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National Security and
International Affairs Division

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April 25, 1997

The Honorable Philip Crane
Chairman, Subcommittee on Trade
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives

Subject: Customs Service: Office of International Affairs

Dear Mr. Chairman:

To support the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade's oversight of the U.S. Customs Service, you requested that we provide information on the Customs Service's Office of International Affairs (OIA). Specifically, this letter describes (1) OIA's overall mission and organization, (2) the nature and extent of OIA's activities; (3) its relationship with other offices within Customs, (4) its budgetary and staffing resources, (5) its management improvement efforts and system for measuring and evaluating its performance, and (6) other federal agencies' views on the training and assistance that OIA provides for foreign customs administrations in conjunction with U.S. international programs.

BACKGROUND

U.S. Customs is responsible for ensuring that all goods and persons entering and exiting the United States do so in accordance with U.S. laws and regulations. Customs collects duties, taxes, and fees associated with the commercial movement of cargo across U.S. borders and enforces import-export and counternarcotics laws and regulations. To advance its objectives, Customs, through OIA, supports the international adoption of policies, programs, and procedures compatible with those of the U.S. Customs Service and seeks to help modernize foreign customs administrations. Customs has carried out international training and advisory functions since the mid-1960s; OIA was established in 1982.

RESULTS IN BRIEF

To help facilitate the legal flow of goods and persons across borders, OIA supports the development of uniform customs procedures worldwide and seeks to improve the effectiveness of foreign customs administrations, often in collaboration with other agencies. OIA provides training and technical assistance to foreign customs administrations in areas such as import-export procedures, drug interdiction, and technology controls, and coordinates Customs' participation in international organizations such as the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

OIA provides training and assistance both directly to host governments and in conjunction with other federal agencies. From 1994 through 1996, OIA trained over 8,300 foreign customs officials and participated, on behalf of Customs, in 21 international organizations, including WCO.

OIA provides information and policy support to a number of offices within Customs. It also draws upon the technical expertise and staff of other offices to conduct training abroad.

In fiscal year 1997, OIA's budget was \$13.8 million and it had 83 staff positions, including 36 who directly provide training and technical assistance. OIA receives funding for its training and assistance activities primarily through reimbursable agreements with host governments or other federal agencies.

In 1995, OIA reorganized, reducing management layers, cutting its support staff, and decreasing the number of organizational units. OIA is currently developing a system to measure the performance of its programs.

The federal agencies we interviewed that have worked in collaboration with OIA were generally satisfied with its training programs and interagency coordination efforts.

OIA'S MISSION AND ORGANIZATION

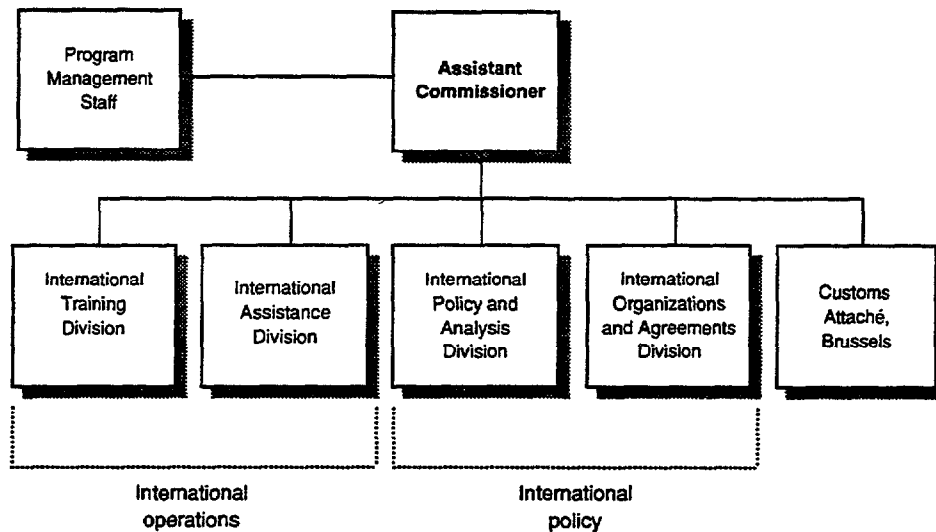
OIA represents the Customs Service in international organizations and provides training and technical aid to customs administrations abroad. Through these activities, OIA seeks to promote the development of uniform customs procedures worldwide and improve foreign customs administrations' ability to facilitate international trade and detect activities such as transborder weapons and drug smuggling. In so doing, OIA supports the adoption of policies, programs, and procedures compatible with those of the U.S. Customs Service and helps to modernize foreign customs administrations.

OIA has divided its activities into two functional areas—international operations and international policy. The goal of the international operations area is to build cooperative relationships with foreign customs administrations by

providing training, technology, and information. The goal of the international policy area is to (1) help develop unified U.S. Customs Service positions on international customs issues; (2) negotiate agreements with foreign customs administrations to expand international law enforcement cooperation; and (3) represent Customs on international working groups, committees, and organizations that address specific enforcement and trade issues.

OIA is organized into five divisions, two devoted to international operations, two to international policy, and one to staffing the Customs Attaché in Brussels, Belgium (see fig. 1). Those concerned with international operations are the International Training Division and the International Assistance Division. The International Training Division develops, coordinates, and delivers training programs for drug interdiction, enforcement of customs laws, and commercial procedures. The International Assistance Division provides technical assistance in such areas as enforcement of import-export procedures. In the policy area, the International Organizations and Agreements Division participates on behalf of Customs in international organizations such as WCO and WTO. The International Policy and Analysis Division coordinates Customs' bilateral and multilateral activities with foreign governments, oversees strategy development for Customs' trade and enforcement activities, and coordinates with Customs attachés abroad. In addition, OIA maintains a Customs Attaché in Brussels, who is the U.S. representative to WCO and the European Union.

Figure 1: Organization of Customs' OIA, 1997



Source: Customs' OIA.

NATURE AND EXTENT OF OIA ACTIVITIES

OIA reported that from 1994 through 1996, over 8,300 foreign government officials participated in its training programs (see table 1). Examples of training offered include courses on antismuggling and narcotics interdiction, the international harmonized tariff system,¹ intellectual property rights protection, money-laundering detection, customs automation, and customs facility management. (See app. I for a complete list of training courses that OIA offered in 1994-96). OIA officials told us that they receive more requests for training each year than they can fulfill; OIA, in concert with the Department of State and other federal agencies, tries to deliver training and assistance where it believes it is most needed and appropriate.

Table 1: Number of Foreign Participants in OIA's Training Programs, 1994-96

Region	1994	1995	1996	Total
Asia	211	272	320	803
South America	1,254	358	1,444	3,056
Central America and the Caribbean	1,019	848	388	2,254
Middle East	179	135	0	314
Europe	342	249	527	1,118
Former Soviet Union	128	219	217	565
Africa	23	61	137	221
Total	3,156	2,142	3,033	8,331

Source: Office of International Affairs: The Team at Work (Washington, D.C.: Assistant Commissioner, OIA, 1996).

Training Programs Conducted in Conjunction With Other Federal Agencies

In addition to providing training and assistance directly, OIA participates in customs-related training programs led by other U.S. agencies to assist foreign governments in curbing transborder weapons proliferation and drug smuggling, among other things. OIA's participation in these international training programs is funded primarily through reimbursable funding agreements with other federal agencies. OIA also negotiates funding agreements directly with host country governments for the ongoing technical assistance that it delivers independently.

¹The Harmonized System is an extension of the six-digit Harmonized Commodity and Coding System, the internationally recognized system for classifying commodities.

OIA's numerous international policy activities include representing Customs in international organizations, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and WCO, and supporting bilateral negotiations on Customs-related issues such as protecting intellectual property rights. Other federal agencies we interviewed gave generally positive reports on OIA's training programs and participation in bilateral negotiations.

Customs supports a wide range of training programs led by other federal agencies, including the Departments of State and Defense (DOD) and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR). One example of OIA's jointly offered training programs is its participation in U.S. efforts to control the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. As a participant in Project Amber, which was funded by the State Department's Nonproliferation and Disarmament Fund in fiscal years 1995-97, OIA worked with the Department of Energy to train border enforcement officers in interdicting weapons of mass destruction in the Baltics and East European countries. Also, as part of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, which Congress authorized DOD to establish in 1991,³ OIA worked with DOD and State to provide former Soviet nuclear states with training and equipment intended to help develop modern export control systems. OIA and other Customs units' role was to provide training to host countries and advice to DOD on what type of equipment to purchase and where to install it. DOD and Customs are planning to continue these nonproliferation training efforts under the DOD-Customs Counterproliferation Program, a new program that is currently being negotiated by the two agencies. According to the draft plan, the program is intended to provide about \$9 million over fiscal years 1997-99 to provide training, expert advice, and equipment maintenance support for border enforcement agencies in the former Soviet Union, the Baltics, and Eastern Europe. Over time, the program may serve as many as 25 countries in the region, according to OIA written statements.

Another example of OIA's joint activities with other U.S. agencies is the training it provides under the direction of the State Department's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) office. Since 1973, State has given OIA funds to train customs agencies in high-threat developing countries in the interdiction of illegal drugs. In addition, OIA's International Visitors Program brings high-level foreign border control officials to the United States to familiarize them with U.S. Customs operations and procedures. INL training also includes the Carrier Initiative Program, in which OIA and other Customs units provide training to international air and sea carriers in the prevention of narcotics smuggling.

²The Baltic states include Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

³See Weapons of Mass Destruction: Reducing the Threat From the Former Soviet Union (GAO/NSIAD-95-7, Oct. 6, 1994).

OIA's intellectual property rights training activities in China further exemplify some of the trade-related programs OIA conducts in coordination with other federal agencies. OIA has coordinated Customs' participation in USTR-led bilateral negotiations to increase China's enforcement of intellectual property rights laws along Chinese borders. Under a 1995 bilateral agreement, the Chinese government pledged to provide protection for intellectual property and market access for U.S. intellectual property-based products. In turn, the U.S. government offered border enforcement training. OIA and other Customs units played a significant role in identifying the Chinese government's needs and tailoring existing training programs to meet those needs, according to USTR. In addition, OIA won a \$447,000 contract in 1995 from the Asian Development Bank to assist the Chinese Customs General Administration in proposing new legislation and regulations relating to China's involvement in external auditing, anticommercial fraud measures, antidumping⁴ and countervailing duty⁵ measures, according to OIA.

Funding Arrangements

The mechanics of funding OIA's international training and assistance programs vary, depending on the U.S. agency or foreign government involved. In the case of a reimbursable agreement with another U.S. agency, the lead agency typically negotiates a written agreement with Customs' OIA on the specific training and assistance OIA will provide, as well as its associated costs. After OIA completes the training, the lead agency uses its own appropriations to reimburse Customs for the specified amount. Reimbursable agreements may be renewed or renegotiated annually. In one instance, funding for Customs' intellectual property rights training in China came out of OIA's administrative budget, since USTR—which initiated the training program—does not have the funds to support other agencies' overseas assistance activities. For programs that are financed by the host country, OIA signs an agreement directly with host government officials and must receive the funds prior to carrying out training.

Participation in International Organizations

OIA works with other U.S. agencies to develop consistent positions on customs issues and to represent the U.S. government's interests in international organizations where customs procedures are addressed, such as WCO and APEC. The State Department generally provides policy direction on overseas training and assistance and representation in international organizations, while

⁴Dumping is the sale of commodities in a foreign market at a price that is lower than the price or value of comparable commodities in the country of their origin.

⁵A countervailing duty is a U.S. government fee on goods imported into the United States in an amount equal to any subsidy provided with respect to manufacture, production, or export of those goods by a government of another country.

USTR represents the United States on international trade issues. OIA also has a role in negotiating and implementing customs mutual assistance agreements with other countries.

WCO

OIA coordinates U.S. Customs' representation in WCO, founded in 1950 to promote harmonization of customs procedures and systems worldwide. Headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, WCO has 144 member countries. OIA has two staff on loan to the U.S. Secretariat of WCO in Brussels. WCO adopted several U.S. Customs initiatives to (1) establish more effective customs controls to prevent intellectual property rights infringement, (2) encourage greater worldwide customs' use of automated passenger information systems using electronic data interchange technology, and (3) develop an international inventory of export processing procedures. In addition, OIA, working in partnership with the International Chamber of Commerce, prepared a concept paper that was submitted to WCO in 1995. It provides a vision for a new international customs model for trade facilitation.

APEC

The U.S. Customs Service is one of 18 customs administrations participating in APEC's Subcommittee on Customs Procedures, formed in 1994 under the Committee on Trade and Investment. OIA is responsible for coordinating Customs' activities relating to the Subcommittee, whose primary goal is to standardize and harmonize customs procedures among APEC members. Working in cooperation with USTR, State, and the other 17- member customs administrations, Customs has helped develop the Subcommittee's Collective Action Plan, which was submitted to the leaders at the 1995 APEC meeting in Osaka, Japan. The plan lays out nine areas for standardization by the year 2000, such as the valuation and classification of goods, customs procedures and best practices, and intellectual property rights administration.

Customs Mutual Assistance Agreements

OIA, in conjunction with Customs' Office of Chief Counsel, negotiates customs mutual assistance agreements with other countries to expand law enforcement cooperation in the international arena. These agreements establish a legal framework for sharing trade, regulatory, and law enforcement information more effectively and encourage cooperation among customs administrations to combat illegal activity. Such exchanges can provide mutual benefits in addressing problems such as commercial fraud, money laundering, and narcotics trafficking. The United States has concluded customs mutual assistance agreements with 32 countries since 1973, 11 of which have been negotiated in the last 3 years, according to OIA officials.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER OFFICES WITHIN CUSTOMS

Among OIA's primary "customers" within Customs are the Office of Investigations, the Office of Strategic Trade, the Office of Regulations and Rulings, and the Office of Field Operations.⁶ OIA serves these customers by supplying them with background information and briefing materials on international customs initiatives and by facilitating relations between these offices and foreign customs administrations or international organizations. OIA also supports the international objectives of these offices by providing training and technical assistance overseas.

In turn, many offices within Customs support OIA by providing staff and technical expertise for OIA's overseas training and assistance programs. For example, the Office of Investigations, through its network of foreign attaché offices, frequently offers support and insight into the regions and countries where OIA's training division is planning or implementing projects. The Office of Field Operations provides expertise on methods for uncovering illegal shipments and efficiently processing legitimate shipments and works with OIA to help reform and modernize foreign customs administrations. Office of Field Operations staff also participate fully in OIA's border enforcement training courses related to narcotics control, nonproliferation, and antiterrorism. OIA relies on the Office of Strategic Trade and the Office of Information Technology to supply team members for various international commercial and automation training missions. At the request of foreign customs agencies or international organizations, OIA may collect and transfer technical information from various offices within Customs.

According to written statements from OIA's major divisions, OIA has generally effective relationships with other offices within Customs. In some cases, these interoffice relationships are guided by formal written agreements, and in other cases they are conducted more informally. The International Assistance Division reported that each of its assistance projects involves a formal agreement with other Customs offices that clearly states the resources, goals, procedures, and personnel that will be needed for the project. The International Training Division told us that some of its interactions with other Customs offices are coordinated by intra-agency working groups, while others

⁶The Office of Investigations is responsible for investigations and intelligence-gathering, oversight of the foreign and domestic investigative offices, and the air and marine interdiction programs. The Office of Strategic Trade identifies and analyzes major trade issues facing the United States and develops strategies for managing these issues. The Office of Regulations and Rulings facilitates the entry of goods into the United States by drafting regulations to implement relevant U.S. trade laws; issuing rulings on the proper classification, valuation, country of origin, and marking of imported goods; and providing compliance-related guidance to the trade community and other Customs units. The Office of Field Operations manages and establishes the policies, procedures, and systems related to the processing of carriers, cargo/merchandise, and persons entering and departing the United States at ports of entry.

are guided by written agreements. OIA officials did not identify any major limitations in their working relationships with other Customs' offices.

BUDGET AND STAFFING

In fiscal year 1997, OIA's \$13.8 million budget was comprised of direct authority and reimbursable authority⁷ (see table 2 for 1994-97 budget information), according to OIA officials. In that year, OIA's direct authority was \$4.5 million and covered salaries/benefits (80 percent), travel (11 percent), and other administrative costs (9 percent). The remaining \$9.3 million consisted largely of funds pledged to OIA through reimbursable agreements to support OIA's overseas training and technical assistance programs. This funding comes primarily through reimbursable agreements with other federal agencies, such as State and DOD, or through funding agreements with host country governments that receive the training and/or technical assistance. Less common sources of funds are grants and contracts used for specific overseas training purposes from international organizations such as the Asian Development Bank.

Table 2: Customs' OIA Annual Budget Authority, Fiscal Years 1994-97
Dollars in millions

Fiscal year	Direct budget authority	Reimbursable authority	Total
1994	\$4.47	\$9.57	\$14.04
1995	4.65	10.90	\$15.55
1996	4.27	9.86	\$14.13
1997	4.53	9.31	\$13.84

Source: Customs' OIA.

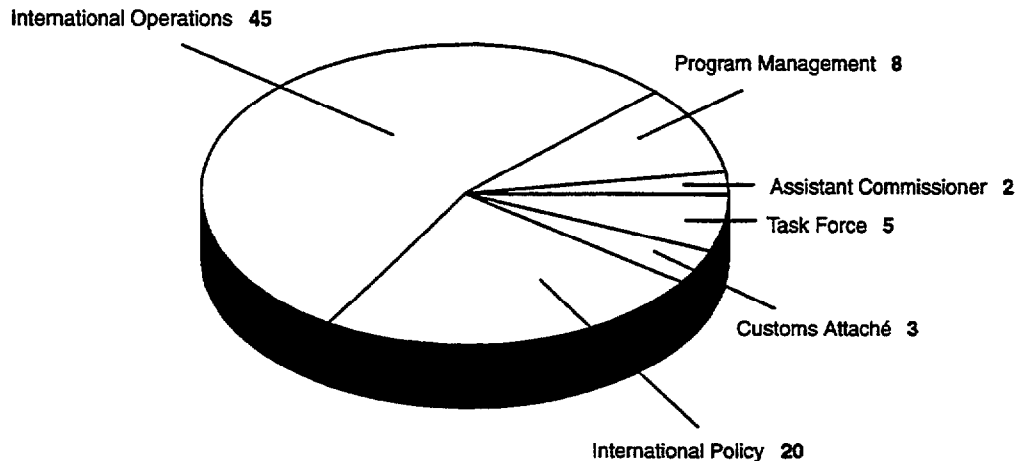
As of April 1997, OIA had a staff of 83, with 16 percent at the General Service (GS)-15 level or above, 42 percent at the GS-13 through GS-14 level or its equivalent, and 42 percent at the GS-7 through GS-12 level or its equivalent,⁸ according to OIA officials. About 54 percent of OIA's staff positions were devoted to international operations, while 24 percent were devoted to international policy. Figure 2 shows the percentage of OIA staff positions

⁷The total budget of the Customs Service was \$1.6 billion in fiscal year 1997.

⁸Of OIA's 83 staff positions, 70 are physically located in OIA's office in Washington, D.C.; 9 serve overseas on temporary assignments; and 4 serve on training/assistance missions in Puerto Rico.

allocated to each of its major functions, including the International Customs Model Task Force, a temporary unit formed in 1996 to develop best practices for harmonizing international customs procedures. In addition to OIA's 83 staff positions, OIA has 13 that are funded through reimbursable agreements and stationed overseas. OIA officials told us that staff turnover is typically in the range of 5 to 10 per year and attributed most staff turnover to the movement of Customs officials leaving for and returning from overseas assignments.

Figure 2: Customs' OIA Staff Allocations, by Function, 1997



Source: Customs' OIA.

MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

In response to both internal and external factors⁹ affecting Customs' overall mission and operations, Customs undertook a major reorganization in 1995. In addition, Customs began redefining its mission and launched an agencywide management improvement effort. These efforts were partly in response to the 1993 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)¹⁰ and to the Clinton administration's National Performance Review. According to Customs' Office of

⁹Internal factors included management and organizational deficiencies such as a lack of uniformity in the application of Customs laws, policies, and procedures; the absence of a clearly defined mission; and a pattern of noncompliance with the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990, according to Customs. External factors included substantial increases in international trade, travel, and tourism; the requirements of the North American Free Trade Agreement and WTO; and rising numbers of legal and illegal immigrants.

¹⁰GPRA mandates that federal government agencies (1) develop 5-year strategic plans containing mission statements and outcome-related strategic goals; (2) prepare annual plans with performance goals and indicators to measure performance; and (3) prepare and submit to the President and Congress yearly reports on the extent to which an agency has met its annual performance goals, beginning in the year 2000. It requires agencies to submit their initial 5-year strategic plans to Congress and the Office of Management and Budget by September 30, 1997.

Planning, Customs began publishing performance-based annual plans¹¹ in 1994; a performance measurement initiative by Customs' Office of Investigations served as a GPRA pilot project. In addition, Customs has prepared a draft strategic plan for the years 1996-2001¹² and expects to complete the plan for submission to the Office of Management and Budget before the September 30, 1997, deadline as required by GPRA. OIA's international training and policy functions are included in Customs' strategic plan under the Customs-wide objectives relating to narcotics enforcement and trade compliance.

OIA reorganized in 1995 in an effort to reduce unnecessary layers of management within the office. As part of this effort, OIA reported that it (1) reduced from six units to four units by eliminating branches, (2) cut back its support staff by 30 percent, (3) decreased management and supervisory layers by 66 percent, (4) cut organizational units from 27 to 7, and (5) increased its supervisor-to-employee ratio from 1 to 4 to 1 to 11. Regarding management improvement, OIA has been working to incorporate techniques such as team building, delegation of authority, process mapping, and performance improvement into its operations, according to the report.

Different initiatives are in place to measure OIA's performance in training that is directly delivered and training conducted in conjunction with other federal agencies.¹³ OIA is developing performance measures to monitor the effectiveness of its directly delivered international training activities. In fiscal year 1996, these programs engaged 54 percent of the office's staff positions and represented about 67 percent of its total funding (direct appropriations plus reimbursable funding). OIA is developing these measures based in part on a model the U.S. Agency for International Development produced to evaluate the performance of its international assistance programs, according to OIA officials. This model establishes a broad strategic framework, agency goals and objectives, and more specific strategic objectives¹⁴ measured by performance indicators.

¹¹Most recently, Customs published its Annual Plan Fiscal Year 1997: People, Processes, and Partnerships—A Window on the Future U.S. Customs Service (Washington, D.C.: Commissioner, U.S. Customs Service, Jan. 1997).

¹²U.S. Customs Service Strategic Plan (Fiscal Years 1996-2001), January 13, 1997.

¹³OIA's administrative and international policy functions are not currently covered by OIA performance outcome measures because the nature of these activities is more difficult to quantify, according to OIA officials.

¹⁴The U.S. Agency for International Development defines strategic objectives as significant development results that can be accomplished over 5-8 years, with contributions from the agency and its partners.

OIA is using its technical assistance program in Puerto Rico for excise tax collection as a pilot program to evaluate the effectiveness of its new performance measurement system. The program has five objectives, each supported by subobjectives and measured by specific performance outcomes. According to OIA, the new system has been useful in helping the two governments set clear expectations and in providing a way to determine how well program objectives are achieved. The next pilot project for performance measurement will be the cargo inspection program in Guatemala, which officials expect to launch in mid-1997. In most cases, specific measures have yet to be developed for each training or technical assistance program type (that is, tax collection, commercial cargo, and narcotics enforcement) since the outcome measures for these activities are distinct. In addition, with the assistance of U.S. embassies, OIA has recently implemented a formalized system of data collection in countries where it provides training and assistance related to State's INL program. According to OIA, the purpose of this effort is to routinely receive and analyze end-results data from foreign agencies that have received training to better gauge the outcome of Customs' programs and provide insight on where best to focus future programs.

In addition to the programs offered directly by Customs, OIA is helping to develop evaluation methods for the training and assistance programs it offers in cooperation with other U.S. agencies. In most cases, OIA officials said they rely on feedback from their program partners, U.S. embassies in the host countries, and the Customs attachés. For example, as part of the INL training offered under the direction of the State Department, U.S. embassies provide on-site reports that highlight program effectiveness and the subsequent performance of foreign customs administrations. In addition, the foreign participants in INL training programs are asked to complete evaluation forms through which OIA obtains their input. OIA reported that it has made program changes in response to these participant evaluations and recommendations.

U.S. AGENCIES' VIEWS ON OIA TRAINING PROGRAMS

In interviews with DOD, State, and USTR officials and from a review of cables from U.S. embassies, we found that there was general satisfaction with OIA's overseas training programs and interagency coordination efforts. Although none of the agencies we contacted had conducted formal evaluations to measure program effectiveness, they all portrayed the Customs' training and assistance programs as successful in meeting their objectives. Examples of some of the comments we received follow:

- An official in the Office of the Secretary of Defense who has been working with Customs on counterproliferation activities characterized OIA officials as team players who work effectively within the interagency process to negotiate and implement overseas training. He attributed the success of OIA's overseas training programs to Customs officials' technical expertise and knowledge.

- According to an official in the Office of the Coordinator of NIS Assistance within the State Department,¹⁵ Customs is most effective in assessing host country requirements, designing programs, and delivering training and assistance.
- An official in the State Department's Arms Transfer and Export Control Policy office said OIA's overseas training courses on customs procedures related to export controls are well received by host government participants. He added that Customs is a cooperative and active member of the Interagency Working Group on Export Controls.
- According to the Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for China and Mongolia, Customs' intellectual property rights training activities in China have been essential to the success of bilateral negotiations with China on intellectual property protection. In her view, Customs' efforts to establish good working relationships with Chinese government officials through training and assistance have contributed to a sense of goodwill in the negotiations and helped to produce some positive results for both countries.
- In the cables we reviewed, U.S. embassies in countries that have received INL training reported a high level of satisfaction on the part of host governments. For example, the U.S. embassy in Peru said the U.S. Customs team was professional and the training was well suited to its audience. The embassy also noted that the training was highly useful in sensitizing host country recipients to new trends and methods of drug and trafficker detection.

AGENCY COMMENTS

OIA reviewed a draft of this letter and agreed that the letter accurately portrayed its work. OIA supplied a few technical clarifications, which we incorporated as appropriate.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

To obtain information on OIA's mission, organization, budget, and staffing, we reviewed OIA documents and held interviews with OIA officials, including the Assistant Commissioner for International Affairs, the Director of Program Management, and the division directors. To identify OIA's efforts to improve its management and monitor the performance of its programs, we interviewed

¹⁵NIS refers to the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. On April 4, 1995, the President strengthened the role and authority of the Coordinator in a memorandum designating him as a Special Advisor to the President and to the Secretary of State on assistance to the former Soviet Union.

Customs officials, reviewed GPRA requirements for establishing performance measures, obtained documents outlining OIA's performance-based objectives and outcome measures, and reviewed Customs' 1996-2001 strategic plan and annual plans for 1994-97.

To gain an understanding of OIA's role in supporting other Customs' offices, we obtained comments from each of OIA's division directors and reviewed examples of written agreements reached between OIA and these other offices. To ascertain the nature and extent of OIA's overseas training and assistance programs, we reviewed OIA program summaries, accomplishment reports, and examples of reimbursable agreements and met with OIA office directors responsible for training and assistance. In addition, we interviewed officials from USTR and the Departments of State, Defense, and Energy to obtain their views on the effectiveness of OIA's training and assistance activities. We reviewed some U.S. embassy cables provided by OIA, but did not visit any foreign locations to observe OIA training activities or directly discuss OIA's performance with foreign government officials.

We conducted our review from December 1996 to March 1997 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

If you have any questions concerning this letter, please call me at (202) 512-8984. The information in this letter was developed by Elizabeth Sirois and Sara Denman.

Sincerely yours,



JayEtta Z. Hecker
Associate Director, International Relations
and Trade Issues

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