



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## DOJ OIG Releases Report on the BOP's Management and Oversight of its Chaplaincy Services Program

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of a report on the Federal Bureau of Prisons' (BOP) management and oversight of its Chaplaincy Services Program. The BOP, through its Chaplaincy Services Branch, seeks to ensure that inmates in its custody are afforded the opportunity to practice their religion of choice, a right protected by the Constitution. The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) identified significant deficiencies and opportunities for improvement in BOP's delivery of religious services to inmates.

The specific findings in the report released today include:

- **Chaplaincy shortages and lack of faith diversity.** At the time of the review, BOP Chaplaincy was staffed at around 30 percent below its staffing guidelines with only 236 BOP chaplains to serve the needs of approximately 160,000 inmates. In addition, we found that 84 percent of BOP's chaplaincy represented a Protestant Christian faith, although only about one-third of the inmate population who claimed a faith preference were Protestant Christian. In fact, at the time of the review, BOP's 236 chaplains only represented 8 of 24 different faith groups recognized by the BOP.
- **Inmate-led religious services increase opportunities for high-risk inmates to exert influence.** As a result of chaplaincy shortages and faith diversity challenges, the OIG found that BOP allows inmates to lead services when chaplaincy services or external faith providers are not available to do so. Although BOP's policies do not restrict high-risk inmates from leading religious services, the required level of monitoring did not always occur when this alternative was utilized. Further, the audit found that inmates incarcerated for terrorism-related crimes, or with known connections to terrorist organizations, were permitted to lead religious services at 4 of the 12 BOP facilities visited by the OIG.
- **Inadequate control of Chapel Libraries and monitoring of Chapel Spaces.** Collectively, the BOP's chapel libraries contain nearly 800,000 individual items including religious texts, books with religious themes, and audio and video recordings. However, the OIG found that BOP staff does not maintain adequate control over the chapel materials due to its poorly maintained library database and the inability to adequately screen foreign language materials. These weaknesses increase the risk that content advocating violence and religious extremism is introduced into BOP facilities. We identified prohibited content in the chapel libraries of at least 4 of 12 institutions we visited.
- **Improvements in oversight of volunteer faith providers needed.** The OIG found instances of apparent inappropriate telephone contact between inmates and volunteer faith providers, in violation of BOP policy. The OIG also identified weaknesses in the BOP's system for tracking

terminated and previously disciplined volunteer faith providers, which created a risk that previously disciplined or terminated volunteers could surface in other BOP facilities without detection.

Today's report makes 5 recommendations to the BOP that will strengthen the BOP's management and oversight of its chaplaincy services program. The BOP agreed with all 5 recommendations.

**Report:** Today's report is available on the OIG's website at the following link:

<https://oig.justice.gov/reports/audit-federal-bureau-prisons-management-and-oversight-its-chaplaincy-services-program>.

**Video:** To accompany today's report, the OIG has released a two-minute video of the Inspector General discussing the report's findings. The video and a downloadable transcript are available at the following link:

<https://oig.justice.gov/news/multimedia/video/message-inspector-general-audit-federal-bureau-prisons-management-and>.

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