



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

APR - 4 2013

Dear Madam Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of December 6, 2012, requesting information about the Department's progress in addressing the issues raised in the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) report on the Office of Information Programs and Services (IPS) and information regarding how the Department responds to public and Congressional requests for information. We also note that you sent a letter on March 11 requesting information on how the Department manages Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, to which we plan to provide a response shortly.

We agree that the Department's procedure for responding to requests for information is an important issue. Our implementation of U.S. foreign policy has direct and powerful effects on the everyday lives of all Americans. It is therefore critical that the Department operate as openly and transparently as possible, including by responding in a timely manner to requests for information from the public and Congress. The Department is committed to providing effective access to information and we are working hard to that end. We appreciate your engagement on this important effort.

In your December 6 letter, you ask us to address how problems associated with records management may have impacted our ability to respond to public requests for information. As your letter also notes, the OIG inspection report

The Honorable
Claire McCaskill, Chairman,
Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight,
Committee on Homeland Security
And Government Affairs,
United States Senate.

contained a discussion of, and recommendations about, a wide range of IPS's information access activities. IPS cooperated fully with the OIG throughout the inspection and has carefully studied all of the OIG inspection report and its recommendations, including those related to records management. IPS is working with the OIG in the compliance phase of the inspection process to implement the OIG report's recommendations, as appropriate, with the goal of ensuring that IPS's information access and management activities satisfy, in both letter and spirit the Department's statutory obligations. Please be assured that the Department takes seriously its commitment to increasing transparency and effectively discharging those obligations.

Your letter also asks how the issues identified in the OIG report have affected the Department's ability to respond to Congressional requests for information. Such requests are primarily coordinated by the Bureau of Legislative Affairs with the support of a range of bureaus within the Department. It is important to note that the vast majority of Congressional requests for information do not involve IPS, as the Bureau of Legislative Affairs will typically develop responsive information directly with the regional or functional bureau with lead responsibility for the matter in question, and always with the aim of responding rapidly to Congressional inquiries.

In order to more fully explain the Department's procedures for responding to information requests from members of Congress, we have discussed this topic with your staff in detail recently. We would be very happy to follow up with any additional information you or your staff may need.

We hope this information is helpful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance in this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas B. Gibbons".

Thomas B. Gibbons
Acting Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs