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INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES - BUREAU DES SERVICES DE CONTRÔLE INTERNE

INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION - DIVISION DE L'AUDIT INTERNE

TO: Mr. Victor Da Silva Angelo,
A: Special Representative of the Secretary-General,
MINURCAT

DATE: 29 May 2009

REFERENCE: IAD: 09- 02514

FROM: Fatoumata Ndiaye, Acting Director
DE: Internal Audit Division, OIOS

Fatou

SUBJECT: **Assignment no. AP2008/636/02 – Audit of the recruitment of international staff in**
OBJET: **MINURCAT**

The vacancy rate remained high in spite of the deployment of a recruitment task force to expedite recruitment

1. I am pleased to present the report on the above-mentioned audit which was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

2. In order for us to close the recommendations, we request that you provide us with the additional information as discussed in the text of the report and also summarized in Annex 1.

3. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its recommendations, particularly those designated as high risk (i.e., recommendation 1) in annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annual report to the Secretary-General.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recruitment of international staff in MINURCAT

OIOS conducted an audit of the recruitment of international staff in the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). The overall objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls in recruitment of international staff. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

OIOS was unable to assess the adequacy and/or effectiveness of internal controls due to the lack of available information. However, the audit identified the following issues:

- High vacancy rate of authorized civilian staff in the Mission as a result of vacancies in the Tiger Team, insufficient training of Team members and the lack of a strategic recruitment planning. As at June 2008 when the Tiger Team should have been disbanded, the Mission's vacancy rate was more than 70 per cent compared to the overall target vacancy rate of 20 per cent;

- Lack of training provided to programme managers and supervisors in competency based interviewing techniques. This may have resulted in the use of inappropriate interviewing techniques, precluding the recruitment of the best candidates; and

- Lack of a requirement for some key positions to be filled by individuals who are fluent in French, the language of the host country, resulted in the recruitment of individuals that lacked skills to effectively carry out their functions.

OIOS made recommendations to address the issues identified during the audit to further improve human resources management.

I. INTRODUCTION

4. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the recruitment of international staff in the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

5. In its resolution 1778 dated 25 September 2007, the Security Council established MINURCAT to help create security conditions conducive to the voluntary, secure and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons. Prior to the establishment of the Mission, the Department of Field Support (DFS) deployed a recruitment task force (the Tiger Team) in August 2007 with delegated authority to recruit international and national civilian staff. Its terms of reference included support to the Mission in its start-up phase to deploy 80 per cent of authorized civilian personnel within six months. The mandate of the Tiger Team was to expire on 30 June 2008.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

6. The main objectives of the audit were to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls in recruitment of international staff.

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

7. The audit covered the recruitment of international civilian staff and recruitment activities for the period from September 2007 to 30 June 2008.

8. The audit methodology involved the review of relevant procedural guidelines, budgets and other records supporting the recruitment of international staff. Interviews were conducted with key personnel in the Local and International Recruitment Unit and other staff with human resources responsibilities.

IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Vacancy rates

9. The terms of reference of the Tiger Team required that it supports recruitment of civilian staff in MINURCAT and deploy at least 80 per cent of the authorized civilian staff in six months, or by the end of February 2008, based on the Mission start-up period of September 2007. OIOS found that as at June 2008, the vacancy rate of the Mission remained very high, as indicated in Table 1 below, compared to the overall target vacancy rate of 20 per cent.

Table1: MINURCAT staffing level as at 30 June 2008

Category	Authorized	On board	Under recruitment	Travel Status	Vacant	Vacancy rate
International staff	543	197	68	19	346	64 %
National staff	576	124	8	-	452	78 %
Total	1119	321	76	19	798	71 %

10. The Mission was unable to provide OIOS with any satisfactory explanation for the high vacancy rate. It was noted, however, that certain factors could have effected recruitment including the vacancy of professional level posts in the Tiger Team and the insufficient training provided to the Team. Regarding the professional level posts, OIOS noted that the authorized staffing level of the Team was 12. However, at least two of the professional level posts authorized for the Team were never encumbered. Moreover, although some members of the Team were new to the United Nations, the Team was not provided with the required six-week training. Rather, only three weeks of training was provided in the areas of prioritizing recruitment needs, developing and implementing recruitment strategies, and the Nucleus System.

11. The Chief of Administrative Services confirmed that a strategic recruitment planning process was not in place. The head of the Local and International Recruitment Unit (the former Tiger Team) stated that the Unit meets with the Chief of Mission Support (CMS) and with each programme manager separately to discuss the respective staffing requirements. There were no records of the recruitment plans resulting from these meetings. In absence of a documented recruitment plan identifying current and projected vacancies, key mission staffing requirements may be overlooked.

Recommendation 1

(1) The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support should implement effective measures to reduce its vacancy rates, including the timely identification of vacancies and initiation of recruitment actions.

12. *The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 1 and stated that since 1 March 2009, a strategy has been put in place to reduce the time for recruitment and on-boarding of staff.* Recommendation 1 remains open pending OIOS' review of the recruitment strategy.

B. Structure of the human resource function

13. There were no resources allocated in the 2008-2009 budget for the maintenance of the Tiger Team. However, OIOS was informed that DFS expected the Team to continue to function as a unit called the Local and International Recruitment Unit within the Office of the Chief of Mission Support until the Mission achieved its 80 per cent recruitment target. The terms of reference of the Local and International Recruitment Unit are similar to those of the disbanded Tiger Team. In OIOS' view, the functions of the disbanded Tiger Team should have been transferred to the Human Resources Section (HRS), in-line with the structure in other peacekeeping missions, since recruitment is an integral part of the HRS. OIOS suggested that to ensure synergy and more effective and efficient human resources management, recruitment should be under the HRS. The Mission however was of the opinion that due to its new mandate and further expansion, there was a need to extend the tenure of the Tiger Team to fill the bulk of vacancies including those that will result from the additional posts requested in the 2009-2010 budget. The Human Resources Section will take over responsibility for recruitment once the posts are encumbered.

C. Training on competency based interviewing techniques

14. The standard operating procedure (SOP) on staff selection states that interviews shall be conducted by a panel of at least three persons, one of whom should be the programme manager responsible for the post being filled, who shall chair the interview panel. The SOP further indicates that at least one member of the panel has to have undertaken the competency-based interview course developed by the Office of Human Resources Management and offered through the Mission's Training Section. However, most programme managers and supervisors in MINURCAT had not attended the course. Thus, there was a risk that appropriate interviewing techniques were not used and as a result, the Mission may have been precluded from recruiting the best candidates.

Recommendation 2

(2) The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support should ensure that all programme managers and persons participating in interviewing panels are provided with training in competency-based interviewing techniques.

15. *The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 2 and stated that all programme managers and other personnel involved in the recruitment process will be provided with necessary training in competency-based interviewing techniques.* Recommendation 2 remains open pending confirmation that staff members involved in interviewing applicants have completed the required training.

D. Language requirement for key posts

16. There were managers and supervisors in MINURCAT who could not communicate in French, the official language of the host country. Without the requisite language skills, there is a risk that managers and supervisors cannot effectively communicate with their local counterparts. The CMS mentioned that the language issue negatively impacts the activities of the Transport Section and the relationship with the Détachement Intégré de Sécurité, the Chadian troops mandated to ensure the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons. The generic job description provides for "fluency in spoken and written English or French; knowledge of a second UN language is an advantage and sometimes a requirement." If, as mentioned by the CMS, for some functions fluency in French is essential, it should be made one of the criterions in the selection process. This issue should be further discussed with the Field Personnel Division (FPD) of DFS to ensure candidates selected have the necessary qualifications.

Recommendation 3

(3) The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support should follow-up with the Field Personnel Division, Department of Field Support to ensure, for certain positions identified by MINURCAT management, there is a requirement for candidates to be fluent in French.

17. *The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 3 and stated that fluency in French and/or Arabic will be considered an asset in the recruitment of the staff.* Recommendation 3 remains open pending receipt of documentation identifying the

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positions that require fluency in the official language(s) as well as the review of future vacancy announces requiring fluency in the official language(s) of the host country.

E. Maintenance of recruitment records

18. A review of recruitment files maintained in the Mission found that interview reports for recruitment of staff had not been maintained. Paragraph 5.9 of the SOP on staff selection states that the Comparative Evaluation Report or Worksheet, Interview Report and the annotated list of candidates, showing reasons why programme managers eliminated candidates, shall be treated as confidential documents. It further adds that the documents shall be filed in a recruitment file in the Mission for three years after the selection is approved by FPD. Copies of the documents shall also be transmitted to FPD at the time of sending the selection fax.

19. Although the Local and International Recruitment Unit explained that records supporting the recruitment process were downloaded into Nucleus, the SOP requires that the Mission maintain original documents for a period of up to three years. Furthermore, other records such as candidates' short-lists and clearance by the Conduct and Discipline Unit were also missing. Unless the SOP is amended by DFS to exclusively require the maintenance of electronic records, the Mission should comply with the existing SOP.

Recommendation 4

(4) The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Recruitment Unit maintains complete files of records in accordance with the relevant standard operating procedures.

20. *The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the Tiger Team will implement a more effective and efficient recruitment strategy and maintain an information-based structure that will enable accountability and transparency.* Recommendation 4 remains open pending submission to OIOS of the new recruitment strategy which includes the proper maintenance of files.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

21. We wish to express our appreciation to the Management and staff of MINURCAT for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

cc: Mr. Guy Siri, Chief of Mission Support , MINURCAT
Mr. Swatantra Goolsarran, Executive Secretary, UN Board of Auditors
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ANNEX 1

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/ O[1]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date
1	The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support should implement effective measures to reduce its vacancy rates, including the timely identification of vacancies and initiation of recruitment actions.	Operational	High	O	Submission of the recruitment strategy to OIOS.	1 March 2009
2	The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support should ensure that all programme managers and persons participating in interviewing panels are provided with training in competency-based interviewing techniques.	Operational	Medium	O	Confirmation that staff members responsible for interviewing completed the mandatory training.	None provided
3	The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support should follow-up with the Field Personnel Division, Department of Field Support to ensure, for certain positions identified by MINURCAT management, there is a requirement for candidates to be fluent in French.	Operational	Medium	O	Submission of documentation identifying the positions that require fluency in the official language(s) and the related vacancy announcements.	None provided
4	The MINURCAT Office of Mission Support should ensure that the Recruitment Unit maintains complete files of records in accordance with the relevant standard operating procedures.	Operational	Medium	O	Submission to OIOS of the new recruitment strategy which includes proper maintenance of files.	None provided

1. C = closed, O = open
2. Date provided by MINURCAT in response to recommendations