

# U.S. Postal Inspection Service's San Francisco Division

## AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 22-129-R23 | December 15, 2022



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# Highlights

## Background

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of postal employees, postal facilities, and the mail. Postal inspectors are federal law enforcement agents authorized to carry out this mission. They use various tools and resources to conduct their work. For example, postal inspectors are assigned accountable property, including vehicles, and may use other tools, such as electronic surveillance equipment, for investigative purposes. They also use an online database to track case activities, such as logging property and evidence. Postal inspectors and postal police officers are required to regularly take training to maintain proficiency when performing their work.

## What We Did

Our objective was to determine whether the Postal Inspection Service's San Francisco division implemented effective controls related to equipment, evidence, and training. We reviewed division equipment inventories and training records, conducted site visits to the division headquarters and the Sacramento, Oakland, and San Francisco domiciles; and interviewed division officials.

## What We Found

We found that the San Francisco division generally followed Postal Inspection Service policy for accountable property, electronic surveillance, and evidence at the division headquarters and three domiciles; however, we identified issues related to vehicles. For example, one inspector had been driving a new vehicle that had not yet received a license plate. The division submitted paperwork to obtain the license plate and received a temporary permit; however, the inspector did not have a temporary permit affixed to the vehicle or a copy in the vehicle during our visit. Division officials confirmed that inspectors should not be driving vehicles without license plates or a temporary permit.

We also could not verify whether division personnel completed all required training from July 2021 through June 2022 because the training records were incomplete or inaccurate. This occurred because the division threat management coordinator does not have a process to verify that training data is accurately recorded in the Threat Management Training System, as required by policy.

## Recommendations

We recommended that division officials require inspectors with new vehicles to carry a copy of temporary permits in the vehicle until they receive a license plate and create a process to verify that training data is accurately recorded.

# Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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December 15, 2022

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** GARY R. BARKSDALE  
CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR

RAFAEL E. NUNEZ  
DEPUTY CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR (ACTING) WESTERN FIELD  
OPERATIONS

KEVIN K. RHO  
INSPECTOR-IN-CHARGE (ACTING)  
SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "W Espinoza", is positioned above the typed name.

**FROM:** Wilvia Espinoza  
Deputy Assistant Inspector General  
for Inspection Service, Technology, and Services

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – U.S. Postal Inspection Service’s San Francisco Division  
(Report Number 22-129-R23)

This report presents the results of our audit of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service’s San Francisco division.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Elizabeth Kowalewski, Director, Inspection Service, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General  
Corporate Audit Response Management



# Results

## Introduction/Objective

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service’s San Francisco division (Project Number 22-129). Our objective was to determine whether the Postal Inspection Service’s San Francisco division implemented effective controls related to equipment, evidence, and training. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this audit.

## Background

The mission of the Postal Inspection Service is to support and protect the U.S. Postal Service and its employees, infrastructure, and customers; enforce the laws that defend the nation’s mail system from illegal or dangerous use; and ensure public trust in the mail. Postal inspectors are federal law enforcement agents authorized to carry out this mission. They carry firearms, make arrests, execute federal search warrants, and serve subpoenas.<sup>1</sup>

Postal inspectors use various tools and resources to conduct their work. For example, they are assigned accountable property, including vehicles, firearms, and body armor,<sup>2</sup> and may use other tools, such as electronic surveillance equipment, for investigative purposes. They also use the Case Management System, an online database, to track case activities and log property and evidence.

Postal inspectors and postal police officers are required to regularly complete threat management training to maintain proficiency when performing their work. This training consists of three courses: firearms, defensive tactics, and officer survival. Each of these courses includes requirements that must be completed on a semiannual or annual basis.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, inspectors and postal police officers are required to qualify with their assigned handguns and shotguns semiannually by achieving a minimum target score when shooting each type of weapon.

“The San Francisco Division is assigned 59 postal inspectors and 19 postal police officers.”

The Postal Inspection Service comprises 17 divisions nationally. The San Francisco Division is assigned 59 postal inspectors and 19 postal police officers. Postal inspectors are assigned to division headquarters or nine domiciles in Northern California, Hawaii, and Guam, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Postal Inspection Service’s San Francisco Division Domiciles**



Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) based on Postal Inspection Service information.

<sup>1</sup> Title 18 U.S. Code §3061, Investigative Powers of Postal Service Personnel.

<sup>2</sup> Accountable property also includes badges and communication devices, among other things.

<sup>3</sup> Requirements include lethal force policy, judgmental firing, and handcuffing techniques, among other things.

## Findings Summary

We found that the division generally followed Postal Inspection Service policy for electronic surveillance equipment and inspector accountable property, but identified issues related to vehicles. The division also properly handled 162 of 168 (96 percent) sampled high-value evidence pieces. However, we could not verify whether division personnel completed all required training from July 2021 through June 2022 because the threat management training records were unreliable.

### Finding #1: Equipment

We found that accountable property and electronic surveillance equipment at the division headquarters and three selected domiciles were generally secured and maintained according to Postal Inspection Service policy. Specifically, we found that the responsible custodians properly stored or issued all 43 pieces of electronic surveillance equipment assigned to the locations we visited as required by policy.<sup>4</sup> In addition, we reviewed vehicles, firearms, and body armor for all 39 of the division's inspectors across the four locations and found issues related to vehicles, as described below.

- **Firearms:** We verified that all 39 inspectors had their assigned firearms, including agency-issued handguns, shotguns, and rifles, per the division's inventory. For inspectors who opted to carry personally owned handguns, we verified that they submitted documentation and obtained management approval, as required by policy.<sup>5</sup> We also observed that the division securely stored any additional firearms, such as those used for training, and bulk ammunition at the locations we visited.
- **Body Armor:** We verified that all 39 inspectors had agency-issued, fitted body armor that was within the manufacturer's five-year warranty period. Use of fitted body armor is generally at the individual inspector's discretion but may also be directed by division management.

- **Vehicles:** We verified that inspectors' vehicles were appropriately equipped with safety and law enforcement equipment but identified connection issues with seven of 39 (18 percent) two-way radios. Official law enforcement vehicles are to be equipped with two-way mobile radios that enable inspectors to contact the National Law Enforcement Communication Center (NLECC).<sup>6</sup> Six inspectors in the Sacramento domicile [REDACTED] NLECC. According to management, the [REDACTED] was a known issue caused by [REDACTED] outside of the Postal Inspection Service's control.

“We found that the responsible custodians properly stored or issued all 43 pieces of electronic surveillance equipment assigned to the locations we visited.”

Another inspector at the division's headquarters [REDACTED] to NLECC. This inspector told us that he previously reported the issue to his team leader to be addressed. In all seven instances, inspectors stated that they use [REDACTED].

Additionally, one inspector at the division's headquarters was assigned a new vehicle that had not yet received a license plate or

registration. The division submitted the required paperwork to the California Department of Motor Vehicles in July 2022 and received a temporary permit for that month. However, a temporary permit was not affixed to the vehicle at the time of our visit. California requires temporary permits to be accompanied by a receipt or the letter issuing the permit. When asked to produce any documentation stored in the vehicle, the inspector provided a certificate from the manufacturer but did not have a copy of a temporary permit or other paperwork, such as a receipt or a letter from the Department of Motor Vehicles issuing a permit. Division officials confirmed that inspectors should not drive vehicles without license plates or a temporary permit. These officials could not explain why the inspector did not have the temporary permit affixed to his vehicle at the time of our review. However, in July 2022, the vehicle was driven almost 800 miles. Failure to follow state licensing and permitting laws for operating

<sup>4</sup> *Inspection Service Manual (ISM) Section 6.3.7.2, Division Electronic Surveillance Custodian(s)*, dated January 2022.

<sup>5</sup> ISM Section 3.5.3, *Agency Authorized Handguns*, dated January 2022.

<sup>6</sup> ISM Section 2.8.12.2, *Vehicle Equipment*, dated January 2022. There are two NLECC facilities – one in Dulles, VA, and one in Fort Worth, TX – which provide 24-hour coverage of the Inspection Service's national law enforcement radio network and intrusion-detection systems at postal facilities nationwide. They provide emergency and after-hours phone coverage for the Inspection Service and give postal inspectors access to law enforcement and intelligence information.

vehicles creates a significant reputational risk to the Postal Inspection Service and the potential for unnecessary scrutiny by local law enforcement.

### Recommendation #1

We recommend the **Inspector-in-Charge, San Francisco Division**, issue guidance that requires inspectors assigned new vehicles without license plates to carry a copy of any issued temporary permits, along with the receipt or letter from the Department of Motor Vehicles issuing a permit, in the vehicle until the license plates are received and properly affixed to the vehicle.

## Finding #2: High-Value Evidence

We found that the San Francisco division properly handled 96 percent (162 of 168) of the high-value evidence pieces<sup>7</sup> according to Inspection Service policy.<sup>8</sup> This included 40 disposed pieces that contained required disposal information in the Case Management System, such as the date of disposal and witness names.

We identified minor deficiencies associated with six of 168 (4 percent) pieces of high-value evidence. For example, one piece had been opened at the request of a prosecutor but the inspector had not properly recorded the opening in the Case Management System. Postal Inspection Service policy states that if the evidence seal or container is later broken for investigative or prosecutive purposes, the inspector should prepare a record for the case file that includes the details of the opening.<sup>9</sup>

The Postal Inspection Service took corrective action to address all of the minor issues we identified. For example, the inspector responsible for the opened piece added a record to the case file in the Case Management System based on a handwritten note he prepared at the time of the opening. Since officials took corrective action to address these issues and we did not identify any systemic deficiencies related to the division's handling of high-value evidence, we are not making a recommendation on this issue.

“The Postal Inspection Service took corrective action to address all of the minor issues we identified.”

## Finding #3: Training

We found that threat management training records from July 2021 through June 2022 were incomplete or inaccurate. We compared the rosters for the three threat management training courses during this timeframe to records from the Threat Management Training System (TMTS) for 81 division personnel<sup>10</sup> to determine whether they completed all of the semiannual and annual requirements, as well as the semiannual handgun and shotgun qualifications. Based on our initial review of the course rosters and records, we found:

- Twenty-five personnel appeared on a course roster, but the corresponding course requirements were not marked complete on their TMTS records.
- Seventeen personnel did not appear on a course roster, but the corresponding course requirements were marked complete on their TMTS records.
- Fifty-six personnel in 10 courses from July through December 2021 and 52 personnel in nine courses from January through June 2022 appeared on the same roster, but had different corresponding course requirements marked complete on their TMTS records.

Management provided explanations and original training records for some of the identified issues, but acknowledged the training records in TMTS contained inaccuracies. Based on the results of our initial review and the additional information provided by management, we determined the data in TMTS was unreliable to determine training status.

Postal Inspection Service policy requires each division to designate a Division Threat Management Coordinator (DTMC).<sup>11</sup> The DTMC is required to verify that all training records are input into TMTS, resolve any data entry deficiencies, and provide a written report of any training deficiencies to the Inspector-in-Charge for resolution semiannually.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> We reviewed a stratified, statistical sample of 168 pieces of high-value evidence across the four locations we visited. The total number of high-value evidence pieces in our scope was 604.

<sup>8</sup> ISM Section 8.2, Acquisition of Evidence, dated January 2022.

<sup>9</sup> ISM Section 8.2.8.6, Property/Evidence with a Broken Seal or Container, dated January 2022. Details of the opening include who broke the seal, the time, date, and reason the seal was broken.

<sup>10</sup> We reviewed records for 61 inspectors and 20 postal police officers.

<sup>11</sup> ISM Section 3.3.2.3, Division Threat Management Coordinator, dated January 2022.

<sup>12</sup> ISM Section 3.3.3.2, Threat Management Training Records, dated January 2022.

While the San Francisco division had a designated DTMC, these issues occurred because the DTMC does not have a process to verify that training data is accurately recorded in TMTS. As a result, the division does not have accurate insight into the training status of its personnel. For example, the DTMC's semiannual report to the Inspector-in-Charge dated July 7, 2022, does not identify any deficiencies in personnel completing handgun and shotgun qualifications. However, we confirmed with management that at least two inspectors did not attempt to qualify with a shotgun during the training period that ended on June 30, 2022. One of these inspectors was assigned a shotgun that we verified was in his possession on July 26, 2022, almost a month after the training period ended. Without accurate training data, the division risks having personnel who are not trained to perform their duties, which could negatively impact the division's ability to carry out its mission.

#### **Recommendation #2**

We recommend that the **Inspector-in-Charge, San Francisco Division**, require the Division Threat Management Coordinator to create a process to verify that training data is accurately recorded in the Threat Management Training System in accordance with U.S. Postal Inspection Service policy.

### **Management's Comments**

Management generally agreed with findings 1, 2, and 3; and agreed with recommendations 1 and 2.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated they would message all inspectors advising that if they are assigned a new vehicle without license plates, they are required to carry a copy of any issued temporary permits, along with the receipt of letter from the Department of Motor Vehicles issuing a permit, in the vehicle until the license plates are received and properly affixed to the vehicle. Management provided a copy of the message, which was sent to all division inspectors on December 1, 2022.

Regarding recommendation 2, management stated they had worked with the DTMC to develop processes to verify that training data is accurately recorded in TMTS. For example, they created a standard operating procedure to provide guidance on when, where, and how to document threat management training information. Management provided a copy of the standard operating procedures along with a

standard lesson plan and sign-in sheet template to be used for all threat management trainings.

See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

### **Evaluation of Management's Comments**

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to the recommendations in the report.

All recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. We reviewed the materials submitted with management's comments and consider recommendations 1 and 2 closed with the issuance of this report.



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# Appendix A: Additional Information

## Scope and Methodology

The scope of our audit included a review of equipment, evidence, and training from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. We selected the San Francisco division for our review based on its location,<sup>13</sup> the proximity of its domiciles to the division's headquarters, and a review of case data from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2021.

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Interviewed San Francisco division managers and postal inspectors to gain an understanding of their roles and responsibilities related to equipment, evidence, and training.
- Obtained division inventories and other documentation related to equipment, including assigned vehicles, firearms, and electronic surveillance equipment, and high-value evidence.
- Conducted site visits to the division headquarters and the Sacramento, Oakland, and San Francisco domiciles to verify equipment and evidence against applicable inventories and other criteria, such as requirements for storage. For equipment, we verified vehicles, firearms, and body armor assigned to 39 inspectors at these locations, as well as any additional firearms, stored ammunition, and electronic surveillance equipment. For high-value evidence, we reviewed a stratified statistical sample of pieces at the

division headquarters and Sacramento domiciles, as well as all pieces at the Oakland and San Francisco domiciles.

- Reviewed training records for a total of 81 division personnel to verify whether they completed required threat management training.

We conducted this performance audit from May through December 2022 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on November 21, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

We assessed the reliability of data from the Vehicle Tracking System, Firearms Inventory, Electronic/Technical Surveillance Tracking System, Case Management System, and TMTS by verifying it against source documentation or in-person observations. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report unless otherwise noted in the findings.

## Prior Audit Coverage

Report Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date
<i>U.S. Postal Inspection Service Washington Division</i>	Determine whether the Postal Inspection Service, Washington division, implemented effective controls for case management, accountable property, and training	21-005-R21	4/16/2021
<i>Review of Postal Inspection Service Criminal and Administrative Processes – Fort Worth Division</i>	Assess the Inspection Service's compliance with criminal and administrative processes, including the effectiveness of internal controls.	HR-AR-19-002	4/19/2019
<i>Division Reviews: U.S. Postal Inspection Service New York Division</i>	Determine whether the Postal Inspection Service, New York division, implemented effective controls for case management, accountable property, and training.	OV-AR-19-004	9/19/2019
<i>U.S. Postal Inspection Service Charlotte Division</i>	Determine whether the Inspection Service, Charlotte division, implemented effective controls for accountable property, training, and case management.	19TG013OV000-R20	11/15/2019

<sup>13</sup> This is our first review of a division on the West Coast of the U.S. See Prior Audit Coverage for the location of prior division reviews.

# Appendix B: Management's Comments



UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

December 1, 2022

John Cihota  
Director, Audit Operations  
1600 Woodstone Drive, Suite 100  
St. Charles, MO 63303-9928

Subject: U.S. Postal Inspection Service's San Francisco Division 22-129-DRAFT

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the recommendations contained in the draft audit report, U.S. Postal Inspection Service's San Francisco Division. Management generally agrees with the findings and recommendations associated with the draft report and will address each separately below.

**Finding #1:**

Generally, San Francisco Division Management agrees with Finding #1.

**Finding #2:**

Generally, San Francisco Division Management agrees with Finding #2.

**Finding #3:**

Generally, San Francisco Division Management agrees with Finding #3.

**Recommendation #1:**

We recommend the Inspector-in-Charge, San Francisco Division, issue guidance that requires inspectors assigned new vehicles without license plates to carry a copy of any issued temporary permits, along with the receipt or letter from the Department of Motor Vehicles issuing a permit, in the vehicle until the license plates are received and properly affixed to the vehicle.

**Management Response/Action Plan:**

Management agrees with the recommendation. Management will message all Inspectors advising if they are assigned a new vehicle without license plates, they are required to carry a copy of any issued temporary permits, along with the receipt of letter from the Department of Motor Vehicles issuing a permit, in the vehicle until the license plates are received and properly affixed to the vehicle. *See Exhibit 1, email sent from Management to all San Francisco Division Inspectors on December 1, 2022.*

**Target Implementation Date:** March 31, 2023

2501 RYDIN RD. [REDACTED]  
RICHMOND, CA 94850  
877-876-2455

**Responsible Official:** Inspector-in-Charge, San Francisco Division

**Recommendation #2:**

We recommend that the Inspector-in-Charge, San Francisco Division, require the Division Threat Management Coordinator to create a process to verify that training data is accurately recorded in the Threat Management Training System in accordance with U.S. Postal Inspection Service policy.

**Management Response/Action Plan:**

Management agrees with the recommendation. Management and the Division Threat Management Coordinator have developed the following processes to verify that training data is accurately recorded in the Threat Management Training System:

- Created a standard Threat Management Lesson Plan template for use with all TM disciplines. *See Exhibit 2.*
- Created a Threat Management Administration SOP to provide guidance on when, where, and how to document Threat Management information. *See Exhibit 3.*
- Use of current TM/Training forms.
  - *See Exhibit 4, IS Form 681, December 2019, Firearms Threat Management Score Sheet.*
  - *See Exhibit 5, Threat Management Training Sign-In Sheet.*

**Target Implementation Date:** March 31, 2023

**Responsible Official:** Inspector-in-Charge, San Francisco Division



Kevin K. Rho  
Inspector-In-Charge (Acting)  
San Francisco Division



# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES



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