



**United States Department of State  
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors  
Office of Inspector General**

**Office of Inspections**

**Review of the  
Department of State's  
Shuttle Bus Fleet Operations**

**Report Number ISP-I-12-50, September 2012**

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## **PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY OF THE INSPECTION**

This review was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2011 by the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspector's Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the U.S. Department of State (Department) and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).

### **PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the BBG, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and the BBG. 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; whether U.S. interests are being 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; whether instance of fraud, waste, or abuse exist; and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In conducting this review, the inspector: reviewed pertinent records; conducted on-site interviews; and reviewed the substance of the report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, organizations, and activities affected by this review.



United States Department of State  
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors

*Office of Inspector General*

## PREFACE

This report was prepared by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, and Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended. It is one of a series of audit, inspection, investigative, and special reports prepared by OIG periodically as part of its responsibility to promote effective management, accountability, and positive change in the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

This report is the result of an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the office, post, or function under review. It is based on interviews with employees and officials of relevant agencies and institutions, direct observation, and a review of applicable documents.

The recommendations therein have been developed on the basis of the best knowledge available to the OIG and, as appropriate, have been discussed in draft with those responsible for implementation. It is my hope that these recommendations will result in more effective, efficient, and/or economical operations.

I express my appreciation to all of those who contributed to the preparation of this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H.W. Geisel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Harold W. Geisel  
Deputy Inspector General

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## Key Judgments

- The Fleet Management and Operations Division (FMO) provides a satisfactory level of routine maintenance services for the Department of State's (Department) bus fleet. FMO does not always act on nonroutine mechanical problems with the vehicles in a timely manner. (b)(3) [REDACTED]
- The FMO program has organizational, management, and process deficiencies, and its record-keeping system is inadequate.
- The Department needs to review the number and condition of the buses and determine whether it is more cost effective to continue leasing vehicles from the General Services Administration (GSA) or switch to a commercial company.
- FMO does not interact with GSA in a manner that optimizes the cost and efficiency of the shuttle bus system.

All findings and recommendations in this report are based on conditions observed during the on-site review and the standards and policies then in effect. The report does not comment at length on areas in which OIG did not identify problems that need to be corrected.

The field work for this review took place in Washington, DC, between June 27 and July 31, 2012. (b)(6) [REDACTED].

## Context and Background

### The A-76 Process and the Most Efficient Organization

Under the provisions of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76 (A-76) on competitive sourcing, in 2007 the Department awarded a 5-year, \$19.7 million contract to FMO to provide fleet management, shuttle, and sedan services. The Most Efficient Organization (MEO) within FMO was selected as the winner of a public-private competition.<sup>1</sup> The intent was to transform the former in-house fee-for-service operation to a market-based pricing model, and it was projected to save the Department \$1.25 million over the course of the 5-year contract. The publicity provided at the time noted that the MEO would save money and increase accountability via the exclusive use of government-owned and operated shuttles and introduce flexibility into position descriptions (PD) as drivers would be able to operate any of the vehicles, from sedans to shuttle buses, rather than only a particular vehicle. In December 2011, as part of the 2012 omnibus spending bill, Congress extended the ban on Federal agencies competing work between contractor and federal employees, effectively ending A-76.

The MEO portion of FMO is a disorganized and dysfunctional office, with no clear delineation of responsibilities and authority. The MEO will end in 2012, and with this termination, FMO has an opportunity to review and revamp the fleet management organization.

### Shuttle Bus Fleet Operations

In June 2012, the Department was leasing 15 shuttle buses from GSA for an annual cost of around \$416,400. When a shuttle bus is out of service and FMO has no replacement vehicles in the pool, FMO contracts for replacement services from a commercial vendor. From January through June of 2012, FMO contracted for 68 days of replacement shuttle vehicle services for a total cost of \$91,971.<sup>2</sup>

The shuttle buses are aging and need frequent repair. Although the average age of a bus is 5 years, some of the buses are 9 years old. The mileage of the buses ranges from 18,000 to 129,000, with an average odometer reading of 69,759 miles on July 11, 2012.

GSA pays for maintenance and repair of leased vehicles. The projected average number of visits to the shop in 2012 is 10 per vehicle. The average time in the shop for each visit is 12 days. Some vehicles are in the shop for as long as 40 or 50 days at a time, but the usual range is from 6 to 20 days.

Twenty-six operators drive the buses and other Department vehicles. The Department uses the buses primarily for shuttles but also provides group transportation services. For the purposes of this report, the term “shuttle bus” includes all such services.

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<sup>1</sup>A-76 defined the MEO as the Government’s in-house organization deemed the most efficient for competition with the private sector in accordance with A-76 guidance and 10 U.S.C. 2461.

<sup>2</sup> This figure does not include the cost for additional shuttle vehicles, such as the Ballston/Foreign Service Institute shuttle being tested during summer 2012.

(b)(3)

## Routine Maintenance

(b)(3)

the Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted a review of how FMO managed scheduled and unscheduled maintenance for the Department's shuttle bus fleet.

(b)(3)

During the review, GSA representatives told the OIG inspector that for some of the FMO buses, GSA had been using the maintenance schedule for light trucks, instead of that for buses. GSA subsequently provided the correct schedule.

***Informal Recommendation 1:*** The Bureau of Administration should review the appropriate General Services Administration maintenance schedules for the shuttle buses and should take buses to the vendors to update or perform any services that might have been omitted under the light truck schedule.

GSA reports that all of its vehicles have a preventive maintenance (PM) schedule assigned when they are entered into the GSA system. The publication, *GSA Inspection and Safety Procedures for the Department of State's D.C. Area Buses*, notes that the "schedule is determined by the class of vehicle, fuel type, and type of use. All PM schedules require a PM inspection at least every 12 months and upon a varying range of mileages, with shorter time and mileage intervals available for more severe use vehicles. Schedules specific to buses require both tire and brake inspections at each interval, along with a number of required services."

On July 14, 2012, GSA reported that all 14 buses leased to the Department had a PM inspection within the past year, with an average of 224 days between PM inspections.<sup>3</sup> The 14 buses were averaging three visits per year, for the past 2 years, to maintenance shops for work on tires and brakes. GSA stated that these visits allowed for inspection of safety components as well.

Although GSA personnel said that they normally informed FMO when preventive maintenance was due, recent computer problems have interrupted this practice.

***Informal Recommendation 2:*** The Bureau of Administration should establish a procedure for checking the General Services Administration vehicle database to keep up to date on when preventive maintenance is due for each shuttle bus.

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<sup>3</sup> On July 11, 2012, GSA took one bus out of service, reducing the number to 14.

(b)(3)

## Shuttle Bus Mechanical Problems and

(b)(3)

(b)(3)

The OIG review found that, at least on occasion, driver comments regarding mechanical problems were not acted upon quickly by FMO managers.

FMO relies on drivers to identify maintenance problems. The operators are required to do a pre-trip inspection each time they begin driving a vehicle, entering information into the Vehicle Inspection Report (hereinafter called the logbook). The logbook itself remains in the vehicle. Each page in the logbook has two sheets. The driver tears out the first sheet and delivers it to the dispatch office. The other sheet remains in the book. Thus the drivers can see if previous operators have identified problems with the vehicle.

The logbooks are designed to help drivers do thorough pre-trip inspections. The drivers report problems to the dispatcher either in the logbooks or by telephone or radio. The logbooks do not always indicate the problems reported verbally by the drivers. The dispatcher keeps the equivalent of “cuff records” for verbal reports, but this information is not put into a file for that vehicle. This gap in record keeping means that the response of FMO management to the drivers’ concerns cannot always be verified by the records. Many of the drivers interviewed said that their supervisors took appropriate action when they reported problems with the shuttle buses, but written records that might substantiate these comments are incomplete.

The OIG inspector reviewed logbooks from January 2012 through June 2012 for three representative vehicles, and compared the information to the records of maintenance work performed on those vehicles during the same time period. For the first vehicle, the OIG inspector found a delay of 2 days from the time a driver wrote “Don’t Drive” in the logbook to the time FMO management took the vehicle out of service. For the second vehicle, the inspector found a delay of 10 days between the time a driver indicated the vehicle had problems and the time FMO management took the vehicle for service. In the third case, FMO took the vehicle out of service when a driver indicated problems with the brakes, but there was no indication that the vehicle was repaired.

## **Record Keeping in the Fleet Management and Operations Division**

FMO's record keeping is inadequate. Many of the staff members in FMO said that because GSA provided and maintained the vehicles, FMO did not need to keep records. GSA does keep records on its database, and these can be downloaded by FMO personnel. But the GSA records do not provide details on what maintenance was performed. They list such items as "head lamp assembly," "slack adjuster," "compressor belt," and "brakes." The drivers report that many vehicles go back again and again for the same service, but the abbreviated GSA records do not always allow these patterns to be identified. In addition, GSA records do not show the number of days that a vehicle is in the shop. Since the FMO buses average 12 days for each visit to the shop, this information is important in managing and monitoring the bus fleet and in applying to GSA for credit when vehicles are out of service.

The OIG inspector reviewed information on maintenance and repair services performed when buses were sent to the shop. FMO provided two sets of data on vehicle repair history, and GSA provided a third set. The three sets of data were not consistent. While it is clear that the vehicles are being taken to the shop for services, including preventive maintenance, it is not always clear which services are being performed and whether these services are fixing the problems identified.

When a vehicle has been serviced, a driver picks it up from the shop. Sometimes the driver checks to ensure that the requested service has been performed and that the problem is fixed, but there are no records to show that this is always done. The vendor sends an invoice to GSA. Sometimes the driver who picks up the vehicle also obtains a copy of the invoice, and sometimes not. FMO is not reviewing the invoices to determine which services the vendor said it was providing and whether these services solved the problem that FMO identified.

There is no designated record keeper for the shuttle vehicles. During the OIG review, many of the FMO staff members identified someone else as being responsible for or having data pertaining to issues such as mileage, maintenance and repair, accidents, and incidents that may have resulted in injuries to passengers. Frequently, the persons identified did not have the data. Some of them referred the OIG inspector back to the first respondent.

The FMO written record system needs to be improved. Office personnel do not indicate when they have reviewed logbook pages and what their actions were, if any. When FMO asks a more knowledgeable driver to verify problems identified by another operator, FMO does not keep written information on the results. The office does not systematically note when problems occur with a bus and when a bus has been sent for service. The records do not show clearly what services were performed and do not include a mechanic's signature verifying that services were completed. The records do not show a driver's signature that the vehicle was checked at the time of pick up from the vendor. In order to manage the fleet in a cost effective manner, FMO must gather and maintain this information in a computerized system that allows monitoring and tracking of each bus and its repair record.

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Administration should institute a comprehensive record-keeping system to track maintenance of the shuttle buses. (Action: A)

Drivers are not using consistent wording in the “Remarks” section of the logbook. They write comments such as “same old damages,” “check brakes,” “OK,” and “no new damages.” Office personnel and the drivers interpret these remarks differently. The drivers think they are reporting problems that sometimes involve safety issues. Office personnel do not take action when reviewing such comments.

*Informal Recommendation 3:* The Bureau of Administration should implement standard nomenclature for vehicle maintenance and repair.

## Clarification of Responsibilities

Under the MEO, the supervisors of the motor pool (the MEO co-managers), the dispatchers, and the drivers were separated from the remainder of FMO. Inventory management personnel, who also kept the records, were not part of the MEO. The fleet manager told the inspector that all of the PDs of the MEO personnel were revised when the MEO was instituted. The PDs for the supervisory transportation operations specialists (supervisors) refer to the MEO as do those for the program analysts (quality assurance) and the grade 8 drivers. However, the PDs for the grade 7 drivers and the dispatchers do not contain references to the MEO. The PDs do not always reflect the responsibilities that individuals are performing, and several individuals may share the same PD but perform different responsibilities.

*Informal Recommendation 4:* The Bureau of Administration should review and update, as appropriate, all position descriptions in the Fleet Management and Operations Division.

FMO supervisors and dispatchers determine when a vehicle is sent for repair, usually without physically examining the vehicle themselves, although they may ask a driver to verify the problem. The drivers who take the vehicles to the vendor for repair carry a written list of the problems with the vehicle but may not have personal knowledge of the problems. When a driver picks up a vehicle from the vendor after repair, he/she does not always verify that the repair has been completed satisfactorily and that the vehicle is in good condition.

The MEO assigned drivers to operate any of the vehicles, from sedans to shuttle buses, rather than only a particular vehicle. When an operator drives one vehicle over a long period of time, he/she becomes familiar with that vehicle and can track its maintenance and repair. When the drivers shift from vehicle to vehicle, this familiarity is lost. FMO does not have personnel who are knowledgeable about the performance and history of each vehicle. This lack of continuing oversight contributes to the gaps in tracking and monitoring maintenance issues.

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Administration should implement procedures for maintenance of shuttle buses, including identifying an employee responsible for the fleet’s maintenance. (Action: A)

Although the logbooks kept in each bus list items to be reviewed, drivers do not always perform thorough pre-trip inspections.

**Informal Recommendation 5:** The Bureau of Administration should develop and provide operators with written guidance on shuttle bus maintenance duties, including what is required to document full, walk around, pre-trip inspections of equipment; how and when this information is to be conveyed to dispatch or management personnel; and how problems with the buses that occur later in the trip are to be reported and documented.

(b) (5)

The PDs for the two grades of operators differ in the wording of the responsibilities with respect to performing inspections and safety checks and keeping records. One PD refers to post-trip reports and the other to trip tickets. A standard terminology would improve understanding of and compliance with the reporting requirements.

**Informal Recommendation 6:** The Bureau of Administration should implement standard terminology for vehicle inspections and vehicle reporting requirements for use in position descriptions and documentation of procedures.

(b)(3)

## **Buses with Perimeter Seating**

FMO leases four buses with perimeter seating, rather than seats that face forward. These vehicles meet Department of Transportation-approved standards and GSA specifications for passenger vehicles. Two of the buses were involved in incidents that resulted in injuries when the drivers applied the brakes suddenly and seated passengers fell to the floor. Both operators reported that their experiences with perimeter seating buses led them to take extra caution when driving these vehicles. They said that now they regularly drive much more slowly, even if this results in the shuttle being delayed.

(b)(3)

The seats do not have seat belts, arm rests, or hand holds. The operators said that driving conditions in the Washington, DC, area made sudden application of the brakes a common occurrence.

**Recommendation 3:** The Bureau of Administration should coordinate with the General Services Administration to resolve concerns about buses with perimeter seating or exchange the buses for models without perimeter seating. (Action: A)

## Coordination with the General Services Administration

FMO communication and interaction with GSA are poor, whether in determining why vehicles have lengthy repair times, obtaining credit for vehicles out of service, or identifying suitable vehicles to lease for the Department's shuttle operation. GSA officials told the inspector that other agencies "were on their backs all the time" and that GSA was helping other agencies find vehicles that met the demands of their mission. GSA personnel also told the inspector that they would meet with FMO staff more often than the once-a-year meetings that FMO currently holds with GSA.

FMO personnel who work with GSA regional staff to lease buses spoke of the experience as one of taking what they could get. They told the inspector that they often visited the Springfield, VA, GSA office and if they found a bus on the lot would ask GSA personnel if it was available for lease. The OIG inspector met with GSA officials, who advised that FMO should develop a list of specifications for future replacement buses, and that GSA did not dictate what kind of leased vehicles the Department would get. FMO personnel told the OIG inspector that GSA did not accept specifications for leased equipment.

Asked why vendors were keeping vehicles sent for repair for an average of 12 days, GSA officials said that if FMO notified the regional GSA office on the third day after a vehicle had been taken to the vendor for repair, GSA would work with the vendor to determine why the repair was taking longer than 3 days. The regional personnel said that they did not know when a vehicle was sent to a vendor for repair unless FMO staff told them.

GSA's maintenance control center approves all maintenance and repairs. FMO staff told the inspector that the maintenance control center would not approve certain types of repairs. However, the regional GSA personnel told the inspector that they would intercede with the maintenance control center to help get approvals. In subsequent discussions with the OIG inspector, FMO staff said that the regional staff did not have the authority to oversee repairs.

GSA regional personnel told the inspector that GSA could issue credit for vehicles kept in the shop for long periods of time. FMO personnel had some knowledge of this practice. However, neither GSA nor FMO staff could identify what the time period was before GSA would issue credit. FMO has not asked GSA for credit.

**Recommendation 4:** The Bureau of Administration should implement a communication process with the General Services Administration that includes determination of specifications for future replacement vehicles, notification of regional General Services Administration staff when a vehicle is sent to a vendor for service, and implementation of a credit process when a vehicle is out of service for an extended period of time. (Action: A)

## Costs to Repair and Lease Shuttle Vehicles

In 2011, the average number of visits to the shop per shuttle vehicle was seven. If the trend for the first 6 months of 2012 continues, the vehicles will average 10 visits each for 2012. The average number of days in the shop in 2012 is 12. Thus the forecast for 2012 is for the buses to spend an average of 120 days each in the shop. Out of 365 days in the year, the buses will spend approximately one-third of that time in the shop.

FMO pays GSA an average of \$2,300 per month to lease a vehicle or an average of \$34,700 per month for the entire fleet. FMO pays a contractor an average of \$15,000 per month for substitute shuttle vehicles when leased vehicles are in the shop. Thus the monthly cost of shuttle vehicles is increased by over 40 percent due to inoperability and maintenance time for the fleet. (Some of the days in the shop are for routine maintenance and would be required even if the buses were in good repair.)<sup>4</sup>

### Projected Demands on the Shuttle System

The Department is increasing demands on the shuttle system. For example, during summer 2012, FMO was testing a Ballston/Foreign Service Institute shuttle using contractor buses and drivers. If the decision is to implement this shuttle route, FMO will have to determine whether to use leased buses or contract out the service. The Department is in the midst of the largest hiring initiative in its history, with a projected 24 percent increase in diplomatic staffing by 2013. During 2009 and 2010, the Department increased the size of its workforce by nearly 15 percent. The budget and staff at the Foreign Service Institute tripled from 1999 to 2012, and about 2,000 students are on campus daily. In 2010, the Foreign Service Institute added 100 new classrooms. In early 2013, the Department will move about 300 Bureau of Consular Affairs employees from SA-1 to quarters in the former World Bank building. Other Department personnel will also move into that space. In January 2013, FMO will add the World Bank building to the Rosslyn shuttle route.

In light of the actual and projected demands for shuttle services, and given the cost differential between leasing and contracting for shuttle vehicles, FMO would benefit from a review of the number of shuttle vehicles to ensure that there are sufficient vehicles for an economical and cost effective operation. Such a review would include consideration of the number of days lost when vehicles are out of service.

**Recommendation 5:** The Bureau of Administration should review the actual and projected demands on the shuttle bus system and prepare written documentation on the number of shuttle vehicles needed and whether to continue leasing shuttle vehicles from the General Services Administration or to contract services from a commercial company. (Action: A)

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<sup>4</sup> Costs to the Department include driver time and mileage when taking vehicles to the shop for repair. This cost is doubled since a second vehicle and driver must accompany the first vehicle to bring back that driver. One frequently used GSA vendor is located near Baltimore, MD, almost 40 miles from the Department.

## List of Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Administration should institute a comprehensive record-keeping system to track maintenance of the shuttle buses. (Action: A)

**Recommendation 2:** The Bureau of Administration should implement procedures for maintenance of shuttle buses, including identifying an employee responsible for the fleet's maintenance. (Action: A)

**Recommendation 3:** The Bureau of Administration should coordinate with the General Services Administration to resolve concerns about buses with perimeter seating or exchange the buses for models without perimeter seating. (Action: A)

**Recommendation 4:** The Bureau of Administration should implement a communication process with the General Services Administration that includes determination of specifications for future replacement vehicles, notification of regional General Services Administration staff when a vehicle is sent to a vendor for service, and implementation of a credit process when a vehicle is out of service for an extended period of time. (Action: A)

**Recommendation 5:** The Bureau of Administration should review the actual and projected demands on the shuttle bus system and prepare written documentation on the number of shuttle vehicles needed and whether to continue leasing shuttle vehicles from the General Services Administration or to contract services from a commercial company. (Action: A)

## List of Informal Recommendations

Informal recommendations cover operational matters not requiring action by organizations outside the inspected unit and/or the parent regional bureau. Informal recommendations will not be subject to the OIG compliance process. However, any subsequent OIG inspection or on-site compliance review will assess the mission's progress in implementing the informal recommendations.

***Informal Recommendation 1:*** The Bureau of Administration should review the appropriate General Services Administration maintenance schedules for the shuttle buses and should take buses to the vendors to update or perform any services that might have been omitted under the light truck schedule.

***Informal Recommendation 2:*** The Bureau of Administration should establish a procedure for checking the General Services Administration vehicle database to keep up to date on when preventive maintenance is due for each shuttle bus.

***Informal Recommendation 3:*** The Bureau of Administration should implement standard nomenclature for vehicle maintenance and repair.

***Informal Recommendation 4:*** The Bureau of Administration should review and update, as appropriate, all position descriptions in the Fleet Management and Operations Division.

***Informal Recommendation 5:*** The Bureau of Administration should develop and provide operators with written guidance on shuttle bus maintenance duties, including what is required to document full, walk around, pre-trip inspections of equipment; how and when this information is to be conveyed to dispatch or management personnel; and how problems with the buses that occur later in the trip are to be reported and documented.

***Informal Recommendation 6:*** The Bureau of Administration should implement standard terminology for vehicle inspections and vehicle reporting requirements for use in position descriptions and documentation of procedures.

## Principal Officials

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Arrival Date</b>
Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Administration	Joyce Barr	12/2011
Deputy Assistant Secretary	Keith Miller	1/2009
Deputy Director for Operations	Thomas J. Sgroi	10/2007
Director, General Services Management	Barry K. Shpil	8/2010
Chief, Fleet Management and Operations	James Goodwin	3/2010
Assistant Chief, Fleet Management and Operations	Michael Passmore	5/2011
MEO Co-Manager	Chantay Newman	6/2007
MEO Co-Manager	Rickie Sampson	12/2010

## Abbreviations

A-76	U.S. Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76
Department	U.S. Department of State
FMO	Fleet Management and Operations Division
GSA	General Services Administration
MEO	Most Efficient Organization
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OSC	U.S. Office of Special Counsel
PD	Position description
PM	Preventive maintenance

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