



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Department of Homeland Security

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Inspector General Roth Responds to GAO Report

Stressing that “we are a far different organization than we were last year,” Inspector General John Roth has responded to a review by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) of the Office of Inspector General (OIG), Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The GAO report, “DHS OIG’s Structure, Policies and Procedures are Consistent With Standards, but Areas for Improvement Exist,” was ordered by Congress. It noted that the OIG’s structure, roles and responsibilities are generally consistent with the Inspector General Act, and that the office has made recent changes to its structure to enhance independence and oversight.

“Few organizations are static, and that is especially true of DHS OIG in the last six months,” Roth wrote in a September 8, 2014, letter to Asif A. Khan, GAO’s Director of Financial Management and Assurance. “Many of your observations involve the former Acting IG/Deputy IG (an individual who is no longer a DHS OIG employee), and the criminal conduct committed by former employees in our McAllen, Texas, field office (who have been criminally prosecuted and likewise no longer employed by DHS OIG).

“The threats to our independence, as reflected in those episodes, were not a result of a structural deficiency, but a failure of leadership at the highest level,” said Roth, who took office on March 10, 2004. The OIG’s former acting leader resigned on December 16, 2013.



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Roth wrote that, since his arrival, key vacancies are being filled, operations have been improved, and a strong emphasis has been placed on independence and integrity.

“Our conduct must be beyond reproach. Since my nomination and confirmation in March of this year, I have stressed to my employees — in office visits, in town hall meetings, in my internal written communications, and in my public statements and testimony — the necessity to relentlessly scrutinize and jealously guard against threats to our independence,” he wrote. Roth concurred with several other GAO findings, including the need to better protect the identities of hotline complainants and to formalize the OIG’s ongoing cooperative relationship with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He said that implementation of most of the GAO recommendations was already well under way.

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