



**United States Department of State
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors
Office of Inspector General**

**Inspection of the Bureau of Administration,
Office of Language Services**

The Office of Language Services (LS) in the Bureau of Administration effectively delivers timely, world-class interpreting and translating services to the President, cabinet-level officers, federal agencies, and the District of Columbia's courts.

The employees and contractors in LS are among the world's top interpreters and translators. In addition to an exceptional knowledge of English and a foreign language, LS interpreters must also have the poise and self-confidence to stand before the world's press. Although less publicly visible than interpreters, LS translators must be able to efficiently and accurately convey the meaning of the written word in different languages.

LS professional standards require that interpreters understand and study ahead of time the issues they will be working with. The officials of the Department of State and other agencies risk being misunderstood and embarrassed should problems arise because they made avoidable last-minute requests for interpreting services, neglected to share briefing papers with interpreters in advance, or failed to include interpreters in substantive meetings.

The most significant challenge facing LS is recruiting a pool of contractors and direct-hire employees, but the Office of Personnel Management's applicant rating procedures and stringent Department security clearance requirements hinder LS recruitment of direct-hire employees.

OIG Report ISP-I-06-47, Inspection of the Bureau of Administration, Office of Language Services

The fieldwork for this report was conducted by the Office of Inspections in Washington, DC, from March 24 through May 15, 2006. This is an unclassified summary of a full report, which receives limited official distribution. Both the report summary and the full report reflect the conditions reviewed during the fieldwork.

Background: Office of Language Services

LS has the mission of providing the highest quality interpreting and translating services to senior U.S. government officials, including the President, Secretary of State, and cabinet secretaries. Interpreters accompany the President on official travel, interpret the phone calls of high-level officials, and facilitate communication at conferences and during negotiations. Translators provide, under tight deadlines, precise translations of technical documents, including the treaties and agreements signed by representatives of the U.S. government.

LS has four work groups: the Interpreting Division, the Translating Division, the Interpreter Assigning Unit, and the Administrative Unit. Besides supporting high-level U.S. government officials, the office also supports bureaus and offices in the Department and many clients from other agencies.

Office of Inspector General

The Office of Inspector General conducts independent audits, inspections, and investigations to promote effective management, accountability, and positive change in the Department of State, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and the foreign affairs community.

OIG's Office of Inspections provides systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department of State, its posts abroad, and related activities. Inspections cover policy implementation, resource management, and management controls.

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