

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on Federal Services, Post Office, and
Civil Service, Committee on
Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

September 1990

ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY

Stronger Actions Needed to Improve Personnel Management



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**National Security and
International Affairs Division**

B-240554

September 12, 1990

The Honorable David Pryor
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal Services,
Post Office, and Civil Service
Committee on Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you requested, we reviewed certain personnel policies and practices at the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA). Specifically, we determined whether ACDA had effectively addressed problems identified in 1989 reports by the State Department's Office of Inspector General and by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Background

ACDA was established to provide the President, the Secretary of State, other officials of the executive branch, and the Congress with advice and recommendations on U.S. arms control and disarmament policy. As of June 1990, ACDA was authorized 218 full-time permanent and full-time equivalent positions. In addition, ACDA has about 50 detailees from the Departments of State and Defense. ACDA's fiscal year 1990 budget is \$33.4 million, including \$15.8 million for salaries and benefits.

In March 1989, State's Inspector General issued a report on ACDA's operations and activities, including personnel practices. The report concluded that ACDA's personnel structure was "skewed and lacks organization." The Inspector General recommended that ACDA seek OPM's assistance in conducting a comprehensive review of positions, structure, and staffing.

The report also cited ACDA's lack of development and training programs for its career employees as a cause of poor morale. In addition, ACDA had not sufficiently emphasized equal employment opportunity (EEO) and affirmative action programs to eliminate underrepresentation of minorities and women in the nonclerical career work force. The Inspector General recommended that ACDA establish a task force to address clerical concerns by developing an upward mobility program and reaffirming EEO and affirmative action goals.

In August 1989, OPM recommended that ACDA develop a new structure and career path for its clerical and technical staff. OPM believed a new

position structure could deal effectively with a number of ACDA personnel concerns.

Results in Brief

ACDA's top management has not shown a commitment to improving personnel management or developing a systematic approach to resolving personnel management problems. For example:

- ACDA has not conducted a comprehensive review of personnel positions, structure, and staffing, as State's Inspector General recommended. Although it sought OPM's assistance during a review of its staffing structure, ACDA has not implemented OPM's recommendations to develop a new structure and career path for its clerical and technical staff.
- ACDA has not (1) reassessed or revalidated the numbers and grades of its employees, (2) established formal training or upward mobility programs for its career employees, and (3) implemented its affirmative action plan or updated its goals since 1985. Although ACDA has made some progress in hiring women, it has made no progress in meeting minority hiring goals.

ACDA Has Not Reviewed or Changed Staffing Structure

In its March 1989 report, State's Inspector General concluded that ACDA needed to revalidate the number and grades of career personnel because positions had remained unfilled for 5 years or had been filled by staff whose grade levels did not appear to match their duties and responsibilities. The report also cited the breakdown in communication between supervisors and clerical staff and the resulting poor morale. The Inspector General recommended a comprehensive review of positions, structure, and staffing and establishment of a task force to address clerical problems.

In response to these recommendations, ACDA management asked OPM to review the nonsupervisory professional and clerical positions. In August 1989, OPM reported on a number of problems, including the turnover of clerical staff, the dilution of professional work with subprofessional tasks, and the apparent overgrading of clerical positions. OPM reported that a significant number of employees believed that ACDA management had created and filled positions with personal or political favorites. OPM recommended that ACDA establish a new position structure and career path for its technical and clerical staff to deal with these concerns. OPM offered to help ACDA design the new system.

ACDA continues to have vacancies in its career work force and some positions whose grades may not match the duties and responsibilities. As of June 1, 1990, ACDA had 33 vacancies, or 15 percent of its authorized ceiling. OPM officials told us that in several instances, supervisory and high-graded staff primarily performed administrative work and that high-graded clerical staff performed basic administrative tasks normally handled by lower-graded staff.

We found that ACDA had upgraded a position from GS-13 to GS-14/15, even though the position description and duties were identical. According to OPM officials, justification for upgrading a position requires a review of duties and responsibilities and rationale for the upgrade. At our request, OPM is currently investigating the appropriateness of the classification of this position.

ACDA officials told us they did not plan to implement OPM's recommendations to develop a new position structure or career path. Moreover, they said they did not intend to review current job positions, classifications, and grade structures. Instead, they told us they will review vacant positions when an individual is hired or leaves the agency. The Deputy Director told us that he was unaware of personnel problems within ACDA. He further stated that due to ACDA's small size and unique staff composition, no major changes in career development are needed. We believe ACDA's size and composition do not eliminate the need for ACDA to be concerned with grade structure and career development.

ACDA Has No Formal Training Program

State's Inspector General reported that ACDA lacked an agencywide training program for its professional and administrative work force, which contributed to poor staff morale and lack of career development opportunities.

ACDA has not acted on State's recommendations to establish formal training requirements or programs for its career employees and to develop important training elements identified in its training manual. For example, ACDA has not established individual development plans for its employees and an evaluation system to determine the usefulness and cost-effectiveness of training.

In addition, ACDA's training manual suggests that supervisors receive at least 80 hours of formal supervisory training. We reviewed available training records for ACDA's 11 non-Senior Executive Service managers

and supervisors, of whom 5 were responsible for administrative functions and 6 were operational division chiefs. Between October 1, 1986, and June 1, 1990, only 4 of the 11 had received supervisory or personnel management training, and only 2 had 80 hours or more of such training. In addition, only one of the four was an operational division chief. The other seven had not taken supervisory or personnel management training during this period.

ACDA has no separate training budget. Over the past 4 fiscal years (1986-89) ACDA reported that it had spent an average of \$35,000 annually on training (tuition, travel, and per diem). According to reports filed with OPM, about 30 percent of ACDA's employees received some training each year. ACDA's per capita training expenses for fiscal years 1986 through 1988, the most current data available, were well below average for agencies with less than 1,500 employees. During that 3-year period, ACDA's per capita training expenses averaged \$202, whereas the per capita average for other agencies was \$579.

ACDA officials said that training is provided as requested and that bureau managers are encouraged to identify staff needs. Neither professional nor clerical staff are required to take any training other than orientation when initially hired.

ACDA officials said they had not performed any analysis to determine whether staff were receiving adequate training.

ACDA Has Not Implemented an Effective Affirmative Action Program

The State Department's Inspector General reported that ACDA management had not adequately emphasized EEO and affirmative action goals and that supervisors and employees were only vaguely aware of management's efforts to pursue EEO and affirmative action programs. Also, an upward mobility program had not been established, even though the need for one had been identified in ACDA's Affirmative Action Plan. The Inspector General recommended that ACDA reemphasize its commitment to affirmative action and upward mobility programs.

We found that ACDA has taken little action to implement effective affirmative action and upward mobility programs. Although ACDA's Director issued a memorandum in December 1989 reaffirming ACDA's intention to adhere to EEO principles, the agency has made little progress in achieving the affirmative action goals outlined in its 1985 multiyear plan. In 1985, ACDA indicated that minority and female groups were

underrepresented within the agency. Of 69 nonadministrative professionals, 9 were white females and 3 were minorities. ACDA had established goals to hire 11 white females and 21 minority employees by the end of fiscal year 1986. ACDA's part-time EEO officer told us the 1985 goals remain unchanged. However, he had no current data on the extent to which the goals had been met. He said he was too busy with his other job responsibilities to determine whether ACDA was making progress in reaching its EEO goals.

Our analysis of ACDA's June 1990 staffing roster shows that ACDA had 62 employees in job positions corresponding to nonadministrative professional positions in the affirmative action plan. Of that total, 13 were white females and 2 were minorities. In the three job categories identified to be filled as a part of affirmative action goals, only the goal for white female foreign affairs specialists had been met. None of the minority goals were met, and no progress had been achieved since 1985.

Our review also showed that key elements in ACDA's affirmative action plan have not been implemented, including maintaining a full-time EEO officer and establishing a program to recruit minorities for ACDA. ACDA currently has no identified budget for EEO or affirmative action programs related to recruiting, training, or upward mobility. According to ACDA officials, the upward mobility program had not been established because of the limited number of positions available for such a program. One official admitted that OPM's suggestion to establish a new career structure for administrative staff would likely provide a better opportunity to establish an upward mobility program, but he stated that no effort was being made to implement OPM's suggestions.

Conclusions

Top management has not taken adequate action to address personnel management problems. Establishing more systematic career development, training, and affirmative action programs would demonstrate to career employees that ACDA's management is committed to actively improving personnel practices, which should result in the improved morale of employees and enhanced work productivity.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Director, ACDA, develop a personnel management action plan to establish a career development program for clerical and technical staff, develop and implement formal training requirements for all ACDA staff, and implement more proactive upward mobility and

affirmative action programs. The plan should identify specific completion dates for each personnel area, and periodic reports on progress in achieving action should be provided to appropriate congressional oversight committees and to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service.

Agency Comments

As requested, we did not obtain official agency comments. However, we discussed the contents of this report with agency officials and have incorporated their comments as appropriate.

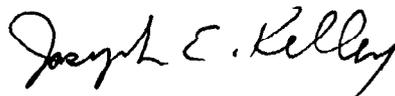
Scope and Methodology

We discussed personnel management practices with officials from ACDA, the State Department's Office of the Inspector General, OPM, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and reviewed pertinent reports and documents related to personnel policies, procedures, and practices. We also reviewed selected ACDA personnel and training records. Our work was conducted between September 1989 and June 1990 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

As arranged with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from its issue date. At that time, we will send copies to the Secretary of State, the Director of ACDA, and the Director of OPM. Copies will also be provided to the other interested parties on request.

Major contributors to this report were Jess T. Ford, Assistant Director, and Evaluators Paul Atkins, John Gallant, and Calvin D. Watson. If you or your staff have any questions regarding this report, please call me on (202) 275-4128.

Sincerely yours,



Joseph E. Kelley
Director, Security and International
Relations Issues

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