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Office of Inspector General
United States Department of State

ISP-I-20-05

Office of Inspections

November 2019

Inspection of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

DOMESTIC OPERATIONS

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HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General
United States Department of State

ISP-I-20-05

What OIG Inspected

OIG inspected executive direction, policy and program implementation, resource management, and information management operations at the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs.

What OIG Recommends

OIG made 6 recommendations: 5 to the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and 1 to the Executive Secretariat.

In its comments on the draft report, the Department concurred with all 6 recommendations. OIG considers all 6 recommendations resolved. The Department's response to each recommendation, and OIG's reply, can be found in the Recommendations section of this report. The Department's formal written responses are reprinted in their entirety in Appendix B.

November 2019

OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS

DOMESTIC OPERATIONS

Inspection of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

What OIG Found

- The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs successfully supported Department of State policies and its overseas missions despite operating in crisis mode as it implemented multiple high-priority administration policies for the region and managed ordered departures for four missions from 2017 to 2019.
- Multiple crises and priorities challenged the staff's work-life balance. Bureau leadership responded to these challenges by implementing new processes to help relieve workload pressures.
- The bureau developed effective interdepartmental and interagency relationships despite its heavy workload pressures and staff vacancies.
- Unclear lines of authority, staffing issues, and the separation of the Venezuela Working Group from the Office of Andean Affairs resulted in workplace stress and confusion regarding taskings and supervision.
- Bureau staff did not fully understand the status and role of the recently constituted Migration Working Group.
- The bureau's lack of management controls for procuring information technology equipment resulted in \$300,000 in unnecessary purchases.
- The bureau did not have a records management program and lacked a content management process for its intranet site.
- Spotlight on Success: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs organized an annual grants training for its overseas mission employees to improve their management of foreign assistance and public diplomacy grants.

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CONTEXT

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) is responsible for managing and promoting U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere region. WHA engagement advances fair and reciprocal trade, sustainable economic development, and poverty reduction; combats drug trafficking, transnational crime, and illegal immigration; and supports democracy, the rule of law, and good governance. The bureau directs 52 U.S. embassies and consulates and the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States (USOAS), which manage relations with 34 countries in a region that includes almost 14 percent of the world's population.

Events in the Western Hemisphere directly affect U.S. national security. Political events in Venezuela have produced a humanitarian crisis characterized by economic collapse, a breakdown in democratic order, serious human rights violations, and the migration of more than 3 million people to other countries in the region. Meanwhile, U.S. policymakers have renewed attention on Central America because it is a major transit corridor for illicit drugs and the largest source of illegal migration to the United States. Crises of governance, natural disasters, and lack of opportunity in much of the region drive migration and enable transnational criminal networks that traffic in narcotics, arms, and people. Additionally, China is exerting economic and political influence throughout the region.

The United States trades almost \$2 trillion worth of goods and services annually with other countries in the Western Hemisphere and is the top trading partner for nearly two-thirds of the region's countries. The United States runs trade surpluses with most of its trading partners in the region. Twelve of the United States' 20 global free-trade agreements are with Western Hemisphere countries. On November 30, 2018, the United States concluded a renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement and, with Mexico and Canada, signed the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.¹

The 2019 Joint Regional Strategy of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean includes four goals:

- A secure hemisphere.
- A prosperous hemisphere.
- Stronger democratic institutions.
- Receptiveness to U.S. leadership.

STAFFING, STRUCTURE, AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

WHA's authorized staffing levels in FY 2018 included 119 Foreign Service, 95 Civil Service, and 36 contract positions. In addition to the Front Office, the bureau is organized into 12 offices and

¹ At the time of the inspection, the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement had yet to be ratified by the U.S. Congress, which is required for it to take effect.

2 working groups supervised by an Assistant Secretary, a Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS), and five Deputy Assistant Secretaries (DAS). As shown in the chart below, WHA includes eight offices that focus on specific geographic areas; a public diplomacy and public affairs office; and an executive office that provides management services to the bureau and management support to missions in the region. Two offices direct regional and multilateral issues, foreign assistance, strategic planning, and summit coordination while the two working groups focus on Venezuela and Central American migration issues.

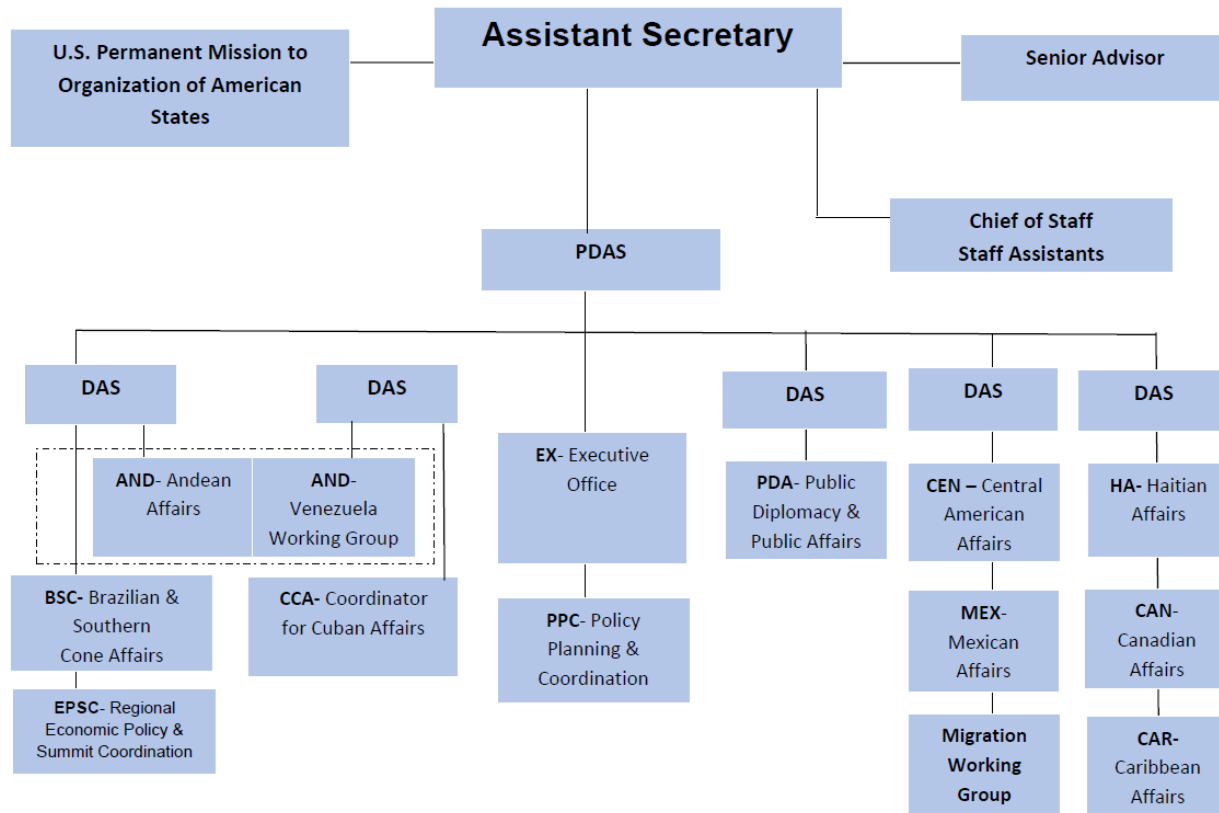


Figure 1: WHA organizational chart. (Source: Generated by OIG from data provided by WHA.)

In January 2019, the Secretary appointed a Special Representative for Venezuela to lead the Department’s Venezuela policy. The Special Representative reports directly to the Secretary and coordinates with the WHA Assistant Secretary.

USOAS, which is physically located in the Department of State (Department), is led by a Permanent Representative appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. USOAS coordinates with WHA and relies on it for management support. A related inspection report discusses USOAS operations, including policy implementation and resource management.²

² OIG, *Inspection of the U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States* (ISP-I-19-37, September 2019).

At the time of the inspection, the bureau managed 11 active foreign assistance grants with a total value of \$27.6 million. The bureau also coordinated assistance delivered by USAID and by other Department bureaus, including International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Political-Military Affairs, and Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

OIG evaluated the bureau's strategic planning, policy implementation, resource management, and management controls consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980.³

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION

OIG assessed bureau leadership on the basis of interviews, questionnaires completed by WHA staff and by management officers and deputy chiefs of mission at WHA's overseas posts, and OIG's review of documents and observations of bureau events during the inspection. OIG also conducted interviews with Department and interagency partners that elicited comments on WHA's performance in the interagency policy process.

Tone at the Top and Standards of Conduct

The non-career Assistant Secretary, who arrived in October 2018, has more than 20 years of experience in foreign policy, primarily focused on Western Hemisphere affairs. Prior to her appointment, she served as the Western Hemisphere member of the Department's Policy Planning Staff. The PDAS assumed her position in November 2018. A career member of the Senior Foreign Service, she held positions as the Deputy Chief of Mission in Cambodia, Economic Counselor in Thailand, and Deputy Political Counselor in Colombia.

WHA staff told OIG the arrival of the Assistant Secretary and the PDAS was a positive change for the bureau. They described the productive partnership between the Assistant Secretary and the PDAS as complementary and stated that it melded the Assistant Secretary's strategic policy expertise with the PDAS's management and team building skills. Staff also described the Assistant Secretary as having strong analytical skills and expertise in the region and noted that the PDAS's background in East Asian affairs had expanded WHA's ability to address China's influence in the region. OIG found the Assistant Secretary and the PDAS modeled the leadership principles in 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 1214. Both were involved in the employee-led leadership program, "WHA Leads," which includes WHA's domestic offices and overseas missions. The program included guest speakers and events focused on a different leadership tenet each month. Staff welcomed the Front Office's participation in these activities as well as the "Walk with the PDAS" program, aimed at supporting the bureau's work-life balance and resilience objectives.

Multiple Crises Challenged Bureau Staff's Work-Life Balance

WHA leadership had focused on multiple crises since December 2018, which often left the staff overtaxed with night and weekend work for extended periods. According to the bureau, the

³ See Appendix A.

U.S. Government considered the crisis in Venezuela⁴ to be its highest priority. The increase in migration to the U.S. southern border⁵ was also a highly visible issue that required extensive resources. In addition, the bureau supported the U.S. Strategy for Central America,⁶ civil society and democracy programs in Cuba and Nicaragua, and numerous high-level visits to the region. For example, in one week in April 2019, the Secretary, the Counselor of the Department, and the Secretary of Commerce required WHA support for their separate trips to the region, while the Deputy Secretary drew on WHA support for an event he hosted with officials from 18 Caribbean countries in Miami, Florida. Furthermore, WHA was responsible for managing ordered departures from multiple embassies from 2017 to 2019.⁷

OIG found that, across the bureau, offices were inundated with “flash taskers.” “Flash taskers” included assignments for briefing papers, memoranda, diplomatic notes, and correspondence for bureau and Department leadership with short deadlines. These taskers, often for the Secretary, required responses within mere hours. Frequently, such taskers were issued after normal working hours and on weekends, including, in one case, on a holiday, where a response to the task was expected that same day. OIG found WHA’s tasker workload increased 39 percent from December 2018 to April 2019.⁸ Staff told OIG they were unable to add value to these assignments, which often included policy making concerns, because they did not have time to review documents and analyze issues before the deadlines. Employees told OIG they welcomed the following actions taken by the Assistant Secretary and the PDAS to alleviate some of the pressure:

- The Assistant Secretary and the Special Representative for Venezuela began meeting with the Secretary twice a week to provide updated information on Venezuelan issues in an effort to reduce the number of formal Venezuela-related taskings from the Secretary.
- The bureau was in the process of initiating One Paper, an application used by other regional bureaus, to facilitate the tasker clearance process.
- The Assistant Secretary and the bureau Chief of Staff began to meet routinely with the Executive Secretariat to reduce the number of taskers by eliminating duplicative requests and ensuring that assignments accurately identified the appropriate action offices.

⁴ In January 2019, the United States recognized National Assembly leader Juan Guaidó as interim president of Venezuela. Subsequently, the Maduro regime ordered U.S. embassy personnel to depart, and the United States suspended operations in Venezuela.

⁵ Migration increased from approximately 9,000 migrants per week in July 2018 to 26,000 per week in April 2019.

⁶ The U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America is a multi-year U.S. Government plan promoting institutional reforms and addressing developmental challenges. It aims to protect American citizens by promoting host government reforms to address the security, governance, and economic drivers of illegal immigration and illicit trafficking and smuggling, while increasing opportunities for U.S. and other businesses.

⁷ Ordered departures include U.S. embassies in Cuba (September 2017 to March 2018), Nicaragua (April to September 2018), Haiti (February to June 2019) and Venezuela (since January 2019 and ongoing as of June 2019).

⁸ This analysis was based on OIG’s review of taskers assigned during the 4-month period of September to December 2018 and during the 4-month period of January to April 2019.

- The bureau Chief of Staff worked with chiefs of staff in other bureaus to share best practices and collaborate on streamlining the tasker and clearance process.

As a result of these actions, OIG did not make a recommendation in this area.

Equal Employment Opportunity Program

OIG found the Assistant Secretary and the PDAS set the example for Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) standards in their daily conduct. In office meetings, both expressed their expectation that staff would adhere to EEO principles, and the PDAS shared EEO-related messages with the staff. The Assistant Secretary and the PDAS also encouraged embassy personnel to participate in the bureau's Diversity Council, which offered sessions on topics such as unconscious bias and interviewing techniques. Staff told OIG they appreciated the reinvigorated Diversity Council.

Despite the Assistant Secretary and the PDAS's attention to the program, WHA employees told OIG they did not know the name or location of the bureau's EEO counselor. OIG also found the bureau did not post EEO information, including contact information for the counselor, throughout the offices. According to guidance in 3 FAM 1514.1b4, the Assistant Secretary is responsible for publicizing to all employees the names and locations of the counselor. Because WHA posted the required information during the inspection, OIG did not make a recommendation to address this issue.

Execution of Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives

In spite of its fast-paced operational tempo, the bureau had some significant successes, most notably in implementing policies on Venezuela and Cuba, which are both high priorities of the White House and the Secretary. Other accomplishments included strengthened bilateral relations with Brazil, cooperation with Andean countries on Venezuela policy, and renewed U.S. engagement in the Caribbean.

The Assistant Secretary exercised her responsibilities in accordance with 1 FAM 150 and 1 FAM 112. Staff told OIG she was viewed as the outward face of the bureau who represented the direction of the Department and was knowledgeable about the WHA region. She met regularly with the Secretary and was in frequent contact with the National Security Council and the White House. She maintained contact with the bureau's overseas posts through quarterly conference calls as well as ad hoc emails and phone calls. The Assistant Secretary and the PDAS also traveled to as many posts as their schedules would allow. At the time of the inspection, the Assistant Secretary had recently returned from El Salvador and Honduras, where she held town halls, attended country team meetings, and met with First- and Second-Tour officers. In addition to managing the bureau, the PDAS visited seven countries in the WHA region between January and April 2019.

Bureau Leadership Did Not Use a Strategic Plan to Guide Operations

OIG found that the Assistant Secretary and the PDAS did not actively engage in strategic planning and did not use the WHA-USAID Joint Regional Strategy to guide the bureau's progress toward strategic goals. Some Front Office staff were unfamiliar with the current Joint Regional Strategy, and many working-level staff members were unaware of the bureau's strategic goals and planning processes. WHA staff also told OIG the bureau's focus on several crises, including Venezuela and migration from Central America, diverted WHA's attention from achieving long-term, strategic goals elsewhere in the region.

As outlined in 18 FAM 301.2-1a, the Department uses strategic planning to achieve the most effective U.S. foreign policy outcomes and provide greater accountability to its primary stakeholders and the American people. Moreover, the Department's leadership and management principles described in 3 FAM 1214b(2) require leaders to develop and promote attainable, shared short- and long-term goals for their organizations. The Assistant Secretary and the PDAS acknowledged the need for improved strategic planning but said the ongoing crises and heightened senior-level interest in the region limited the time they could devote to such efforts. In addition, bureau staff said the complexity of the Department's formal strategic planning process made it difficult for the bureau to use documents such as the Joint Regional Strategy to prioritize and guide its day-to-day operations. However, the absence of a clearly communicated strategic plan and processes for measuring progress against that plan placed the bureau at risk of failing to achieve important, long-term foreign policy goals.

OIG advised bureau leadership to strengthen its strategic planning practices and to communicate the strategic goals and implementation plans with bureau staff. At the time of the inspection, WHA was organizing a leadership and planning offsite meeting to refocus the bureau on these goals. Therefore, OIG did not make a recommendation to address this issue.

Adherence to Internal Controls

Bureau staff told OIG the Assistant Secretary and the PDAS emphasized adherence to internal controls and encouraged and emphasized ethical behavior. The Assistant Secretary and the PDAS discussed internal controls at meetings, and senior leadership encouraged personnel to comply with standards. OIG determined the WHA's Executive Office coordinated an effective annual internal control process that culminated in the then-acting Assistant Secretary's 2018 Annual Management Control Statement of Assurance. That statement included documentation of internal control reviews conducted by 29 embassies and the bureau's domestic offices and noted that one embassy reported a significant deficiency in fire safety.

The PDAS closely reviewed representational claims for accuracy and to ensure the funds were being used as intended, before signing them, as required by 3 FAM 3244.1-2.

POLICY AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

OIG assessed WHA's policy and program implementation through a review of the bureau's policy implementation, foreign assistance, and public diplomacy. OIG found the bureau generally met Department requirements for policy and program implementation, with the exceptions noted below.

Policy Implementation

OIG reviewed the bureau's eight geographic offices, two regional and multilateral policy offices,⁹ and two working groups to assess policy formulation, implementation and coordination, leadership and management, and Leahy vetting.¹⁰ OIG found the offices' operations generally conformed to Department requirements with the exception of the issues noted below.

Geographic and Regional Policy Offices Effectively Supported Policy Implementation

OIG found the eight geographic and two regional policy offices developed effective interdepartmental and interagency relationships while at the same time supporting WHA's embassies, as required by Department guidance. All external stakeholders OIG interviewed commented positively about their interactions with WHA on clearances and policy communication, despite the rapidly developing policy changes. In addition, all 21 WHA embassies that responded to OIG's survey agreed or strongly agreed that WHA geographic and regional policy offices effectively supported their needs, including providing support for Leahy vetting. In addition, employees consistently reported that offices were able to support Department policy priorities for the region despite workload pressures and vacancies caused by the Department's hiring freeze in 2017 and 2018.¹¹

Organizational Structure Impeded Operations and Coordination on the Venezuela Crisis

OIG found that the organizational structure the bureau created to address the Venezuelan crisis impeded coordination and efficient operations. Following the U.S. recognition of Juan Guaidó as interim President of Venezuela on January 23, 2019, the bureau carved out the Venezuela Working Group from the Office of Andean Affairs, which previously had handled Venezuela-related issues. The working group was an independent entity that reported to different leadership than the Office of Andean Affairs. The Venezuela Working Group did not

⁹ The bureau's two policy offices are the Economic Policy and Summit Coordination Office and the Policy Planning and Coordination Office.

¹⁰ The Leahy Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 prohibits the Department from furnishing assistance to foreign security forces if the Department receives credible information that such forces have committed gross violations of human rights. See 22 U.S.C. 2378d.

¹¹ The Office of Management and Budget first announced a Government-wide hiring freeze on January 23, 2017. While most positions were frozen and could not be filled if vacant, the Secretary approved specific exemptions to the hiring freeze to ensure the Department was able to meet critical needs. The Secretary lifted the hiring freeze in May 2018; however, some vacancies remain. See OIG, *Review of the Effects of the Department of State Hiring Freeze* (ISP-I-19-23, August 2019).

sufficiently coordinate its work with other offices. As a result, staff working on issues related to countries bordering Venezuela were not adequately integrated into the bureau's Venezuelan crisis response, despite the important role those countries played in regional policy and humanitarian responses.

Furthermore, the bureau had not addressed the status of operations at Embassy Caracas, which also hindered coordination on the Venezuela crisis. Following an ordered departure in January 2019, the Department assigned Embassy Caracas employees to the Venezuela Working Group, other Department bureaus, or to temporary duty locations outside of Washington, D.C. However, staff told OIG that the fluid situation in Venezuela created uncertainty regarding when embassy employees might return to Embassy Caracas and delayed decisions about the structure of remote embassy operations. These factors also made it difficult for embassy employees working in locations other than the Venezuela Working Group to coordinate their activities with that working group.

The Government Accountability Office's Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government¹² requires that management develop an organizational structure and assign responsibilities to discrete units to enable the organization to operate in an efficient and effective manner. It also requires management to periodically evaluate the structure to ensure it meets the entity's objectives. During the inspection, WHA began clarifying the status of Embassy Caracas' remote operations. However, inadequate coordination and a continued lack of clarity concerning the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Andean Affairs and the Venezuela Working Group impeded the bureau's execution of its responsibilities.

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should delineate the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Andean Affairs and the Venezuela Working Group with regard to the Venezuela crisis and communicate that information to all appropriate Department stakeholders. (Action: WHA)

Unclear and Conflicting Lines of Authority Complicated Venezuela Policy Implementation

OIG found that multiple unclear and conflicting lines of authority within the Department complicated the execution of Venezuela policy.¹³ For example, Department officials told OIG the division of labor between the Special Representative for Venezuela and WHA was not well delineated, and they stated that, at times, the leaders of these offices issued conflicting policy guidance. OIG also found that Department principals outside of WHA directly tasked members of the Venezuela Working Group, instead of going through the Department's Executive Secretariat, as required by 1 FAM 022.2a.¹⁴ As a result, neither the Executive Secretariat nor the

¹² Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* at 27-28 (GAO-14-704G, September 2014).

¹³ The Inspector General Statement on the Department of State's Major Management and Performance Challenges identifies unclear lines of authority as a Department major management challenge for 2019. (OIG-EX-19-01, November 2018).

¹⁴ Guidance in 1 FAM 022.2 outlines responsibilities of the Executive Secretariat of the Department, including the direction and control of official action, briefing and information documents to and from the Secretary, Deputy

bureau was able to adequately prioritize or direct the work. These unclear lines of authority occurred, in part, because of the number of offices working on the Venezuela crisis. Specifically, both the Secretary and the Special Representative for Venezuela played a central role in developing Venezuela policy; in addition, WHA, its Venezuela Working Group, and Embassy Caracas employees worked on many aspects of the crisis. The Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government¹⁵ require management to establish and define reporting lines at all levels of the organization. During the inspection, the Special Representative issued guidance to clarify which issues required his review. However, the continued unclear lines of authority and ongoing taskings by Department principals directly to WHA staff compromised the Department's ability to efficiently coordinate policy guidance.

Recommendation 2: The Executive Secretariat, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and the Special Representative for Venezuela, should require that all Department requests for action, briefing, and information documents related to Venezuela policies for senior Department principals or interagency equivalents are coordinated through its staff. (Action: S/ES, in coordination with WHA and the Special Representative for Venezuela)

Staffing Issues Hampered Venezuela Crisis Operations and Contributed to Employee Stress and Burnout

OIG found that staffing issues in the Venezuela Working Group hampered the bureau's ability to implement Venezuela-related policy and programs. Department and bureau staff told OIG that working group employees had an unsustainable workload that was causing workplace stress and burnout. The issues OIG identified included inadequate staffing, inefficient distribution of staff, and insufficient personnel management. To keep up with the demand for information and policy recommendations, employees told OIG they worked 10- to 16-hour days and multiple weekends from January to May 2019. In addition, although the Department assigned some Embassy Caracas employees to the working group, they continued to handle embassy taskings and issues related to the ordered departure, which reduced their availability for working group assignments. Finally, OIG determined that because the working group had no deputy director with responsibility to handle personnel and management matters, some of these issues were not addressed. For example, some Civil Service employees with non-supervisory position descriptions nonetheless supervised other staff. Employees told OIG that without an office deputy, they received limited managerial support and no training to deal with personnel and policy problems in the high-pressure environment. As a result of these factors, staff had difficulties covering the range of duties required to address the Venezuelan crisis.

Guidance in 3 FAM 2612 requires positions to be structured and staffed in the most economic manner consistent with effective mission accomplishment. During the inspection, the bureau took steps to identify replacements for the 16 embassy employees scheduled to leave the

Secretaries, and Under Secretaries. The Executive Secretariat also serves as the official channel for the receipt from the White House of instructions and responses to recommendations.

¹⁵ GAO-14-704G, September 2014, at 28, 35-36.

working group in summer 2019. The bureau also began efforts to reclassify the position descriptions for staff performing supervisory roles¹⁶ and recruited an officer to serve as deputy director. Because the bureau began addressing Venezuela Working Group staffing challenges, OIG did not make a recommendation to address this issue.

Bureau Took Steps to Address the Surge in Migration From Central America

OIG found WHA devoted attention and resources to address a surge in migration from Central America,¹⁷ a high priority for the U.S. Government and Department leadership. For example, in December 2018, the bureau established the Migration Working Group to track and report on migration flows at the southern border. In March and April 2019, the Assistant Secretary directed chiefs of missions in the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador to develop recommendations for measures to stem illegal migration. The Assistant Secretary also traveled to the Northern Triangle countries and, along with the chiefs of mission, stressed to host governments the issue's urgency and importance. The bureau also proposed refinements to the U.S. Strategy for Central America¹⁸ to focus programming on local areas that are sources of high migration to the United States. Following the President's March 2019 decision to suspend foreign assistance to the Northern Triangle countries, the bureau produced a plan, approved by the Secretary, specifying priority areas for cooperation from Northern Triangle government in order to reinstate foreign assistance.

Migration Working Group Status and Eventual Role Not Clear

Notwithstanding the bureau's efforts to respond to the surge in migration, OIG found that the status and eventual role of the Migration Working Group was unclear. Specifically, staff expressed uncertainty to OIG about the respective roles of the working group and the bureau's geographic offices. For example, they did not understand whether the Migration Working Group or geographic offices would manage interagency coordination. Furthermore, staff members told OIG they did not understand whether the group's mandate would extend beyond the Northern Triangle countries to other migration issues in the region, such as in Venezuela and Cuba. OIG advised, and bureau leadership agreed, to make decisions on these issues and communicate them to bureau staff and Department stakeholders.

Information Flow in Office of the Coordinator for Cuban Affairs Was Problematic

Department and interagency leaders credited the Office of the Coordinator for Cuban Affairs for its substantive knowledge and competent support to implement U.S. policy on Cuba despite a reduced embassy presence in Havana due to unexplained health incidents affecting U.S.

¹⁶ Once reclassified, the positions would need to be recompeted unless the incumbents have previously served a 1-year probationary period for new supervisors.

¹⁷ The number of migrants apprehended or deemed inadmissible at the U.S. southern border in the first half of FY 2019 was more than 105 percent higher than the total from the same period in FY 2018. More than 64 percent of the migrants were from the Central American Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

¹⁸ See footnote 6.

Government personnel in Cuba.¹⁹ The office also supported the Deputy Secretary's Health Incidents Response Task Force, which was created to address the health incidents. However, OIG found that problems with information flow in the Office of the Coordinator for Cuban Affairs impeded desk officers' ability to respond to the needs of Department senior officials in a timely manner. Specifically, OIG identified a number of obstacles, including difficulties accessing National Security Council correspondence and other classified documents important to desk officers' work; changing or unclear guidance from office and bureau leaders; and delays in reviewing and approving work products. As described in 1 FAM 114.1b, country directors are responsible for ensuring the adequate, regular flow of information on U.S. Government policies, policy deliberations, and diplomatic exchanges. A rapidly changing policy environment²⁰ was partially to blame for the problems with information flow. OIG advised, and bureau leadership agreed, on steps to improve timely information flow to better equip and support staff in implementing the Cuba policy.

Foreign Assistance

OIG reviewed WHA's management of foreign assistance, including its administration of foreign assistance grants, and found the bureau generally managed these grants in accordance with applicable Department guidelines, as described below.

WHA coordinated policy decisions for \$1.8 billion in FY 2018 foreign assistance funding that supported U.S. priorities related to security, development, and governance.²¹ The bureau provided overall direction for assistance funds supporting regional initiatives, including the U.S. Strategy for Central America, the Central American Regional Security Initiative, and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, as well as funding appropriated to promote democracy in Cuba. As of May 2019, the bureau managed 11 active foreign assistance grants with a total value of \$27.6 million. The bureau also coordinated assistance delivered by other Department stakeholders, including the Bureaus of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Political-Military Affairs, and Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and by USAID.

U.S. Government stakeholders consistently described to OIG a positive working relationship with WHA on foreign assistance and cited the relationship as a model for how regional bureaus should coordinate foreign assistance. OIG found WHA established policies and procedures to

¹⁹ U.S. diplomats and family members in Havana suffered a variety of injuries from attacks of an unknown nature, with symptoms including ear complaints, hearing loss, dizziness, headache, fatigue, cognitive issues, and difficulty sleeping. On September 29, 2017, the Department ordered the departure of non-emergency personnel assigned to Embassy Havana, as well as all family members.

²⁰ The administration published new policy guidance on Cuba in June 2017, which changed aspects of the previous administration's policy of engagement. The Secretary of State in April 2019 and the National Security Advisor in November 2018 and April 2019 announced further changes to the Cuba policy.

²¹ The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 vests primary responsibility in the Secretary of State for directing and leading all U.S. Government foreign assistance. See 22 U.S.C. § 2382(c). As described in 1 FAM 112, regional bureau assistant secretaries are responsible for the general conduct of foreign relations with the countries in their bureaus and assist the Secretary in providing direction, coordination, and supervision of interdepartmental activities of the U.S. Government in their respective regions.

guide its management of foreign assistance grants. These included a system for tracking completion of grants officer representative reports and a process to ensure grant recipients submitted required reporting before the bureau approved their payment requests. OIG reviewed 10 grant files (total value \$25.2 million) out of a total of 20 active and expired awards (total value \$35.3 million)²² and found the grant documentation complied with Department standards.

OIG also found the bureau was on track to implement enhanced practices required in 18 FAM 301.4²³ related to conducting major bureau-managed assistance programs. OIG advised, and the bureau agreed, to consider how it also can support its embassies in complying with 18 FAM 301.4-6(C) requirements for bilateral programs and projects designed and managed solely at overseas posts.

Finally, in March 2019, the President directed U.S. Government agencies to suspend foreign assistance to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras because of dissatisfaction with their progress in curbing flows of migrants to the southern U.S. border. During the inspection, OIG noted that WHA began working with the Department's Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources and other foreign assistance stakeholders to identify affected funding and develop plans for reallocating the funds.

Spotlight on Success: Annual Regional Grants Training Supported Mission-Managed Awards

Beginning in 2014, WHA started delivering grants training for employees who work at the bureau's 52 overseas embassies and consulates to improve management of foreign assistance and public diplomacy grants. The week-long training—held annually in either the Florida Regional Center in Ft. Lauderdale or at a regional embassy—covers the entire assistance life cycle and includes presentations by WHA offices and Bureau of Administration staff responsible for grants policy and the State Award Management System used to issue and manage Federal assistance awards. During the 2019 training, which occurred during the inspection, 40 employees from 19 embassies and consulates attended. Training participants serve as grants officers or grants officer's representatives for mission-managed public diplomacy and foreign assistance awards, including awards supporting the Central America Regional Security Initiative and grants funded by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. As of May 2019, at least one other regional bureau planned to replicate WHA's model.

²² The sample included grants with at least one year of activity after award and in which the latest documented activity in the file was no earlier than May 2017, when the Department's current Federal Assistance Directive was promulgated.

²³ In 2018, the Department issued 18 FAM 301.4 which incorporates major program identification, design, monitoring, evaluation, and data analysis best practices to improve the Department's ability to more fully characterize and account for the various ways bureaus and offices use their resources to achieve goals and objectives. The policy applies to new and ongoing bureau and office efforts across diplomatic engagement and foreign assistance.

Public Diplomacy

The bureau's Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs directs its efforts to regional policy priorities and reviews missions' Public Diplomacy Implementation Plans to ensure overseas activities are linked to the Joint Regional Strategy and other Assistant Secretary and PDAS priorities. Missions that responded to OIG's field survey expressed satisfaction with the office's support, although OIG observed the factors discussed below limited this support.

Increased Workload Inhibited Capacity to Support Overseas Missions

OIG found the increased workload of public diplomacy desk officers, driven by the bureau's expanding agenda and regional crises, restricted their capacity to support public diplomacy operations at overseas missions. Staff estimated they spent at least 80 percent of their time producing press guidance, drafting talking points, and responding to Front Office taskings. This left little time for other core functions such as supporting overseas missions, consulting with office leadership, and developing a longer-term strategic perspective on public diplomacy programs in their portfolio countries. Officers told OIG the workload and staffing gaps hampered their ability to identify opportunities for cross-regional programs, coordinate with colleagues in planning senior official travel, and mentor less experienced officers. Staff also described their inability to expand their regional expertise and public diplomacy program knowledge to further their own professional development and the objectives of 10 FAM 114 public diplomacy leadership tenets. Bureau public diplomacy leaders told OIG they were considering several remedies, from reinstating regular meetings between desk officers and office leadership to exploring alternative models for desk officer functions used in other regional bureaus. Therefore, OIG did not make a recommendation to address this issue.

Increased Social Media Demands Constrained Digital Media Team's Support of Overseas Missions

Increased social media demands constrained the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs digital media team's support of overseas missions. These duties are outlined in 10 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-1 H-062 and directives from the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. To respond to regional crises and resultant bureau leadership needs, the team devoted more time to supporting the Assistant Secretary's Twitter account and Department social media platforms than to assisting its overseas missions. At the time of the inspection, the digital team lead also served as WHA's acting press chief and spokesperson.

The Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs employed short-term remedies to manage its demands. For example, the office assigned another employee to assist with social media communications and drew on the Bureaus of International Information Programs and Public Affairs²⁴ to provide content and training for overseas account managers. Because the office was in the process of assessing current constraints and longer-term solutions, OIG did not make a recommendation to address this issue.

²⁴ In May 2019, the Department launched the Bureau of Global Public Affairs, which merged the Bureaus of International Information Programs and Public Affairs.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The bureau's Executive Office delivered administrative, financial management, general services, human resources, and information management support services to WHA and its overseas missions. Management officers at overseas missions who responded to OIG's survey gave generally high scores for the Executive Office's support, except in the area of human resources. Additionally, Executive Office staff who responded to OIG's questionnaire highly praised the acting Executive Director's leadership. OIG determined that the Executive Office delivered services in accordance with Department guidance and policies, with the exceptions discussed below.

Procurement

Lack of Management Controls for Purchases of Information Technology Equipment

WHA did not have management controls in place for the procurement of information technology (IT) equipment, which resulted in unnecessary purchases at the end of FY 2018. Guidance in 14 FAM 221.2a and b(1) states that acquisitions made near the end of a fiscal year must represent a bona fide need for that fiscal year and that such orders be kept to the minimum needed to support essential, approved programs. However, OIG found that, in September 2018, the bureau spent \$300,000 on 300 new monitors for its domestic offices but did not solicit employee input on their need for these monitors until two months after the end of the fiscal year. Moreover, after delivery of the monitors, bureau staff discovered they were incompatible with existing IT equipment. As of May 2019, the bureau was working with the vendor to return and replace the monitors. OIG determined this poorly planned procurement occurred because only officers overseeing general services and financial management functions could approve procurements in the Department's procurement system, leaving the bureau's Information Management staff with no official role or oversight of the purchase. Furthermore, WHA staff who approved the purchase did not consult with Information Management staff prior to the purchase to ensure the new monitors would be compatible with existing IT equipment and systems. Without proper management controls on the procurement of IT equipment, the bureau is at risk of wasting Government resources.

Recommendation 3: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should implement management controls for its procurement of information technology equipment. (Action: WHA)

Human Resources

Domestic and Overseas Staff Identified Concerns With Human Resources Services

In OIG's survey, 47 percent of domestic and 31 percent of overseas respondents rated the Executive Office's Human Resources Unit as "good" or better. However, 16 percent of domestic and 31 percent of overseas respondents rated the unit's service as "poor." An additional 26 percent of domestic and 37 percent of overseas respondents rated the unit's service as "fair."

Respondents told OIG the unit's staff was unresponsive, provided unhelpful answers, and did not have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. OIG determined the customer dissatisfaction resulted from a lack of transparency, accountability, and communication. The Human Resources Unit had no service standards that defined what a customer could expect and that reminded management and employees of their obligations, nor did it have a tracking mechanism to monitor performance and response times to customer requests. As stated in 3 FAM 1211, procedures governing the personnel systems of the foreign affairs agencies should be designed to promote the most effective execution of each agency's responsibilities. These deficiencies led to customer frustration and poor morale.

Recommendation 4: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should implement and enforce written service standards for the Human Resources Unit that comply with Department standards. (Action: WHA)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

WHA's Information Management staff delivered helpdesk support services for more than 300 domestic users, performed domestic information systems security officer responsibilities, and oversaw the development of applications. The staff also supported overseas missions by coordinating equipment purchases and assigning information management personnel to embassies. In OIG's survey, Information Management staff received positive ratings for the support provided to both the bureau and its posts. WHA leadership and Bureau of Information Resource Management staff also commended the bureau's Information Management staff for their assistance with several ongoing efforts, including installing a regional destruction facility at the Florida Regional Center, supporting the pilot of Smart Mission at a WHA overseas mission, and implementing ClassNet Regionalization at several WHA posts.²⁵ However, OIG found several areas for improvement in the bureau's delivery of services, as described below.

Division of Responsibilities Between Information Management and General Services Operations Was Unclear

OIG found a lack of clarity between the bureau's Information Management and General Services Office staff regarding which office handles IT equipment purchases, installation, and removal. Information Management staff told OIG the confusion over who had responsibility for moving IT equipment between offices left bureau staff frustrated and wasted time and resources. The Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government²⁶ describe effective and efficient operations that are necessary to produce the intended results while minimizing the waste of resources. This lack of clarity in IT equipment responsibilities hindered the support the two offices provided to WHA staff. During the inspection, Information Management

²⁵ The regional destruction facility coordinates and executes the destruction and disposal of classified IT equipment for WHA missions. Smart Mission leverages next generation technology to bring unclassified Wi-Fi, internet, telephone, and radio communications into a single business infrastructure. ClassNet Regionalization consolidates IT resources and services for the Department's classified network into regional hubs to reduce hardware at individual posts, provide regionalized disaster recovery solutions, improve security, and reduce IT service costs.

²⁶ GAO-14-704G, September 2014, at 13.

leadership began drafting a document to clarify their responsibilities. OIG advised them to work with General Services Office management to jointly define responsibilities and disseminate the information to all WHA staff. Because of WHA's progress on this issue, OIG did not make a recommendation.

Dedicated Internet Networks Incorrectly Registered

The bureau incorrectly registered its dedicated internet networks (DIN) with the Department. Guidance in 5 FAM 872.1 states that DINs must be registered with the Department's Enterprise IT Configuration Control Board and updated annually with complete and accurate technical information. OIG found WHA had two DINs, with plans to add more by the end of 2019, but Department control board records incorrectly showed WHA had four DINs. Incorrect DIN information increases the risk of outages, potential compromise, and loss of data. During the inspection, WHA and the Enterprise IT Configuration Control Board began correcting this information. Because of WHA's progress, OIG did not make a recommendation to address this issue.

Bureau Did Not Have a Records Management Program

WHA did not have a records management program in place to ensure the uniform creation, maintenance, and disposition of files and records, as required by Department standards. Furthermore, the bureau's written records management policy was outdated and did not outline employee and management responsibilities as required. Department policies require bureaus to implement a records management program that defines the administration of records policies, standards, and procedures, including effective management controls.²⁷ In addition, bureaus are required to assign trained employees to manage office files, ensure the integrity of records, and assist in retention and disposition.

OIG found that employees inconsistently stored documents on the bureau's network shared drive, which lacked organization, version control, and consistent naming conventions. Furthermore, OIG found WHA documents dating from 1997 without any evidence that files had been appropriately archived; in fact, the bureau had not retired any files and records since 2017. Although the bureau assigned to an employee the responsibility to review WHA files and records to ensure compliance with Department standards, the employee told OIG that due to competing responsibilities, she lacked sufficient time to perform the review. Without an established and enforced records management program, WHA is at risk of failing to retain or dispose of its files and records in accordance with Department policy.

Recommendation 5: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should implement a records management program in accordance with Department standards. (Action: WHA)

²⁷ 5 FAM 413, "Program Objectives"; 5 FAM 414.4, "Bureaus"; 5 FAH-4 H-212, "Records Creation—General Methods and Procedures"; and 5 FAH-4 H-215.1-1, "Department Offices."

Bureau Lacked a Content Management Process for Its Website

WHA did not have a content management process or dedicated staff to update, clear, and upload content to its intranet site on the Department's OpenNet system, as required by Department guidance in 5 FAM 776.3a and 5 FAH-8 H-115. Content managers are responsible for ensuring that posted information is current, relevant, and accurate. WHA management told OIG the site content had not been updated since 2018, and bureau staff said they rarely referred to the site because most of the information was outdated. Without current, relevant, and accurate content, WHA's intranet site is not a reliable resource for bureau or other Department staff.

Recommendation 6: The Bureau of Western Hemispheres Affairs should implement a content management process for its intranet site that complies with Department standards. (Action: WHA)

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 Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and the Executive Secretariat. The Department's complete responses can be found in Appendix B. The Department also provided technical comments that were incorporated into this report, as appropriate.

Recommendation 1: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should delineate the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Andean Affairs and the Venezuela Working Group with regard to the Venezuela crisis and communicate that information to all appropriate Department stakeholders. (Action: WHA)

Management Response: In its November 12, 2019, response, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs delineated roles and responsibilities of the Office of Andean Affairs and the Venezuela Working Group with regard to the Venezuela crisis and communicated that information to all appropriate Department stakeholders.

Recommendation 2: The Executive Secretariat, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and the Special Representative for Venezuela, should require that all Department requests for action, briefing, and information documents related to Venezuela policies for senior Department principals or interagency equivalents are coordinated through its staff. (Action: S/ES, in coordination with WHA and the Special Representative for Venezuela)

Management Response: In its November 7, 2019, response, the Executive Secretariat concurred with this recommendation. The Executive Secretariat noted an expected completion date of December 1, 2019.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Executive Secretariat required that all Department requests for action, briefing, and information documents related to Venezuela policies for senior Department principals or interagency equivalents are coordinated through its staff.

Recommendation 3: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should implement management controls for its procurement of information technology equipment. (Action: WHA)

Management Response: In its November 12, 2019, response, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs implemented management controls for its procurement of information technology equipment.

Recommendation 4: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should implement and enforce written service standards for the Human Resources Unit that comply with Department standards. (Action: WHA)

Management Response: In its November 12, 2019, response, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs enforced written service standards for the Human Resources Unit that comply with Department standards.

Recommendation 5: The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should implement a records management program in accordance with Department standards. (Action: WHA)

Management Response: In its November 12, 2019, response, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs concurred with this recommendation. The bureau noted a target completion date of September 30, 2020.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs implemented a records management program in accordance with Department standards.

Recommendation 6: The Bureau of Western Hemispheres Affairs should implement a content management process for its intranet site that complies with Department standards. (Action: WHA)

Management Response: In its November 12, 2019, response, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs concurred with this recommendation.

OIG Reply: OIG considers the recommendation resolved. The recommendation can be closed when OIG receives and accepts documentation that the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs implemented a content management process for its intranet site that complies with Department standards.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

Title	Name	Arrival Date
Assistant Secretary		
	Kimberly Breier	10/2018
Deputy Assistant Secretaries		
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (Executive Office and Office of Policy Planning and Coordination)	Julie Chung	11/2018
Deputy Assistant Secretary (Office of Haitian Affairs, Office of Canadian Affairs, Office of Caribbean Affairs)	Cynthia Kierscht	1/2019
Deputy Assistant Secretary (Office of Central American Affairs, Office of Mexican Affairs, Migration Working Group)	Hugo Rodriguez	5/2019
Deputy Assistant Secretary (Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs)	Jon Piechowski	12/2018
Deputy Assistant Secretary (Venezuela Working Group and Office of the Coordinator of Cuban Affairs)	Carrie Filipetti	2/2019
Deputy Assistant Secretary (Office of Andean Affairs, Office of Brazil and Southern Cone Affairs, Office of Regional Economic Policy and Summit Coordination)	Kevin O'Reilly	3/2019

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

APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

This inspection was conducted from March 18 to August 2, 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 OIG for the Department and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

Objectives and Scope

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

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

The specific objectives for this inspection included determining whether the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA):

- Leadership implemented policy and communicated effectively.
- Had clear lines of authority and unity of command in the execution of policy on Venezuela and migration issues.
- Complied with 18 Foreign Affairs Manual 300 requirements for program design, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Instituted appropriate management controls.

OIG also sought to determine why survey respondents rated WHA's human resources services notably lower than other management services provided by the bureau.

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 RESPONSES



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

November 12, 2019

UNCLASSIFIED

THRU: Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs – Michael Kozak, Acting Assistant Secretary

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

FROM: WHA Executive Directorate (WHA/EX)

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – Inspection of WHA

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

OIG Recommendation 1:

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should delineate the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Andean Affairs and the Venezuela Working Group with regard to the Venezuela crisis and communicate that information to all appropriate Department stakeholders. (Action: WHA)

Management Response:

WHA agrees with recommendation 1. WHA has prepared a Bureau Notice delineating the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Venezuelan affairs. The notice includes contact information and portfolios for all personnel in the office as well as instructions for clearance requests. This notice will be communicated to all appropriate Department stakeholders.

OIG Recommendation 3:

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should implement management controls for its procurement of information technology equipment (Action: WHA)

Management Response:

WHA agrees with the stated recommendation and will work to ensure that all IT-related procurements are initiated and approved by WHA/EX/IMO. Additionally, WHA will ensure that WHA/EX/IMO is added to the ILMS ARIBA approval chain for all IT procurement actions. WHA/EX/GSO and WHA/EX/ADMIN were in close coordination with WHA/EX/IMO with respect to the subject IT procurement to replace WHA monitors that were well-beyond their average lifecycle. Coordination between the offices began in January 2018, several months prior to the September 25, 2018 obligation, and compatibility verification of the devices soon followed. However, AQM's solicitation contained specification language that inadvertently allowed vendors to provide brands that were different from what was actually tested and validated by WHA/EX/IMO. Once the order was fulfilled, WHA determined that the substitute brand was not compatible with existing Department IT infrastructure and needed to be returned.

OIG Recommendation 4:

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should implement and enforce written service standards for the Human Resources Unit that comply with Department standards. (Action: WHA)

Management Response:

WHA/HR agrees with the OIG findings. WHA/HR has created and will implement written service standards for the Human Resources section that comply with Department standards. The Human Resources section has developed procedures that align WHA sites with Department guidance. The performance goals created are based on WHA/HR receiving all documentation to assemble a complete package for HR Shared Services (HR/SS). We have also listed HR/SS performance goals in the guidance for informational purposes. In addition to the written service standards, WHA/HR will send out weekly reports to clients informing them of the status of their open cases pending with HR/SS. WHA/HR receives these reports from HR/SS weekly and the Specialist assigned to a given office will send them out once received.

OIG Recommendation 5:

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs should implement a records management program in accordance with Department standards. (Action: WHA)

Management Response:

WHA/Admin agrees with recommendation 5. The Bureau Records Coordinator (BRC) developed a SharePoint page that displays updated records management policies and procedures to ensure that all incoming officials clearly understand their records preservation and retention responsibilities, including records contained on personal email accounts and training of employees in their records preservation responsibilities. The BRC consulted with an analyst in A/GIS/IPS and WHA/Information Officer (IO) to positively respond to the

recommendation of implementing an appropriate method for filing structure. IPS will partner with WHA/BRC and WHA/IO to improve records management gaps to establish records management controls. This will enable better understanding by offices managing records internally. An organizational files plan will be developed or mirrored in the network share folder hierarchy to manage permanent and temporary records in accordance with established disposition standards. WHA/Admin is looking to hire a full-time contractor to assist the BRC and IO with this complex task.

Target Completion Date: September 30, 2020.

OIG Recommendation 6:

The Bureau of Western Hemispheres Affairs should implement a content management process for its intranet site that complies with Department standards. (Action: WHA)

Management Response:

WHA agrees with the findings for WHA intranet site and has since taken steps to address the recommendation. WHA/EX/IMO and WHA/EX/ADMIN have collaborated to create procedures that align WHA sites with Department guidance written in 5 FAM 776.3a, and 5 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-8 H-115. While 5 FAM 776.2 was also cited, we note this guidance is specific to internet sites not intranet sites. WHA has taken the following steps; WHA/EX has hired a Developer/Content Manager to manage the WHA Intranet sites. WHA/EX/IMO has drafted standard operating procedures for requesting changes to WHA Intranet sites and implemented policies to address retention and annual content review. An analysis was performed on WHA intranet site to identify outdated, irrelevant content. Meetings were held to discuss the findings of the analysis, and as of today's date we have met with 40% of the offices and the remainder are scheduled throughout the end of the 2019 year. Based on these meetings, 40% of sites were updated. All offices have updated contact and POC information on their respective site. User permissions have been put in place to manage access to PII and SBU content. All offices have identified a POC to work with the Developer/Content Manger to ensure the sites are regularly updated and reviewed.

The point of contact for this memorandum is WHA/EX Director Chris Del Corso.

November 7, 2019

UNCLASSIFIED

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

FROM: S/ES – Lisa D. Kenna, Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: S/ES Response to Draft OIG Report on the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

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

OIG Recommendation: The Executive Secretariat, in coordination with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and the Special Representative for Venezuela, should require that all Department requests for action, briefing, and information documents related to Venezuela policies for senior Department principals or interagency equivalents are coordinated through its staff. (Action: S/ES, in coordination with WHA and the Special Representative for Venezuela.)

Management Response: The Executive Secretariat concurs with the above recommendation to require that all Venezuela-related requests for action, briefing, and information documents for senior Department principals or interagency equivalents be coordinated through its staff. S/ES will issue formal Department-wide instructions to that effect no later than December 1, 2019.

The point of contact for this memorandum is David M. Schnier, Director, S/ES-S, ext 7-8879.

ABBREVIATIONS

DAS	Deputy Assistant Secretary
DIN	Dedicated Internet Network
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
FAH	Foreign Affairs Handbook
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
PDAS	Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USOAS	U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

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