

## MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: OIG Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments and Voluntary Early Retirement Authority

TO: All OIG Employees

I am pleased to provide you with updated information about the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP - Buy Out) and Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA - Early Out).

In FY 2006, the OIG began to significantly streamline its operations, realign functions and programs, and reduce overall staff levels and field sites. In that we are likely to experience additional organizational realignments and reshaping, we have to take action to prepare for FY 2008 and beyond. One strategy that we sought to utilize to help accomplish organizational realignments and reshaping is the VSIP and VERA. Early-out and buy-out offers are one of several human resources flexibilities and tools that we expect to utilize to help manage OIG realignments and any resulting reductions over the next year or so.

Pursuant to authority from the Homeland Security law, and to help accomplish a strategic approach to reductions, OIG requested authority to offer early-out and buy-out to its employees. As part of our submission, the OIG identified employees in headquarters and the field offices to whom incentive payments will be offered. The attached chart provides the categories, job series, and locations of positions covered by the VSIP and VERA request. On March 5, 2007, the OIG received approval from the Office of Personnel Management, with concurrence from Office of Management and Budget, to utilize these two authorities jointly in FY 2007 as a management tool to strategically realign the organization and reduce the workforce. This means that OIG can offer designated employees who are eligible for optional (standard) retirement or voluntary early retirement an opportunity to apply for retirement with a buy-out during a specified timeframe. In addition, employees in designated positions who are not eligible for voluntary or early-out retirement, but who choose to resign, may also apply for the VSIP.

At this time, OIG leadership has decided to offer both VSIP and VERA to eligible employees starting March 15, 2007, with an acceptance deadline of April 11, 2007. Employees accepting the VSIP/VERA during this offer period must separate from the OIG by no later than April 30, 2007. There is a maximum limit of 30 VSIP (buyouts) authorized. Based on the response to this initial offer and acceptances in April 2007, the OIG may offer a second and final offer during May–June 2007 for the balance of the remaining 30 authorized buyouts. If OIG makes a second offer, those employees must separate by no later than June 30, 2007. We do not know how many acceptances will be received and processed in the first April 2007 period; therefore, we cannot promise a second offer period. Also, if we receive more than 30 acceptances either during the first offer period or any succeeding period, acceptances will be approved in accordance with the VSIP and VERA authority.

Employees eligible for either the VSIP or VERA offering will receive an individual notification letter and the necessary application forms from the Servicing Personnel Office, Team Vegas, prior to March 15, 2007, opening date. Eligible employees for the VSIP or VERA will have until April 11, 2007, to decide whether to elect either VSIP or VERA. The initial offer

period to apply will close April 11, 2007. Employees who avail themselves of either VSIP or VERA must retire by no later than April 30, 2007. If you receive a notification and are interested, you should apply early in the application period to allow sufficient time to process your retirement and to resolve any questions or issues that may arise. Again, you are reminded that only 30 applications can be accepted by OIG under this authority. Team Vegas will provide the appropriate forms for application next week.

We request that you consider the VSIP and VERA thoroughly and that you make an informed decision about whether VSIP or VERA is right for you. All applicants should remember that OIG management/leadership can make organizational or assignment decisions based on approved VSIP and VERA applications. After an employee applies for, and is approved for either VERA or VSIP, OIG management can restructure the remaining workforce and either abolish or transfer the position to a different geographic location or to a different part of the organization. Therefore, though a VSIP or VERA employee may change his or her mind and decide not to leave, the OIG cannot guarantee that the employee will be able to remain in the same geographic location or in the same part of the organization. While we encourage all eligible employees to consider this offer, we also caution eligible employees to be mindful of this when applying for either VSIP or VERA.

If, after considering the VSIP and VERA, you think that you are eligible and you want more information, or if you have questions, you should contact Team Vegas Personnel staff, Sheron Johnson at 702-798-2413 or Sandra Pridgen at 702-798-2404. For questions and personal information regarding retirement and related calculations, you may contact Nancy Perry at 202-564-5874 or Nicole Early at 202564-0242, both in the EPA Retirement Counseling Center. For OIG specific information you may contact the Office of Human Capital, Penny Scully at 202-566-2677. Additional information on VSIP/VERA can be obtained at two websites: 1) frequently asked questions (2004 BO-EO – disregard positions covered): [http://intranet.epa.gov/policy/buyouts/buyout\\_faq.htm](http://intranet.epa.gov/policy/buyouts/buyout_faq.htm); and 2) an employee specific calculator for severance pay and retirement: <http://intranet.epa.gov/ohr/benefits/retire/frbcalc.htm>. You may also wish to attend one of EPA's Retirement Briefings. Information on when these are offered is located at: <http://intranet.epa.gov/policy/buyouts/retirecenter.htm>.

If you decide to apply, you are encouraged to try to do so early in the application period, which starts March 15, 2007. After your application for buy-out and/or early-out is processed, you must resign/retire during the separation window. The only exception is rare – if senior leadership requests and gets approval to defer a separation date for business reasons. This exception can only be exercised by management determination, not employee request. It is also important to understand that the decision to take advantage of these opportunities is entirely voluntary. The buy-out and early-out offer during the window of opportunity – no one should be pressured to accept one. However, employees should note that this opportunity to accept a buy-out or early-out offer may not be available in the future.

I hope eligible employees will seriously consider this opportunity and make an informed decision.

Bill Roderick



Attachment

<b>CHART DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION OF POSITIONS IN THE OIG AFFECTED BY VERA/VSIP</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grades</b>	<b>Series</b>
Auditors/Program Analysts	All locations	13-15	0511 & 0343
Criminal/General Investigations	All locations	13-15	1811 1801
Computer Specialists (Investigations)	DC	13-15	2210
Chemist (Investigations)	DC	13	1320
Administrative Support staff	DC, Philadelphia	11-13	0301
	DC, Boston, SF, Chicago	6-10	0318 0303 0326
	DC, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Chicago Kansas City	7-10 13-14	0344 0343
Office Management positions	Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, Washington, RTP, NC, Denver, Dallas, Boston	15	0301 0343 0511 0905 1811 2210
Writer/Editor positions	DC	12-14	1082 1035 343