

Office of the Auditor General of Canada

Internal Audit
Executive Summary

Security at Regional Offices

January 2004



Strategic Planning and Professional Practices
Planification stratégique et méthodes professionnelles

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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 Regional Office's Security function to determine the level of compliance with the Government Security Policy (GSP). This was the second phase of an Internal Audit of Security. The first phase looked at security at the Ottawa Office of the Office of the Auditor General.

Conclusion

Based upon the audit work performed, we conclude that the Regional Offices of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada are in compliance with the Government Security Policy and the security procedures over draft value for money chapters, and the handling of draft annual attest audit opinions and special examination plans.

Background

The new Government Security Policy came into effect on February 1, 2002. Under the new policy, Deputy Heads are accountable for safeguarding employees and assets and assuring the continued delivery of services. The Government Security Policy 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 Government Security Policy is essential for the conduct of the Office's audits of government departments and agencies. The unique role of the Office makes it incumbent upon the Office to be able to assure entities that the Office itself is in compliance with the Government Security Policy and that information provided, or that is collected 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 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 are in compliance with the Government Security Policy. The audit was conducted in two phases. Phase I addressed the level of compliance with the Government Security Policy of the Ottawa office. The report concerning Phase I was completed in November 2002. Phase II addressed the level of compliance with the Government Security Policy of the Regional Offices. Work conducted included a review of the security procedures over draft value for money chapters, and the handling of draft annual attest

audit opinions and special examination plans and final reports. All regional offices with the exception of Winnipeg were visited. Winnipeg was excluded due to its imminent closure.

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, management process/procedures, etc. The second was to confirm the adequacy of the Physical Security, the Personnel Screening 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. In addition, the Office's ability to ensure continued delivery of services in the event of an emergency was also included in the scope.

To assess compliance with the Government Security Policy of the Office of the Auditor General we carried out the audit work in Headquarters and the Regional Offices of the Office of the Auditor General during the fall of 2003. Our approach to the assignment included: interviewing key people responsible for security, briefing and debriefing of regional Principals and Directors, interviewing staff and holding several focus groups where the staff indicated a desire to meet “en-famille”, reviewing relevant documents (previous audit reports in relation to the Office's security function, Threat and Risk Assessments, Business Continuity Plans, the Government Security Policy, incident reports, etc); and, developing analysis tools and interview guides as required.

Opportunities for Improvement

While we have concluded that the Regional Offices of the Auditor General are in compliance with the Government Security Policy, some opportunities for improvement presented themselves during the course of the audit and were brought to the attention of the Departmental Security Officer, Regional Principals, Directors and Group Security Coordinators. 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 that would be most beneficial to the Regional Office's Security Programs are:

- that the Departmental Security Officer ensures that all Regional Group Security Coordinators are aware of any new government wide security initiatives, and
- that the various access control systems in the regional offices be standardized as opportunities present themselves.

Management Response

We are pleased that the audit found the Office to be compliant with the GSP. We agree with the opportunities for improvement. Regional Group Security Coordinators will be kept aware of new government wide security initiatives. A reporting system will be developed to provide annual

security reports from the regions. We will continue regular DSO visits to the regional offices. Security-related training will form part of the annual training plan for the Regional Security Coordinators. Access control systems will be standardized across the country. We will ensure that the regions have suitable arrangements in place in the event that a higher level of readiness is required.

With respect to threats to the health and safety of staff in the Office, at client sites, and during travel status, this is a joint responsibility of the security function and regional office management. Security will be focussed on threats within our Offices. Local management within each regional office will retain their responsibility for the health and safety of regional staff while travelling and while at client sites. Both aspects will be included in the regions' annual security report.