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Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

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ISP-I-21-33

Office of Inspections

August 2021

# **Inspection of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Overseas Security Advisory Council Program Office**

DOMESTIC OPERATIONS

UNCLASSIFIED



# HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

ISP-I-21-33

## What OIG Inspected

OIG inspected program implementation and resource management operations in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Overseas Security Advisory Council Program Office.

## What OIG Recommends

OIG made 2 recommendations to the Bureau of Diplomatic Security.

In its comments on the draft report, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security concurred with one recommendation and partially concurred with the second recommendation. OIG considers both recommendations resolved. The Bureau of Diplomatic Security's 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.

August 2021

OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS  
DOMESTIC OPERATIONS

## Inspection of the Bureau Diplomatic Security's Overseas Security Advisory Council Program Office

### What OIG Found

- The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) Program Office provided effective support to U.S. private sector organizations as required by its mandate.
- The office did not effectively manage the contract for its public website.
- The OSAC Program Office did not comply with the requirement to provide its contract staff with IT equipment when they were required to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Spotlight on Success: The OSAC Program Office hosted its first-ever virtual annual briefing in 2020, attracting nearly 2,000 participants. The virtual environment offered an opportunity for OSAC members and security professionals from various sectors to connect during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## CONTEXT

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Established in 1985, under the Federal Advisory Committee Act,<sup>1</sup> the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) supports the safe operations of U.S. organizations overseas. OSAC is made up of private-sector representatives from 31 U.S. organizations operating abroad and three public-sector representatives from U.S. Government agencies.<sup>2</sup> The Council is chaired by the Department of State's (Department) Bureau of Diplomatic Security's (DS) Director of Diplomatic Security Service and co-chaired by one of the Council's private sector representatives. The objectives of OSAC include establishing ongoing liaison among security officials in both the private and public sectors; providing for regular exchanges of information concerning developments in the overseas security environment; recommending methods for planning and implementation of security programs abroad; and recommending methods to mitigate risks to U.S. private sector interests worldwide. OSAC represents more than 5,400 member organizations drawn from a cross-section of the U.S. economy, including corporate, non-profit, academic, and faith-based groups. In addition to the member organizations, OSAC individual membership includes 18,000 security professionals, more than 150 embassy and consulate-led country chapters,<sup>3</sup> 13 Common-Interest Committees, and 5 Regional Committees.<sup>4</sup>

The DS OSAC Program Office was created in 1997 to support OSAC's programs and services through the dissemination of information and to conduct program evaluations to help inform the Council's decision-making. The OSAC Program Office's mission is to provide enterprises incorporated in the United States and doing business abroad with timely security threat information affecting their overseas operations. The OSAC Program Office also provides security-related information to OSAC's country chapters and subcommittees.<sup>5</sup> The office delivers this information through its website, consultations with U.S. enterprises, and other information-sharing avenues. The OSAC Program Office's 2019 strategic plan included three objectives: to create and implement a strategy to increase private sector interest in OSAC's analyses; to increase country chapter sustainability through targeted engagement with subcommittees; and to expand knowledge of OSAC's policies and programs by enterprises incorporated in the United States and doing business abroad.

The OSAC Program Office is divided into three teams. The Research and Analysis Unit researches issues affecting private sector U.S. enterprises operating overseas and distributes this information through reports, briefings, and consultations. The Policy, Partnerships and

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, Pub. L. 92-463.

<sup>2</sup> OSAC public sector representatives from Federal agencies include representatives from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of State.

<sup>3</sup> Country chapters facilitate the sharing of security information between the private sector and OSAC members.

<sup>4</sup> Common Interest Committees serve the needs of smaller, similarly focused groups within OSAC's broader constituency. Regional Committees are based in the United States and are chaired by the Special Agent-in-Charge from a DS field office, with a member of the private sector serving as co-chair.

<sup>5</sup> OSAC's subcommittees focus on specific security-related issues of interest in the country or region where the subcommittee operates.

Programs Unit conducts outreach to private sector enterprises and shares security information with these enterprises. The Global Threat Warning Unit provides guidance to public and private sector OSAC members on avoiding and mitigating current and emerging threats to U.S. personnel and assets overseas.

At the time of the inspection, DS transferred supervision of the office from the Threat Investigations and Analysis Directorate to the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary. The OSAC Program Office was led by an Executive Director and Deputy Director and had a staff of 6 Civil Service employees, 2 Foreign Service specialists, 26 contractors, and 3 reemployed annuitants.

OIG evaluated the OSAC Program Office's executive direction, program implementation, and resource management consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980. The inspection objectives were focused on the office's internal operations and not on its engagement with the Council, the Council's committees and subcommittees, or the country chapters.<sup>6</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OIG conducted the inspection remotely.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTION**

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OIG assessed the OSAC Program Office's leadership based on questionnaires completed by office staff members, interviews with domestic and overseas staff, and reviews of pertinent documents.

### **Tone at the Top**

The Executive Director assumed leadership of the OSAC Program Office in September 2019. As a Senior Foreign Service specialist, he previously served in DS as Regional Director for International Programs. At the time of the inspection, the Executive Director was also serving as the Acting Assistant Director for the Threat Investigations and Analysis Directorate and the Deputy Assistant Director for the Office of Intelligence and Threat Analysis. The Deputy Director, a Civil Service employee, assumed his position in May 2020. He had worked in the OSAC Program Office since 2013 as Chief of the Research and Information Support Center.

OIG found through interviews and document reviews that the OSAC Program Office leadership empowered staff and encouraged their professional development by providing opportunities for training. In an OIG questionnaire based on the Department's 10 leadership and management principles outlined in 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 1214, OSAC Program Office staff members gave leadership consistently favorable scores, particularly in modeling integrity, fostering resilience, and decisiveness. However, in interviews, staff told OIG that leadership did not consistently share information with all three teams, which inhibited cross-office communication. As a result, members did not always collaborate with their colleagues on other teams on issues of mutual concern. The Executive Director and Deputy Director acknowledged this shortcoming and committed to improve communication within the office.

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

## Equal Employment Opportunity

OIG found the OSAC Program Office leadership was committed to equal employment opportunity (EEO) principles as described in 3 FAM 1511 and leadership principles in 3 FAM 1214b(6) and (8).<sup>7</sup> To familiarize private sector OSAC members with the U.S. Government's EEO principles, the OSAC Program Office Executive Director formed a working group to develop a Code of Conduct for private sector OSAC members to ensure both OSAC members and Program Office staff were treated in accordance with those principles at OSAC-sponsored events.<sup>8</sup>

## PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

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OIG found that the OSAC Program Office generally met its mandate to provide threat notifications, analytical analyses, and support to the U.S. private sector overseas, as described in 12 FAM 064. Specifically, as described below, OIG determined that the OSAC Program Office coordinated effectively with the Regional Committees and aligned its activities across all three Program Office teams consistent with objectives in its strategic plan. However, OIG also found that the OSAC Program Office did not provide sufficient training to the public sector committee chairs, and it had not fully implemented metrics to assess the office's performance against key strategic goals.

### *Office Coordinated Effectively With Regional Committees*

OIG found productive coordination between the OSAC Program Office and the Regional Committees.<sup>9</sup> Regional Committee staff told OIG that the OSAC Program Office was very proactive in communicating with the Regional Committees. For example, the office sent daily emails to the Regional Committees and scheduled biweekly meetings between the office's regional analysts and Regional Committee staff. Additionally, one Regional Committee staff member told OIG that the Executive Director contacted each Regional Committee chair approximately every 2 weeks to discuss operational status and resource needs.

The OSAC Regional Committee Program<sup>10</sup> provides a forum for OSAC members to engage in discussions to address region-specific security challenges in five geographic regions: Latin America, Pan-Asia, Africa, Middle East and North Africa, and Europe. DS Special Agents-in-Charge of five DS field offices in the United States serve as the public sector chairs for the OSAC Regional Committees for each of the five geographic regions. Overall, the Special Agents-in-Charge told OIG that the OSAC Program Office effectively articulated OSAC goals and objectives

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<sup>7</sup> 3 FAM 1214b outlines the leadership and management principles for Department managers and supervisors. These principles include self-awareness (3 FAM 1214b(6)) and valuing and developing people (3 FAM 1214b(8)).

<sup>8</sup> The Code of Conduct is posted on OSAC's public website.

<sup>9</sup> As described in 12 FAM 064b, the OSAC Program Office provides program management expertise in the operation of the Regional Committees.

<sup>10</sup> Per 12 FAM 062.1, the OSAC Regional Committee Program provides a forum for U.S. private sector organizations to address security challenges in a particular geographic region. The Regional Committee Program is a part of OSAC and not the OSAC Program Office.

to the Regional Committees. The Regional Committee charters<sup>11</sup> each included committee-specific objectives developed under the guidance set forth by the OSAC Program Office. Additionally, the most recent OSAC Program Office strategic plan included a vision and mission statement for OSAC and aligned its objectives with each of the subordinate groups and committees.

***Office Did Not Provide Sufficient Training for Regional Committee Public Sector Chairs***

Despite the OSAC Program Office coordinating effectively with the Regional Committees, OIG found that the office did not have a training program for Special Agents-in-Charge serving as Regional Committee public sector chairs. According to principle 4.05 of the U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, management must enable individuals to develop competencies appropriate for key roles, reinforce standards of conduct, and tailor training based on the needs of the role. Three of the five Special Agents-in-Charge serving as Regional Committee public sector chairs at the time of the inspection said that, without previous OSAC experience to guide them in their public sector chair roles, agents would need training to carry out their duties effectively. OIG brought this to the attention of OSAC Program Office leadership, and they agreed to develop a training program for DS Special Agents-in-Charge with OSAC Regional Committee responsibilities.

***Office Took Steps to Develop Program Metrics, but Continued Attention Was Needed***

OIG found that although the OSAC Program Office had taken initial steps to develop metrics to assess the performance of its programs, as required by 18 FAM 301.2-4(B)(1)(c), it had not maintained and analyzed OSAC member survey and audit results prior to 2020. Systematically maintaining and analyzing this type of data over time would have allowed the OSAC Program Office to develop metrics to evaluate and refine its strategic plan. In 2020, under its current leadership, the OSAC Program Office began to use data collected from OSAC member surveys to assess overall program performance. The OSAC Program Office also used the 2020 OSAC member survey data to evaluate the usefulness of its products and communications. In addition, the OSAC Program Office identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to improve program performance through a separate internal review process. Office leadership introduced this framework to evaluate its programs in 2020 and planned to apply the evaluation framework moving forward.

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<sup>11</sup> The OSAC charter, last updated in October 2020, outlines the conditions under which OSAC is organized, and defines the rights, duties, and privileges of the OSAC members. Additionally, each regional committee issues their own charters to reflect the unique characteristics of each regional committee.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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The OSAC Program Office had two Contracting Officer's Representatives (CORs)<sup>12</sup> and one Government Technical Monitor<sup>13</sup> with oversight responsibility for two contracts, that had a combined value of \$12 million. OIG reviewed the OSAC Program Office's administration of these contracts and found that generally they complied with Department standards with the exception of the two deficiencies discussed below.

### ***Office Did Not Effectively Manage the Contract for Its Public Website***

The OSAC Program Office did not effectively manage the IT services contract<sup>14</sup> for its public website. The public website was especially important to the office's mission because it included Department travel warnings and security alerts issued by U.S. embassies and consulates, links to daily security-related news articles, terrorist group profiles, and updates on new or unusual situations related to crime, violence, or terrorism. OIG found that the office's COR did not document and manage contractor performance to ensure that services conformed to contract requirements for website management and maintenance, as required by the contract's Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan and Task Order Management Plan. For example, although the contractor stated in its quarterly report to the OSAC Program Office that the contract was understaffed by 20 percent, the COR did not take action to require the contractor to remedy the staffing problem in accordance with contract requirements. In another case, OIG found that the COR had not performed all the testing needed, to include logging any defects that needed correcting, before giving final approval for the website to deploy.

As stated in Federal Acquisition Regulation 46.104(b) and (c), a contract management office (the OSAC Program Office) must perform all actions necessary to assure services conform to contract requirements and maintain records of contract surveillance actions. Furthermore, Department guidelines in 14 Foreign Affairs Handbook-2 H-142b(12) require the COR to inform the responsible Contracting Officer in writing of any performance or schedule failure by the contractor. OSAC Program Office employees consistently described performance problems with the website, such as extended outages, a cumbersome user interface, inefficient password management, time-consuming processes for making changes to site content, and slow response times from the contractor on service requests. Because the office did not carry out its contract management responsibilities effectively, it was unable to hold the contractor accountable for deficiencies with the website. As a result, the OSAC Program Office's website

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<sup>12</sup> The Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) is the primary individual assigned to monitor and evaluate the contractor's performance.

<sup>13</sup> The Government Technical Monitor is the individual who assists the COR in monitoring and evaluating the contractor's performance.

<sup>14</sup> Contract 19AQMM20F2679 was awarded on August 13, 2020, to provide operations and maintenance support for the OSAC Program Office website. The same vendor was awarded a prior contract, SAQMMA15F0679, for similar services.

was not always functional and did not efficiently distribute time-sensitive security information to its members.

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should comply with Department and Federal contract management standards for contract 19AQMM20F2679. (Action: DS, in coordination with A)

***Office Did Not Comply With Requirements to Provide Contract Staff Government-Furnished Property***

The OSAC Program Office did not provide its IT services contractors with Government-furnished equipment to enable them to work remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated in the IT services contract, the Government should furnish equipment and any other necessary supplies while contractors are at their primary worksite. However, when the Department mandated that staff—employees and contractors—maximize the use of telework at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the primary worksite shifted to staff residences. Employees were permitted to take home Government-furnished equipment to do their jobs, but contractors were not. As a result, some contract staff told OIG they had to purchase equipment at their own expense to be able to work from their residences because they did not own a personal laptop or computer suitable to complete the work they were assigned to do for the OSAC Program Office.

Six months into the pandemic, in September 2020, the OSAC Program Office requested Government-furnished laptops from DS to issue to the contract staff for their use while teleworking in their homes. However, DS informed the OSAC Program Office that Government-furnished equipment was not authorized for contractor use while teleworking.

General Services Administration guidance issued for COVID-19 operations states that contracting officers should proactively engage with each contractor to address possible impediments arising from contract terms and consider all options available to accomplish the mission without endangering the health or safety of the Federal workforce, which includes contractors. Specifically, General Services Administration standards state that contracting officers may provide Government-furnished property to contractors when it is clearly demonstrated to be in the Government's best interest. Failure to provide contract staff with the equipment necessary to carry out their duties during a global pandemic could negatively affect the performance and productivity of contract staff and risk the accomplishment of the office's mission.

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should request a contract modification for SAQMMA17F3029 to clarify responsibility for providing Government-furnished equipment to contract staff. (Action: DS, in coordination with A)

### **Spotlight on Success: OSAC Program Office Successfully Hosted First-Ever Virtual Annual Briefing**

The OSAC Program Office hosted its annual briefing in 2020 virtually for the first time. The OSAC Annual Briefing, one of the Department's largest annual events, is a forum for security professionals from the Department and representatives from the U.S. private sector to discuss best practices and emerging issues, as well as collectively review lessons learned from recent global events. The virtual annual briefing attracted nearly 2,000 participants, its highest attendance ever. The program included more than 20 hours of presentations and panels, 60 interactive member engagement sessions, 79 speakers and moderators, and 51 discussion facilitators.

This transition to a virtual environment offered an opportunity for OSAC members and security professionals from U.S. companies, nongovernmental organizations, academia, and faith-based organizations to engage and discuss issues such as the global security environment facing U.S. organizations. A post-event survey showed a 9 percent increase in first-time attendees, showcasing the event's popularity. Additionally, the virtual environment afforded opportunities for smaller organizations with limited budgets and personnel to attend. OSAC Program Office staff described the virtual event as the broadest outreach to the OSAC security community in its 36-year history.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should comply with Department and Federal contract management standards for contract 19AQMM20F2679. (Action: DS, in coordination with A)

**Management Response:** In its July 30, 2021, response, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security concurred with this recommendation.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security complied with Department and Federal contract management standards for contract 19AQMM20F2679.

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should request a contract modification for SAQMMA17F3029 to clarify responsibility for providing Government-furnished equipment to contract staff. (Action: DS, in coordination with A)

**Management Response:** In its July 30, 2021, response, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security partially concurred with this recommendation. The bureau noted that the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) Program Office has been working to provide Government-furnished laptops to third-party contractors and personal service contractors since September 2020. At the time of the initial request, the bureau was developing a policy for issuance and accountability of laptops to third-party contractors. In April 2021, the bureau advised the OSAC Program Office that it may issue laptops to third-party contractors and personal service contractors as part of a GO desktop pilot program. However, laptops are still on back order and have not been issued. Furthermore, the bureau noted that some staff did not elect to participate in the pilot, which involves removing the desktop workstation. The bureau noted that it does not believe the contract requires modification as this was a barrier the OSAC Program Office encountered.

**OIG Reply:** OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Diplomatic Security clarified responsibility for providing Government-furnished equipment to contract staff.

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

## PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

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| <b>Title</b>                     | <b>Name</b>  | <b>Arrival Date</b> |
|----------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| <b>Executive Director</b>        |              |                     |
|                                  | Jason Kight  | 9/2019              |
| <b>Deputy Executive Director</b> |              |                     |
|                                  | James Weston | 4/2013 <sup>a</sup> |

Source: Generated by OIG from data provided by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security.

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<sup>a</sup> The Deputy Executive Director joined the OSAC Program Office in 2013 as the Chief of the Research and Information Support Center and assumed the role of Deputy Executive Director in May 2020.

## **APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY**

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This inspection was conducted from January 4 to April 19, 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 the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

### **Objectives and Scope**

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive Officer of USAGM, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and USAGM. Consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, OIG evaluated the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) Program Office's executive direction, program implementation, and resource management. OIG's objectives were to determine whether the OSAC Program Office:

- (1) Had a leadership team that modeled the Department's leadership and management principles in 3 FAM 1214.
- (2) Had developed performance metrics and evaluation methods to measure its progress in accomplishing strategic plan objectives.
- (3) Organized and deployed resources to manage its programs and meet its operational mission and goals.
- (4) Managed and administered its contracts in accordance with Department standards.
- (5) Had established a Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulations.

The scope of the inspection was limited to the OSAC Program Office's internal operations and did not include the office's engagement with the Council, the Council's committees and subcommittees, or the country chapters.

### **Methodology**

OIG used a risk-based approach to prepare for this inspection. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and taking into consideration relevant guidance, OIG conducted the inspection remotely and relied on audio- and video-conferencing tools in lieu of in-person interviews with Department and other appropriate personnel. OIG also reviewed pertinent records; circulated surveys and compiled the results; and reviewed the substance of the 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 findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations.

APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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July 30, 2021

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

FROM:        DS – Todd Brown, Acting Assistant Secretary *TB*

SUBJECT:     Response to Draft OIG Report – Inspection of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security’s Overseas Security Advisory Council Program Office, ISP-I-21-33

DS has reviewed the draft OIG inspection report. We provide the following comments in response to the recommendations provided by OIG:

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should comply with Department and Federal contract management standards for contract 19AQMM20F2679.

**DS Response (07/30/2021):** DS concurs with the recommendation. The OSAC Program Office is now working closely with the Contracting Officer, who is aware of the performance problems with the current contractor. We have instituted a log of all identified problems in the Jira system, which the contractor also has access to, provided Jira training to all staff so they can enter any problems and see how they are being resolved, and worked with the contractor to address problems and resolve them as they are identified.

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, in coordination with the Bureau of Administration, should request a contract modification for SAQMMA17F3029 to clarify responsibility for providing government-furnished equipment to contractor staff.

**DS Response (07/30/2021):** DS partially concurs with the recommendation. The OSAC Program has been working diligently to provide third party contractors (TPCs) and personal service contractors (PSCs) government-furnished EMD laptops since September 2020. At the time of the initial request, DS was working to develop a policy for issuance and accountability of EMD laptops to TPCs. In April 2021, following appropriate policy implementation, DS advised the OSAC Program Office that the Bureau may issue laptops to TPCs and PSCs as part of a GO desktop pilot program. On May 5, OSAC provided a list of all staff who requested a laptop and those staff have registered for GO Desktop accounts. However, laptops are still on back-order and have not been issued. The best estimate OSAC has received is that laptops will be available in late-July. Some staff did not elect to participate in the pilot at this time, which involves removing the desktop workstation. We do not believe the contract requires modification as this was barrier the OSAC Program Office encountered.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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|      |                                       |
|------|---------------------------------------|
| CORs | Contracting Officer's Representatives |
| DS   | Bureau of Diplomatic Security         |
| EEO  | Equal Employment Opportunity          |
| FAM  | Foreign Affairs Manual                |
| OSAC | Overseas Security Advisory Council    |

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# **HELP FIGHT**

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