

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
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Good morning, Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Klobuchar and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee on my first four months as the Inspector General (IG) of the Government Publishing Office (GPO). I look forward to sharing my thoughts on the state of the agency and my office as I first found them, and on my thoughts regarding how the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) can help GPO to succeed in its mission going forward. I will also take this opportunity to identify certain obstacles to accomplishing the OIG mission and to offer my thoughts on how to address them.

As the IG of a legislative branch agency, I see the Congress, through my oversight committee, as not only a stakeholder along with my agency leadership and the public, but also as a partner and advisor. I am fully committed to working closely together with you, maintaining transparency in my interactions with you, and to keeping you fully informed about my findings and recommendations.

My Initial Assessments

The Agency:

I have found the GPO workforce to be professional and highly competent, but also concerned. As you well know, going from 8000 strong to less than 1800 in the course of the last forty years already created significant internal insecurity. The transformation to the digital age, while necessary, has taken a toll. On top of this, the workforce has had a series of acting deputy directors running their agency going on two years, and I sense many have begun to wonder if the administration and Congress are committed to a relevant and competitive GPO.

Based on my observations, the agency has been well managed. The Acting Deputy Director has published a new Five Year Strategy and has continued efforts to modernize agency workforce, equipment and processes. Nonetheless, GPO needs a permanent Director confirmed by the Senate. There are too many senior managers in key positions that have been fleeted up to acting positions for extended periods of time. An appointed and confirmed Director would have the opportunity to articulate a vision for the future, put in place a team to implement that vision, advocate more effectively to the administration and Congress, and lead the workforce.

As a newcomer to GPO, I was very impressed by the historic nature of the agency and the buildings that house it. Our red brick facilities are unique to Washington and the Capitol Grounds and serve wonderfully to remind citizens and lawmakers alike of the agency's long history and its unique role in the government's past. However, it does not move one to contemplate the role GPO will play in the government's future. A quick tour of the main buildings show that time, usage, and multiple short range adjustments have taken their toll on the physical plant. This raises concerns for keeping GPO competitive but also about the well-being and safety for the workforce.

It seems that significant investment is necessary to maintain and upgrade the buildings. A long term solution to this issue lies with the Congress, and GPO's oversight committees in particular, in partnership with an empowered GPO management team.

The OIG:

My initial observations of the Office of Inspector General at the GPO caused me significant concern.

Partially fueled by several high profile investigations, the relationship between the agency and the OIG was clearly marked by distrust. This had manifested itself in reduced interaction, communications, and cooperation. I found the office to be seriously understaffed, which prevented the office from performing the full range of OIG responsibilities.

The relationship of an OIG to its agency is similar to a family doctor. If my doctor tells me I have a serious illness, that is certainly unwelcome news, but it is also helpful. If she tells me to stop smoking or puts me on a fitness plan, that may or may not be welcome but if the doctor is saying it, it's probably going to be helpful. Within the agency, an IG's work is often not welcome, but, if we're doing our job right, it will be helpful. In the past, some of our work was not received as either.

I also believe that several high-profile investigations left the impression that the office prioritized investigations over audits. Naturally, these open investigations attracted the greatest interest both with agency leadership as well as with Congress and the press.

I observed a vacuum in leadership within the OIG. I am the 5th IG over the last year, while there have been either no or acting Assistant IG's for Audits and Investigations for two years. As a result, oversight and continuity in managing the office and its decisions and actions were at best inconsistent. Past IG's had simply not been in place long enough to make programmatic changes.

My Immediate Actions:

The foundation of a relationship between an independent OIG and its parent agency is an understanding of and professional respect for each entities' role and mission, as well as a firm belief that there is value in investing in the relationship. Following are key

actions I have implemented over the last four months to build this understanding and respect:

- I have emphasized with the agency senior leadership that my focus is on proactive inspections, management reviews, performance audits and strategic impact investigations into systemic areas of fraud.
- I have met individually with all the senior leaders to discuss their work, my office and priorities and to build personal lines of communication.
- I have finished or closed almost all open investigative matters of congressional interest that I inherited.
- I have reorganized my office to add an Inspections Division in order to proactively focus on agency management of programs.
- Because they were routine agency functions, I remanded to the agency oversight of two contracts to perform IT penetration testing and PKI testing.
- I have reviewed all open recommendations and either closed or transferred to the agency more than half of them. Frankly, as stated above many of these open recommendations concerned routine agency functions instead of being more broadly focused on improving the overall economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the GPO.
- I have directed all office handbooks and manuals to be rewritten to ensure the full incorporation of GAGAS and CIGIE standards for all divisions of my office.

(I would note here as well, that I am a full supporter of CIGIE and believe that there are tremendous resources available at CIGIE and in the IG community writ large from which my office can and will benefit.)

- In order to provide better oversight of the OIG and promote internal excellence in its production, the agency has authorized and I am in the process of hiring a new Deputy Inspector General, Assistant IG for Inspections, and a Quality Assurance Officer.
- I have directed my Counselor to oversee a review of the Performance Evaluation process in my office and to personally oversee the hiring process of 12 new positions.
- Within the month, my office will conduct a full day offsite to discuss how to be a positive force for change at the agency.
- I have implemented a policy that all work conducted by my office be team-based and collaborative. I am ending a past practice of individually performed audits, evaluations and investigations. Additionally, my physical space is being transformed into a more open and collaborative configuration allowing all divisions to interact.
- I have met regularly with congressional staff to keep them fully apprised of my observations and OIG reorganization plans.

Current Assessment:

After four months, the relationship between my office and the agency is generally a positive one. My actions to reform my office and change the nature of its relationship with GPO senior management have been supported. I meet regularly with the Acting Deputy Director, Chief Administrative Officer and Chief of Staff, and have asked to meet regularly with the full senior staff. Recently, several new team-based inspections have been favorably received by agency senior managers. GPO has also facilitated my requests for increased staff and office reconfigurations. I will have a better sense of this relationship after I begin the next work plan.

Concerns:

I think it is important to mention here that for my office, and legislative branch OIG's in general, there are issues affecting our independence that were addressed for OIG's in the Executive Branch years ago in the IG Act and its amendments. These issues of independence concern human resources, budgets, database and email access, and the integrity of my physical spaces; as well as protections against summary firing of the Inspector General. In either their cost or implementation, I don't see any easy or inexpensive long term answers. Still, I think the conversation should be had at the congressional level.

To the extent I can address these issues, I have begun discussions with GPO to at the very least obtain verifiable assurances against unauthorized access of my spaces, email and databases, and to ensure flexibility and timeliness in my hiring needs. However these are by definition compromise solutions and stakeholders should understand them as such.

With regard to staff, basically half of my office is vacant. There is a critical need to hire skilled, diversely experienced and motivated individuals to transform my office. I intend to tap into the IG Community for all the help I can get and to aggressively hire as quickly as the GPO HR process will allow. It will take time to see the effects of this reform in the office.

I have a serious concern regarding Law Enforcement Authority for my Special Agents that I believe can only be adequately addressed by Congress. For the last ten years GPO OIG has relied on the US Marshals Service (USMS) for deputation of our special agents. Being deputized allowed them to carry weapons which enabled them to perform a range of law enforcement functions, such as serving subpoenas and warrants, making seizures, and conducting arrests and interviews. Recently, USMS has declined to approve the deputations of our Criminal Investigators and those in other Legislative Branch OIGs.

We train alongside OIG agents in the executive branch, we comply with the same standards, and we all have the same mission. Our agents receive their law enforcement authority through individual, three-year deputations by the Marshals, like many other small OIGs. Since May, 2019 – less than three months ago – I went from 7 deputized positions to now 2. My ability to conduct my responsibilities has been and will continue to be eroded by this development. I look forward to working with the Committee to resolve this matter expeditiously so that we our agents can have all the tools they need to do their job safely and effectively.

The Future - Focus areas for my office and GPO and strategic vision:

My initial impressions and observations are what you might expect. They concern the viability of GPO's business model and the agency's relevancy as a product service provider going forward. I'll be looking at how the OIG might be able to help senior management to succeed. Such things that are critical in the private sector for success in business like customer service, modernized infrastructure and workforce investment, the selection and oversight of contractors, business promotion, and acquisition of leading edge technology are all obvious areas to emphasize down on. To that end I am focusing on three key documents in the next 60 days that will drive the near to mid-range future of my office activities.

These are a new OIG Work Plan for 2020; the next Semi-annual Report to Congress and the next Five Year Strategy for my office. They are each due on October 1st. I also will be examining the current Management Challenges my office is tracking. I believe they are lacking in specificity and have marginal relevance to GPO. They will be reevaluated with the goal of making them more operational, trackable and achievable.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would welcome the opportunity to continue to work with the Committee as we develop a strategic and operational way forward for the OIG.