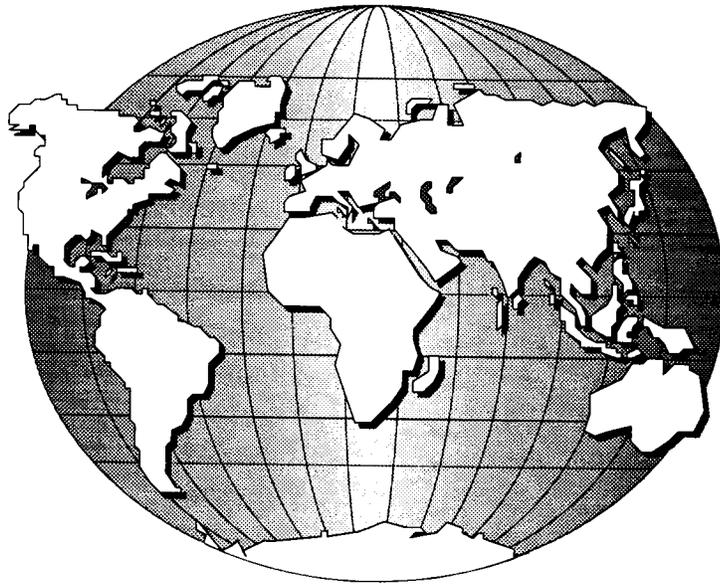


PEACE CORPS



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Semiannual Report to Congress

April 1 - September 30, 1989



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OVERVIEW

". . . on your willingness to contribute part of your life to this country, I think, will depend the answer to whether we as a free society can compete."

- *Presidential candidate John Fitzgerald Kennedy on the steps of the University of Michigan Student Union, October 14, 1960*

With these words, President Kennedy ignited the vision that, within months after his election, became the Peace Corps. Since its beginning in 1961, the Peace Corps has sent more than 120,000 Volunteers to countries around the world, serving in such fields as education, health, agroforestry and small business development. Today, the Peace Corps has approximately 6,000 Volunteers who serve in 66 countries in Africa, Inter-America and Asia.

Within government, the Peace Corps is unique. It is the only Federal agency that places Volunteers in communities to live and work directly with the people of developing countries. The principal function of all other Peace Corps employees is to support the work of our Volunteers. It is a mission that promotes international communication and understanding. With a fiscal year 1989 budget of \$153.5 million, the Peace Corps is a small agency with global responsibilities.

"Any definition of a successful life must include serving others."

- *President George Bush*

As we approach a new decade, the Peace Corps is facing new challenges. In July, Director Paul D. Coverdell announced plans to send Volunteers to Hungary, our first entry into an eastern bloc country. Throughout the developing world, the challenges of urbanization, drug abuse and deforestation are calling for diverse skills and modernized approaches.

At this time of new beginnings, Congress has authorized the establishment of an Office of Inspector General within Peace Corps to conduct audits and investigations of agency programs and operations, promote economy and efficiency and detect waste, fraud and abuse in programs and operations.

Congress passed the Inspector General Act of 1978 because it perceived that Federal agencies were failing to make sufficient and effective efforts to prevent and detect fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement in government programs and expenditures. As was noted in the legislative history, "Congress and the public derive extraordinary benefits when an agency identifies its problems and management begins to confront them."

In its 100th session, Congress amended the Inspector General Act of 1978 to create Offices of Inspectors General in thirty-three designated Federal entities, including Peace Corps (P.L. 100-504). Peace Corps' Office of Inspector General (OIG) was established on January 23, 1989, and became effective by law on April 16, 1989.

This is our first semiannual report.

We have spent much of this first reporting period (April 1-September 30, 1989) recruiting personnel and establishing our office. We have accomplished the transition from an Office of Compliance under the direction of the Associate Director for Management to an Office of Inspector General reporting to the Director.

Organizationally, our Inspector General is assisted by a Deputy Inspector General/Counsel and by Assistant Inspectors General for Audits, Investigations, and Oversight. In addition to conducting audits and investigations, the OIG conducts inspections of Peace Corps' programs and operations at overseas posts, recruitment field offices, and agency headquarters.

As Peace Corps' mission is unique, so is the oversight function of our OIG. As in any Office of Inspector General, our role is to prevent and detect fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in the agency's programs and operations, and thus support and protect the vital work of our Volunteers. Anything that causes a Volunteer's mission to falter or fail, whether it be a lack of resources or a violent assault, diminishes the effectiveness and efficiency of our operations. Because the integrity of the agency's programs depends on its response to these situations, our role must include involvement in any allegation affecting Volunteer safety, morale and effectiveness.

Highlights

While we have been in operation as an OIG only a short time, we note the following accomplishments:

- arrest warrants issued in several cases involving stolen and forged Government checks that were issued to Volunteers;
- identification of erroneous billings to Peace Corps on Federal Employees Compensation Act claims, resulting in *recovery of approximately \$80,000 and potential dollar savings of an estimated \$1.5 million*;
- arrest and preliminary finding of guilt of Chilean national in connection with brutal rape and assault of Volunteer in Ecuador;
- resignation of Volunteer confronted with evidence gathered by OIG in response to allegation of child molestation;
- recommendation in contract audits of total of \$375,200 in *disallowed and questioned costs, of which \$99,500 has been sustained* so far;
- detection of *major weakness in internal controls* related to payments for medical services for Peace Corps applicants and Volunteers, *resulting in approved 1988 budget for Office of Medical Services being exceeded by \$1,362,759*;
- development of plans to conduct our first post inspections as an OIG in Philippines, Thailand, Marshall Islands, and Micronesia in November 1989.

Significant issue

We have identified a significant issue that affects the OIG (and, in the long run, the entire agency) and are developing a strategy to address it:

Legislation is needed to exempt the OIG from the agency's so-called five-year rule limiting terms of employment at Peace Corps.

Under the Peace Corps Act, all employees are hired for limited term excepted service appointments. An appointment is for thirty months, renewable at the supervisor's option for one additional thirty-month tour. This unique personnel system was developed to reflect the philosophy of the first agency director, Sargent Shriver, that the Peace Corps should be non-bureaucratic and should be permanently young, creative and dynamic.

Only two minor modifications have been made to what is commonly referred to as the agency's "five-year rule." Under very limited circumstances, a Peace Corps employee may be granted a sixth year and/or a third thirty-month tour *at the discretion of the Director*.

In the legislative history surrounding the original Inspector General Act, Congress envisioned the appointment of Inspectors General "of high ability, stature and an unusual degree of independence." With passage of the 1988 Amendments to the Inspector General Act, the Peace Corps IG and all OIG employees continue to fall squarely within the five-year rule. As a result, the independence of the OIG could be seriously compromised.

The rate of turnover of qualified staff, both in the OIG and throughout the agency, is disheartening. Since 1985, the average tour of duty of all Peace Corps staff has been seventeen months. *By December of this year, our OIG (formerly Office of Compliance) will have suffered 100% turnover in the last three years.* The impact of this on an OIG whose very effectiveness depends on continuity is great. Management oversight, training, peer review, and reporting to Congress all depend on a competent and stable work force agency-wide. There may be OIG audits and investigations that are not completed as tours of duty end or, more likely, as new employment is sought.

The impact of the five-year rule has been recognized in other parts of the agency as well. In a review of Peace Corps' financial management system, independent auditor Peat Marwick Main & Co. found that high employee turnover created by the statutory five-year rule causes a weak internal control environment, deprives Peace Corps of the institutional memory essential to the resolution of problems, increases staff training costs, and creates difficulty in attracting and retaining competent, qualified personnel to operate the financial management system economically and efficiently.

We are dedicated to addressing the problem of the five-year rule in the months ahead, not only with respect to the OIG, but also with respect to efficiency and effectiveness throughout the agency.

Other initiatives

In the months ahead, the OIG will pursue the following initiatives to assist us in carrying out our statutory responsibilities:

- promoting integrity throughout the agency by our involvement in orientation and fraud awareness training of new employees, particularly those assigned overseas;
- developing an inspections plan to test the efficiency and effectiveness of program management;
- promoting accountability at all levels of management through our audit and inspection findings, our audit followup, and our monitoring of the agency's compliance with the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act;
- conducting proactive investigations in an effort to detect *and prevent* fraud, waste and abuse in agency programs and operations;
- developing plans for training of all OIG personnel, including auditor training in accordance with General Accounting Office guidelines.

We view this as an exciting time for Peace Corps and for our OIG. In many respects, we are charting a new course. Our goals are to enforce accountability and integrity throughout the agency. We look forward to the challenge of working with management and with the Congress in achieving concrete results.

Gerard A. Roy
Inspector General

OIG ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

The establishment of Peace Corps' Office of Inspector General on January 23, 1989, completed the work of an agency task force designed to effect the transition from the Office of Compliance under the supervision of the Associate Director for Management to the Office of Inspector General reporting by law to the Director.

For many years, the Office of Compliance had had responsibilities similar to those of an OIG, that is, to conduct and supervise administrative audits and investigations within the agency. Additionally, the Office of Compliance had conducted the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program and played a key role in the agency's internal controls function. Since the OIG is prohibited by statute from carrying out any programmatic responsibilities, the EEO program remains under the supervision of the Associate Director for Management. The Office of Compliance's internal controls function is being more fully assumed by the agency-wide internal controls committee.

In the transition from an Office of Compliance to an OIG, a number of administrative matters required attention during this reporting period. We drafted new position descriptions for all OIG personnel, upgrading our investigators to the 1811 criminal investigator series. We spent a significant amount of time recruiting and hiring qualified professionals to staff our OIG. With assistance of the Office of General Counsel, we drafted a delegation of authority, signed by the Director, that transferred to the OIG all the general administrative functions, such as personnel authority, conferred on the Inspector General by statute to assure his independence.

We participated in numerous training activities designed to assist the development of the new Offices of Inspector General that were sponsored by such groups as the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency, the Association of Directors of Investigation/Assistant Inspectors General for Investigations, and the Council of Counsels to Inspectors General. We met with groups both inside and outside Peace Corps, such as Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, to explain the role and responsibilities of our OIG.

We have had numerous and fruitful discussions with agency management regarding our budget, office space, and personnel

ceiling. While our fiscal year 1989 budget was approximately \$800,000, our fiscal year 1990 request of \$1.2 million has been approved and future requests are being viewed favorably.

Staffing

The Inspector General is assisted by a Deputy Inspector General/Counsel and Assistant Inspectors General for Audits, Investigations and Oversight. As a result of recruiting and hiring during this reporting period, we now have two criminal investigators, four auditors, and three inspectors on staff. At that level, we are below our authorized personnel ceiling of 18 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.

The Deputy Inspector General/Counsel provides legal advice to the Inspector General and serves as legal advisor to the OIG, reviewing all audit and inspection reports for legal sufficiency and working closely with the investigative staff to provide guidance in pursuing allegations of unlawful activity.

The Assistant Inspector General for Oversight serves as an advisor to the agency's internal controls committee and to agency managers and staff and is responsible for a broad range of activities affecting administration and accountability within the OIG, including our annual operating budget, annual and long range audit and inspection plans, quality assurance reviews, audit followup and training of inspectors and auditors.

The Office of Audits, consisting of an Assistant Inspector General for Audits and four senior auditors, is responsible for the conduct of all operational, financial, contract and program audits of organizational units within Peace Corps.

The Office of Investigations, consisting of an Assistant Inspector General for Investigations and two criminal investigators, responds to allegations of wrongdoing affecting the agency's programs, operations and personnel.

The Office of Inspections consists of three senior inspectors whose prior Peace Corps experience enhances their ability to review our overseas posts and domestic operations with a view toward assessing the effectiveness of program management. All three inspectors are former Peace Corps Volunteers, and one is a former Country Director.

Other activities

In carrying out our duties and responsibilities under the Inspector General legislation, the OIG is involved in the following additional activities:

- processing Freedom of Information requests directed to the OIG or to information in the possession of the OIG;
- reviewing proposed and existing legislation and regulations affecting the agency's programs and operations;
- participating as a member of the coordinating conference of the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency;
- participating in the Council of Counsels to Inspectors General.

AUDITS

The Office of Audits is responsible for planning, conducting, supervising, and coordinating audits of all organizational units of Peace Corps, both domestically and overseas. Audits focus on operational, financial, or programmatic activities of organizational components. They also may concern selected claims, costs, cost proposals, and cost and pricing data arising from contracts, funding arrangements, or other agreements entered into or proposed by various components of the agency. In addition, senior auditors may conduct reviews in response to specific allegations of waste, fraud, abuse or mismanagement. The Office may engage and supervise the services of non-Federal auditors to assist in carrying out its responsibilities under the Inspector General legislation.

As of the beginning of this reporting period, thirteen audit reports recommending \$98,900 awaited management decisions. The OIG has advised agency officials of our responsibility to report semiannually on management decisions related to audit findings. We are working with management in an effort to develop a more efficient means of resolving questioned costs.

During this reporting period, ten audit reports were issued, including six contract audits, an internal controls review by a non-Federal auditor, an imprest fund verification at headquarters, and two administrative management reviews of organizational components at overseas posts. No recommendations were made during this period that funds be put to better use.

The following is a sample of significant audit activity during this period:

Training Contracts

Auditors reviewed cost reimbursable training contracts in Liberia, Cameroon, Senegal, Honduras and the United States. As a result of six reports issued during this reporting period, the OIG recommended a total of \$375,200 in disallowed and questioned costs, of which \$99,500 has been sustained so far. Determinations are proceeding on the remaining questioned costs.

As an example of our contract audits, the OIG examined claimed costs of a consultant on a \$2.3 million cost-plus-fixed-fee contract for pre-service and in-service Volunteer training. The auditor questioned over \$312,000 in claimed costs. The questioned costs included more than \$107,000 in fringe benefits, some of which were not paid on behalf of the employees and some of which the consultant attempted to recover twice. Other questioned costs included over \$151,000 for overhead.

Medical Payments

The OIG engaged the services of a non-Federal auditor, Brown & Company, to review internal controls related to medical payments made by the agency on behalf of Peace Corps applicants and Volunteers. Specifically, the auditor was asked to determine under OIG supervision whether the approved budget for medical payments had been exceeded, creating a violation of the Antideficiency Act.

The audit disclosed major weaknesses in internal controls for recording obligations for medical services. As a result, the approved fiscal year 1988 budget for medical payments was exceeded by approximately \$1.3 million. In response, the Office of Medical Services instituted numerous changes to its payments system.

The agency did not exceed its appropriations primarily because obligations at overseas posts were overstated. Previous administrative management reviews of our overseas posts had revealed that this practice, known as "block dumping," that is, recording nonexistent obligations in an effort to retain the use of funds not supported by valid obligations, has been a common practice in Peace Corps. The OIG is committed to detecting this problem wherever it occurs and has urged management to take immediate corrective action.

Financial Management System

The Office of Audits is monitoring agency response to a review conducted by a non-Federal auditor of Peace Corps' financial management system. The agency engaged independent auditor Peat Marwick Main & Co. to review its compliance with Office of Management and Budget Circular A-127, which establishes guidelines to agencies for meeting the requirements of the Federal

Managers' Financial Integrity Act. Among the review's findings requiring corrective action are the following:

- The Peace Corps Operating Manual is outdated and does not consistently reflect current policies and procedures.
- The Peace Corps Accounting Manual, in use when the agency was part of ACTION, has not been updated since Peace Corps became a separate agency in 1982.
- Inadequate training of administrative personnel overseas results in a very high error rate in accounting, diminishing the reliability of figures required for budget support and financial management.
- Peace Corps' statutory five-year rule limiting terms of employment causes a weak internal control environment, deprives the agency of the institutional memory essential to the resolution of problems, increases staff training costs, and creates difficulty in attracting and retaining competent, qualified personnel to operate the financial management system economically and efficiently.
- The lack of a comprehensive policies and procedures manual for the agency's information resources and data processing system, *when combined with the thirty-month employment limitation*, is conducive to weakness in the financial management system.

INVESTIGATIONS

The Office of Investigations responds to allegations of wrongdoing affecting Peace Corps programs, operations and personnel. While our investigative staff is located at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, the scope of our investigations is worldwide, encompassing our domestic operations as well as Peace Corps staff and Volunteers in 66 countries. We have conducted joint investigations with the U.S. Secret Service, the Department of State's OIG, and other Federal and foreign law enforcement agencies. During this reporting period, we have had no occasion to refer a matter to the Department of Justice for prosecution. The following is a sample of the kinds of cases to which we have dedicated our investigative resources:

Thefts of U.S. Treasury Checks

The OIG initiated a number of investigations involving thefts and forgeries of U.S. Treasury checks that had been issued to Peace Corps Volunteers, and was assisted by the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of State's OIG. Such cases include the following:

- Six checks totalling US\$10,028.32 that were sent by diplomatic pouch to Volunteers in Zaire were stolen either en route from the pouch or at the American Embassy in Zaire. Three foreign national suspects have been identified and arrest warrants issued.
- A check sent by diplomatic pouch to a Volunteer in Zaire was altered from US\$29.00 to US\$140,029.00 and honored by U.S. Treasury. An arrest warrant has been issued for a foreign national who allegedly stole, forged and cashed the check in Zaire.
- A check sent by diplomatic pouch to a Volunteer in Zaire was altered from US\$28.00 to US\$96,028.00 and honored by U.S. Treasury. A foreign national suspect has been identified and an arrest warrant issued.
- Six checks totalling US\$6,863.69 that were sent by diplomatic pouch to Volunteers in Sierra Leone were stolen either en route from the pouch or at the American Embassy in Sierra Leone. A

foreign national suspect has been identified and an arrest warrant issued.

Alleged Conflict of Interest/Contract Irregularities

An investigation disclosed that former high-level agency officials with personal ties to employees of a nonprofit organization were perceived to have exerted pressure on contracting personnel to award a non-competed sole-source contract to the organization on the basis of an unsolicited proposal. Although preliminary opinions, including one from the Office of General Counsel, had deemed the proposal ineligible for a sole source award, agency personnel suggested refinements in the proposal and for several months reviewed subsequent drafts until finally awarding the contract on a sole-source basis. When the contractor failed to meet several deadlines for deliverables, the contract was terminated for the convenience of the government.

Interviews with responsible officials and a review of records also indicated that, while the contract was in effect, a former high-level agency official agreed to sit on a search committee to select a new president of the nonprofit organization. After the contract was terminated, the agency official resigned from the search committee to avoid any further appearance of a conflict of interest. The OIG examined Federal criminal laws and regulations and found no evidence that Federal laws were violated. Nor was there evidence to suggest an intent in these actions to influence the disposition of the contract.

As a result of these allegations, the OIG is continuing to examine the agency's contracting practices. We also commented on proposed revisions to Peace Corps Manual Section 736, "Procurement Requests and Unsolicited Proposals in the U.S.," focusing on the area of unsolicited sole-source awards.

Erroneous FECA payments

The OIG initiated an inquiry into the integrity of Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) claims billed to Peace Corps. The inquiry disclosed three instances in which, for many years, cases had been billed erroneously to Peace Corps rather than to the appropriate agency, ACTION. [From 1971 to 1981, Peace Corps was part of ACTION.] In all, Peace Corps had been billed approximately \$500,000

for benefits paid to ACTION claimants. The Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, which administers FECA, has agreed to credit to the agency approximately \$80,000 in payments erroneously made in fiscal years 1987 and 1988. Potential future savings are estimated to be \$1.5 million.

Alleged Child Molestation by Volunteer

The OIG investigated an allegation referred to Peace Corps by a social services agency that a Peace Corps Volunteer, while living in Africa following an earlier stint as a Volunteer, had sexually molested a six-year-old girl who was in his care and custody. Now living in the United States with her mother, the child had contracted a venereal disease. After conducting several witness interviews and reviewing medical records, the OIG confronted the Volunteer with the evidence. The Volunteer resigned, rather than undergo administrative separation. [The complainant declined to seek prosecution in her homeland.]

In the course of the investigation, the OIG learned that, in violation of agency regulations, the Volunteer - prior to his reassignment - had not been required to submit supporting documentation related to his marital status. At that time, he indicated that he was separated from his spouse and had had five earlier divorces. As a result of these allegations, a review of the agency's Volunteer recruiting practices is planned.

Sexual Assault of Volunteer in Ecuador

The OIG assisted local authorities in Ecuador in the investigation into a brutal rape and assault of a Peace Corps Volunteer who was kidnapped by two men and driven to the outskirts of Quito where she was savagely attacked. A preliminary investigation by the Embassy Regional Security Officer led to the involvement of the OIG, the Ecuadorian police, Interpol, and the FBI. An extensive manhunt resulted in the apprehension of the alleged rapist, a Chilean national. The initial phase of the criminal process has been completed, and the suspect has been found legally responsible for the offense.

Other Assists

Homicide of former Volunteer in Korea. The OIG responded to inquiries by law enforcement authorities in Korea who were

conducting an investigation into the stabbing death there of a former Peace Corps Volunteer. The investigation also involved Interpol, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigations Division, the FBI and the Department of Justice. One U.S. citizen suspect is under detention in Korea while a warrant has been issued for a second American suspect. United States and Korean officials are collaborating in an effort to secure extradition of the second suspect from the United States.

Sexual assault on Volunteer in Cape Verde. The OIG interviewed and prepared for trial a Peace Corps Volunteer who had been sexually assaulted twice by a Cape Verde national and had reported the incidents to local police. The defendant was convicted in Cape Verde of two counts of sexual assault and two counts of breaking and entering. He was sentenced to eleven months imprisonment, execution of sentence suspended with five years' probation. He was fined approximately US\$600.

INSPECTIONS

An integral part of Peace Corps' OIG is our Office of Inspections, which conducts inspections of overseas posts and domestically of management operations. This function complements our work in audits and investigations, and is a vital component of the mission of an Inspector General's office with international responsibilities.

An inspection is conducted by reviewing the functioning of Peace Corps programs and operations at a particular post or domestically in an organizational unit of the agency. The purpose of such an inspection is to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the inspected unit in carrying out the function or policy entrusted to it by the agency. An inspection examines administrative, managerial and programmatic areas, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of management initiatives, systems, internal controls, and interpersonal relationships involving, as appropriate, Peace Corps staff, Volunteers, host country counterparts and others involved in or affected by agency programs and operations. The OIG inspection program is a proactive approach to detect and prevent fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement, and to promote economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

A post inspection is flexible in approach in order to address the diverse range of problems encountered overseas. An inspector may examine a broad range of issues but focus on areas that emerge as significant, where corrective action is most needed.

As inspections are completed, reports of inspection will be prepared for the Peace Corps Director and affected managers throughout the agency, including country directors. The Assistant Inspector General for Oversight is responsible for tracking management decisions made in response to recommendations contained in inspection reports. The OIG will conduct occasional followup inspections to assess the degree of compliance in-country with OIG recommendations.

Much of this reporting period has involved the recruiting of qualified professionals to staff our inspections unit and to develop a preliminary inspections plan. We now have three inspectors, all with prior Peace Corps experience. All three are former Volunteers, and one is a former country director. Together, they possess experience not only with Peace Corps but in the fields of management analysis and government inspections.

Our first OIG post inspections will be conducted in the Philippines, Thailand, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands in November 1989. Based on insights gained from the first round of inspections, the OIG will refine its inspection plan and begin selecting future inspection sites.

Table 1

OIG Audit Reports
With Costs Disallowed and Questioned
(Dollars in Thousands)

	<u>Number of Reports</u>	<u>Total Disallowed and Questioned Costs</u>	<u>Questioned Costs</u>
A. For which no management decision had been made by the commencement of the reporting period	13	98.9	98.9
B. Which were issued during the reporting period	7	375.2	373.4
Subtotals (A + B)	20	474.1	472.3
C. For which a management decision was made during the reporting period	16		
(i) dollar value of sustained costs		99.5	97.7
(ii) dollar value of costs not sustained		34.6	34.6
D. For which no management decision had been made by the end of the reporting period	4	340.0	340.0
E. For which no management decision was made within six months of issuance	2	19.7	19.7

Table 2

Reports Issued April 1, 1989 to Sept. 30, 1989

<u>Report No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity/ Contractor</u>
IGR-89-001	08/28/89	Peace Corps - Review of Selected Medical Payments and Internal Controls
IG-89-003	04/12/89	CHP International, Inc. Contract PC-288-1001
IG-89-004	04/14/89	TEM Associates, Inc. Contract PC-287-1008
IG-89-005	05/05/89	Labat-Anderson, Inc. Contract PC-287-1007
IG-89-006	04/14/89	Peace Corps-Liberia Administrative Management Review
IG-89-007	05/09/89	Peace Corps-Senegal Administrative Management Review
IG-89-008	09/21/89	Arawak Consulting Corporation Contract PC-287-1002
IG-89-009	08/17/89	Center for Applied Linguistics Contract PC-387-1007
IGR-89-010	06/26/89	Peace Corps Report of Imprest Fund Verification
IGA-89-011	07/17/89	National Assn. of the Partners of the Americas, Inc. Contract PC-286-1008

Help promote the integrity, efficiency and effectiveness of the Peace Corps. Anyone knowing of wasteful practices, abuse, mismanagement, fraud or unlawful activity involving Peace Corps programs or personnel should call or write the Office of Inspector General.

Call: 202-254-8320
800-424-8580, ext. 281

Write: Office of Inspector General
Peace Corps
1990 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20526

Information received is treated in confidence.