



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2017/071

Audit of recruitment of staff in the
United Nations Interim Security Force
for Abyei

The Department of Field Support and the
Mission needed to implement effective
monitoring measures to ensure compliance
with the established policies and procedures
on the recruitment of staff

25 July 2017
Assignment No. AP2016/635/01

Audit of recruitment of staff in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over recruitment of staff in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The audit covered the period from 1 January 2014 to January 2017 and included a review of: delegation of recruitment authority; processing of recruitment actions; and maintenance of recruitment records.

The Department of Field Support (DFS) and UNISFA needed to implement effective monitoring measures to ensure compliance with established staff recruitment policies.

OIOS made two recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit:

- DFS and UNISFA should implement effective monitoring measures to minimize the occurrence of irregularities and non-compliance with established recruitment policies and procedures; and
- UNISFA should implement effective measures to ensure the maintenance of adequate records for the recruitment process.

DFS and UNISFA accepted the recommendations, one recommendation has been implemented and action is being taken to implement the remaining one.

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Audit of recruitment of staff in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the recruitment of staff in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).
2. From January 2015 to February 2016, UNISFA carried out all recruitment activities, from posting job openings to the selection of candidates and recording of selection decisions in Inspira. During the majority of this period, both the Chief of Mission Support (CMS) and the Head of Mission (HoM) were on extended sick leave. In March 2016, the Director of Field Personnel Division (FPD) of DFS assumed responsibility for the selection of candidates based on recommendations from UNISFA, which became responsible only for announcing job openings and vetting candidates.
3. The UNISFA Human Resources Section is responsible for: (a) managing the Mission's recruitment; (b) administering and providing support on human resources policies, procedures and guidelines; and (c) managing vacancies in coordination with the respective hiring managers. The Section is headed by a Chief Human Resources Officer at the P-4 level who reports to the CMS at the D-1 level and, during the extended absence of the CMS, reported to the Chief of Service Delivery who was the Officer-in-Charge of Mission Support. As of 30 September 2016, the Human Resources Section had six authorized posts comprising four international staff and two national staff.
4. As of 30 September 2016, UNISFA had 225 civilian personnel including 119 international staff, 74 national staff, 3 National Professional Officers and 29 United Nations volunteers.
5. Comments provided by UNISFA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

6. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes over the recruitment of staff in UNISFA.
7. This audit was included in the 2016 risk-based work plan of OIOS because of the criticality of human resources to the efficient and effective implementation of the Mission's mandate and concerns raised by management about irregularities in the recruitment staff.
8. OIOS conducted this audit from September 2016 to April 2017. The audit covered recruitments undertaken during the period from January 2014 and January 2017. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks including: the delegation of recruitment authority; processing of recruitment actions; and maintenance of recruitment records.
9. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews of Human Resources Section staff, the CMS and select hiring managers of UNISFA, and FPD staff dealing with UNISFA recruitment; (b) analytical review of recruitment data; (c) examination of a judgmental sample of recruitment cases; and (d) review of relevant recruitment documents that supported the recruitment and selection process.

III. OVERALL CONCLUSION

10. There was a need for DFS and UNISFA to implement effective monitoring measures to reduce recruitment irregularities and for UNISFA to take effective measures to ensure compliance with established procedures on the recruitment of staff.

IV. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Delegation of authority for recruitment

There was a need for a formal recruitment authority and effective monitoring measures to ensure compliance with established policies

11. The United Nations Recruiters' Manual requires UNISFA to perform recruitment activities in line with its delegation of authority from the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support (USG/DFS) for positions up to and including the D-1 level.

12. A review of 58 recruitment actions for international staff undertaken in the audit period showed that UNISFA processed 29 and selected 16 candidates during January 2015 to March 2016 without formal delegation of authority. FPD advised that it had retained the authority for the recruitment of UNISFA staff during January 2015 to March 2016 due to concerns over the Mission's capacity to carry out the recruitment process in a fair and transparent manner and ensure compliance with established policies and procedures. However, FPD was unable to provide evidence of its communication of the decision to retain UNISFA recruitment authority. There was also no evidence that FPD implemented adequate and effective transitional arrangements during January 2015 to March 2016. Subsequently, the following communications formalized recruitment responsibilities:

- In a communication dated 22 August 2016, the USG/DFS formalized the arrangements earlier put in place by FPD on 7 March 2016 whereby UNISFA was required to perform all recruitment activities from the posting of a job opening to the recording of FPD-approved selection decisions by the CMS in Inspira, while FPD continued approving the Mission's selection recommendations; and
- The USG/DFS formally delegated the UNISFA recruitment authority to the Director of FPD in October 2016.

13. In March 2017, FPD advised that it still had concerns regarding UNISFA recruitment activities and until these concerns were resolved and an HoM was recruited, DFS would not delegate full recruitment authority to the Mission. As indicated in Section B of the present report, the audit confirmed that there were a number of irregularities including non-compliance with established recruitment policies mainly prior to March 2016 when the CMS was on extended sick leave and FPD was not effectively monitoring UNISFA recruitment activities. Regarding the recruitment of a civilian HoM, FPD advised that the UNISFA Force Commander was acting as the HoM and delays in filling the vacancy for the position of HoM had impacted on the DFS decision to delegate recruitment authority. However, UNISFA advised that the Government of Sudan recognized the Force Commander as HoM and had so far refused to accept a civilian HoM in addition to the Force Commander. OIOS noted that DFS had in 2011 delegated recruitment authority to the Force Commander and continues to do so in other peacekeeping missions such as the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.

14. FPD advised that DFS was not responsible to resolve the concerns of the Government regarding the recruitment of HoM and it was pleased with the current arrangements whereby selection recommendations are vetted and approved by FPD. FPD also stated that it would continue to monitor recruitment activities in UNISFA and, if necessary, reconsider the need to delegate full recruitment authority to UNISFA. Considering that FPD had started taking prudent measures related to the Mission's recruitment activities, OIOS did not make a recommendation regarding the need for full delegation of recruitment authority to UNISFA.

B. Processing of recruitment actions

Need to consistently comply with recruitment policies and temporary measures on recruitment of staff

15. The UNISFA recruitment activities are governed by the Recruiters' Manual and various administrative instructions, the DFS/Department of Peacekeeping Operations Standard Operating Procedures on staff selection, UNISFA human resources score card and various guidance and instructions from DFS.

16. Interviews with staff of the Human Resources Section, a sample of 10 hiring managers and the CMS and review of job openings/vacancy announcements, status matrix, comparative analysis, selection certificates in Inspira, and relevant communications between UNISFA and FPD indicated that UNISFA had generally complied with the FPD instructions of March 2016 in processing all 26 job openings up to the recommendation stage. Specifically, UNISFA had established and approved evaluation criteria before the job openings were posted, complied with the requirements for screening candidates and prepared comparative analysis reports. Based on assessments of candidates, the hiring managers recommended candidates to the CMS who in turn submitted the Mission's selection recommendations to the Director of FPD. The CMS accurately recorded FPD selection decisions in Inspira.

17. FPD advised that they had identified irregularities related to the Mission's recruitment activities including non-compliance with certain policies and procedures and publication of temporary job openings (TJOs) without the prior approval by FPD. However, FPD was unable to provide the specific cases or confirm whether the cases identified by this audit and summarized below were the exact ones they had identified. Therefore, OIOS was unable to review these specific cases to validate FPD's concerns.

(a) Recruitment activities during the period when the Mission did not have formal delegation recruitment authority from DFS

18. UNISFA published 32 job openings prior to March 2016, but after consulting with FPD, the Mission cancelled 20 of them between March 2016 and January 2017 prior to the end of the mandatory 160 day period even though there were suitable rostered candidates in some instances. This was mainly due to the possible irregularities identified by FPD and the new CMS.

19. OIOS identified the following recruitment cases prior to March 2016 that did not comply with the relevant policy and procedures:

- For three posts established for at least one year each in 2014/15, the Mission did not comply with the requirement of the administrative instruction on the administration of temporary appointments (ST/AI/2010/4) to first initiate a normal recruitment (i.e. position-specific job openings where there were no suitable candidates on the relevant rosters). Instead, the Mission filled all three posts for 364 days each using TJOs. The administrative instruction allows the use of

a TJO where there was an immediate need to fill job opening pending the completion of a normal recruitment process;

- For nine recruit-from-roster job openings, the evaluation method that was used to assess candidates was not indicated in Inspira;
- For 12 other recruit-from-roster job openings, the required comparative analysis reports were either not prepared, incomplete or some of the recommended and selected candidates did not have the required educational qualifications and technical certificates;
- For 12 job openings for the recruitment of national staff, there was no information to determine the composition of the interview panels and for another 12 job openings, the interview panels did not include females. Only 8 of the sampled 20 panelists had undergone competency-based interviewing training; and
- For 11 recruit-from-roster job openings, the hiring managers did not include the rostered female candidates in their selection recommendations for nine job openings. There was also no evidence that hiring managers complied with the requirement of the administrative instructions on special measures for the achievement of gender equality (ST/AI/1999/9) to provide written explanation of their decision not to recommend qualified female candidates. After consultation with FPD, the CMS cancelled five of the job openings.

(b) Recruitment activities from March 2016 to January 2017 when the Mission had a formal delegation of authority to perform certain recruitment functions

20. During the period from March 2016 to January 2017, the Mission did not obtain FPD approval prior to issuing 12 TJOs. FPD advised that it had required all other missions including UNISFA in general instructions and during meetings to obtain its prior approval when issuing TJOs. However, the Mission stated that it was not aware of this requirement and FPD was unable to provide copies of its instructions for missions to obtain its prior approval for TJOs. OIOS also noted that, in July 2015, FPD had instructed missions to advertise TJOs in Inspira without seeking FPD's prior approval for the TJOs up to and including the D-1 level. Furthermore, for three job openings for the positions of: Principal Officer, D-1; Logistics Officer, FS-6; and Environmental, Water and Sanitation Engineer, P-3, the comparative analysis did not contain the qualifications and work experiences of some candidates.

21. The above occurred because UNISFA did not take effective actions to ensure consistent compliance with FPD guidance, which was not always documented, on the processing of recruitment actions. As a result, there was a risk of selecting candidates that were not qualified for the relevant position.

(1) DFS and UNISFA should implement effective monitoring measures to minimize the occurrence of irregularities and non-compliance with established recruitment policies and procedures.

FPD and UNISFA accepted recommendation number 1 and stated that they had further strengthened the review and analysis of recruitment cases through delegation of authority to FPD supported by the loan of a UNISFA post. Recommendation number 1 remains open pending receipt of evidence that DFS and UNISFA have implemented effective monitoring measures to minimize the scope for irregularities and non-compliance with established policies and procedures in the recruitment of Mission staff.

C. Maintenance of recruitment records

Need to ensure compliance with guidance and policies on recruitment for national staff and maintain adequate records of recruitment actions

22. The FPD guidelines for the selection of locally recruited staff in the United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions require hiring managers to maintain adequate documentation of all the stages of the recruitment process. They also require hiring managers to prepare a reasoned and documented record of the evaluation of the proposed candidates against the applicable evaluation criteria and transmit an unranked list of recommended candidates to the HoM.

23. OIOS review of all 27 national staff recruitments undertaken between 2014 and 2016 indicated that the Human Resources Section did not have two case files and the remaining 25 recruitments, for which case files were available, did not include necessary information as follows: (a) in 18 case files, there were no application cover letters; (b) in 15 case files, there were no copies of the applicants' qualifications; (c) in 15 case files, there were no comparative evaluation reports; and (d) in 12 cases files, there were no selection recommendations from the respective hiring managers.

24. The above resulted because UNISFA had not implemented effective measures to ensure adequate records of the recruitment process were maintained. The Human Resources Section did not monitor the documentation process and management of records relating to the recruitment and selection process. Failure to retain adequate documentation and records may impair transparency, fairness and competitiveness in the recruitment and selection processes.

(2) UNISFA should implement effective measures to ensure the maintenance of adequate records for the recruitment process.

UNISFA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that its Human Resources Section maintains comprehensive physical and digital records for both national and international recruitment case files. Also because of the current delegation of authority, the Mission is required to provide comprehensive records to the FPD and the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe for further processing of the recruitments. Based on the information received, recommendation 2 has been closed.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

25. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of UNISFA and FPD for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

(Signed) Eleanor T. Burns
Director, Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of recruitment of staff in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	DFS and UNISFA should implement effective monitoring measures to minimize the occurrence of irregularities and non-compliance with established recruitment policies and procedures.	Important	O	OIOS verification that DFS and UNISFA have implemented effective monitoring measures to minimize the scope for irregularities and non-compliance with established policies and procedures in the recruitment of Mission staff.	30 June 2018
2	UNISFA should implement effective measures to ensure the maintenance of adequate records for the recruitment process.	Important	C	Action taken.	Implemented

¹ Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

² Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

³ C = closed, O = open

⁴ Date provided by UNISFA in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response



UNCLASSIFIED

Immediate

TO: Mr. Bolton Tarleh, Chief,
A: Peacekeeping Audit Service, Internal Audit Division, OIOS

DATE:

JUL 14 2017

THROUGH:

REFERENCE: UNHQ-AR-BOI-Memo-2-
2017-11266

S/C DE:

FROM: Lisa Buitenheim, Assistant Secretary-General
DE: for Field Support

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Buitenheim".

SUBJECT: **Draft report on an audit of recruitment of staff in the United Nations**
OBJET: **Interim Security Force For Abyei (Assignment No. AP2016/635/01)**

1. I refer to your memorandum, dated 5 June 2017 and communication dated 7 July 2017, regarding the above-mentioned audit. We note that OIOS has substantially taken into account our comments provided earlier. We have, however, updated Appendix I to reflect our comments and the individual responsible for the implementation of the recommendations with the deadline.

2. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report. We stand ready to provide any further information that may be required.

cc: Ms. Cynthia Avena-Castillo

Management Response

Audit of recruitment of staff in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	DFS and UNISFA should implement effective monitoring measures to minimize the occurrence of irregularities and non-compliance with established recruitment policies and procedures.	Important	Yes	Director FPD, DFS and DMS, UNISFA	Second quarter of 2018	DFS and UNISFA's comments are reflected in the report.
2	UNISFA should implement effective measures to ensure the maintenance of adequate records for the recruitment process.	Important	Yes	Director, UNISFA	Implemented	The recommendation has been implemented. UNISFA Human Resources maintains comprehensive physical and digital records of both national and international recruitment case files. Furthermore, as a result of the current delegation of authority arrangement, a comprehensive record of the recruitment process is required to enable FPD, DFS to review and confirm the adequacy of the recruitment process. The requirement to provide comprehensive case files for national recruitment to RSCE via the COSMOS web platform also ensures that the Mission maintains comprehensive records of national recruitment, to reduce potential delays in case processing. Internally, UNISFA utilizes a recruitment check-list for every case file to ensure the responsible officer is aware of the required documents/actions to be taken. UNISFA Human Resources maintains comprehensive physical and digital records of national and international recruitment case files.

¹ Critical recommendations address critical and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

² Important recommendations address important (but not critical or pervasive) deficiencies in governance, risk management or control processes, such that reasonable assurance may be at risk regarding the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.