

DHS Is Slow to Hire Law Enforcement Personnel





DHS OIG HIGHLIGHTS

DHS Is Slow to Hire Law Enforcement Personnel

October 31, 2016

Why We Did This Inspection

Congress has expressed concerns about the Department's hiring process, particularly about the ability of its law enforcement components to hire personnel in a timely manner. We reviewed hiring in three components to determine whether they fill law enforcement positions effectively and efficiently.

What We Recommend

We are making five recommendations to improve the efficiency of Department and component law enforcement hiring practices.

For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202) 254-4100, or email us at DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov

What We Found

Although U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the United States Secret Service have been able to maintain staffing levels close to the authorized number of law enforcement personnel, they continue to have significant delays in hiring. The additional steps in the hiring process for law enforcement applicants contribute to the length of time it takes to hire law enforcement officers, but the components also do not have the staff or comprehensive automated systems needed to hire personnel as efficiently as possible. Although they have taken steps to reduce the time it takes to hire law enforcement personnel, it is too early to measure the long-term effects of the Department's and the components' recent actions. The inability to hire law enforcement personnel in a timely manner may lead to shortfalls in staffing, which can affect workforce productivity and morale, as well as potentially disrupt mission critical operations.

DHS' Response

The Department concurred with our recommendations and is taking steps to address them. Based on the components' response to the draft report, we consider one recommendation unresolved and open and four recommendations resolved and open.



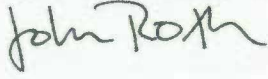
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Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528 / www.oig.dhs.gov

October 31, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Russell C. Deyo
Under Secretary for Management

FROM: John Roth 
Inspector General

SUBJECT: *DHS Is Slow to Hire Law Enforcement Personnel*

Attached for your information is our final report, *DHS is Slow to Hire Law Enforcement Personnel*. We incorporated the formal comments from the Department's Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Secret Service in the final report.

The report contains five recommendations aimed at improving DHS' operations. The Department concurred with all five recommendations. Based on information provided in your response to the draft report, we consider one recommendation unresolved and open and four recommendations resolved and open. As prescribed by the *Department of Homeland Security Directive 077-01, Follow-Up and Resolutions for Office of Inspector General Report Recommendations*, within 90 days of the date of this memorandum, please provide our office with a written response that includes your (1) corrective action plan and (2) target completion date for each recommendation. Also, please include responsible parties and any other supporting documentation necessary to inform us about the current status of the recommendation.

Consistent with our responsibility under the *Inspector General Act*, we will provide copies of our report to congressional committees with oversight and appropriation responsibility over the Department of Homeland Security. We will post the report on our website for public dissemination.

Please call me with any questions, or your staff may contact Anne L. Richards, Assistant Inspector General, Office of Inspections and Evaluations, at (202) 254-4100.

Attachment



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Abbreviations

CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
e-QIP	Electronic Questionnaires for Investigative Processing
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
POCHCO	Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PFT	physical fitness test
PMO	Frontline Hiring Management Office



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Background

The Department of Homeland Security employs the largest number of Federal law enforcement officers, combined, than any other agency. As of September 30, 2015, DHS law enforcement components had more than 70,000 authorized law enforcement positions. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Secret Service have the largest number of authorized law enforcement positions in DHS.

DHS law enforcement personnel perform various functions, including providing protective services; securing the nation's borders; providing interagency law enforcement training; and enforcing the nation's economic, transportation, and infrastructure components.

In recent years, Congress expressed concerns about DHS' hiring process, particularly in its law enforcement components. According to a 2015 House Appropriations Committee report, "For the last few years, DHS has suffered from the inability to hire people in a timely manner. Lengthy hiring in addition to chronic and systemic personnel shortfalls jeopardizes DHS' homeland security mission."¹ The Senate and House Appropriations Committees also faulted DHS for its inability to describe how long each step in the hiring process takes and its failure to link process improvements to their impact on hiring. Additionally, Congress expressed concern about the accuracy of the Department's time-to-hire reports.

Congress acknowledged law enforcement agencies must maintain a rigorous hiring process to ensure bad actors, or those who have been or could become compromised, are not inadvertently employed. In addition to the standard hiring procedures for applicants seeking Federal employment, which includes submitting an application, being interviewed, and undergoing a background investigation, Federal law enforcement applicants must complete other steps, which may include a written examination, medical examination, physical fitness test, and a polygraph examination. Typically, law enforcement applicants must successfully complete each step before proceeding to the next. Appendix C contains details of the law enforcement hiring processes at CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service.

The Senate and House Appropriations Committees asked the DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) to identify areas of delay in various components' hiring processes, as well as best practices that could be shared across components. Our objective was to determine whether DHS fills law enforcement vacancies effectively and efficiently.

¹ House Report 114-215, *Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, 2016*, July 21, 2015, accompanying *Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2016*, H.R. 3128



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We focused our review on CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service because these components have the largest number of law enforcement personnel and have similar hiring practices. We examined the hiring processes for the following positions:

- CBP Border Patrol Agents
- CBP Customs and Border Protection Officers
- CBP Air Interdiction Agents and Marine Interdiction Agents
- ICE Criminal Investigators
- ICE Deportation Officers
- Secret Service Special Agents
- Secret Service Uniformed Division Officers

Specifically, we reviewed (1) the effectiveness of the three components in filling vacant positions; (2) the timeliness of the hiring process, including areas of delays; and (3) process improvements implemented by the three components.

Results of Inspection

Although CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service have been able to maintain staffing levels close to the authorized number of law enforcement personnel, they continue to have significant delays in hiring. The additional steps in the hiring process for law enforcement applicants contribute to the length of time it takes to hire law enforcement officers, but the components also do not have the staff or comprehensive automated systems needed to hire personnel as efficiently as possible. Although they have taken steps to reduce the time it takes to hire law enforcement personnel, it is too early to measure the long-term effects of the Department's and the components' recent actions. The inability to hire law enforcement personnel in a timely manner may lead to shortfalls in staffing, which can affect workforce productivity and morale, as well as potentially disrupt mission critical operations.

CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service Are Slow to Hire Law Enforcement Personnel

Hiring law enforcement personnel efficiently to fill law enforcement positions is key to sustaining and improving operations and accomplishing the Department's critical missions. From fiscal year (FY) 2011 through FY 2015, the three components came close to meeting authorized hiring levels for law enforcement personnel. During this period, in all but three instances, the three components filled 90 percent or more of the seven authorized law enforcement positions that we examined. In FYs 2012 and 2013, ICE filled 88 percent and 85 percent, respectively, of Criminal Investigator positions. In FY 2015, the



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Secret Service filled 87 percent of Uniformed Division Officer positions. These percentages represent authorized law enforcement personnel onboard as of the last day of each fiscal year, so the percentages may have fluctuated during the fiscal year.

Table 1 shows the percentage of authorized law enforcement personnel onboard as of the last day of each fiscal year from FYs 2011 through 2015.

Table 1: Percentage of CBP, ICE, and Secret Service Authorized Law Enforcement Positions Filled, FYs 2011–15

		FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
CBP	CBP Officers	98%	100%	100%	97%	96%
	Border Patrol Agents	100%	100%	100%	97%	94%
	Air/Marine Interdiction Agents	97%	95%	99%	95%	91%
ICE	Deportation Officers	91%	93%	91%	93%	91%
	Criminal Investigators	90%	88%	85%	91%	91%
Secret Service	Special Agents	100%	97%	94%	100%	95%
	Uniformed Division Officers	100%	97%	93%	94%	87%

Source: OIG analysis of CBP, ICE, and Secret Service hiring data

Although the three components came close to meeting authorized hiring levels for law enforcement personnel, all three had difficulty hiring law enforcement applicants in a timely manner. Since FY 2011, CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service have, on average, shortened the time it takes to hire law enforcement personnel, but as of FY 2015, it still took these components between 212 and 359 days to hire law enforcement officers. Currently, there is no established benchmark for hiring Federal law enforcement personnel.

Table 2 shows, from FYs 2011 through 2015, the average number of days it took to hire a law enforcement applicant from the date a job announcement closed to the date the applicant was hired.



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Table 2: CBP, ICE, and Secret Service Average Days-to-Hire, FYs 2011–15

		FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
CBP	CBP Officers	406	505	390	–*	221
	Border Patrol Agents	598	–	420	312	282
	Air/Marine Interdiction Agents	456	384	286	375	220
ICE	Deportation Officers	–	1,161	–	–	212
	Criminal Investigators	–	357	–	182	219
Secret Service	Special Agents	286	–	482	441	298
	Uniformed Division Officers	–	–	294	272	359

*A dash indicates the component did not hire during that fiscal year.

Note: We calculated the average number of days to hire for each fiscal year based on those applicants who were hired through job announcements issued during that particular fiscal year, and not on applicants hired during the fiscal year.

Source: OIG analysis of CBP, ICE, and Secret Service hiring data

Staffing Is Not Sufficient to Process Law Enforcement Applicants Quickly

Officials from the components said they lack the staff to support hiring, which slows the processing of applicants. Insufficient staff can delay applicants' progression through some of the necessary steps in the hiring process. At the Secret Service, for example, the lack of staff has affected completion of polygraph examinations and background investigations of applicants. Special Agents in field offices conduct polygraph examinations and background investigations as collateral duties. Officials explained it is difficult for these Special Agents to complete these collateral duties because their primary investigative and protective functions take precedence. In FY 2015, the Secret Service's security clearance process, including polygraph examinations and background investigations, for Uniformed Division Officers averaged 200 days. In an election year, Secret Service officials said it will take even longer to complete background investigations and polygraph examinations, which will mean significant hiring delays for applicants.

More generally, all of DHS has experienced a reduction in mission support functions, including human resources personnel. Hiring freezes and attrition have affected staffing levels of human resources personnel across the Department and delayed applicant processing and hiring. For example, because only 3 human resource specialists were available to process approximately 3,000 entry-level Deportation Officer applicants during an FY 2015 hiring surge, ICE pulled 6 additional staff within the Office of Human Capital to process these applicants. According to ICE officials, the staff worked overtime hours, totaling approximately \$17,000. ICE's need for permanent human resource staff to process applicants was also evident in FY 2016 when



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the agency planned to double the number of new entry-level Criminal Investigators. CBP and the Secret Service also recently lacked sufficient human resources personnel to support law enforcement hiring. At the end of FY 2015, 14 percent of CBP's human resources positions that support law enforcement hiring were vacant; for the Secret Service, 32 percent were vacant.

Inadequate Systems to Track and Process Applicants Slow Hiring

In addition to insufficient human resources staffing, some components do not have comprehensive automated systems to efficiently process and track law enforcement applicants. Unlike CBP, which has one automated system to track applicants through the entire hiring process after selection, ICE and Secret Service use multiple systems. For example, ICE uses six systems, which ICE officials said are not user friendly or well designed. Further, according to these officials, the systems require manual data entry, and large amounts of data have to be moved among the various systems. The Secret Service uses two applicant tracking systems and, according to component officials, although one system is customized, the systems do not communicate with each other. The systems also require manual manipulation of data, making it difficult and cumbersome to process large numbers of applicants. CBP officials told us that even with one system, information must still be transferred to and from other systems, making it difficult to "seamlessly" analyze data and track applicants.

In addition, unlike CBP and ICE, the Secret Service does not use the web-based, automated Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing (e-QIP) system for applicants to submit their Standard Form 86, *Questionnaire for National Security Positions* (SF 86), during the background investigation. Rather, it requires applicants to email the document to Secret Service staff, who then print it out and review it manually. The electronic SF 86 only contains pages the applicant has completed; the paper version is the entire 140-page document, including pages not completed. One Secret Service official described the process as a "paper mill," with boxes of applicant files filling an entire room.

Having to enter data manually, move data among several systems, and review paper documents lengthens the already extensive hiring process and introduces the possibility of data entry errors. Even during our review, when we requested applicant data from FYs 2011 to 2015, the lack of a comprehensive, automated system made it difficult for ICE and the Secret Service to provide the data. When analyzing the two components' data, we also noted data entry errors.

The inability to hire law enforcement personnel efficiently can affect the workforce and, in turn, the missions of these components. During April 2016 testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security, a union official



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representing CBP Officers stated, “There is no greater roadblock to legitimate trade and travel efficiency than the lack of sufficient staff at the ports. Understaffed ports lead to long delays in commercial lanes ... and also create a significant hardship for CBP employees.” In a previous OIG report we found that staffing shortages for Uniformed Division Officers led to inadequate training, fatigue, low morale, and attrition.² An internal Secret Service report described similar effects on Special Agents. Delays in hiring could result in Secret Service personnel working longer hours, with fewer days off and less opportunity to receive training. Insufficient law enforcement staff can also impact ICE’s mission, especially when it is increasing its immigration enforcement and removal operations.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Directors of ICE and the Secret Service:

Recommendation 1: Prioritize and dedicate full-time human resources, investigative, or polygraph personnel as needed to help process law enforcement applicants.

Recommendation 2: Establish an automated method to track applicants throughout the entire law enforcement hiring process.

We recommend that the Director of the Secret Service:

Recommendation 3: Adopt the e-QIP system for applicants to submit information during their background investigation.

Management Comments

We evaluated DHS’s written comments and made changes to the report where we deemed appropriate. A summary of the written response to the report recommendations and our analysis of the response follow each set of recommendations. A copy of DHS’s response, in its entirety, is included as appendix B. In addition, technical comments received were incorporated into the report where appropriate.

ICE and the Secret Service concurred with Recommendation 1. ICE plans to continue detailing staff members from other branches with the Office of Human Capital to help process law enforcement applicants until additional resources are available. ICE estimated this would be completed by August 30, 2017. The Secret Service dedicates full-time Federal Government employees and

² 2014 White House Fence Jumping Incident, OIG-16-64, April 16, 2016



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contractor support staff to process law enforcement applicants, and it can request additional contractor support staff during peak processing times. The Secret Service's Office of Human Resources also intends to recruit a polygraph examining investigator to assist with applicant processing. The Secret Service estimated this would be completed by December 31, 2016.

ICE and Secret Service concurred with Recommendation 2. According to ICE, the Office of Human Capital is currently reviewing potential automated tracking systems to improve its hiring process. The estimated completion date is August 30, 2017. The Secret Service Office of Human Resources is working to create a tracking management system and dashboard to automate and streamline the entire application process. The system, which will be implemented in phases, will ultimately consolidate the separate databases currently used to manage applications and have a dashboard for real-time status updates on applicants. The Secret Service estimated this would be completed by September 30, 2017.

The Secret Service concurred with Recommendation 3 and expects to begin using e-QIP for applicants during the second quarter of FY 2017.

OIG Analysis of Management Comments

ICE's and the Secret Service's planned actions are not responsive to Recommendation 1. ICE did not describe how many or what type of additional resources would be made available to process law enforcement applicants. We also believe that one additional polygraph examining investigator will not substantially ease the burden of Special Agents in field offices who conduct polygraph examinations and background investigations as collateral duties. We consider the recommendation unresolved and open. We will close this recommendation when ICE confirms the number and type of additional human resources staff who are permanently available to process law enforcement applicants and when the Secret Service hires more than one full-time polygraph examiner to help process law enforcement applicants.

ICE's and the Secret Service's planned actions are responsive to Recommendation 2. We consider the recommendation resolved and open. We will close the recommendation when the two components implement automated systems to track applicants throughout the entire law enforcement hiring process.

The Secret Service's planned action is responsive to Recommendation 3. We consider the recommendation resolved and open. We will close this recommendation when the Secret Service adopts the e-QIP system for all applicants to submit information during their background investigation.



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DHS and the Components Have Taken Steps to Improve the Law Enforcement Hiring Process

The Department, CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service have all implemented changes to improve their law enforcement hiring processes and shorten the amount of time it takes to hire personnel, but because most of the improvements are relatively new, their long-term success cannot yet be measured.

In the fourth quarter of FY 2015, the DHS Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) began a time-to-hire initiative. The purpose of the initiative is to methodically track hiring throughout the Department, which will help show trends, determine areas of delay in the hiring process, and streamline the process. As part of this initiative, OCHCO collects data on what it considers to be commonly measurable hiring process steps for five positions, including four law enforcement positions covered in our review. OCHCO chose these positions to be part of the initiative because they have the highest time-to-hire averages, receive internal and external scrutiny, have high applicant volume, include complex multi-step hiring processes, and are mission-critical occupations.

All three components have also established hiring events that allow applicants to complete several steps in the hiring process in one location. For example, at the Secret Service's expedited hiring events, applicants may complete a written examination, undergo two required interviews, and either schedule or take their polygraph examination, depending on the applicant's progress and availability of resources. In FY 2014, it took an average of 272 days to hire all Uniformed Division Officers. But when we separated the applicants who attended a hiring event from those who did not, we found that applicants hired through these events were hired in 192 days versus 290 days for all other applicants. Similarly, according to officials, CBP's expedited hiring events have decreased the time-to-hire for qualified applicants by 63 percent and eliminated unqualified candidates more quickly. Because ICE only began expedited hiring events for entry level Deportation Officer applicants in FY 2016, we could not verify whether these events have improved ICE's hiring process.

CBP and the Secret Service have also created internal teams to address hiring challenges. In February 2015, CBP created its Frontline Hiring Program Management Office (PMO). Through the PMO, CBP identified the steps in the hiring process with the most delays and the number of applicants who failed each step. For instance, when PMO's hiring model data showed medical examinations were slowing down the hiring process, CBP hired additional nurses to review applicants' medical files. In November 2015, the Secret Service created the Applicant Coordinating Center to further monitor applicant hiring, specifically during the polygraph examination, medical examination, and



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background phases of the process. The Applicant Coordinating Center is staffed with a polygraph examiner, nurse, security clearance adjudicator, and a human resources specialist who track applicants through the hiring process.

Components Are Not Meeting Targeted Hiring Timeframes

Despite improvements, CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service continue to fall short of the time-to-hire goals established by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and, in some instances, by the components themselves.

OPM's September 2008 hiring initiative³ recommends agencies strive to hire applicants in 80 days, which is unrealistic for these three components. OPM's goal does not take into account the realities that lengthen CBP's, ICE's, and the Secret Service's hiring processes for law enforcement applicants. As mentioned previously, in addition to the standard hiring procedures for applicants seeking Federal employment, law enforcement applicants normally complete other steps, such as a medical examination and a polygraph examination. Typically, law enforcement applicants must successfully complete each step before proceeding to the next. OPM's timeframe does not take into account these additional steps in the extensive hiring process.

DHS has not established time-to-hire goals for law enforcement personnel at the three components, but instead measures their timeliness based on the components' established timeframes, which are either nonexistent or impractical. For example, CBP has not established internal hiring timeframes. According to CBP, it has chosen not to set unattainable hiring expectations until it can establish a consistent baseline based on recent initiatives. CBP officials told us its Office of Professional Responsibility⁴ may process 5,000 polygraph examinations in one period and 1,000 in another, making it impossible to predict how long the polygraph examination step will take. In contrast, ICE uses law enforcement hiring timeframes it created in FY 2011 based on historical patterns, but still does not always meet them. In 2014, the Secret Service implemented an 118-day hiring target for its law enforcement applicants, but on average failed to meet this timeframe in FY 2014 and FY 2015 for both Special Agents and Uniformed Division Officers.

Components have improved their time-to-hire averages, but will likely not meet OPM's 80-day timeframe, regardless of process improvements. They will only meet internal targets that are credible and attainable. Considering the complexity of the law enforcement hiring process, DHS should work with CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service to establish guidance and realistic timeframe

³ OPM End-to-End Hiring Initiative, September 2008

⁴ CBP's Office of Professional Responsibility screens potential CBP employees for suitability and conducts polygraph examinations for law enforcement applicants.



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targets for their law enforcement hiring.

We recommend that the DHS' Chief Human Capital Officer, Commissioner of CBP, and the Directors of ICE and the Secret Service:

Recommendations

Recommendation 4: Establish performance measures to accurately determine the long-term effect of their process improvements.

Recommendation 5: Establish law enforcement hiring timeframes that account for all steps in law enforcement components' hiring processes.

Management Comments

The Department concurred with Recommendation 4. As described in the report, OCHCO began a time-to-hire initiative to help identify potential gains in efficiencies. As data is collected and analyzed, OCHCO plans to coordinate with components to identify department-wide performance measures, with an estimated completion date of March 31, 2017. CBP and ICE also plan to establish their own performance measures to determine the effects of process improvements, with completion dates of June 30, 2017, and August 30, 2017, respectively. The Secret Service recently hired a full-time program analyst to evaluate the hiring process, including developing recruitment metrics that align to hiring objectives. The Secret Service's estimated completion date is January 30, 2017.

The Department concurred with Recommendation 5. As part of its time-to-hire initiative, OCHCO collected data on 10 commonly measurable hiring phases for law enforcement personnel and estimated it would complete initial analysis of the data by March 31, 2017. According to CBP, hiring timeframes that account for all steps in the hiring process for law enforcement personnel will be in place by June 30, 2017. ICE expects to establish timeframe benchmarks by August 30, 2017, and the Secret Service will distribute hiring targets by December 31, 2016.

OIG Analysis of Management Comments

The Department's and the components' planned actions are responsive to Recommendation 4. We consider this recommendation resolved and open. We will close this recommendation when OCHCO, ICE, CBP, and the Secret Service provide the performance measures for their process improvements.



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The Department's planned actions are responsive to Recommendation 5. We consider this recommendation resolved and open. We will close this recommendation when OCHCO, ICE, CBP, and the Secret Service provide hiring timeframes for their law enforcement hiring processes.

Other Observations

As part of the Government's overall effort to improve the hiring process, OCHCO was required to report time-to-hire information to OPM and Congress. Our analysis indicated that starting in FY 2014, the Department miscalculated and reported inaccurate data for some law enforcement positions to OPM and Congress. The erroneous data was a result of OCHCO not using a weighted average when calculating the average number of days to hire.

As shown in appendix D, in six of eight quarters starting in FY 2014, OCHCO reported the wrong average time-to-hire for Border Patrol Agents. In one instance, OCHCO underreported the time-to-hire for Border Patrol Agents by more than 200 days. OCHCO also reported the wrong overall time-to-hire to Congress for CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service for the first quarter of FY 2015. We presented our findings to OCHCO officials who confirmed our calculations were accurate. OCHCO has since adjusted its methodology.



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Appendix A

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

DHS OIG was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Public Law 107-296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*.

We conducted this inspection to determine whether DHS' law enforcement hiring practices are efficient and effective. We compiled data about DHS law enforcement positions in CBP, ICE, National Protection and Programs Directorate, Transportation Security Administration, the United States Coast Guard, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the Secret Service. After receiving the data, we focused our review on the three DHS components with the most law enforcement personnel — CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service — specifically, their mission-critical positions.

We examined the hiring policies and procedures from DHS, CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service. To calculate time-to-hire in FYs 2011 through 2015, we requested information from the three components for all law enforcement applicants who were hired through job announcements issued from FY 2011 through FY 2015. Based on this data, we calculated the average number of days to hire from the date the job announcement closed to the date the applicant was hired by fiscal year and position.

We requested CBP, ICE, and Secret Service law enforcement staffing data for FYs 2011 through 2015. We also requested components' law enforcement staffing data for human resources, background investigation, and polygraph examinations. We did not examine the recruitment or retention practices of the components.

We researched and reviewed Federal Government policies and reports governing Federal law enforcement hiring and congressional testimony related to DHS hiring. We interviewed officials from the Department's OCHCO and the Office of the Chief Security Officer; component officials from CBP, ICE, National Protection and Programs Directorate, Transportation Security Administration, the Coast Guard, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Secret Service; and OPM.

We conducted this inspection between November 2015 and June 2016 under the authority of the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, as amended, and according to the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.



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Appendix B
Management Comments to the Draft Report


U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland
Security**

October 4, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR: John Roth
Inspector General

FROM: Jim H. Crumpacker, CIA, CFE
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office 

SUBJECT: Management's Response to OIG Draft Report: "DHS is Slow
to Hire Law Enforcement Personnel"
(Project No. 16-012-ISP-DHS)

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the work of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

The Department is pleased to note OIG's positive recognition of steps taken by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and U.S. Secret Service (USSS) to improve their law enforcement hiring processes. For example, by creating internal teams to address hiring challenges and conducting recruiting events that allow applicants to complete several steps in one location, these agencies have been able to recruit, assess and hire a cadre of more than 60,000 federal law enforcement officers, the largest contingent within the Federal government. In addition, a new DHS Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) "time to hire" initiative is helping to methodically track hiring data, identify trends, determine areas of delay, and streamline the process. DHS is committed to achieving its major human capital objectives in support of critically important DHS missions while adhering to applicable laws, regulations, and Merit System Principles.

The draft report contained five recommendations with which the Department concurs. Attached find our detailed response to each recommendation.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Technical comments were previously provided under separate cover. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Attachment



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Attachment: DHS Management Response to Recommendations Contained in OIG Project No. 16-012-ISP-DHS

The OIG recommended that the Directors of ICE and USSS:

Recommendation 1: Prioritize and dedicate full-time human resources, investigative, or polygraph personnel as needed to help process law enforcement applicants.

Response: Concur. The ICE Office of Human Capital currently has three full time Human Resource (HR) Specialists to process entry level law enforcement applications. ICE will also continue to detail staff members from other branches within the Office of Human Capital, Dallas, to assist with this workload until additional resources are available. Estimated Completion Date (ECD): August 30, 2017.

The USSS Office of Human Resources dedicates full-time Federal HR personnel and contractor support staff, as needed, to process law enforcement applicants. Also, the USSS has the ability to request a surge capacity of additional contractor support staff during peak processing times. When the USSS conducts Entry Level Assessment Center hiring events, special agents, Uniformed Division members, polygraph examiners, human resources and other administrative employees are used to assist in processing the additional applications received during these recruiting events. Currently, the Office of Human Resources is in the preliminary stages of recruiting a dedicated full-time polygraph examining investigator to assist with applicant processing. ECD: December 31, 2016.

Recommendation 2: Establish an automated method to track applicants throughout the entire law enforcement hiring process.

Response: Concur. The ICE Office of Human Capital is currently reviewing potential automated tracking systems that will improve its hiring process. ECD: August 30, 2017.

The USSS Office of Human Resources is working with their Applications Development team to create a tracking management system and dashboard to automate and streamline the entire application process. This robust system is in the early stages of development and will be implemented in phases. When fully operational, the Applicant Tracking Management system will:

- a. Automate the processing of applications by conducting programmed reviews and quality controls;
- b. Consolidate the separate databases currently used to manage applications;



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- c. Provide an automated timeline to push applications through the stages of the hiring process, generating due date e-mail alerts, assignment ticklers, and activity notifications;
- d. Contain a dashboard that will provide real-time status of applicants and automate data reporting;
- e. Offer field recruiters access to the dashboard so they are able to check the status of an application and electronically submit forms and information;
- f. Create fillable forms used in the processing of applications which will make it possible to quickly extract data for analysis, tracking, and reporting;
- g. Automate the dissemination of security background forms to the applicant, form submission back to the Secret Service, and processing by the Secret Service; and
- h. Facilitate mass communication to applicants and perspective applicants which will make it easier for the Secret Service to schedule applicant interviews as well as announce future job fairs, recruiting events and assessments.

ECD: September 30, 2017.

The OIG recommended that the Director of the USSS:

Recommendation 3: Adopt the e-QIP system for applicants to submit information during their background investigation.

Response: Concur. The USSS Office of Human Resources is currently using the e-QIP system for periodic reinvestigations for incumbent employees and is in the process of expanding its use to include all applicants. The USSS expects to begin using e-QIP for applicants during the second quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2017. ECD: January 30, 2017.

The OIG recommended that the DHS CHCO, Commissioner of CBP, and the Directors of ICE and the USSS:

Recommendation 4: Establish performance measures to accurately determine the long-term effect of their process improvements.

Response: Concur. The DHS OCHCO is leading a Department-wide effort to improve time-to-hire data collection and reporting. The Department identified 10 hiring phases for selected law enforcement occupations and will analyze the hiring timelines for these



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phases to help identify potential gains in efficiencies. As data is collected and analyzed, the OCHCO will coordinate with Components to identify Department-wide performance measures to assess the long-term impact of improvement efforts. ECD: March 31, 2017.

At the direction of the Deputy Commissioner, CBP's Office of Human Resources Management established the Front Line Hiring Program Management Office (PMO) to address challenges in the hiring process. The Front Line Hiring PMO is a continuous improvement organization with interdisciplinary partnerships. As part of its efforts, it has a robust data analytics function that provides quantitative information regarding the various aspects of the hiring process. The PMO uses quantitative analysis to identify pain points, measure the effect of its initiatives, and provide feedback for future improvements. The Front Line Hiring PMO will build on its existing body of work to establish performance measures to document the efficacy of the continuous improvements they introduce. ECD: June 30, 2017.

The ICE Office of Human Capital currently produces biweekly diagnostic reports on human capital processes. Once process improvements are in place, Office of Human Capital will add performance measures to determine long-term effects. ECD: August 30, 2017.

The USSS Office of Human Resources recently hired a full-time program analyst to evaluate applicant/hiring processes. This program analyst will:

- a. Develop procedures and systems for assessing the effectiveness of processes currently being utilized;
- b. Develop recruitment metrics that are actionable, predictive, forecast actions, indicate trends, and align to hiring objectives;
- c. Conduct detailed analyses of work processes and making recommendations to improve effectiveness and efficiency;
- d. Evaluate current and projected recruitment programs, hiring goals, objectives, and requirements, to identify potential solutions to long-term, critical, or difficult issues.

ECD: January 30, 2017.

Recommendation 5: Establish law enforcement hiring timeframes that account for all steps in law enforcement components' hiring processes.

Response: Concur. The DHS OCHCO is leading an effort across the Department to improve time-to-hire data collection and reporting. DHS has expanded overall "time-to-



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hire” data collection to fourteen mission critical occupations in addition to reporting overall DHS and Component results. In a pilot initiative, the Department identified 10 commonly measurable hiring phases for selected law enforcement occupations for more granular analysis of law enforcement officer hiring timeframes and identification of areas where Department-wide efficiencies can be gained. OCHCO estimates to have initial analysis of the phase-specific reporting complete by March 31, 2017.

CBP created the Front Line Hiring PMO to make improvements to frontline recruiting and hiring processes. As a result, CBP increased the number of Border Patrol agents and CBP officer applicants from approximately 40,000 in FY 2014 to over 115,000 in FY 2015. CBP is also on pace to double the 1,578 recruiting events from last year during FY 2016 which should also increase the number of applications for a third consecutive year. The Front Line Hiring PMO will establish hiring timeframes that account for all the steps in the hiring process for law enforcement personnel. ECD: June 30, 2017.

The ICE Office of Human Capital will work with subject matter experts to establish timeframe benchmarks that accurately account for ICE hiring processes and hiring timeframes. ECD: August 30, 2017.

The USSS Office of Human Resources will continue to review its established law enforcement hiring timeframes to ensure all steps in the hiring process are accounted for and revise the timeframes as needed. Upon completion, a revised and updated Entry-Level Selection Process as well as Special Agent and Uniformed Division Hiring Targets process map will be distributed throughout the Secret Service. ECD: December 31, 2016.



Appendix C

Steps in Law Enforcement Hiring Processes at CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service

The law enforcement hiring processes for CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service typically consist of:

- Vacancy announcement
- Application
- Assessment exam
- Human resources qualification review
- Structured oral interview
- Hiring manager selection
- Extension of conditional job offer
- Background investigation
- Security clearance
- Polygraph examination⁵
- Medical examination
- Drug test
- Fitness test⁶
- Final applicant review, and
- Extension of final job offer

Source: CBP, ICE, and Secret Service

Hiring steps vary within CBP, ICE, and the Secret Service depending on the requirements for each law enforcement position.

CBP's Law Enforcement Hiring Process

CBP's law enforcement personnel include Criminal Investigators, Air Interdiction Agents, Marine Interdiction Agents, CBP Officers, and Border Patrol Agents.

To select all law enforcement occupations except Criminal Investigators, CBP uses a competency-based assessment. Once the assessment is complete, CBP Human Resources reviews each applicant's qualifications and assessments to determine whether the applicant meets the minimum qualifications for the

⁵ ICE does not require applicants to undergo pre-employment polygraph examinations as part of its law enforcement hiring process.

⁶ The Secret Service does not require applicants to undergo a fitness test as a part of its law enforcement hiring process.



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position and grade. If met, Human Resources issues a tentative selection letter to the applicant. CBP field offices then interview the applicant and collect fingerprints and send the interview results to CBP Human Resources for processing.

Successful interview applicants undergo a medical exam and take two physical fitness tests (PFT): PFT1 during the pre-employment process and PFT2 prior to beginning work and entering basic training. PFT requirements depend on the respective job requirements but generally include push-ups and sit-ups. CBP nursing staff reviews the medical examination results to determine suitability.

While undergoing the interview, medical examination, and PFT1, applicants complete their SF 86. CBP Human Resources sends applicants' completed SF 86s to CBP's Office of Professional Responsibility, which conducts the background investigation, administers the required polygraph examination, and determines applicants' suitability. The *Anti-Border Corruption Act of 2010* requires CBP to administer polygraph examinations to all applicants for law enforcement positions. Concurrently, CBP Human Resources completes the pre-employment hiring process, which includes a drug test.

Once the applicant completes all phases, CBP Human Resources coordinates when the applicant begins work and basic training.

ICE's Law Enforcement Hiring Processes

ICE's primary law enforcement personnel are Criminal Investigators and Deportation Officers.

Homeland Security Investigations (Criminal Investigators): Applicants must complete a series of assessment tests, including an *1811 Occupational Questionnaire*, as part of the application process. Those applicants who meet the cut-off score then take the Special Agent Battery Test and Writing Sample Assessment. Applicants who pass both move to the structured oral interview. Applicants who pass the structured oral interview receive a tentative selection letter and must successfully complete a medical examination, drug test, and background investigation. Applicants who clear all of these processes may be extended a final job offer.

Enforcement Removal Operations (Deportation Officers): Applicants must meet position eligibility requirements and minimum qualifications before receiving a tentative selection offer. Applicants must successfully complete a medical examination, fitness test, drug test, structured oral interview, and background investigation. Applicants who clear all of these processes may be extended a final job offer.



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At the time of our fieldwork, ICE did not require applicants to undergo pre-employment polygraph examinations as part of its law enforcement hiring process. According to ICE officials, the Office of Professional Responsibility planned to develop a pre-employment polygraph program in FY 2016 and FY 2017. ICE estimates that by FY 2019, its pre-employment polygraph program will be required for all entry-level law enforcement applicants.

Secret Service's Law Enforcement Hiring Process

Secret Service law enforcement personnel include Uniformed Division Officers and Special Agents.

Applicants who meet minimum qualifications are referred to a field office that reviews resumés to identify best-qualified applicants. Selected applicants are invited to take a written assessment. Those who pass the assessment are invited to participate in the Special Agent and Uniformed Division Pre-Employment Review interview. Applicants who pass the interview receive a conditional job offer; they must complete an SF 86 and successfully pass a polygraph examination, background investigation, and medical examination. The Secret Service does not require applicants to undergo a fitness test.

After successfully completing these steps, a hiring panel reviews the applicant file and makes a final hiring decision, at which point a final job offer is extended to the applicant.



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Appendix D
Incorrect Time-to-Hire Data Reported by DHS OCHCO

Incorrect Data Reported to Congress

	Average Number of Calendar Days to Hire, First Quarter, FY 2015		Difference between OIG and OCHCO Analysis
	OIG Analysis	OCHCO Data Reported to Congress	
CBP	201	411	210
ICE	147	144	-3
Secret Service	334	282	-52

Source: OIG analysis of OCHCO, CBP, ICE and Secret Service data

Incorrect Time-to-Hire Data Reported to OPM for Border Patrol Agents

Quarter	Average Number of Calendar Days to Hire		Difference between OIG and OCHCO Analysis
	OIG Analysis	OCHCO Data Reported to OPM	
FY 14, Q1	936	708	-228
FY 14, Q2	361	539	178
FY 14, Q3	547	368	-179
FY 14, Q4	269	260	-9
FY 15, Q1	249	265	16
FY 15, Q2	262	262	0
FY 15, Q3	263	263	0
FY 15, Q4	325	319	-6

Source: OIG analysis of OCHCO and CBP data



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Incorrect Time-to-Hire Data Reported to OPM for CBP Officers

Quarter	Average Number of Calendar Days to Hire		Difference between OIG and OCHCO Analysis
	OIG Analysis	OCHCO Data Reported to OPM	
FY 15, Q1	216	194	-22
FY 15, Q2	304	304	0
FY 15, Q3	261	261	0
FY 15, Q4	326	330	4

Source: OIG analysis of OCHCO and CBP data



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Appendix E

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