



Office of Audits
Office of Inspector General
U.S. General Services Administration

Audit of Management Controls
Within the Network Services Division
Pacific Rim Region,
Federal Acquisition Service

Report Number A110100/Q/9/P12009
May 30, 2012



Office of Audits
Office of Inspector General
U.S. General Services Administration

REPORT ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the audit was to determine whether management controls within the Federal Acquisition Service's (FAS) Network Services Division's (NSD) financial and program operations in the Pacific Rim Region are sufficient to ensure adherence to federal regulations and policy. If they are not, determine the impact and suggest corrective action.

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Audit of Management Controls Within the Network Services Division Pacific Rim Region, Federal Acquisition Service

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WHAT WE FOUND

We identified the following during our audit:

Finding 1 – NSD lacks inventory control procedures.

Finding 2 – NSD lacks written procedures and management controls over contract administration.

Finding 3 – NSD management needs to establish effective criteria for evaluating staff performance.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

The FAS Regional Commissioner in the Pacific Rim Region should:

1. Conduct a comprehensive inventory of recurring services (B1) to identify errors, missing transactions, and outdated or expired services.
2. Ensure accurate accounting of the recurring services inventory by developing and implementing written procedures and management controls for training NSD employees on how to update and monitor the inventory.
3. Take action to ensure contracting officers' technical representatives receive all required acquisition training.
4. Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the newly appointed Branch Chiefs.
5. Develop and implement written procedures in the following areas:
 - a. Compliance with training mandates for contracting officers' technical representatives.
 - b. Management oversight of independent contract employees.
 - c. Compliance with Fair Opportunity requirements under local services acquisition contracts for client requested telecommunication services.
 - d. Justification to award telecommunication services under tariff agreements.
 - e. Timely completion of customer orders in TOPS.
6. Re-evaluate and revise NSD's Associate Performance Plans to accurately reflect employees' skill sets.
7. Develop and implement a methodology to measure customer satisfaction with employee performance; this methodology should be included in the Associate Performance Plans.

MANAGEMENT COMMENTS

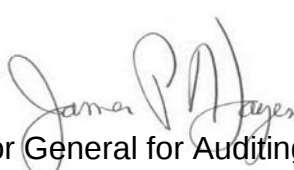
The Regional Commissioner of the Pacific Rim Region concurred with the audit report findings and recommendations. Management's written comments to the draft report are included in their entirety as **Appendix B**.



**Office of Audits
Office of Inspector General
U.S. General Services Administration**

DATE: May 30, 2012

TO: Michael Gelber
Regional Commissioner
Federal Acquisition Service (9Q)

FROM: James P. Hayes 
Regional Inspector General for Auditing
Pacific Rim Field Audit Office (JA-9)

SUBJECT: Audit of Management Controls within the
Network Services Division, Pacific Rim Region
Federal Acquisition Service
Report Number A110100/Q/9/P12009

This report presents the results of our audit of management controls within the Network Services Division in the Pacific Rim Region. Our findings and recommendations are summarized in the Report Abstract. Instructions regarding the audit resolution process can be found in the email that transmitted this report.

Your written comments to the draft report are included in **Appendix B** of this report. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me or Perla Corpus at (415) 522-2744 or by email:

James P. Hayes Regional Inspector General
 for Auditing

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Perla Corpus Audit Manager

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On behalf of the audit team, I would like to thank you and your staff for your patience and assistance during this audit.

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Introduction

The Federal Acquisition Service's (FAS) Network Services Division (NSD) assists customer agencies on a broad range of telecommunication solutions/services. The goal of the NSD is to obtain the lowest aggregate prices for these services through local services acquisition contracts¹ and other acquisition vehicles. The division consists of a Director and a professional staff of 16 area telecommunication managers who are responsible for making sound procurement decisions in fulfilling customer orders. The NSD also uses contract employees to assist in initiating customer orders.

Area telecommunication managers are required to record and complete sales transactions accurately and timely using FAS's billing system, known as Telecommunications Operating and Payment System or TOPS.² NSD's sales are primarily from monthly telecommunication services (also known as recurring services), which are designated as B1³ in TOPS. In addition, area telecommunication managers are responsible for maintaining an accurate and reliable inventory of these recurring services.

The objective of this audit was to determine whether management controls within the NSD's financial and program operations in the Pacific Rim Region are sufficient to ensure adherence to federal regulations and policy. If they are not, determine the impact and suggest corrective action.

See **Appendix A** – Purpose, Scope, and Methodology for additional details.

¹Local services acquisition contracts are used to procure regional telecommunication services. The majority of service lines were purchased via the California local services acquisition contract.

²TOPS is managed by FAS's Financial Service Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

³In fiscal year 2010, revenue generated from B1 services, i.e. monthly dial tone services, represented \$26.4 million or 92 percent of total sales. In addition, the region generates sales from telecommunication equipment referred to as expanded/non-recurring services (B3) and toll call charges (B4).

Results

The lack of written procedures and/or weak management controls puts the integrity of NSD operations at risk. As a result, NSD may not be providing best value telecommunication services to its customer agencies. Three areas, in particular, require strengthening: (1) Accounting for Inventory, (2) Contract Administration, and (3) Evaluation of Employee Performance.

Findings

Finding 1 –NSD lacks inventory control procedures.

The lack of control procedures over the Region's recurring services inventory impedes NSD's ability to effectively manage its operations. Although NSD maintains an inventory of recurring services provided to customers, it cannot demonstrate that this inventory is accurate or reliable. Nearly a third of the customer base is impacted by errors in the inventory.

The current inventory, as reported in TOPS, includes 1,086 items representing approximately 43,200 telephone lines. Within this inventory, we noted that: (1) a number of line items are no longer in service; (2) the contract vehicle (local services acquisition contract or tariff agreement⁴) used to procure monthly services cannot be readily identified; (3) some items may be non-recurring services; and (4) other recurring service line items notated in the "Need Inventory Correction" and "No Inventory" tabs could not be verified. **Table I** summarizes these deficiencies.

**Table I – Summary of Deficiencies Regarding NSD's
Recurring Services Inventory**

Deficiency	Total Number of Telephone Lines Impacted	Total Number of Items Affected
Lines no longer in service	9,224	244
Contract vehicle not identified	2,246	208
Non-recurring services	1,282	4
Recurring service items requiring verification	1,323	126
TOTAL	14,075	582

⁴A tariff agreement is an alternative to a local services acquisition contract in purchasing telecommunication services. Depending on the service location, the Public Utility Company dictates the rates charged to the customer agency. Generally, tariff agreement rates are significantly higher than rates awarded under a local services acquisition contract.

The primary reason for these deficiencies is that NSD is not updating and validating TOPS sales transactions. As a result, some customer agencies may be paying for terminated telecommunication services while others may be paying higher prices under tariff agreements for services that are available under the lower priced local services acquisition contracts. (**Table VI** on page 7).

To correct these deficiencies, management needs to develop and implement written policies and procedures to ensure NSD employees are properly trained regarding how to update and validate TOPS and how to monitor the recurring services inventory. The Regional Commissioner agreed with the recommendations and is in the process of validating the recurring services inventory and developing written policies and procedures.

Recommendations 1 and 2

We recommend the Regional Commissioner of the Federal Acquisition Service, Pacific Rim Region:

1. Conduct a comprehensive inventory of recurring services (B1) to identify errors, missing transactions, and outdated or expired services.
2. Ensure accurate accounting of the recurring services inventory by developing and implementing written procedures and management controls for training NSD employees on how to update and monitor the inventory.

Finding 2 – NSD lacks written procedures and management controls over contract administration.

NSD needs to strengthen written procedures and management controls over contract administration. This would include: (1) providing required training to NSD employees; (2) improving personnel management; and (3) improving contract order processing.

Training

Customer agencies are not receiving the most effective and efficient services because NSD's designated contracting officers' technical representatives have not met the continuing education requirements mandated by the Office of Management and Budget's Office (OMB) of Federal Procurement Policy.

OMB requires contracting officers' technical representatives to complete 40 hours of continuing education every two years to maintain their certifications. However, none of NSD's four designated contracting officers' technical representatives met this requirement.

We addressed this issue with the NSD's Acting Director and the Senior Acquisition Policy Executive in May 2011 during the course of our audit. At that time, they indicated

that NSD was developing new procedures to ensure that it is meeting the minimum training requirements. Nevertheless, because the training has not been received, management should take action to ensure these procedures are put in place and fully implemented.

Personnel Management

NSD did not clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the newly appointed supervisors. Prior to the appointments, two area telecommunication managers (GS-13 grade level), designated as team leaders, were expected to oversee the work of their colleagues even though they had no direct supervisory authority. As such, they are limited to providing advice on best practices but cannot compel their assign staff to follow through on that advice. To address this concern, NSD recently filled two GS-14 supervisor positions (i.e., Branch Chiefs). However, to help ensure efficient management, the NSD needs to clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for these supervisors.

NSD lacks effective procedures for supervising independent contract employees. We found little evidence of contract oversight despite the fact that independent contract employees initiated 35 percent of the purchases made under local services acquisition contracts during the 9-month period ended June 30, 2011. Therefore, we recommend that management develop procedures to more effectively direct the work performed by independent contract employees.

Contract Order Processing

NSD needs to develop written procedures detailing the steps involved with determining whether telecommunication purchases should be made under tariff agreements or local services acquisition contracts. In addition, area telecommunication managers were not completing customer orders in TOPS in a timely manner, which may have an impact on NSD's financial position.

Tariff Agreements versus Local Services Acquisition Contracts

Of the 11 new customer orders placed during the 9-month period ended June 30, 2011, 10 were placed under the higher priced tariff agreements (**Table II** on page 5). NSD did not provide an adequate explanation and/or supporting documentation justifying the use of this contract vehicle and could not provide evidence showing that any of the orders were eventually transitioned to a local services acquisition contract. As a result, customer agencies are most likely paying more for telecommunication services than they should.

**Table II - Summary of Unsupported
Customers' Orders under Tariff Agreements**

TOPS Control Number	Effective Date	Client Agency*	Reason for Tariff Agreement	Amount of Order
93600323	2/1/11	Department of the Navy	Unsupported	\$3,078
96700314	5/1/11	Department of Labor	Unsupported	1,286
90500976	12/1/10	Department of Justice, Probation Office	Unsupported TOPS Error	456
90002034	4/1/11	Bankruptcy Court	Unsupported TOPS Error	442
93600336	2/1/11	Department of Defense	Unsupported	411
90002047	1/1/11	Bankruptcy Court	Unsupported	301
90002050	1/1/11	Bankruptcy Court	Unsupported	271
96200089	11/1/10	Department of Defense	No Issues Noted	151
90011119	6/1/11	General Services Administration	No explanation given	112
95009265	1/1/11	Small Business Administration	Unsupported TOPS Error	44
94700413	4/1/11	Homeland Security	No explanation given	18

*With the exception of TOPS Control Number 96200089, all locations are in California.

We were unable to determine how management monitored the 1,200 customer orders billed under tariff agreements as of June 30, 2011. In California, customer agencies in federal buildings in metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles and San Francisco have access to lower priced telecommunication services through awarded local services acquisition contracts. Nevertheless, NSD used tariff agreements for 30 such customer agencies in Los Angeles and 29 in San Francisco. **Table III**, on the next page, notes several examples of this, one of which dates back to 1999.

**Table III – Examples of Telecommunication Services
Billed Under California Tariff Agreements**

TCAID No.	Effective Date	Federal Building	City
77	1/1/2003	Phillip Burton	San Francisco
95	10/1/2003	Phillip Burton	San Francisco
01	4/1/1999	Appraisers Building	San Francisco
83	8/1/2002	Appraisers Building	San Francisco
02	4/1/2007	7 th Street Building	San Francisco
38	10/1/2000	U.S. Courthouse	Los Angeles
04	10/1/2002	U.S. Courthouse	Los Angeles
49	8/1/2002	North Los Angeles	Los Angeles
48	8/1/2008	North Los Angeles	Los Angeles
97	3/1/2003	Edward Roybal	Los Angeles
02	1/1/2005	Edward Roybal	Los Angeles
40	9/1/2008	6 th Street Building	Los Angeles
27	10/1/2005	West Los Angeles	Los Angeles

TCAID – TOPS Contract Agreement Identification

NSD management indicated that many of these customers may have required immediate telecommunication services, which are best provided using tariff agreements because they require less time to award. However, NSD management is not aware if area telecommunication managers later transitioned these customer agencies to the less costly local services acquisition contracts, where available.

Fair Opportunity Clause

The Fair Opportunity Clause (Federal Acquisition Regulation 16.505b) requires contracting officers to take into consideration all eligible vendors when awarding a local services acquisition contract valued in excess of \$3,000. While no purchases in our sample met this criterion, we noted that NSD management does not have written policies and procedures to ensure contracting officers understand and comply with this regulation.

TOPS Orders

We noted incomplete TOPS orders affecting not only NSD's financial position but customer billings as well. NSD's budget may be impacted as a result of customers' under billings due to incomplete TOPS orders. Customer agencies are not billed for services until area telecommunication managers enter complete transactions in TOPS. However, NSD is still responsible for paying vendors for these orders. As a result, NSD operates in a deficit position⁵ pending reimbursement from the customer agency, which could take several months.

⁵In addition to unreimbursed costs for services, NSD assesses customers a 35 percent surcharge on orders to recover its administrative and overhead costs. Failure to complete customer orders in TOPS may have an adverse effect on NSD's financial position.

Our comparison of vendors' invoices to the TOPS database disclosed a number of incomplete TOPS orders. **Table IV** provides a summary of incomplete TOPS orders as of June 2011.

Table IV– Summary of Incomplete TOPS Orders

Reconciliation Number	TOPS System ID Number	Total Orders	Total Number of Telephone Lines Impacted	Total Number of Incomplete TOPS orders
1	99B ⁶	1,315	127	384
2	99B	1,967	62	319
3	940	1,173	190	353

Incomplete TOPS orders also impact the accuracy of the financial data generated by the Regional budget office that relies on accurate information for economic forecasting and monitoring of the division's operating revenues and expenses.

In reconciling TOPS system ID number 99B, we noted significant discrepancies on the quantity of services ordered between the vendors' invoices and TOPS billing information (**Table III**). In addition, customer agencies were billed for services no longer provided (**Table VI**).

Table V – Summary of Quantity Differences

Reconciliation Number	TOPS System ID Number	Total Orders	Total Number of Telephone Lines Impacted	Total Number of Quantity Differences
1	99B	1,315	91	305
2	99B	1,967	58	104

Table VI – Summary of Terminated Orders

Reconciliation Number	TOPS System ID Number	Total Orders	Total Number of Terminated Orders
1	99B	1,315	30
2	99B	1,967	110
3	940	1,173	11

Order discrepancies in TOPS can result in over or under billings and if services are terminated, customers may pay for services they no longer receive.

⁶Due to the significant number of telephone lines assigned to TOPS system 99B, NSD divided the system into two parts for reconciliation purposes.

Recommendations 3, 4, and 5

We recommend the Regional Commissioner of the Federal Acquisition Service, Pacific Rim Region:

3. Take action to ensure contracting officers' technical representatives receive all required acquisition training.
4. Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and management's expectations for the newly appointed Branch Chiefs.
5. Develop and implement written procedures in the following areas:
 - a. Compliance with training mandate for contracting officers' technical representatives.
 - b. Management oversight of independent contract employees.
 - c. Compliance with Fair Opportunity requirements under local services acquisition contracts for client requested telecommunication services.
 - d. Justification to award telecommunication services under tariff agreements.
 - e. Timely completion of customer orders in TOPS.

Finding 3 – NSD management needs to establish effective criteria for evaluating staff performance.

NSD provides no differentiation in performance criteria among grade levels and job series within the NSD's professional staff. This practice does not comply with the General Services Administration's (GSA) personnel policy. While NSD employees are generally categorized as area telecommunication managers, we noted these employees were classified in the following GS-series and corresponding job titles:

Table V – NSD Job Series and Titles

GS-Series	Job Title
301	Technology Project Executive, Project Integrator, or Technology Project Advisor
391	Telecommunication Specialist or Telecommunication Manager
1101	Team Lead
2210	Information Technology Specialist

No distinction or differentiation exists between grade levels for NSD employees with regard to evaluation criteria. The four series are evaluated using identical percentages for five critical elements: Project Management (30 percent), Client Satisfaction

(30 percent), Team Work (20 percent), Oral Communication (10 percent), and Written Communication (10 percent). NSD is not complying with GSA policy for the Associate's Performance Plan and Appraisal Record that requires different evaluation criteria based on grade level and job series. We also noted the Associate Performance Planning Worksheet (Associate Worksheet) for all GS series had identical performance descriptions for each of the five critical elements.⁷ Further, no methodology exists to measure employee performance concerning client satisfaction, which represents 30 percent of an employee's performance. The NSD could measure client satisfaction using customer surveys or customer response/complaint logs.

We compared the Position Descriptions and Associate Worksheets for the four general service job series and noted they share common elements. However, the Position Descriptions list several metrics that are not included in the Associate Worksheets. Further, when a metric on the Position Description is comparable to the Associate Worksheet, the Associate Worksheet generally does not list the same level of detail included in the Position Description. Of the 90 measures reviewed across our sample of position descriptions, we noted 63 instances (70 percent) where the Position Description either did not match, or only partially matched, the Associate Worksheet.

Currently, NSD management officials are evaluating employee skills based on inaccurate performance criteria. We recommend that management re-evaluate and revise the division's Associate Performance Plans to accurately reflect employees' skill sets. In addition, NSD management must develop and implement a methodology to measure employee performance related to customer satisfaction.

The NSD Director informed us that he is currently evaluating the NSD job titles, Position Descriptions, and Associate Worksheets and is considering changes to the Associate Worksheets and the weights of the critical elements.

Recommendations 6 and 7

We recommend the Regional Commissioner of the Federal Acquisition Service, Pacific Rim Region:

6. Re-evaluate and revise NSD's Associate Performance Plans to accurately reflect employees' skill sets.
7. Develop and implement a methodology to measure customer satisfaction with employee performance; this methodology should be included in the Associate Performance Plans.

⁷The narratives for the project management and teamwork elements of the team lead series (GS-1101) differed from those of the other GS-series.

Management Comments

The Regional Commissioner of the Pacific Rim Region concurred with the audit report findings and recommendations. Management's written comments to the draft report are included in their entirety as **Appendix B**.

Other Observations

NSD must provide timely and accurate data regarding the use of local services acquisition contracts to the regional Acquisition Operations Division, which awards local services acquisition contracts. The NSD also needs to provide better assistance to the Acquisition Operations Division during the re-competition of local services acquisition contracts.

- o The NSD should determine contract requirements early in the contract vetting process. It must perform sufficient research to identify telecommunication vendors that will provide best value for customer agencies. For example, NSD should focus on the source selection plan prior to re-competing an expiring local services acquisition contract. The plan is a key document that specifies how the source selection activities will be organized, initiated, and conducted. It serves as the guide for conducting the evaluation and analysis of proposals, and the selection of source(s) for the acquisition. In order to be successfully executed, the source selection plan must clearly and succinctly express the Government's minimum needs or evaluation factors and their relative order of importance.
- o NSD staff must provide requested documents in a timely manner. The Acquisition Operations Division relies on documents such as historical data and the current Statement of Work in the contract award process. Delays in obtaining crucial documents may subject customer agencies to higher tariff rates.⁸

⁸Upon expiration of a local services acquisition contract, the NSD and Acquisition Operations Division are responsible for ensuring that customer agencies transition to either a bridge contract or, if awarded, the new local services acquisition contract. The bridge contract uses the same telecommunication rates under the expired contract until the eventual award of the new local services acquisition contract. Customer agencies avoid the higher priced rates under tariff agreements.

Conclusion

Current management controls covering NSD operations (program, financial, and compliance) need strengthening. Having effective controls in place is a major part of managing an organization. These controls also serve as a first line of defense in safeguarding assets and preventing and detecting errors and fraud. Without effective management controls, NSD managers will have difficulty in achieving the division's goals with minimal operational problems.

Appendix A – Purpose, Scope, and Methodology

Purpose

The audit of the Federal Acquisition Service's (FAS) Network Services Division (NSD) in the Pacific Rim Region was included in the Office of Inspector General's Fiscal Year 2011 annual audit plan.

Scope

Our audit generally focused on telecommunication transactions that occurred during the 9-month period ended June 30, 2011.

Methodology

To accomplish our objectives, we:

- Interviewed NSD personnel including the Acting Director and several area telecommunications managers;
- Interviewed FAS regional personnel involved in NSD financial and program operations including the Regional Commissioner, Deputy Regional Commissioner, Business Manager, Director of Acquisition Operations Division, and Financial Service Center;
- Ascertained the reliability of B1 inventory for the region as of June 10, 2011, and reasons for inaccuracies;
- Determined number of discrepancies between vendors' invoices and TOPS inventory report;
- Analyzed NSD's Budgetary Information and Performance Goals;
- Assessed the qualifications of NSD staff designated as warranted contracting officers and/or contracting officer technical representatives and obtained reasons from NSD management for non-compliance with applicable training policy and regulations (General Services Administration's Acquisition Manual and the Office of Management and Budget training policies);
- Audited new customer orders administered by three area telecommunication managers, under local services acquisition contracts to determine compliance with Fair Opportunity Clause (Federal Acquisition Regulation 16.505b);
- Audited all 11 telecommunication orders placed under Tariff Agreements to determine whether orders were awarded unnecessarily;
- Ascertained the reliability of the region's Private Branch Exchange inventory as of September 2011 and reasons for inaccuracies;
- Evaluated position descriptions for each NSD labor category;
- Interviewed Subject Matter Expert in Central Office regarding differentiation among grade levels and job series;
- Requested telecommunication orders designated B1 placed under local services acquisition contracts and Tariff Agreements from the TOPS Help Desk; and

Appendix A – Purpose, Scope, and Methodology (continued)

- Determined that equipment purchases (designated B3) were in accordance with regional policy and Project Manager Guidelines.

We conducted the audit between January 20, 2011, and October 31, 2011, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

Internal Controls

This audit evaluated management controls and procedures over NSD's inventory, personnel, and contract orders. The Results section and the corresponding seven recommendations of this report state in detail the need to strengthen specific processes and controls within the NSD.

Appendix B – Management Comments



MEMORANDUM FOR JAMES P. HAYES
REGIONAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AUDITING
SAN FRANCISCO FIELD AUDIT OFFICE (JA-9)

THRU: MICHAEL GELBER 
REGIONAL COMMISSIONER
FEDERAL ACQUISITION SERVICE (9Q)

FROM: RUTH F. COX 
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR (9A)

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report, Audit No. A110100
Audit of Management Controls
Network Services Division, Federal Acquisition Service

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments on the Draft Audit Report dated April 19, 2012.

We appreciate your efforts in evaluating the existing management controls within the Network Services Division and concur with the draft report findings. We have commenced with enhancing management controls and will create additional action plans to strengthen the three (3) control areas identified in the draft report (Accounting for Inventory, Addressing Personnel Issues and Processing Customer Orders, and Evaluating NSD Performance).

Please contact Michael Gelber at (415) 522-2700 or Les Yamagata at (415) 522-4520 should you have further questions.

US General Services Administration
Federal Acquisition Service
Office of the Regional Commissioner

Appendix C – Report Distribution

Regional Administrator (9A)

Regional Commissioner, Federal Acquisition Service (9Q)

Deputy Regional Commissioner, Federal Acquisition Service (9Q)

Network Service Director, Federal Acquisition Service (9Q)

Senior Acquisition Policy Executive (9Q)

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Inspector General (J)

Deputy Inspector General (JD)

Counsel to the Inspector General (JC)

Staff Assistant to the Deputy Inspector General

Director of Communications and Congressional Affairs (J)

Special Assistant for Communications (J)

Assistant Inspector General for Auditing (JA)

Staff Assistant (JA)

Principal Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Auditing (JAD)

Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Investigations (JID)

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Director, Audit Planning, Policy, and Operations Staff (JAO)