



Why This Matters

In April 2012, United States Secret Service (USSS) employees were preparing for a Presidential visit to the Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia. While off duty, several employees were suspected of soliciting prostitutes and consuming excessive amounts of alcohol. We assessed the adequacy of the agency's efforts to identify, mitigate, and address instances of misconduct and inappropriate behavior.

To satisfy our objectives, we: (1) interviewed more than 200 USSS employees; (2) administered a survey; (3) reviewed USSS internal affairs cases; (4) analyzed discipline records; and (5) analyzed personnel security records.

DHS Response

USSS concurred with all 14 of our recommendations.

USSS' Efforts to Identify, Mitigate, and Address Instances of Misconduct and Inappropriate Behavior

What We Determined

Although individual employees have engaged in misconduct or inappropriate behavior, we did not find evidence that misconduct is widespread in USSS. Furthermore, we did not find any evidence that USSS leadership has fostered an environment that tolerates inappropriate behavior. We conducted a survey of the USSS workforce to obtain employees' views on misconduct and security clearance concerns. Of the 2,575 employees who responded to our electronic survey, 2,144 (83 percent) indicated they were not aware of USSS employees engaging in any of six behaviors that were displayed in Cartagena. Sixty one percent of survey respondents believed management does not tolerate misconduct.

Additionally, some of the employees involved in the Cartagena incident claimed that the Secret Service did not afford them due process, mistreated those involved in the incident, and did not adjudicate their case consistent with comparable prior incidents. Of the 13 employees suspected of soliciting prostitutes, 3 employees returned to duty, 6 either resigned or retired, and 4 had their clearances revoked and were removed. We determined that Secret Service's security clearance actions were consistent and based on facts from internal inquiries.

What We Recommend

We are making 14 recommendations to improve the Secret Service's processes for identifying, mitigating, and addressing instances of misconduct and inappropriate behavior. Specifically, it needs to: (1) enhance policies related to reporting and investigating employee misconduct and security concerns; (2) strengthen procedures for proposing and issuing discipline; (3) ensure compliance with Federal disciplinary regulations; (4) ensure discipline is aligned with agency disciplinary principles; and (5) ensure appointments to the Security Appeals Board are made according to policy.

For Further Information:

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