



United States Department of State  
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors

*Office of Inspector General*

JUN 29 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: S/ES – Mr. Stephen D. Mull

FROM: OIG - Harold W. Geisel, Deputy Inspector General 

SUBJECT: Implementation of a Process to Assess and Improve Leadership and Management of Department of State Posts and Bureaus, ISP-I-10-68

Office of Inspector General (OIG) inspections over the past 4 years have shown that while a majority of posts and bureaus are well run, leadership in a small but significant minority needs to be improved. In a recent OIG survey of employees who are serving or have served in high stress/high threat posts, 45 percent of the respondents cited post leadership as a cause of stress for them or their colleagues. An inspection of the Bureau of African Affairs identified leadership as a problem in certain posts overseas as well as in the bureau itself under its previous management. OIG has found problems in posts in every region, under both career and political ambassadors. The results of poor leadership include reduced productivity and effectiveness, low morale, stress, and curtailments.

OIG assesses post and bureau performance including leadership approximately every five to eight years. That interval is far too long to ensure that posts and bureaus are consistently managed effectively. OIG believes that it is the responsibility of the Department to conduct its own assessments, based in part on input from staff and to do so every year, especially at one-year-tour posts. In many cases, the knowledge that the leaders would be assessed annually would cause them to be more sensitive to how they lead staff. The annual assessment would allow for the early identification of problems and for remedial action in time to have an effect on the management and operations of a post or bureau under each leadership team. In some cases, leaders and mid-level managers will be unable or unwilling to change. In more cases, OIG believes that leaders would be receptive to counseling and training to help them become more effective. These assessments would also provide better support for annual evaluations and help the chief of mission and deputy chief of mission selection committees make better informed recommendations and decisions.

OIG offers the following suggestions for ways to identify post and bureau leadership and management issues. The first stage of these assessments can be conducted through online surveys of employees to identify which posts have problems. The credibility and effectiveness of these surveys will depend on the Department's ability to guarantee confidentiality, to take remedial action, and to protect against retaliation. Based on the surveys, a small team comprised, for example, of representatives of the Bureau of Human Resources and the regional bureau, with possible participation of the Foreign Service Institute or the Office of Medical Services, could

visit a problem post to conduct interviews and provide counseling and training where appropriate. (The Foreign Service Institute has leadership coaches who can be used for this purpose.) Ideally, the regional Assistant Secretary would take a strong role in this process, ensuring that ambassadors, deputy chiefs of mission, and principal officers place a high priority on leadership and management, that their employee evaluation reports reflect their performance in these areas and that counseling occurs whether in person or through letters. The approach of the current Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs can serve as a good example; however, a consistent Department-wide approach would require that the Bureau of Human Resources be heavily involved, including coordinating or leading this process.

**Recommendation 1:** The Department of State should devise and implement a feedback system to regularly assess post and bureau managers and take appropriate measures to address and correct post and bureau leadership and management deficiencies. (Action: S/ES)

OIG would be happy to provide advice and suggestions based on our experience in conducting such assessments, and I would be pleased to discuss this issue further with you or whomever you wish to designate.

Enclosures:

Compliance Sheet  
OIG Resolution Procedures

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