PIB 2013-03 to manage interagency agreements. Where guidance is not available in the FAD and PIB with greater granularity, OES develops internal guidelines through Program and Policy Notices (PPN).

(U) Specifically, in order to address inconsistencies, OES will:

- Develop a communication plan to ensure consistent adherence to Department and Bureau guidance, including completion of documentation, across the Bureau;
- Provide annual updates on required documentation package for federal assistance awards and interagency agreements. Include these annual updates on the OES sharepoint site;
- Clarify the role of the Central Programming Unit during the pre-award, award, and post-award stages;
- Ensure Bureau offices have access to SAMS Domestic

(U) The expected completion date is May 1, 2022.

**Recommendation 5:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should develop and implement a process to identify and reclassify foreign assistance funds before they cancel, in accordance with Department guidance. (Action: OES)

**Response 5:** (U) OES concurs with this recommendation. OES will review its standard operating procedure to reclassify foreign assistance funds. OES will:

- Develop a PPN on the allocation of responsibilities regarding the reclassification process and establish a minimum threshold by instrument;
- Notify the relevant DAS and Office Director of the programs with an expired period of performance that meet the relevant instrument threshold requirements; and
- Incorporate the reclassification process as part of annual meetings and refresher presentations with offices.

(U) The expected completion date is: May 1, 2022.

**Recommendation 6:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should comply with mandatory employee training requirements in accordance with Department standards. (Action: OES)

**Response 6:** (U) OES concurs with this recommendation. OES will ensure that Bureau leadership will have all of the information needed to follow up with staff and emphasize the need to comply with training requirements. Bureau leadership will require all OES supervisors have a standardized work commitment to ensure

employees have completed mandatory training annually. Employee evaluations will be directly tied to successful completion of mandatory training courses. OES will ensure its SharePoint site dedicated to mandatory training requirements is updated properly with the most accurate and current information. OES will also recommend that office directors dedicate a day in the workweek for staff to complete any pending mandatory training they must complete. OES will direct the bureau training officer (BTO) to maintain periodic communication with bureau employees prompting staff and supervisors to check the status of mandatory training requirements, as well as notices of internal and external training opportunities.

(U) The expected completion date is no later than December 2021.

**Recommendation 7:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should develop, disseminate, and enforce mandatory standard operating procedures detailing the bureau's required processes for documenting, tracking, and reporting employee time and attendance. (Action: OES)

**Response 7:** (U) OES concurs with this recommendation and has already taken action to remedy. In December 2020, the Office of the Executive Director reviewed and updated Bureau guidance on reporting time and attendance. The updated guidance now includes an expanded roles and responsibilities section for timekeepers, supervisors, and employees; specific reporting procedures for submitting time and attendance documents; and an overview of all leave categories and requirements for quick and easy reference. Looking forward, OES will continue to conduct periodic audits of bureau time and attendance records to ensure compliance. OES will also hold periodic time and attendance brownbag sessions designed for timekeepers.

**Recommendation 8:** ~~(SBU)~~ The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, in coordination with the Bureau of Information Resource Management, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] (Action: OES, in coordination with IRM)

**Response 8:** ~~(SBU)~~ OES does not concur with this recommendation as written and requests a revision. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~(SBU)~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~(SBU)~~ OES therefore requests that recommendation 8 be removed or revised as follows:

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Recommendation 9:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should implement Managing State Projects methodology or comparable methodology for the Research Application Tracking System Modernization Project, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: OES)

**Response 9:** (U) OES does not concur with this recommendation in that the recommended action is already underway. OES currently utilizes the Managing State Projects (MSP) IT Agile framework and adheres to all requirements described therein, as required under the SIO Project Management Framework, in accordance with IRM policy. As described in the response to recommendation 8, the RATS legacy system is being replaced by RATSc. As the RATSc Project comes online, it will be executed through the MSP-IT Agile framework.

**Recommendation 10:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should implement standard operating procedures to secure and control access to personally identifiable information, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: OES)

**Response 10:** (U) OES concurs with this recommendation. OES has drafted its new policy and standard operating procedures on protecting PII in the office and while working remotely. Guidance will be released on June 28, 2021.

(U) The expected completion date is June 28, 2021.

**Recommendation 11:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should establish information technology contingency plans, in accordance with Department standards. (Action: OES)

**Response 11:** (U) OES does not concur with this recommendation. 12 FAH-10 H-232.1-1b (1) states “The application/information system owner must develop a contingency plan for the system under their authority”. The OES bureau is a consolidated bureau that pays for service under the Department’s IRM IT support structure. OES does not hold system authority to OpenNet nor is it a stakeholder on any decision boards regarding OpenNet. Additionally, the OES bureau does not own any physical file servers throughout the entire OpenNet network structure and does not connect to OpenNet via a separate bureau owned router, domain server, hub, or modem. OES does not hold an OpenNet network system identification in iMatrix or Xacta, which would require a contingency plan per the ATO process.

(U) OES owns two systems, iStix and RATS. The Bureau has an established contingency plan for iStix. RATS, referenced in recommendation 8 and recommendation 9, is under development and will adhere to the Department’s project management framework and IRM ATO process. The Bureau will develop a contingency plan for systems under its authority in compliance with the mandatory function of the ATO process. It will be reviewed and approved by IRM/IA before receiving approval to launch and operate.

**Recommendation 12:** (U) The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs should establish a records management program that complies with Department standards. (Action: OES)

**Response 12:** (U) OES concurs with the recommendation and has taken action to remedy it. OES-DRL/EX has designated two record management coordinators, one to serve as POC, and the other to help senior staff properly manage their records, including when separating from the Bureau and/or Department, as needed. OES is in the final stages of drafting an updated management notice that will outline OES records responsibilities, record policies, standards, systems, and procedures for retaining and disposing of records, working closely with A/GIS/IPS. The OES-DRL/EX SharePoint site is also being updated with pertinent records policies for staff to find and easily follow.

(U) The expected completion date is June 2021.

(U) **Edit**

(U) List of Principal Officials, page 20:

(U) Melissa Kehoe was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary during the inspection.

~~Acting~~ Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Melissa Kehoe

## (U) ABBREVIATIONS

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DAS	Deputy Assistant Secretary
ECW	Office of Conservation and Water
EX	Office of the Executive Director
FAH	Foreign Affairs Handbook
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
IHB	Office of International Health and Biodefense
ILC	International Linear Collider
OES	Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs
OPA	Office of Oceans and Polar Affairs
PDAS	Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
PII	Personally Identifiable Information
RATS	Research Application Tracking System
RATSc	Research Application Tracking System Modernization Project
SAT	Office of Space and Advanced Technology

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