

# Spotlight

Department of Homeland Security



## Office of Inspector General

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### Why This Matters

To accomplish the missions of securing borders, protecting against terrorists, and facilitating trade and travel, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) employees collect, use, maintain, or process personally identifiable information (PII) on a daily basis. For example, more than 20,000 border patrol agents collect, handle, share, or maintain PII to secure 6,900 miles of border with Canada and Mexico, as well as 95,000 miles of shoreline. Because CBP is accountable for PII to perform essential operations, CBP has the responsibility of developing an active culture of privacy in which managers and employees monitor and ensure that appropriate protections are in place.

### DHS Response

Our report had three recommendations to improve CBP's culture of privacy. CBP concurred with the three recommendations and is taking action to implement them.

## U.S. Customs and Border Protection Privacy Stewardship

### What We Determined

CBP has made limited progress toward instilling a culture of privacy that protects sensitive PII and in complying with federal privacy laws and regulations. We determined that CBP must take actions to strengthen its organizational approach to privacy by establishing an Office of Privacy with adequate resources and staffing; holding Assistant Commissioners and Directors accountable for their employees' understanding of and compliance with their privacy responsibilities; conducting current privacy threshold analyses for all systems and a complete inventory of its PII holdings, for which it requires relevant privacy impact assessments and accurate system of records notices; and, implementing stronger measures to protect employee Social Security numbers.

### What We Recommend

We recommend that the Acting Commissioner of CBP:

- 1) Establish an Office of Privacy with adequate resources and staffing to ensure that CBP is able to fulfill its privacy responsibilities.
- 2) Issue a directive that holds Assistant Commissioners and Directors accountable for their employees' understanding of and compliance with their privacy responsibilities.
- 3) Implement stronger measures to protect employee Social Security numbers and minimize their use.

### For Further Information:

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