

Transcript: “A Message from IG Horowitz: Top Management and Performance Challenges for the Department of Justice – 2017”

Hello, I’m Michael Horowitz, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today our office issued a report identifying the Top Management and Performance Challenges for the Department of Justice. We publish a similar report each year, based on our oversight work, research, and judgment. This year’s report identifies eight challenges that we believe represent the most pressing concerns for the Department.

We continue to believe that safeguarding national security and enhancing cybersecurity each present important challenges that will require the Department’s vigilance for the foreseeable future. Homegrown Violent Extremism, domestic and international terrorism, and espionage continue to pose a threat to our nation. Cyber-based attacks and high technology crimes continue to evolve and increase in sophistication. We believe the Department must leverage its existing legal authorities, while also safeguarding the civil liberties of Americans, as it works to disrupt terrorist plots and to identify, locate, and prosecute criminals who threaten our nation’s security.

We added as a new challenge this year the Department’s coordination efforts in its mission to combat crime. In September 2017, the FBI released semiannual crime statistics showing that violent crime increased by 7.2 percent in cities with over 1 million people. According to the DEA, drug overdose deaths are at an all-time high. It is critical for the Department’s components to coordinate effectively with their federal, state, and local law enforcement partners through task forces, grants, and other technical assistance programs in order to address gang violence, the opioid epidemic, and other drug-related crimes that threaten communities.

In addition, this year’s list again includes the challenge of Performance-Based Management, which we believe continues to grow in importance. Moreover, this challenge impacts many of the other challenges listed in our report, illustrating how the deficit in performance based-management can hinder the Department’s ability to accomplish its mission efficiently and effectively.

The other four important, continuing challenges that we identified this year are:

- Managing an overcrowded federal prison system in an era of declining resources;
- Strengthening the relationships between law enforcement and local communities and promoting public trust;
- Administering and overseeing contracts and grants; and
- Filling mission critical positions despite competition for highly-skilled professionals and delays in the onboarding process.

As the Department’s independent watchdog, we will continue to conduct audits, investigations, and reviews to help the Department meet these top challenges, and to ferret out waste, fraud, abuse, and misconduct within the Department.

To read our full Top Management and Performance Challenges report, please visit our website, oig.justice.gov. Thank you for joining us.