

Office of the Auditor General of Canada

Internal Audit Report
Executive Summary

Security at Headquarters

August 2003



Strategic Planning and Professional Practices
Planification stratégique et méthodes professionnelles

Dan Rubenstein, Principal
Bert Cowan, Author

Executive Summary

Introduction

In accordance with the Office's annual internal audit plan that was approved by the Audit Committee, the Strategic Planning and Professional Practices Group completed an audit of the Office's Headquarters' (Ottawa office) security function to determine the level of compliance with the Government Security Policy (GSP).

Conclusion

Based upon the audit work performed, we concluded that Headquarters of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada is in compliance with the Government Security Policy.

Background

The new Government Security Policy (GSP) came into effect on 1 February 2002. Under the new policy, deputy heads are accountable for safeguarding employees and assets and assuring the continued delivery of services. The GSP states that departments and agencies must comply with the baseline requirements as well as the associated operational standards and technical documentation. In addition, departments and agencies must conduct active monitoring and internal audits of their security program. The results of internal audits must be reported to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

Given the unique role of the Auditor General, compliance with the new GSP is essential for the conduct of the Office's audits of government departments and agencies. It is incumbent on the Office to be able to assure entities that the Office is in compliance with the GSP and that information collected or provided, as audit evidence is protected accordingly. It is also incumbent on the Office to ensure that its personnel have adequate security clearances for the work undertaken and that personal safety is considered.

Audit objectives and scope

The objective of this audit was to provide assurance to the Auditor General that the Office of the Auditor General, both at the headquarters and regional levels, is in compliance with the GSP. The audit is being conducted in two phases. Phase I addressed the level of compliance of Headquarters with the GSP. We included the security procedures for draft value-for-money chapters but excluded the handling of draft annual attest audit opinions and special examination plans and final reports. This will be covered in Phase II, which will be carried out in six months. Phase II will address the regions' level of compliance with the GSP and will include visits to two regional offices.

The audit had two sub-objectives. The first was to confirm the overall adequacy of the management control framework for the security program, including the adequacy of the organizational

structure, resourcing, and management process/procedures. The second sub-objective was to confirm the adequacy of the Physical Security Program, the Personnel Screening Program and the IT Security Programs.

All elements of the security program, including physical, personnel, and information, were included in the scope of the audit. Information security included both hard and electronic versions of files, and physical security included personal safety. The audit scope also included the Office's ability to ensure continued delivery of services in the event of an emergency.

To assess compliance of the Office of the Auditor General with the Government Security Policy, we carried out our audit work at Headquarters of the Office of the Auditor General. Our approach to the assignment included interviewing key people responsible for security; reviewing relevant documents, such as previous audit reports on the Office's security function, threat and risk assessments, business continuity plans, and the GSP; and developing analysis tools and interview guides, as required.

Opportunities for improvement

Although we concluded that Headquarters of Office the Auditor General is in compliance with the GSP, some opportunities for improvement were brought to the attention of the Departmental Security Officer. Making these improvements will reinforce the importance of the security program and add to the credibility and integrity of the Office and its work.

A number of improvements are suggested throughout the report. Two improvements, in particular, would be beneficial to the Headquarters security program. These are that the Departmental Security Officer re-evaluate the security roles in Headquarters, with a view to reinforcing the responsibility for security, and that more emphasis be placed on security awareness and security training.

Management response

The audit clearly identified both our strengths and opportunities for improvement and, as such, it was an extremely useful process. Obviously we are pleased that we are in complete compliance with the GSP. We will evaluate all the improvement opportunities, bearing in mind resource implications and constraints (including impacts on group security co-ordinators). We will certainly be undertaking a review of the Security Administrator's position. We will also strengthen security awareness and training as resources are available to do so. Reporting to the Executive Committee will occur as part of our regular accountability reporting process (expected to be twice yearly). Finally, we will conduct visits to the regional offices more frequently with a focus on security.