

ISP-I-19-37 Office of Inspections September 2019

Inspection of the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States

BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS



ISP-I-19-37

What OIG Inspected

OIG inspected the executive direction, program and policy implementation, and resource management operations of the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States.

What OIG Recommends

OIG made 4 recommendations to the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States.

In its comments on the draft report, the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States concurred with all 4 recommendations. OIG considers the 4 recommendations resolved. The mission's response to each recommendation and OIG's reply can be found in the Recommendations section of this report. The mission's formal written response is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.

September 2019 OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS

BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS

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What OIG Found

- The Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission led the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States in a positive and professional manner. Under the Ambassador's leadership, the mission significantly advanced U.S. policy goals for the Organization of American States.
- The mission lacked a formal strategic planning process.
- The mission did not systematically report to the Department of State on the Organization of American States' negotiations and policy meetings, putting the Department at risk of losing information on important deliberations essential to the mission's function.
- The mission did not align its staffing and structure with the Department's organizational planning and position management policies, which led to unbalanced workload distribution among employees.
- The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States did not have a records management program and was not properly retaining or disposing its files and records.

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CONTEXT

Established in 1948, the Organization of American States (OAS) is the main inter-governmental forum in the western hemisphere. OAS comprises all 35 independent states in the region as well as 69 observer states and the European Union.¹ The OAS charter sets forth the organization's essential purposes: to strengthen peace and security; promote democracy; ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes; provide for common action in the event of aggression; seek solutions to political, juridical, and economic problems; promote, by cooperative action, economic, social, educational, scientific, and cultural development; and limit conventional weapons so as to devote greater resources to economic and social development. The OAS uses four lines of effort to implement its purposes: democracy, human rights, security, and development.

The OAS is funded through assessments made to individual member countries. The United States is the organization's largest contributor, with an assessed quota of almost 60 percent of OAS's regular budget, which was approximately \$51 million in 2018.² In 2013, Congress passed legislation to reform the assessed contribution structure so that no member state contributed more than 50 percent of the OAS budget.³ In 2018, OAS approved reducing the U.S. share to 49.99 percent by 2023.

The U.S. Mission to the OAS (USOAS) serves as the central coordination point for communications between the U.S. Government and OAS. USOAS supports two goals in the FY 2019 Joint Regional Strategy for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development. These goals are to encourage OAS action to help restore democracy in Venezuela and to improve financial burden sharing in the organization.

The U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS, with the title of ambassador, is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The mission, located in Washington, D.C., had an authorized staff of 17 Civil Service and Foreign Service employees at the time of the inspection. WHA delivers administrative services to the mission, including financial, budget, human

¹ Although an OAS member, Cuba has not participated since 1962.

² In March 2019, the Secretary of State reduced the U.S. contribution to OAS by \$210,000 in response to a letter from Congress reporting that two OAS commissions—the Inter American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter American Commission on Women—engaged in pro-abortion advocacy in contravention of the Siljander Amendment. That amendment, which Congress has included in annual foreign assistance appropriations since 1981, prohibits use of U.S. funds to lobby for or against abortion. U.S. Senators James Lankford, Thom Tillis, et al., letter to The Honorable Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State, December 21, 2018, and Carol Morello, "Pompeo Cuts OAS Funds Over Advocacy of Legal Abortion," *The Washington Post*, March 26, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/pompeo-cuts-oas-funds-over-advocacy-of-legal-abortion/2019/03/26/4ea5314d-d7e0-48de-b636-e552447430b0 story.html.

³ Organization of American States Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013 (22 U.S.C § 290q, P.L. 113-41). Section 4(15) of the act states that it is in the interest of all member states that no member pays more than 50 percent of the assessed budget. Section 5(a)(1)(D)(i) mandates a multi-year strategy to achieve that outcome.

resources, information management, and travel. Beginning in FY 2017, USOAS administered \$9 million in foreign assistance funds annually.⁴

OIG evaluated the mission's policy implementation and resource management consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act.⁵ OIG's evaluation of the mission's management controls is discussed in the related inspection report of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs.⁶

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

Tone at the Top and Standards of Conduct

OIG assessed USOAS leadership on the basis of interviews that included comments on the Ambassador's and the Deputy Chief of Mission's (DCM) performance; staff questionnaires; and OIG's review of documents and activities during the course of the on-site portion of the inspection.

The Ambassador was sworn in as the U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS on March 30, 2018. The ambassador previously worked as an attorney and also served in the Florida House of Representatives from 2010 to 2017. The DCM, who is the U. S. Deputy Permanent Representative to the OAS, arrived in August 2018. His previous assignment was in the Bureau of Human Resources, Office of Career Development and Assignments. He also served as political counselor successively in Embassy Lima, Peru; Embassy Buenos Aires, Argentina; and Embassy Brasilia, Brazil.

The Ambassador and the DCM set a positive and professional tone for the mission, consistent with Department of State (Department) leadership principles in 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 1214, and formed a cohesive leadership team that aligned with their roles as outlined in 1 FAM 154. Department stakeholders and USOAS staff described the Ambassador as energetic, well-connected, and effective. He has had several successes since his arrival at USOAS. For example, he challenged OAS' practice of passing resolutions by consensus and instead called for votes on significant issues, such as whether the electoral process in Venezuela was legitimate. Department officials told OIG the Ambassador's willingness to call for a vote on issues related to U.S. priorities reinvigorated OAS as a useful policy tool for the United States.

Bureau and USOAS staff described the DCM as open, accessible, and skilled at crafting messages and expressing them persuasively. He drew on his extensive expertise serving in WHA embassies to advise the Ambassador on sensitive foreign policy issues. He also was involved in

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⁴ Prior to FY 2017, Congress appropriated foreign assistance funding for OAS to the Bureau of International Organizations, rather than directly to USOAS.

⁵ 22 U.S.C. 3901 et. seq.; see also Appendix A Objectives, Scope, and Methodology.

⁶ OIG, *Inspection of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs* (report to be issued in FY 2020).

⁷ In its January 10, 2019, "Resolution on the Situation in Venezuela," the Permanent Council of the OAS agreed "to not recognize the legitimacy of Nicolás Maduro's new term." OAS approved the resolution with 19 votes in favor, 6 against, 8 abstentions, and one absent.

increasing USOAS staffing to support the Ambassador's policy objectives by filling a Civil Service position that had been vacant for 18 months. Both the Ambassador and the DCM had open door policies and communicated with the staff through weekly staff meetings.

Equal Employment Opportunity

USOAS staff told OIG that the Ambassador and the DCM advanced Equal Employment Opportunity principles in the mission. However, staff members with whom OIG spoke were unable to identify the program's counselor, and program materials were not posted in office spaces. This is inconsistent with guidance in 15 FAM 1513.1b.4. Because WHA posted Equal Employment Opportunity materials with the counselor's name and contact information during the inspection, OIG did not make a recommendation to address this issue.

Execution of Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives

The Ambassador had a clear vision of his top four priorities: Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, and OAS organizational reform. OIG found he effectively communicated these priorities—and how they related to the U.S. policy principles of representative democracy, constitutional order, and respect for human rights—to the staff. Under his leadership, the mission successfully furthered U.S. foreign policy objectives related to Venezuela. For example, a series of OAS General Assembly and Permanent Council resolutions in 2018 and 2019 called the 2018 election in Venezuela illegitimate, declined to recognize Nicolás Maduro's new term as president of Venezuela,⁸ and called on the regime to allow entry of humanitarian assistance. In April 2019, the mission coordinated efforts by U.S. diplomatic missions in the hemisphere to appeal to OAS member governments to support a resolution recognizing Interim President Guaidó's nominee as the representative of Venezuela at the OAS.⁹ The resolution's passage effectively nullified the Maduro regime's 2017 decision to withdraw Venezuela from OAS in April 2019.

In other actions, mission efforts led to the establishment of an OAS working group on Nicaragua in 2018 and resolutions expressing support for the Nicaraguan people, condemning regime violence, calling for free and fair elections, and urging the Nicaraguan Government to cooperate with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In addition, the Ambassador arranged an OAS-sponsored conference on Cuba in December 2018 with speakers highlighting repression in that country. Because Cuba had not participated in the OAS since 1962 and it was established OAS practice not to address countries in their absence, this event marked an important re-introduction of discussion of Cuba in the organization. Furthermore, advancing its organizational reform goals, the mission in 2018 succeeded in negotiating the reduction in the U.S. quota assessment to the OAS budget, as discussed above.

⁸ On January 10, 2019, Nicolás Maduro began a second presidential term in Venezuela, after winning re-election in May 2018 in a contest deemed illegitimate by the opposition-controlled National Assembly and most of the international community, including the United States.

⁹ As of March 2019, the United States and 53 other countries recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó as interim president of Venezuela.

In addition to making progress on the mission's top four priority areas, on April 1, 2019, the Ambassador assumed the chairmanship of the Permanent Council of the OAS, which rotates every 3 months. Among the Ambassador's objectives for the U.S. chairmanship was advancing the issues of democracy and human rights across the hemisphere. To do this, he engaged frequently with his OAS colleagues in meetings and by attending multiple representational events.

Lack of Strategic Plan Leaves Gaps in Goal Setting, Resource Planning, and Accountability

As noted above, USOAS contributed to the WHA-U.S. Agency for International Development Joint Regional Strategy; however, it did not have its own strategic plan to guide its goal setting, resource planning, and accountability. While the mission's contributions focused on its two strategic objectives of restoring Venezuelan democracy and improving financial burden-sharing, it did not address other objectives, such as the mission's organizational reform agenda for OAS. Staff members interviewed by OIG gave varying explanations of the agenda's goals, which suggests that the lack of a written document did in fact result in differing interpretations of the organizational reform agenda. Guidance in 18 FAM 301.2-1(a) states that strategic planning processes are essential to make informed decisions, prioritize resources, ensure alignment with key policies, and create a framework to monitor progress and ensure accountability. The lack of a strategic plan risks inconsistent communication of mission priorities to mission staff and Department stakeholders. It also hinders transparency in resource planning and accountability for achieving policy and program objectives.

Recommendation 1: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States should develop a strategic plan in accordance with Department standards. (Action: USOAS)

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

OIG assessed the mission's policy implementation, foreign assistance management, and public diplomacy operations. Department stakeholders told OIG they had constructive relations with the mission. Mission and bureau staff coordinated policy positions through attendance of USOAS staff at WHA senior staff meetings as well as through the clearance process. In May 2019, USOAS and WHA instituted a standing biweekly coordination meeting to enhance communication on fast-paced policy issues involving both organizations. OIG found the mission complied with Department standards, with the exceptions described below.

Policy Implementation

Mission Did Not Systematically Report on Organization of American States' Activities

OIG found that the mission did not systematically report on OAS negotiations and meetings. For example, the mission transmitted a cable in March 2019 to regional U.S. embassies requesting engagement with host governments to support the U.S. position on an OAS council resolution on Venezuela. However, USOAS did not report on the council's subsequent debate or the ultimately favorable outcome. Similarly, the mission did not report on its meetings with the OAS Secretary General. Further, from January 2018 through April 2019, the mission produced

18 record messages for the Department's archives. ¹⁰ At approximately one per month, this is fewer than other multilateral missions. Staff told OIG they communicated with colleagues and counterparts principally via non-record email, a text messaging application, and telephone. In addition, staff told OIG they kept WHA informed by participating in bureau meetings. These practices raise two concerns, however. First, Department guidance in 2 FAM 113.1(c)(10) states that reporting is a core function of diplomatic missions. Second, the Federal Records Act¹¹ and 5 FAM 422 set standards for controls over the creation of records to ensure that important policies and decisions are adequately recorded. Mission positions on OAS discussions of Venezuela and Nicaragua fall within these standards. According to 1 FAM 154(c), USOAS is the appropriate channel for official business between the U.S. Government and OAS. Therefore, failure to record negotiations and meetings risks loss of information on important deliberations that facilitate decision and policy making and that document the mission's essential functions.

Recommendation 2: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States should implement reporting requirements for mission staff as required by Department standards. (Action: USOAS)

Foreign Assistance

Mission's Grants Management Division of Responsibilities Unclear

OIG found that the division of grants management responsibilities among four USOAS staff members was unclear. A newly trained Grants Officer Representative managed the mission's three grants to OAS: \$4 million to strengthen democracy, \$500,000 for economic development, and \$4.5 million for human rights. Three other employees with familiarity in monitoring programs also informally assisted with grant oversight. However, OIG found that the four employees did not clearly understand the division of specific grants management duties among them. In addition, OIG determined that USOAS staff overall did not know who had the lead on planning for or requesting future foreign assistance funding. This situation developed due to vacancies in positions that traditionally included foreign assistance expertise. An unclear division of responsibilities increases the risk of not meeting the Department's grants management requirements. Because USOAS was in the process of hiring new employees and reviewing grants management staffing, OIG did not make a recommendation to address this issue. However, OIG advised the mission to clarify staff responsibilities for managing, planning for, and requesting future foreign assistance funding, which it agreed to do.

Public Diplomacy

Structure of Public Diplomacy Staffing Impeded Messaging

OIG found USOAS' staffing structure in support of the Ambassador's public diplomacy efforts hindered the mission's messaging. USOAS did not have a dedicated public affairs officer and instead divided the public diplomacy portfolio among several employees. One staff member

¹⁰ State Messaging and Archive Retrieval Toolset (SMART).

¹¹ 64 Stat. 583 (codified as amended in scattered sections of 41 U.S.C.)

conducted press relations and liaison duties with the Bureau of Public Affairs, while another managed the mission's social media account. Other employees interacted with WHA public diplomacy officers on discrete issues. Although Department standards do not require USOAS to have a dedicated public diplomacy position, OIG found that the mission's diffused approach hampered its ability to meet the Department's public diplomacy goals of influencing foreign publics and expanding relationships that support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals. Specifically, the mission's division of responsibilities limited its ability to coordinate internally and with WHA on messaging regarding U.S. foreign policy developments. On at least one occasion, this resulted in USOAS making public comments before official administration policy statements. OIG advised the mission to review its staffing structure and consider consolidating responsibility for public diplomacy activities, which it agreed to do.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

OIG's review of USOAS' interaction with WHA's Office of Executive Director on human resources, financial management, and information management services found that the mission complied with Department standards, with the exceptions described below.

Mission Staffing and Structure Impeded Efficient Operations

OIG found USOAS' staffing and structure impeded efficient operations and did not reflect the Department's organizational planning principle of achieving a proper balance among mission needs, efficiency of operations, and effective use of employees, as outlined in 1 FAM 014. For example, OIG found that 8 of the mission's 17 authorized positions were in the Front Office, although 3 positions did not perform duties related to that office. In addition, some portfolios were split among employees, as discussed above in the Public Diplomacy section of this report. Furthermore, OIG found that workload changes did not result in a commensurate realignment of personnel and their functions. For example, the mission did not review the workload of staff members who assumed additional duties to cover vacant positions. This staffing structure and workload distribution imbalance resulted in uneven employee productivity and, consequently, tensions among some employees.

Recommendation 3: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States, in coordination with the Bureaus of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Human Resources, should conduct an organizational assessment of the mission's staffing structure and implement appropriate recommendations. (Action: USOAS, in coordination with WHA and DGHR)

Mission Did Not Have a Records Management Program

USOAS did not have a records management program to ensure the uniform creation, maintenance, and disposition of files and records. Department guidance requires offices to implement a records management program that defines the administration of records policies,

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¹² 10 FAM 111b, "Introduction."

standards, and procedures, including effective management controls.¹³ Furthermore, Department offices must assign trained employees to manage office files, ensure the integrity of records, and assist in retention and disposition.

OIG found no documented USOAS records management policy. Instead, employees inconsistently stored documents in either their personal folders or on the office's network shared drive. In addition, the shared drive was unorganized and lacked version control and consistent naming conventions. Furthermore, OIG found USOAS documents dating from 2004 without any evidence that files had been appropriately archived. Although USOAS assigned an employee the responsibility to review USOAS files and records to ensure compliance with Department records management standards, the employee told OIG that she lacked sufficient time to perform the review because of competing priorities. Without an established and enforced records management program, USOAS is at risk of not retaining or disposing of its files and records in accordance with Department policy.

Recommendation 4: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States should implement a records management program in accordance with Department standards. (Action: USOAS)

¹³ 5 FAM 413, "Program Objectives;" 5 FAM 414.4, "Bureaus;" 5 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-4 H-212, "Records Creation—General Methods and Procedures;" and 5 FAH-4 H-215.1-1, "Department Offices."

RECOMMENDATIONS

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 U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States. The mission's complete response can be found in Appendix B. The mission also provided technical comments that were incorporated into this report, as appropriate.

Recommendation 1: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States should develop a strategic plan in accordance with Department standards. (Action: USOAS)

Management Response: In its September 16, 2019, response, the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States concurred with this recommendation.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the mission developed a strategic plan in accordance with Department standards.

Recommendation 2: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States should implement reporting requirements for mission staff as required by Department standards. (Action: USOAS)

Management Response: In its September 16, 2019, response, the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States concurred with this recommendation. The mission noted an estimated completion date of October 15, 2019.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the mission implemented reporting requirements for mission staff.

Recommendation 3: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States, in coordination with the Bureaus of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Human Resources, should conduct an organizational assessment of the mission's staffing structure and implement appropriate recommendations. (Action: USOAS, in coordination with WHA and DGHR)

Management Response: In its September 16, 2019, response, the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States concurred with this recommendation. The mission noted an estimated completion date of February 2020.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the mission conducted an organizational assessment of its staffing structure and implemented appropriate recommendations.

Recommendation 4: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States should implement a records management program in accordance with Department standards. (Action: USOAS)

Management Response: In its September 16, 2019, response, the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States concurred with this recommendation. The mission noted an estimated completion date of January 2020.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the mission implemented a records management program that complies with Department standards.

PRINCIPAL OFFCIALS

Title	Name	Arrival Date
Chiefs of Mission:	<u> </u>	
Ambassador	Carlos Trujillo	03/2018
Deputy Chief of Mission	Alexis Ludwig	08/2018
Chiefs of Sections:		
Management:	Deborah Diggs	08/2006
Political:	Edward Heartney	09/2018
Economic:	Christiana Bruff	05/2019

Source: Generated by OIG from data provided by USOAS.

APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

This inspection was conducted from March 18 to June 25, 2019, 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 Inspector's 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. 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 U.S. interests are accurately and effectively represented; 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 instances of fraud, waste, or abuse exist and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

Methodology

In conducting inspections, OIG uses a risk-based approach to prepare for each inspection; reviews pertinent records; circulates surveys and compiles the results, as appropriate; conducts interviews with Department and on-site personnel; observes daily operations; and reviews the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, and organizations affected by the review. OIG uses 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

September 16, 2019

UNCLASSIFIED

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

FROM: WHA/USOAS – Carlos Trujillo, Ambassador.

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – Inspection of U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States (USOAS)

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

OIG Recommendation 1: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States should develop a strategic plan in accordance with Department Standards.

Management Response: USOAS concurs with this recommendation and will coordinate with WHA/FO and WHA/EX to participate as a separate mission in the upcoming Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) and Mission Resource Request (MRR) exercises.

OIG Recommendation 2: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States should implement reporting requirements for mission staff as required by Department standards.

Management Response: USOAS concurs with this recommendation. In response to informal OIG recommendations during the inspection itself, USOAS has increased its formal reporting while concurrently designing and implementing a reporting plan. Mission staff will now be expected to report formally on all important OAS meetings, including meetings of the Permanent Council and Development Council, as well as significant conversations with OAS senior officials and member state ambassadors and other counterparts. These reports will come in the form of front channel cables or record emails. A formal reporting plan detailing staff reporting requirements will be completed by October 15, 2019.

OIG Recommendation 3: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States, in coordination with the Bureaus of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Human Resources, should

conduct an organizational assessment of the mission's staffing structure and implement appropriate recommendations.

Management Response: USOAS concurs with this recommendation and, in coordination with WHA and DGHR, will conduct an organizational assessment of the mission's staffing structure and implement appropriate recommendations. Ideally, this assessment will result in a reduced front-office staffing pattern that is better proportioned to the size of the overall mission and a workload that is more evenly distributed among staff members. USOAS aims to have this assessment done and recommendations implemented by February 2020.

OIG Recommendation 4: The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States should implement a records management program in accordance with Department standards.

Management Response: USOAS concurs with the recommendation; the management officer will review the department's guidance and take the training needed to create and implement the office's records management program. An appropriate program will then be put into place to bring the office's records management into compliance with Department standards. This process should be completed by January 2020.

The point of contact for this memorandum is Deputy Chief of Mission, Alexis Ludwig.

ABBREVIATIONS

DCM Deputy Chief of Mission
FAM Foreign Affairs Manual

OAS Organization of American States

USOAS U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States

WHA Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

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