



# OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

## U.S. Department of Justice

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### DOJ OIG Releases Report on the Department of Justice's Use of Immigration Sponsorship Programs

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of a report examining the DOJ's use of immigration sponsorship programs. DOJ components sponsor foreign nationals in the United States to help support investigations and prosecutions. The report examined DOJ components' oversight of foreign national sponsorship activities, including information management and coordination within DOJ and with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DOJ components reported sponsoring over 5,000 foreign nationals between fiscal years 2015 and 2017, the majority of whom were sponsored by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that DOJ components must enhance their oversight of sponsorship activities to ensure they have adequate controls for managing and overseeing foreign nationals. Specifically, the OIG found that the DOJ components should improve:

- **Maintaining and communicating accurate and timely sponsorship information.** In February 2018, DHS had identified over 1,000 DOJ-sponsored foreign nationals for whom DHS did not have current information. We found that 6 months later, 665 sponsorships were still in need of resolution. In addition, we identified 62 sponsored foreign nationals who had absconded from DOJ control. We also found 18 instances in which DOJ components did not request sponsorship renewals or terminations in a timely manner, thereby allowing sponsorships to lapse. We believe these deficiencies may have resulted from poor information management at a majority of the components. These components did not maintain adequate information to effectively oversee, prevent, and communicate relevant foreign national events, such as immigration status changes.
- **Monitoring policies to mitigate risks associated with sponsoring foreign nationals.** DOJ components implemented adequate controls over the vetting of foreign nationals whom they intended to sponsor. However, we are concerned that the monitoring policies and practices currently executed by the DOJ components do not adequately mitigate the risks associated with bringing individuals into the United States who may have criminal backgrounds or who may be associated with such individuals.
- **Timely processing of long-term sponsorship applications.** Certain types of sponsorships, called S Visas, can lead to permanent U.S. resident status. Our audit identified lengthy delays in the approval process for S Visas, which led to diminished perceptions by some case agents. We believe that a more streamlined approach would help law enforcement agencies utilize this

immigration benefit to allow foreign nationals to remain in the United States to assist in important and sometimes high-level law enforcement operations.

Overall, we believe DOJ components must establish effective management controls and sufficient oversight to fulfill their obligations to DHS, protect the public, and achieve their objectives of furthering investigation and prosecutions.

Today's report makes 10 recommendations to assist the DOJ and its components in the oversight of sponsorship activities. The relevant DOJ components agreed with all 10 recommendations.

**Report:** Today's report is available on the OIG's website under "Recent Reports" and at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2019/a1932.pdf>.

**Video:** To accompany today's report, the OIG has released a 2-minute video featuring the Inspector General discussing the report's findings. The video and a downloadable transcript are available at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/multimedia/video-06-12-19.htm>.

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