U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Memorandum

Date: September 16, 2020

Subject: INFORMATION: Audit Announcement | Air Traffic Controller Hiring Reform | Project No. 20A3009A000
Federal Aviation Administration

From: Matthew E. Hampton
Assistant Inspector General for Aviation Audits

To: Director, Audit and Evaluation, FAA

Air traffic controllers are responsible for the safe, orderly and expeditious movement of air traffic through the Nation's Airspace System. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) currently employs approximately 14,375 controllers in over 300 air traffic control (ATC) facilities such as airport traffic control towers and Terminal Radar Approach Control Facilities. Every year, FAA must hire new controllers to account for attrition due to retirements and resignations—including those of trainee and inexperienced controllers. Due to the amount of time and funds needed to select and train controllers to be fully certified professional controllers,[1] FAA's selection and training processes must focus on identifying the candidates that have the best chance of succeeding. All candidates selected for entry-level controller positions must pass an ATC pre-employment test also called the Air Traffic Skills Assessment test.[2]

Given the significance of the ATC pre-employment test in FAA's controller hiring decisions, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020[3] mandated that DOT-OIG assess the assumptions and methodologies used to develop this test. Consequently, we are initiating and audit to assess FAA's (1) validation of the assumptions and methodologies used to develop the ATC pre-employment test, (2) administration of the test and evaluation of its results, and (3) plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the test in identifying successful ATC candidates.

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[1] Certified professional controllers are fully certified on all positions within their assigned areas. They also act as on-the-job training instructors for trainee and inexperienced controllers.

[2] The test is broken into seven subtests that cover memory, basic math games, verbal and logic questions, as well as an air collision simulation.

[3] Pub. L. No. 116-92.

We plan to begin this audit in the coming weeks and will contact your audit liaisons to schedule an entrance conference. We will conduct our work at Department of Transportation, FAA headquarters in Washington DC, and other FAA sites as needed. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202-366-0500, or Jay Borwankar, Program Director, at 202-493-0970.

cc: DOT Audit Liaison, M-1
             FAA Audit Liaison, AAE-100