

# US postal ratepayers funding non-postal law enforcement, says audit

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An audit of US Postal Inspection Service investigations has suggested that more than 34% of activities do not “directly” support protection of Postal Service assets, staff or the US mail system.

A report by the USPS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) suggested that cutting out non-postal casework by the postal enforcement agency would save the Postal Service \$77m a year and \$766m over a decade.

However, the findings of the OIG are disputed by USPS management.

The OIG said that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had primary jurisdiction for mail fraud, the Postal Inspection Service’s largest area of activity, and that the FBI could handle such cases directly with the Postal Service.

The auditors also suggested that cases of mail fraud “are usually ancillary to the main crime investigated”, with the Inspection Service involved merely because the mail was used during a crime.

Effectively, the OIG said postal ratepayers were subsidising criminal investigations that would otherwise be carried out by taxpayer-funded law enforcement agencies.

“Assisting the attorney general is commendable; however, it may not be the best use of scarce Postal Service resources and often results in expenditures of money from ratepayers being used towards investigations that should more legitimately be funded by taxpayers,” said the report.

In other areas, like money laundering and identity theft the report pointed out that the Inspection Service was also carrying out investigations where other federal agencies held primary jurisdiction.

The OIG said it had informally passed on its concerns about non-postal investigations, but the Inspection Service had continued to conduct them nevertheless.

## **Consolidating**

The OIG conducts investigations itself, and even suggested that to save money it could be merged with the Inspection Service, setting up a single postal law enforcement agency and saving an additional \$15m a year.

In reply to the OIG’s recommendations, USPS management said consolidating enforcement activities was “not a concern at this time”.

The Postal Service also rejected the suggestion that the Inspection Service was carrying out investigations that are unrelated to the mail, citing a study by Giuliani Security & Safety that “nearly all” investigations were related to USPS staff, facilities, the mail, mail customers or consumers.

OIG said the same report suggested 40% of Postal Inspection Service investigations were not aligned with the Postal Service and benefits for the mail were “difficult to assess”.

The auditors said USPS management had been “unresponsive” to their recommendations.

Elsewhere in its report, the OIG suggested that the Postal Service could save around \$9.5m a year using private sector security guards instead of postal police officers for certain security tasks.

**“No basis”**

The Postal Service said it had already cut 20% of the postal inspection workforce since the beginning of the 2009 fiscal year, from 1,754 inspectors to 1,400.

In his comments to the OIG, chief human resources officer Anthony Vegliante declared that there was “no basis” for the OIG’s claims that 34% of Inspection Service investigations were not linked to the mail.

He said: “The Postal Service rejects the premise that the Inspection Service carries out investigations not inherently related to the USPS mission.”

Vegliante added that mail fraud investigations “for the most part strike at the very core of the Postal Service’s core business”, adding that Congress recognised the role of the Inspection Service in protecting citizens from victimisation through mail fraud.

Regarding the suggestion of merging OIG with the Inspection Service, the USPS executive VP said there was no duplication of investigations by the two agencies, and that the functions of the two had been revisited five years ago.

OIG responded to Vegliante’s comments by insisting: “We do not believe the comments provide a sufficient basis for dismissing an evaluation of organizational alternatives that could save scarce Postal Service resources.”

Source: [James Cartledge](#), Post&Parcel

<http://postandparcel.info/40304/news/us-postal-ratepayers-funding-non-postal-crime-busting-says-audit/>