

The seal of the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction is a large, circular emblem in the background. It features an eagle with wings spread, perched on a shield with vertical stripes. The eagle is surrounded by olive branches and arrows. The text "INSPECTOR GENERAL" is written in English and Arabic at the top, and "RECONSTRUCTION" is written in English and Arabic at the bottom.

U.S. ANTICORRUPTION EFFORTS IN
IRAQ: SUSTAINED MANAGEMENT
COMMITMENT IS A KEY TO SUCCESS

SIGIR-08-008
JANUARY 24, 2008



SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION

January 24, 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY OF STATE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ

SUBJECT: U. S. Anticorruption Efforts in Iraq: Sustained Management Commitment is Key to Success (SIGIR-08-008) (Project 8009)

This is the latest in a series of Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) reports on U.S. government anticorruption efforts in Iraq. SIGIR instituted reviews of these programs in recognition of the importance eliminating corruption plays in promoting Iraq's economic, social, and political reconstruction: SIGIR has described the impact that corruption has had on Iraq as the "second insurgency." Previous SIGIR reports concluded that U.S. anticorruption efforts lacked a comprehensive plan with metrics that ties programs to an overall strategy as well as baselines from which progress could be measured. Moreover, SIGIR found these efforts have gone through periods of high activity and periods when they have languished. Our objective for this report was to review U.S. Department of State (DoS) progress in implementing our prior recommendations to improve the management of U.S. anticorruption initiatives in Iraq.

Results

SIGIR found that the U.S. Embassy in Iraq has taken or planned steps to address SIGIR's concerns that if effectively implemented would address all recommendations contained in previous SIGIR reports (See Appendix A). Most notably, the Ambassador has identified actions to improve the oversight and coordination of the U.S. anticorruption effort and in December 2007 proposed to the Secretary of State a reorganization of personnel and assets to elevate the importance of anticorruption programs. Moreover, the Embassy has recognized the need to design and implement a comprehensive, integrated anticorruption strategy to assist the Government of Iraq (GoI) and the Iraqi people combat the corruption permeating government agencies, private business and other institutions of Iraqi society. SIGIR supports these actions but notes that past efforts to revitalize and coordinate U.S. anticorruption efforts have been largely ineffective and suffered from a lack of management follow through. The success of these new efforts will, therefore, depend in large part on sustained management commitment, particularly in terms of day-to-day leadership and senior-management oversight.

The recent U.S. Embassy plan includes specific actions to revamp the U.S. anticorruption strategy, elevate its priority within the Embassy's areas of responsibility, and better manage and oversee activities. To that end, the Ambassador approved a reorganization that calls for a senior official, reporting directly to the Deputy Chief of Mission, to coordinate all U.S. anticorruption policy and programs. On December 7, 2007, the Ambassador requested the Secretary of State's approval of the plan. The Embassy has also taken other actions such as in resurrecting the

Anticorruption Working Group (ACWG) and beginning an inventory of all U.S. funded anticorruption programs. On January 4, 2008 SIGIR provided the Embassy and DoS a summary of our findings and a draft recommendation that the Secretary of State direct a timely review of the proposed strategy and take whatever actions are necessary to support the reorganization of the U.S. Embassy's anticorruption efforts. On January 9, 2008, the Secretary of State notified the Embassy of its support for the reorganization to include the recruiting of a high level official to serve as anticorruption coordinator. Accordingly, we make no recommendations in our final report.

Background

The U.S. Embassy and the Iraqi Prime Minister have stated that developing the capacity of the GOI to address corruption is critical for good governance. The Ambassador reported that pervasive corruption poses a serious threat to Iraq stability and reconstruction efforts.

Corruption undercuts the construction and maintenance of Iraq's infrastructure, deprives people of goods and services, reduces confidence in public institutions, and potentially aids insurgent groups reportedly funded by graft derived from oil smuggling or embezzlement. A recent report submitted by Iraq, pursuant to the requirements of the recently enacted International Compact for Iraq, identified "high levels of corruption and an immature accountability framework" within the government. This report noted that the GoI believes that incidents of corruption could potentially be endemic. Prime Minister Malaki has stated that 2008 is the year the GOI will address corruption.

A multitude of agencies in Iraq, including the Department of Justice, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Treasury, Multi-National Force-Iraq, and Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, are involved in anticorruption activities. The U.S. Embassy began significant efforts in this area in 2005 when, at SIGIR's urging, the Ambassador held an anticorruption summit. The summit included U.S. and Iraqi officials with direct anticorruption responsibilities, and resulted in the rejuvenation of the Embassy's Anticorruption Working Group (ACWG). The group's aim was to develop an anticorruption strategy and to synchronize all U.S.-led anticorruption activities with this strategy. Heads of U.S. Embassy offices, such as the Political Affairs Section, the U.S. Agency for International Development, as well as officials from the Multi-National Force-Iraq, participated in the ACWG.

In July 2006, SIGIR issued a report¹ that identified problems such as a lack of coordination and leadership in anticorruption activities. We recommended that DoS appoint a senior leader to direct the program and provide continuity in program administration. The report contained 11 other recommendations for program improvement.

In July 2007 another SIGIR report assessed progress in implementing those recommendations and found that little progress had been made.² We noted that the program lacked focus and that the Embassy had not completed a recommended inventory of anticorruption activities or a recommended assessment of U.S. government anticorruption efforts. Of particular concern,

¹ *Joint Survey of the U.S. Embassy-Iraq's Anticorruption Program* (SIGIR-06-021, July 28, 2006).

² *Status of U.S. Government Anticorruption Efforts in Iraq* (SIGIR-07-007, July 24, 2007)

SIGIR found that the Embassy lacked a comprehensive, integrated plan that tied anticorruption activities to an overall U.S. Mission-Iraq strategy, and a baseline to measure progress. The absence of a strategy made it difficult to assess funding requirements. SIGIR determined that as of June 30, 2007, the Embassy had fully implemented only two of our 12 recommendations. In response, SIGIR recommended that the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq re-emphasize and re-address the entire list of recommendations made in our July 2006 audit report. As part of re-addressing the prior recommendations this second report stated that the Ambassador should:

1. Include in the corrective action plans an estimated completion date for implementing each recommendation.
2. Complete the inventory of anticorruption programs, activities, and initiatives.
3. Complete the assessments of the major program initiatives that are supporting the Embassy's anticorruption strategy.

The U.S. Embassy responded that it remained committed to a vigorous and effective anticorruption program, and that the SIGIR recommendations provided a helpful framework for developing specific initiatives and the implementing practical plans to address this serious problem. As such, the Embassy responded that it would complete the implementation of the recommendations no later than September 30, 2007. In October 2007, SIGIR testified that the Embassy had been unable to secure enduring and effective leadership for its anticorruption program and as a result the effort had languished except for a few points of progress. The testimony noted that at that time, the Embassy had neither completed its promised assessment of U.S. government anticorruption efforts nor drafted an integrated, strategic plan. SIGIR concluded that the Embassy had not addressed the 10 open recommendations.³

Recent Actions May Result in Long Needed Management Improvements

SIGIR's current review shows that the U.S. Embassy Baghdad has developed and received DoS approval of a plan to improve the management of U.S. anticorruption activities. If implemented appropriately, the plan would address all SIGIR recommendations. Pending implementation of the plan, however, 10 SIGIR recommendations remain open. (See Appendix A)

The Embassy is aware that its anticorruption program needs attention. In a December 2007 cable to the Secretary of State, the Embassy noted that SIGIR reports described the Embassy's programs as uneven, uncoordinated and only modestly funded. The cable also stated that an internal assessment had found that the Embassy needed to bolster its leadership and coordination. The cable continued that, guided by the SIGIR recommendations and the counsel of the Embassy's senior officers, the Ambassador determined that the Embassy must design and implement a comprehensive, integrated strategy, and proposed a reorganization of personnel and assets. The Ambassador has taken a number of initial actions to advance the coordination and management of U.S. agencies anticorruption programs. As discussed below, the strategy has two major components. The first is to elevate the importance of anticorruption activities within the

³ *Testimony of Stuart W. Bowen, JR., Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, "Assessing the State of Iraqi Corruption", House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, October 4, 2007*

Embassy's area of responsibilities. The second is to initiative specific actions in support of the reorganization of Embassy priorities.

Elevating Prominence of Anticorruption Activities

The revised anticorruption approach would elevate anticorruption activities within the Embassy's areas of responsibilities. The Embassy proposed to accomplish this goal by reorganizing the management of the effort, and assigning a high ranking official of "stature and prominence" to lead its campaign. SIGIR had previously noted that the lack of a program manager with the authority and support to provide the necessary leadership and coordination of the overall anticorruption effort posed a major impediment to success. If effectively implemented, that action would address SIGIR recommendations that the Embassy provide increased direction and oversight of the U.S. anticorruption effort, including the need to develop a plan that links individual programs to a strategy, and establish a policy to vet all new anticorruption activities through an executive steering group.

According to a December 2007 Embassy cable to the DoS, the new coordinator would report directly to the Deputy Chief of Mission and act as the Ambassador's personal representative with budgetary, planning, staffing and program authority for the anticorruption program. Moreover, the coordinator would be the liaison with the Multi-National Forces-Iraq, charged with harmonizing all civilian and military efforts. To accomplish its goals the Embassy requested that DoS endorse its proposal and either recruit a senior level U.S. government official or assign a Foreign Service Officer as coordinator by the end of December. On January 9, 2008 the Secretary of State notified the Embassy that the DoS supported the reorganization and that it had begun recruiting a senior level officer for the coordinator position. The Secretary stated that DoS echoed the Embassy's recommendation that the coordinator be an individual with significant State Department experience as that person would be intimately familiar with the Embassy structure and how the DoS functions overseas. The Department also approved the reassignment of embassy personnel into the coordinator's office.

Actions to Support New Anticorruption Strategy

The Ambassador notified the Secretary of State that he had directed a number of management actions to move the anticorruption effort forward in anticipation that the proposal would be approved and a coordinator appointed. Key initiatives include:

- Reinvigorate the ACWG. SIGIR has previously determined that the ACWG was not sustained. In July 2006, SIGIR reported that this group, after being reconstituted seven months earlier, was still in the early stages of operation. In December 2007, the Embassy noted that the ACWG had been on hiatus again during the previous few months. However, to support the new anticorruption strategy, the Ambassador directed the ACWG to prepare for an intensified focus on anticorruption in 2008. The ACWG is to serve as a forum for coordinating, integrating, and addressing conflicts among all Embassy and military anticorruption activities. If effectively implemented, these actions would address the SIGIR recommendation that the members of the ACWG develop action plans in concert with an overall strategic goal.

The ACWG met three times in November and December of 2007. The first December meeting included representatives from Embassy sections including the U.S. Agency for International Development, Political Affairs, and Rule of Law, as well as from the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq and the Multi-National Forces-Iraq. The working group is in the process of determining its structure and specific taskings.

- Inventory and evaluate all military and civilian U.S. funded programs. The Embassy identifies a number of objectives tied to this effort that flow directly from a previous SIGIR recommendation. We recommended in 2006 that the Embassy conduct a complete review of U.S. programs to assess effectiveness, and reiterated the following year the need to inventory and evaluate all U.S. anticorruption programs, activities and initiatives. The Embassy now plans to develop a roster of all programs, assess the effectiveness of each, and identify best practices. Its aim is to promote programs that work and discontinue those that do not.

Initial actions have been taken to begin the inventory and evaluation process. For example, the Chairman of the December 9, 2007 ACWG meeting requested that agency officials provide information on each of their anticorruption programs such as the funding level and source, the number of U.S. personnel involved, and an evaluation of effectiveness.

- Initiate steps to gain GoI support for the creation of a Good Governance Council. SIGIR previously recommended that the Embassy encourage the GoI to take measures to institutionalize anticorruption activities such as in establishing its own working groups with regional and international partners. The Embassy reported that it was taking actions to continue such outreach. The December 2007 reorganization plan addresses the need to continue dialogue with the GOI. For example, the new strategy calls for the coordinator to work in conjunction with GoI, international and non-governmental organizations and the Multi-National Force-Iraq to promote the creation of a Good Governance Council.
- Address necessary administrative support for reorganization efforts. Previous SIGIR reports determined that the Embassy needed to provide the personnel necessary for sufficient oversight of U.S. anticorruption efforts. Under the reorganization, the Ambassador will transfer staff from other Embassy sections, including the Office of Accountability and Transparency, into the new coordinator's office. When coupled with the arrival of a high level coordinator, the workforce restructuring would start to address the staffing issues.
- Outline a 2008 anticorruption initiative. The Embassy lists numerous purposes of this year-long effort: leverage the resources and experience of international partners engaged in anticorruption efforts; support Iraqi anticorruption institutions and integrate anticorruption systems into all levels of the GoI, and; enhance the performance of U.S. programs and outreach. Together with inventorying and evaluating individual program performance, these initiatives would begin to address the SIGIR recommendation regarding the need for an anticorruption strategic plan.

Conclusions

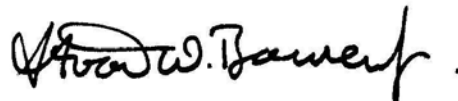
SIGIR regards recent Embassy decisions to revamp its anticorruption strategy as encouraging, and the Embassy's planned actions are generally consistent with our earlier recommendations. SIGIR supports these actions but adds a cautionary note: prior initiatives have been unsuccessful due to insufficient management attention. As a result, most of our recommendations have not been fully implemented. At this time it is too early to assess current actions. DoS has just approved the reorganization and refocus and begun its search for a coordinator. However, it is not too early to conclude that as with the prior actions, the proposed approach will yield little or no benefit without sustained management commitment to leadership and program oversight.

Given the critical importance of these efforts to the Iraq reconstruction program, SIGIR will monitor Embassy implementation efforts, provide progress reports quarterly, and make recommendations as appropriate.

Management Comments

We provided the DoS a draft of this report for comment and a Department official stated they agreed with the report.

Thank you for the courtesies extended to the staff. For additional information on this report, please contact Mr. David Warren (703-604-0982 / david.warren@sigir.mil; or Mr. Glenn Furbish (703-428-1058 / glenn.furbish@sigir.mil. For a list of the audit team members, see Appendix B.



Stuart W. Bowen, Jr.
Inspector General

Appendices

Appendix A—SIGIR Analysis of Actions Planned or Taken to Address SIGIR Recommendations

In July 2006, SIGIR issued a report on anticorruption activities that identified problems such as a lack of coordination and leadership. SIGIR made 12 recommendations to improve the management of U.S. anticorruption efforts. In July 2007, SIGIR reported that limited progress had been made in implementing these recommendations but that the U.S. Embassy was in the process of re-establishing and reorganizing its efforts to better oversee U.S. anticorruption activities.

In December 2007, the Embassy completed its proposed strategy and submitted it to the Department of State for review: the Secretary approved it on January 9, 2008. SIGIR assessed the strategy and actions taken or planned to determine whether they would address our prior recommendations. SIGIR’s analysis shows that 12 of 12 have either been closed⁴ or are being addressed by the new approach. Nonetheless, 10 SIGIR recommendations remain open pending the implementation of the strategy and individual actions. The table below presents U.S. Embassy actions on SIGIR’s 12 recommendations as of January 2008 and a summary of SIGIR’s analysis of them. Overall, planned actions appear to generally support the outcomes SIGIR recommendations were designed to achieve.

SIGIR Recommendations	SIGIR Analysis of Actions Planned or Taken	SIGIR Analysis of Recommendation Status
<p>Recommendation (1). We recommended that the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq provide the necessary resources to have sufficient direction and oversight of the U.S. Embassy’s anticorruption program, including a senior leader from DoS and a senior officer from the Multi National Forces – Iraq(MNF-I). Both positions should be filled with staff that has such a background to bring value to the position.</p>	<p>The U.S. Ambassador obtained a senior Foreign Service (FS-01) officer who arrived on post in September 2006, and the MNF-I officer has been regularly attending the ACWG. Informal contacts between the two organizations are frequent. SIGIR’s July 2007 report concluded that Embassy reorganization efforts also supported this recommendation.</p>	<p>This recommendation was Closed. However, the Ambassador determined that a higher level official was needed to coordinate activities. SIGIR will monitor progress in achieving sufficient direction and oversight of Embassy anticorruption efforts.</p>
<p>Recommendation (2). Continue efforts to recruit an Iraqi local national staff member to provide support to the full-time anticorruption program manager. This person should have the necessary skills and level to be instrumental in forging joint U.S.-Iraqi anticorruption initiatives.</p>	<p>SIGIR found that as of May 2007, the Embassy was still seeking an Iraqi national to fill this position. As of January 2008 the Embassy had not identified ongoing actions to hire an Iraqi for the program. However, the Embassy responded that plans to work more closely with the GoI in partnership and a Good Governance Council address this recommendation. SIGIR will continue to monitor Embassy actions in forging joint U.S. Iraqi initiatives.</p>	<p>This recommendation remains Open, Actions Pending or Underway</p>

⁴ A recommendation is closed when it has been implemented, when action have been taken that essentially meet the recommendation’s intent, or when circumstances have changed and the recommendation is no longer valid.

SIGIR Recommendations	SIGIR Analysis of Actions Planned or Taken	SIGIR Analysis of Recommendation Status
<p>Recommendation (3). Establish a joint executive steering group, chaired by the anticorruption program manager, with oversight of all U.S. government anticorruption programs to ensure that all initiatives are working toward a common goal in the most efficient and effective manner.</p>	<p>SIGIR noted in its July 2007 report that the Embassy was then re-establishing and reorganizing its efforts to better oversee all U.S. government anticorruption programs to ensure that all initiatives were working toward a common goal in the most efficient and effective manner. Recent reorganization plans support the intent of the recommendation to establish an executive management group with visibility over all U.S. funded anticorruption activities.</p>	<p>This recommendation remains Open, Actions Pending or Underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation (4). Direct the Joint Executive Steering Group to provide to the Deputy Chief of Mission periodic reports (at least quarterly) on progress, barriers, and funding needs to support the anticorruption Program.</p>	<p>The current plan has the new coordinator reporting directly to the Deputy Chief of Mission but available information has not yet detailed the type of reports required.</p>	<p>This recommendation remains Open, Actions Pending or Underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation (5). Establish a policy that will require all participating organizations to vet new anticorruption initiatives through the new joint executive steering group.</p>	<p>Based on the approved December 2007 strategy, the DoS will recruit a high level coordinator for all civilian and military anticorruption efforts. This supports the intent of the recommendation. SIGIR will monitor the implementation of the reorganization to determine if all initiatives are vetted through the coordinator.</p>	<p>This recommendation remains Open, Actions Pending or Underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation (6). Direct the joint executive steering group to conduct a complete review of each U.S.-funded anticorruption program and assess how that program helps achieve the U.S. government's strategic goals for anticorruption.</p>	<p>The ACWG has already begun an inventory and initial assessment of U.S. funded anticorruption activities. Planned actions suggest that they will support the development of a strategic plan.</p>	<p>This recommendation remains Open, Actions Pending or Underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation (7). Direct the members of the ACWG to develop action plans for each activity's program in concert with the overall strategic goals.</p>	<p>The Ambassador has stated that the Embassy must design and implement a comprehensive, integrated anticorruption strategy. ACWG actions to inventory and evaluate individual programs appear to be first steps in developing actions plans.</p>	<p>This recommendation remains Open, Actions Pending or Underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation (8). Establish a baseline for each anticorruption program to document a starting point for the program to measure progress.</p>	<p>The structure of the ACWG proposed in December 2007 includes a Monitoring Sub-Group whose purpose is to establish measuring tools for U.S. anticorruption efforts and assess program effectiveness. Because baselines are a critical component of any evaluation, the sub-group's plan supports the intent of the recommendation.</p>	<p>This recommendation remains Open, Actions Pending or Underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation (9). Establish interim and long-term objective(s) for each anticorruption program consistent with the overall anticorruption program strategy.</p>	<p>The Ambassador highlighted the importance of developing an anticorruption strategy and specific program objectives. As part of the planned reorganization, individual IACWG sub-groups are assigned tasks that support this goal.</p>	<p>This recommendation remains Open, Actions Pending or Underway.</p>
<p>Recommendation (10). Engage the Iraqi anticorruption counterparts in the new government and establish the joint U.S.-Iraq</p>	<p>On May 16, 2007, the JACC charter was signed by the Prime Minister and senior Iraqi leaders and since then the JACC has</p>	<p>This recommendation is Closed.</p>

SIGIR Recommendations	SIGIR Analysis of Actions Planned or Taken	SIGIR Analysis of Recommendation Status
ACWG.	held several meetings.	
Recommendation (11). Encourage the GOI to establish its own anticorruption working groups with regional and international partners.	Key components of the December 2007 reorganization plan address efforts to encourage the GoI to take measures such as in supporting the development of anticorruption systems and procedures into their administrative practices at all government levels	This recommendation remains Open, Actions Pending or Underway.
<p>Recommendation (12). Based on the unresolved recommendation 20 from the October 2005 DoS Office of Inspector General report ⁵, develop and implement an action plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Identify the training requirements of the Commission on Public Integrity (CPI), Board of Supreme Audit, Central Criminal Court of Iraq, and the ministerial Inspector Generals, with special emphasis on requirements that apply to all four institutions. B) Prioritize the identified training requirements. C) Identify training solutions for those requirements that can cut across multiple institutions to avoid duplication and maximize resources. 	The reorganized ACWG includes a Training Sub-Group whose purpose will be to deconflict and coordinate interagency training assistance and mandate clear lanes of authority and prevent duplication of efforts.	This recommendation remains Open, Actions Pending or Underway.

⁵ Report of Inspection: Rule of Law Programs, Embassy, Baghdad, Iraq (DoS OIG, ISP-IQO-06-01, October 2005)

Appendix B—Objective, Scope, and Methodology

SIGIR initiated this review in December 2007 (Project 8009) as part of a series of reviews to assess U.S. government anticorruption efforts in Iraq. The objective of this review was to determine current U.S. efforts to strengthen the management of anticorruption activities, and the extent to which they address SIGIR’s recommendations. We reviewed internal management controls from the context of specific plans, policies and procedures that are being implemented and planned to improve the anticorruption program. For example, we addressed internal control issues such as maintaining the requisite number and level of competent staff to manage the multi agency effort, and developing systems to evaluate individual programs.

To determine current U.S. efforts to strengthen management, we analyzed recent Embassy cables and other documents detailing new anticorruption measures. We also met with Embassy personnel and attended meetings of the Embassy Anticorruption Working Group.

To assess progress in addressing SIGIR recommendations, we arrayed current planned and ongoing anticorruption management changes, and assessed the extent to which they supported the objectives of the recommendations. For each recommendation we then concluded whether (1) actions were sufficient to completely address and therefore closeout a specific recommendation, (2) actions were pending or underway but not to the extent that they had resolved the problem the recommendation sought to address, or (3) actions did not address the recommendation.

We conducted this review in December 2007 and January 2008 at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Use of Computer-processed Data

We did not use computer-processed data to perform this review.

Prior Coverage

We reviewed these reports:

- *Status of U.S. Government Efforts in Iraq* (SIGIR 07-007, July 24, 2007)
- *Report of Inspection: Survey of Anticorruption Programs, Embassy Baghdad, Iraq* (DoS OIG, ISP-IGO-06-50, August 2006)

Appendix C—Audit Team Members

This report was prepared and the audit work was conducted under the direction of David Warren, Assistant Inspector General for Audit, Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.

Staff members who contributed to the report include

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SIGIR's Mission	<p>Regarding the U.S. reconstruction plans, programs, and operations in Iraq, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction provides independent and objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oversight and review through comprehensive audits, inspections, and investigations • advice and recommendations on policies to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness • deterrence of malfeasance through the prevention and detection of fraud, waste, and abuse • information and analysis to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Congress, and the American people through Quarterly Reports
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