

# International Mail Service Suspension Operations

## AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 22-158-R23 | March 22, 2023



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# Highlights

## Background:

The U.S. Postal Service processes international mail to more than 180 countries throughout the world. The Postal Service encounters situations where mail service to foreign countries must be suspended due to lack of transportation, COVID-19 concerns, or other unrelated disruptions.

## What We Did:

Our objective was to evaluate the Postal Service's international mail service suspension-related operations. We reviewed applicable policies and procedures and observed operations at the four Postal Service International Service Centers.

## What We Found:

The Postal Service adequately suspended mail service to designated countries under international suspension but did not always properly handle packages destined for these countries. For example, █ of 50 containers █ we observed had missing or incomplete labels. There were also instances where mail within these containers was not properly separated or incorrectly placed (the packages should have been returned to the sender, not held). These issues occurred due to insufficient management operational oversight, which can negatively impact operations and service.

We also determined the Postal Service did not always provide clear visibility or corresponding messaging for internationally suspended packages to customers on USPS.com. For example, █ of 240 packages █ we reviewed either had no corresponding package tracking messages or none that matched the location of the package at the time of our observations. This occurred because the Postal Service does not have a scan event indicating pieces were held due to international suspension. Consequently, customers did not have accurate information regarding the status and location of their packages, which can create customer dissatisfaction and negatively impact the Postal Service brand.

## Recommendations:

We recommended management develop strategies to enhance oversight of the handling of internationally suspended mail and create a scan event code for internationally suspended mailings and corresponding processes and messaging.

# Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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March 22, 2023

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** MIKE L. BARBER  
VICE PRESIDENT, PROCESSING AND MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS

DANE A. COLEMAN  
VICE PRESIDENT, EASTERN REGIONAL PROCESSING  
OPERATIONS

TODD S. HAWKINS  
VICE PRESIDENT, WESTERN REGIONAL PROCESSING  
OPERATIONS

MARC D. McCRERY  
VICE PRESIDENT, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

GARY C. REBLIN  
VICE PRESIDENT, INNOVATIVE BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda H. Stafford".

**FROM:** Amanda Stafford  
Deputy Assistant Inspector General  
for Retail, Marketing & Supply Management

**SUBJECT:** Audit Report – International Mail Service Suspension Operations.  
(Report Number 22-158-R23)

This report presents the results of our audit of International Mail Service Suspension Operations.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Janet Sorensen, Director, Sales, Marketing & International, 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 Service’s international mail service suspension operations (Project Number 22-158). Our objective was to evaluate the Postal Service’s international mail service suspension-related operations. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this audit.

## Background

The Postal Service processes international mail to more than 180 countries throughout the world. Factors can occur, such as COVID-19 concerns, lack of air transportation, weather/natural disasters, or geo-political reasons, that drive temporary suspension of international mail service to certain countries. The Postal Service had 40 countries listed with international service disruptions on its “Service Alert – International Service Disruptions” website<sup>1</sup> in June 2022. Figure 1 shows an excerpt from the website explaining this service alert.

Figure 1. Excerpt from Postal Service “Service Alerts – International Service Disruptions” Website

### Service alerts

### International service disruptions

**International Mail Service Suspensions**  
Updated: June 3, 2022

The Postal Service™ is temporarily suspending international mail acceptance for certain destinations due to impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other unrelated service disruptions. Customers: please refrain from mailing items addressed to the countries listed here, until further notice.

[Hide the suspensions](#)

Suspensions			
Afghanistan	Laos	Russia	Timor-Leste
Bhutan	Libya	Samoa	Turkmenistan
Brunei	Mongolia	Solomon Islands	Yemen
Chad	New Zealand*	South Sudan	
Cuba	Papua New Guinea	Syria	

Source: Excerpt from International Service Alerts – Newsroom – [About.usps.com](#).

1 <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/service-alerts/international/welcome.htm>.

2 Postal Service officials noted that in instances where there are only a few internationally suspended pieces for a specific country, these pieces may be comingled with those from other internationally suspended countries. They did note, in these instances, the corresponding container label placard should indicate each related country.

“The Postal Service has general policies and procedures that govern International Mail Suspension operations.”

Postal Service officials stated this website is updated based on the types of international service suspensions. For example, COVID-19-related updates are usually posted every Friday, while updates for other reasons (e.g., weather, geo-political reasons, or transportation) can be updated as needed.

The Postal Service’s Global Business group is responsible for monitoring and assessing international service updates. When they determine suspensions are necessary, they notify the Corporate Communication group, who then updates the website and coordinates other communication to mailers.

The Postal Service has general policies and procedures that govern International Mail Suspension operations – that is, acceptance/rejections, handling, staging, and returns. International Service Center (ISC) staff are primarily responsible for the handling and processing of mail subject to international suspension including:

- **Containerization:** Postal Service international mail work practices stipulate that, to the extent possible,<sup>2</sup> suspended mail for individual countries should be placed in its own container.
- **Container Labeling/Placarding:** Postal Service international mail work practices require that accurate label placards be placed on every container and include markings indicating the type of mail and date that container was placarded.
- **Resolution/Return to Sender:** Management must make timely decisions about pieces destined for suspended countries – items should be returned to the domestic sender or held until the suspension is lifted. Items that will be returned to

the sender should bear a requisite endorsement<sup>3</sup> specifically noting the international service disruption (see Figure 2).

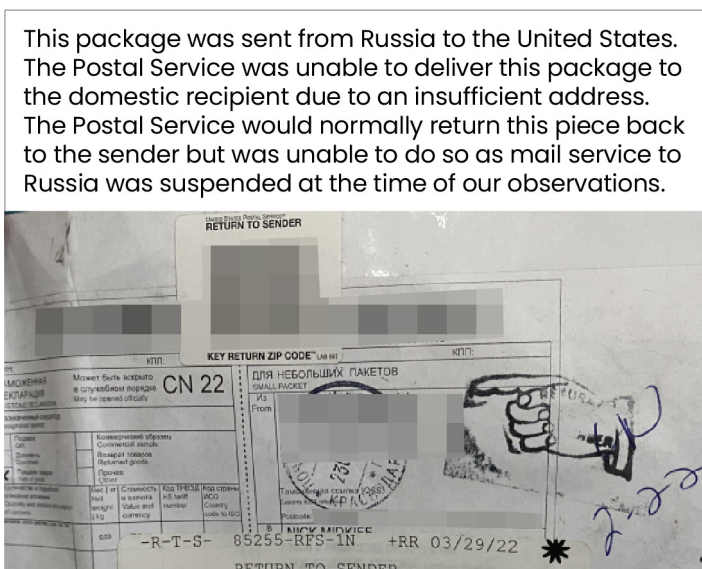
**Figure 2. Example of International Suspended Mail Endorsement**



Source: Office of Inspector General (OIG) staff observation at the Chicago ISC on September 28, 2022.

Inbound pieces originating from foreign countries that cannot be delivered domestically for such reasons as poor addressing, lack of address data, or other issues that required mailpieces to be returned to the sender (see Figure 3) remain at an ISC until a suspension is lifted.

**Figure 3. Example of Undeliverable International Inbound Mail that Currently Cannot Be Returned to the Foreign Sender Due to International Suspension**



Source: OIG staff observation at the Los Angeles ISC on August 16, 2022.

The Postal Service’s international operations focus on timely and secure movement of inbound and outbound mail—including internationally suspended mail—through the ISCs. The New York and Miami ISCs report to the Eastern region, and the Chicago and Los Angeles ISCs report to the Western region. The headquarters International Processing Operations group supports these operations. These groups collect and analyze key performance data related to international mail operations. This data is primarily collected during operational scans of barcoded mailpieces<sup>4</sup> at the ISCs.

The Postal Service’s Product Tracking Reporting (PTR) system collects scan event information for each package.<sup>5</sup> Postal Service staff and customers use this PTR data to monitor the movement of international packages. For example, customers can search the status of their packages using the assigned identification barcode number through the USPS Tracking® system on USPS.com.<sup>6</sup> When doing so, real-time package data is queried from PTR and converted to message scripts that are displayed to the customer. The transmittal of data from PTR to USPS.com and the method used to convert the data to customer messages on USPS.com are governed by a set of business rules specific to international mail and managed by the Postal Service’s Customer Experience group.

### Finding #1: Handling of Internationally Suspended Mail

The Postal Service adequately suspended mail service to designated countries during our fieldwork. At each of the four ISCs we visited, we observed containers of packages appropriately held by the Postal Service due to mail suspensions to the corresponding destinating countries. Most of the internationally suspended mail we observed throughout the network was awaiting return to foreign senders because it was undeliverable to U.S. recipients due to addressing issues. Per international mail protocols, the Postal Service must hold mail and packages for countries subject to international mail suspensions.

<sup>3</sup> An endorsement is an authorized marking on a mailpiece that shows handling instructions, indicates a special service (any service available for a fee that supplements or enhances mail or mail services), or requests an address corrections service such as a forwarding or return.  
<sup>4</sup> Barcoded mailpieces include packages, flats, and letters. We refer to these barcoded mailings as “packages” throughout this report.  
<sup>5</sup> Postal Service’s Innovative Business Technology group is responsible for developing and monitoring PTR.  
<sup>6</sup> USPS.com or USPS Tracking is a free service the Postal Service offers customers to provide end-to-end tracking of an item. See <https://tools.usps.com/go/TrackConfirmActionInput>.

However, the Postal Service did not always properly handle internationally suspended mailings. During our observations at three of the four<sup>7</sup> ISCs, we reviewed 50 containers and determined that associated pieces were not always properly separated, labeled, or returned to the sender, as follows:

- **Container Separation:** [REDACTED] of the 50 containers [REDACTED] had mail destined for countries subject to international suspension that were not clearly separated. For example, we observed a container that included suspended pieces destined to Laos and Canada; however, the placard indicated pieces only to Laos. Postal Service international mail work practices stipulate that, to the extent possible, suspended mail for individual countries should be placed in its own container.
- **Container Labeling/Placarding:** [REDACTED] of the 50 containers [REDACTED] had missing or incomplete placard labels (e.g., lacking required information such as destination country, content, origin of mail, or received date). Figure 4 shows

examples of containers with these placarding issues. Mail Transport Equipment Labeler, a Postal Service web-based program, allows ISC staff<sup>8</sup> to create placards that provide important information relating to the contents and movement of equipment, such as destination, origin, contents, and date.

- **Return to Sender/Held in Error:** We analyzed all pieces within certain judgmentally selected containers at the ISCs to determine if pieces were properly held. From the containers we reviewed, [REDACTED] internationally suspended pieces were incorrectly held and should have been returned to the domestic senders. These pieces were international outbound mailings destined for countries under international suspension (see Figure 5). Postal Service international mail work practices state that outbound pieces destined for suspended countries should be returned to the domestic sender, rather than held until the suspension is lifted.

Figure 4. Examples of Missing and Incomplete Placards for Internationally Suspended Mail

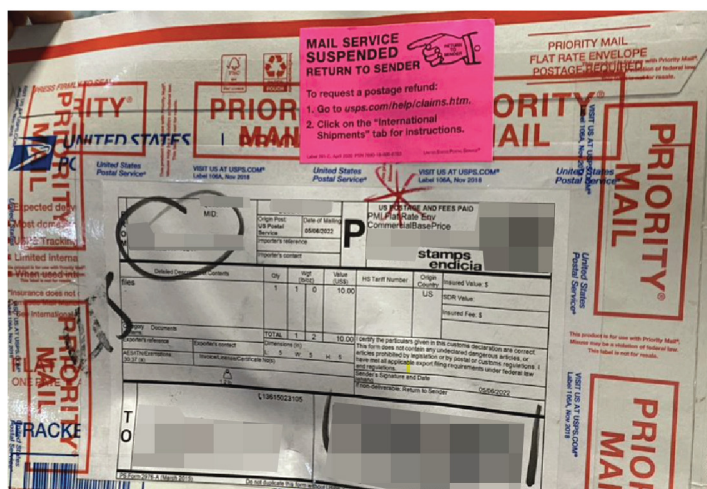


Source: OIG staff photographs taken at the Chicago ISC on July 11, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> The Chicago, Los Angeles, and Miami ISCs.

<sup>8</sup> OIG Report *Issues Identified in International Package Operations – Chicago International Service Center*, Report Number 21-101-R21 (May 12, 2021).

**Figure 5. Example of Pieces That Should Not Have Been Held (Outbound/Export Piece, from Louisville to China)**



Source: OIG observation at the Chicago ISC on July 11, 2022.

Postal Service officials acknowledged these handling and processing issues and attributed them to a combination of many factors including newer staff and the irregularity of these international suspension operations, particularly related to COVID-19 and transportation issues. ISC officials also noted some ambiguity throughout the network regarding how pieces destined for suspended countries should be resolved – some officials assumed the packages should be held until the suspension was lifted, while others assumed packages should be returned to the sender. Postal Service leadership has taken corrective action by issuing a Standard Work Instruction (SWI) (dated January 6, 2023), to improve placarding and handling of outbound suspended pieces that should be returned to domestic senders.

While we recognize management’s interim actions, the related handling oversight shortfalls negatively impact operations and service. Packages mistakenly placed in containers with internationally suspended pieces, as well as suspended packages that were not returned to domestic addresses, can create customer dissatisfaction and result in brand and

reputation risks. Developing strategies to enhance management oversight of the handling and processing of internationally suspended pieces would help promote operational efficiency and service.

With ongoing COVID-19 concerns, geo-political developments, and severe weather situations, there is an increased focus on mail suspension operations for posts throughout the world. The Postal Service’s ability to comply with these suspensions and effectively handle these mailings will be key to protecting the Postal Service’s brand and providing high-quality international mail service.

**Recommendation #1**

We recommend the **Vice Presidents of Processing and Maintenance Operations and Eastern and Western Regional Processing Operations**, develop strategies to enhance management oversight related to the handling of internationally suspended mail, particularly related to containerization, labeling/placarding, and returning to sender.

**Finding #2: Customer Visibility of Internationally Suspended Mail**

The Postal Service does not always provide clear visibility or package tracking messaging related to internationally suspended packages to customers. We reviewed customer messaging on USPS.com for 240 internationally suspended packages<sup>9</sup> we observed across the four ISCs and found that [REDACTED] either had no package tracking messages or did not match the physical location of the package at the time of our observations. Specifically, we noted:

- **No Package Tracking Messaging:** USPS.com messaging for [REDACTED] of 240 packages [REDACTED] did not have any tracking information (see Figure 6). We subsequently reviewed PTR operational tracking data for these pieces and confirmed there were no records of any processing events for these packages; yet, we physically observed the package in the ISC.

<sup>9</sup> During visits to ICSs, we judgmentally selected packages from containers of internationally suspended mail for more detailed analysis. Appendix A has additional information on this analysis.



Figure 6. Example of a Piece with No Package Tracking Messaging



Source: OIG observation at the Los Angeles ISC on August 16, 2022. Note: USPS.com tracking indicated this package was “Not Trackable”.

■ **No ISC Messages Before Our Observation:**

USPS.com messaging for [REDACTED] of 240 packages [REDACTED] did not display any results indicating that the package was at the ISC prior to the OIG observations. For example, we observed a package at the Miami ISC on July 26, 2022. However, Figure 7 shows that USPS.com lacked messaging indicating the package was ever at the facility. We subsequently reviewed PTR operational tracking data for these pieces and confirmed there were no processing event scans at the corresponding ISC. To provide accurate visibility, it is crucial for these scan events to match the physical location and be reflected in USPS.com messaging for customers.

“USPS.com messaging for [REDACTED] of 240 packages [REDACTED] did not display any results indicating that the package was at the ISC prior to the OIG observations.”

Figure 7. Example of a Piece with No Miami ISC-Related Messaging

Tracking Number:  
[REDACTED]

[Copy](#) [Add to Informed Delivery](#)

### Latest Update

Your item departed our TAMPA, FL 33830 destination facility on March 28, 2022 at 7:39 pm. The item is currently in transit to the destination.

- Processing at Destination**  
Departed USPS Destination Facility  
TAMPA, FL 33830  
March 28, 2022, 7:39 pm
- Unclaimed/Being Returned to Sender**  
NORTH PORT, FL 34287  
March 28, 2022, 10:17 am
- Reminder to Schedule Redelivery of your item**  
March 20, 2022
- Available for Pickup**  
NORTH PORT, FL 34287  
March 18, 2022, 8:41 am
- Notice Left (No Authorized Recipient Available)**  
NORTH PORT, FL 34287  
March 17, 2022, 2:31 pm
- Out for Delivery**  
NORTH PORT, FL 34288  
March 17, 2022, 12:28 pm
- Arrived at Post Office**  
NORTH PORT, FL 34287  
March 17, 2022, 12:17 pm
- Arrived at USPS Destination Facility**  
TAMPA, FL 33830  
March 17, 2022, 8:47 am
- Arrived at USPS Regional Facility**  
JAMAICA NY INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION CENTER  
March 16, 2022, 12:37 pm
- Processed Through USPS Facility**  
ISC NEW YORK NY(USPS)  
March 16, 2022, 12:38 pm
- Processed Through Facility**  
EKATERINGBURG , RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
February 13, 2022, 9:08 pm
- Origin Post is Preparing Shipment**
- Processed Through Facility**  
EKATERINGBURG , RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
February 13, 2022, 8:62 am
- Acceptance**  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
February 11, 2022, 8:16 pm
- [Hide Tracking History](#)

Source: OIG observation at the Miami ISC on July 26, 2022.

Note: The USPS.com tracking did not display any messages at the Miami ISC, where we observed the item.

The remaining [REDACTED] of the 240 packages [REDACTED] contained a message stating the package was at the ISC prior to the OIG team’s observation. However, upon further review of the messaging and corresponding PTR data, the team also identified other unclear messaging, including long information gaps and implied processing that may have been confusing, as follows:

- **Long Information Gaps:** On average, across the [REDACTED] packages, there was a [REDACTED] gap between when the team observed the package and the previous ISC-related message. For example, the team observed a package at the Miami ISC on July 26, 2022, and the previous USPS.com message showed an “Arrival at Miami ISC” message on [REDACTED]. The longest gap was [REDACTED].

Postal Service management stated that long processing gaps may be expected due to general handling of internationally suspended mail (i.e., suspensions may last a long period of time and would not necessitate intermediate processing).

- **Implied Processing:** Messaging for [REDACTED] packages [REDACTED] displayed verbiage that implied movement of the mailing – such as “Processed Through [the ISC]” or “In Transit to the Next Facility” – even though a team member observed the mailing (see Table 1):

We reported similar messaging issues in a June 2022 report,<sup>10</sup> in which Postal Service officials stated that current business rules use the broader “processed through” terminology to (a) be consistent with messages for other international scan events – some of which were jointly developed with foreign posts – and (b) give customers the impression the package is still moving through the network. We subsequently recommended the Postal Service review the business rules governing USPS.com tracking for international packages to promote clear and accurate messages. The Postal Service agreed with our recommendation, stating they will “assess opportunities to refine display rules and update the descriptions to provide more consistency and clarity for scans on international packages;” and upon completion, “will develop and implement appropriate changes identified from the assessment.”<sup>11</sup>

“The team also identified other unclear messaging, including long information gaps and implied processing that may have been confusing.”

**Table 1. Example of Implied Processing Messaging**

OIG Observation Time, Date, and ISC	USPS.com Messaging Excerpt at the Respective ISC
9:30 a.m., July 26, 2022, Miami ISC	<i>“Your item was processed through our Miami FL INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION CENTER facility on [REDACTED], at 6:15 pm. The item is currently in transit to the destination.”</i>
Issue: This message implied the package was processed through the Miami ISC and left the facility for the next destination. OIG staff held this package [REDACTED] later at the Miami ISC.	
12:00 p.m., August 16, 2022, Los Angeles ISC	<i>“Your item departed our USPS facility in CARSON, CA 90747 on [REDACTED], at 4:23 pm. The item is currently in transit to the destination.”</i>
Issue: This message implied the package departed the Los Angeles ISC and was in transit to the destination. OIG staff held this package [REDACTED] later at the Los Angeles ISC.	

Source: OIG analysis of internationally suspended packages.  
 Note: The Los Angeles ISC is located in Carson, California.

<sup>10</sup> OIG Report *International Mail Operations and Performance Data*, June 2, 2022, Report Number 21-197-R22.  
<sup>11</sup> The target implementation date for this recommendation is March 31, 2023.

## International Suspension Scan Event Needed

The underlying driver of these individual messaging issues is the Postal Service's lack of a unique operational scan event that reflects an international suspension. Research shows that customer expectations regarding tracking continue to grow. Customers are performing more tracking inquiries and expect accurate, detailed information at various points from acceptance to delivery. The lack of such a scan and related messaging hinders customer visibility into the status of their international mailings, which can create customer dissatisfaction and can negatively impact the Postal Service brand.

Developing such a scan event, along with corresponding processes and messaging, would also provide an opportunity to enhance operational visibility into the number of internationally suspended pieces in the Postal Service network. The Postal Service does not have a system to track suspension volume, but is currently working on a dashboard to provide visibility. Developing an associated scan event would automate data collection, as corresponding data on the number of suspended pieces could be extracted from PTR in a more timely, reliable manner. When assessing the development of a related scan event, the Postal Service could leverage the framework for one of its existing domestic scan events for pieces that are delayed due to transportation problems.

### Recommendation #2

We recommend the **Vice President, Processing and Maintenance Operations**, coordinate with the **Vice Presidents, Innovative Business Technology and Customer Experience**, develop a scan event code for internationally suspended mailings and corresponding processes and messaging.

## Management's Comments

Management agreed with finding 1 and both recommendations, but only partially agreed with finding 2.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated the International Operations group revised the Suspension Mail Standard Work Instruction

and created a placard for identifying, separating, and staging mail suspended from export dispatch pending resolution through required agreements and transportation assignment. The target implementation date is April 30, 2023.

Regarding finding 2, management stated that it only partially agreed with the finding, disagreeing with the observation titled "No Package Tracking Messaging" because it did not recognize a difference in tracking international packages versus domestic packages. They specifically stated that international tracking numbers that begin with "U" do not include tracking

service and are not trackable and requested this analysis, and related counts, be removed from the report. They also stated that the "Implied Processing" observation noted in the report was redundant, as they agreed with a similar recommendation in a previous audit.

Regarding recommendation 2, management stated the Innovative Business Technology group will work with the Processing and Maintenance Operations and Customer Experience groups to create a scan event code for trackable

international packages affected by suspended mail service. The target implementation date is June 30, 2024.

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 and planned actions should resolve the issues identified in the report.

Regarding management's partial disagreements with finding 2, only eight of 240 packages included in our analysis began with a "U" in their tracking number. While Postal Service management stated those packages were "not trackable", six packages returned tracking information on USPS.com visible to customers when we originally searched those assigned identification (ID) barcodes with such messages including "Arrived at USPS Regional Facility", "Departed USPS Regional Facility", or "Label Created, Not Yet in System". Since package IDs

“The underlying driver of these individual messaging issues is the Postal Service's lack of a unique operational scan event that reflects an international suspension.”

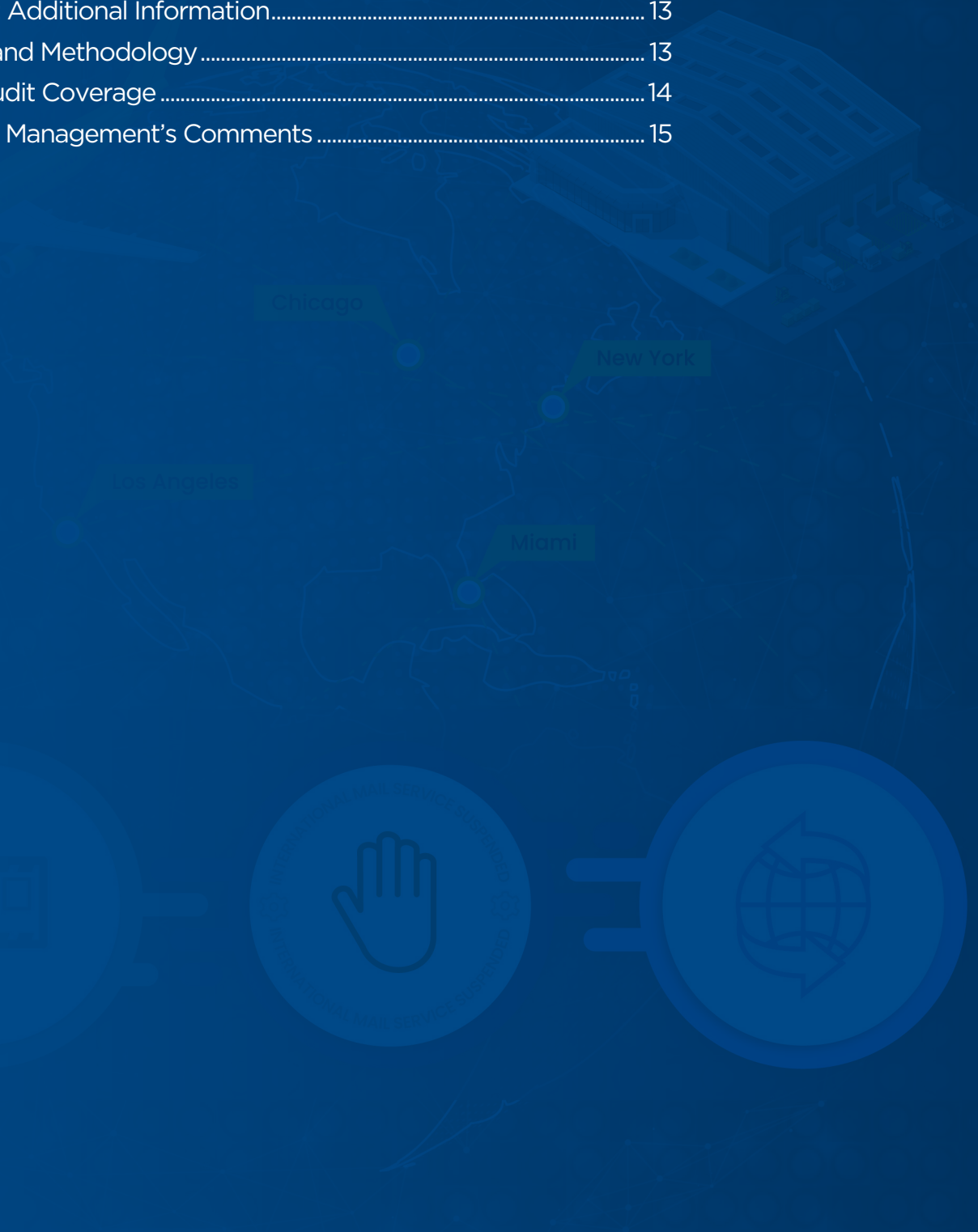
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beginning with a “U” displayed tracking messages, we kept all eight packages in our analysis. Regarding management’s position about the “Implied Processing” observation, we noted that we previously reported on this issue in June 2022 and referenced the respective Postal Service corrective action — information that was pertinent to why we did not make a corresponding recommendation in this report. As this implied processing issue remained germane to internationally suspended packages, we kept that discussion in our report.

All recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. The OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. The recommendations should not be closed in the Postal Service’s follow-up tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendations can be closed.

# Appendices

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# Appendix A: Additional Information

## Scope and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Postal Service’s international mail service suspension-related operations. To accomplish our objective, we:

- Observed operations at the following Postal Service ISCs:
  - Chicago: July 11, 2022, and September 28, 2022.
  - Miami: week of July 25, 2022.
  - Los Angeles: week of August 15, 2022.
  - New York: week of August 8, 2022.

During these site visits, we interviewed ISC management and judgmentally selected packages from containers of internationally suspended mail for more detailed analysis (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Number of Packages per Facility**

ISC	Number of Packages Selected
Chicago	68
Miami	56
Los Angeles	105
New York	11
Total	240

Source: OIG collected internationally suspended package data from the ISCs.

- Reviewed Postal Service policies and procedures related to the operations for accepting/rejecting, handling, staging, communicating, and tracking/messaging of information related to international mail service suspensions.
- Reviewed various Postal Service international datasets and reports, including customer inquiries. We extracted and reviewed data from the PTR, USPS.com, and Customer 360.
- Interviewed Postal Service Headquarters and ISC management about international mail service suspension operations at the ISCs.

- Reviewed best practices on customer tracking and visibility expectations from industry sources.
- Reviewed prior audit work from the USPS OIG and other government agencies.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2022 through March 2023 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 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 with management from each ISC listed above prior to the conclusion of each on-site visit and included their comments where appropriate. We also discussed our observations and conclusions with management on February 28, 2023, and included their comments where appropriate.

We used computer processed data from the PTR, USPS.com, and Customer 360 systems when performing our data analysis. We assessed the reliability of the computer-generated data by discussing the data with headquarters and ISC management, who use this data to oversee ISC operations and performance. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purpose of this report.

## Prior Audit Coverage

Report Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact
<i>U.S. Postal Service International Mail Operations and Performance Data</i>	Assess the Postal Service's international mail operations and performance data.	21-197-R22	June 2, 2022	\$0
<i>Issues Identified in International Package Operations - Chicago International Service Center</i>	While conducting site visits at the Chicago International Service Center for our International Election Mail Observations for the 2020 General and 2021 Georgia Runoff Elections project, we found significant operational delays of international packages and safety and security risks that we believe warrant management's immediate attention and corrective action.	21-101-R21	May 12, 2021	\$0



# Appendix B: Management's Comments

MIKE L. BARBER  
VICE PRESIDENT  
PROCESSING AND MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS



March 16, 2023

JOHN CIHOTA  
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: International Mail Service Suspension Operations (Project Number 22-158-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the draft audit report, International Mail Suspension Operations.

Management agrees with Finding #1: Handling of Internationally Suspended Mail.

Management partially agrees with Finding #2: Customer Visibility of Internationally Suspended Mail. We disagree with the observation titled "No Package Tracking Messaging." As written, this observation does not recognize a difference in tracking of international products versus domestic products. International tracking numbers that begin with "U" do not include tracking service and are not trackable. Therefore, we request this item and related comments, analysis, and counts be removed from the report.

Also, as noted under the "Implied Processing" observation, Management agreed with a similar recommendation in a previous audit, thus mention in this audit is redundant.

Following are our comments on the two recommendations.

**Recommendation [1]:**

We recommend the Vice Presidents of Processing and Maintenance Operations, and Eastern and Western Regional Processing Operations develop strategies to enhance management oversight related to the handling of internationally suspended mail, particularly related to containerization, labeling/placarding, and returning to sender.

475 L'ENFANT PLAZA SW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20260-0006  
WWW.USPS.GOV

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation with regard to packages. The International Operations group has revised the Suspended mail Standard Work Instruction (SWI) and created a placard for identifying, separating, and staging mail suspended from Export dispatch pending resolution through required agreements and transportation assignment.

Management requests closure of recommendation one due to the operational methods and action put in place since the conclusion of the suspended mail audit.

Target Implementation Date: 04/30/2023

Responsible Official:

Director, International Operations and Manager, International Operations and Service Performance

Recommendation [2]:

We recommend the Vice President, Processing and Maintenance Operations coordinate with the Vice Presidents, Innovative Business Technology and Customer Experience develop a scan event code for internationally suspended mailings and corresponding processes and messaging.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management agrees with this recommendation. Innovative Business Technology will work with the Processing and Maintenance Operations and Customer Experience groups to create a scan event code for trackable international packages affected by suspended mail service.

Target Implementation Date: 06/30/2024

Responsible Official:

Director, Mail and Package Information Systems



Mike L. Barber

# OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES



Contact us via our [Hotline](#) and [FOIA](#) forms. Follow us on social networks. Stay informed.

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