



### Why This Matters

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) promotes international tourism without jeopardizing U.S. security. Currently there are 36 VWP countries. The VWP Office is responsible for determining a country's initial and continuing eligibility to participate in the VWP and prepares the Secretary of Homeland Security's decision whether a country's participation should be continued or terminated. The VWP Office conducts mandatory reviews of countries' requests to participate, as well as countries already in the program, and summarizes their findings and the Secretary's determination in summary reports to Congress.

### DHS Response

The Office of Policy concurred with all recommendations.

## The Visa Waiver Program

### What We Determined

The Visa Waiver Program Office (VWPO) had established standard operating procedures and review criteria that satisfy the goals for conducting country reviews. In addition, VWPO officials maintain effective collaboration with stakeholders, however, additional attention is needed in the following areas:

- 1) The VWPO needs to communicate with appropriate officials the standards and criteria needed to meet and assess compliance with the VWP.
- 2) The Office of Policy needs to develop a protocol that will address the timeliness issue of VWPO reviews and summary reports to Congress.
- 3) The VWPO has lost staff members and needs to be staffed to maximize effectiveness.
- 4) The VWPO is currently not assigned to a permanent organization, causing multiple reporting relationships.

### What We Recommend

Department of Homeland Security, Office of Policy:

- 1) Communicate to Department of State and foreign officials the compliance standards and the criteria used to assess compliance.
- 2) Develop and implement an overall reporting process that will satisfy the 2-year reporting requirement for Congress to receive information regarding the status of VWP participating countries.
- 3) Staff the VWPO at a level to maximize its effectiveness in assessing VWP countries' compliance with program requirements.
- 4) Assign the VWPO to an organization that will provide an effective management structure.

### For Further Information:

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