

*Office of the*  
**INSPECTOR GENERAL**



**R E P O R T   O F   I N V E S T I G A T I O N**

File Number: 06-080

Agency: Georgia Department of Administrative Services

Basis for Investigation: Agency Request for Assistance

Allegations: Misuse of State's Email System

Date Opened: October 25, 2006

Investigated By: Deborah W. Copeland, Deputy Inspector General

Date of Report: November 6, 2006

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Elizabeth P. Archer, Inspector General

# OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL



File Number: 06-080

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2006, Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) Commissioner Brad Douglas contacted the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) requesting assistance concerning the potential misuse of the state's email system. Commissioner Douglas was alerted to the potential misuse when a citizen employed at a Statesboro, Georgia bank contacted him after receiving a questionable email. The email contained a suffix of "@gmail.doas.state.ga.us" after the actual user identification, which gave the citizen the impression that it may have originated from a state employee.

OIG worked with officials from the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA), reviewed computer records, policies and procedures, and standard business operating practices to determine whether a DOAS employee authored the email.

Our preliminary inquiry revealed that the person who sent the email was not a state employee but was an employee of a county tax office. The county employee was able to send the email using a particular computer system that is used by local government entities as a means of communication and as a way to conduct day-to-day operations of their respective agencies. The reason that the sender's email address contained a DOAS identifier was because in 1993, it was decided that users of this computer system needed a domain name attached to their mail identification for Internet usage. The domain name chosen was "@gmail.doas.state.ga.us." Additionally, applications that reside on the state's IBM mainframe (including applications used by both local and state entities) are accessed through the Georgia Online access screen. The state's mainframe computer system, previously administered and maintained by DOAS, is currently managed by GTA.

Although OIG has no jurisdiction over local agencies/employees, we contacted the county tax commissioner's office to inform them of the "domino effect" the user created by sending the email. Although the user's intent is unknown, their actions may be viewed as an inappropriate use of the county/state email system.



**Report of Investigation**

**File No. 06-080**

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**I. BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION**

In October 2006, Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) Commissioner Brad Douglas requested assistance from the Office of Inspector General (OIG) concerning the potential misuse of the state's email system. A citizen employed at a local bank alerted Commissioner Douglas to the potential misuse after receipt of a "questionable" email. The email which contained a suffix of "@gmail.doas.state.ga.us" appeared to have originated from a state employee.

**II. ACTION TAKEN IN FURTHERANCE OF INVESTIGATION**

During the course of this preliminary inquiry, OIG worked with officials from the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA), reviewed computer records, policies and procedures, and standard business operating practices to determine whether a DOAS employee authored the email.

**III. NARRATIVE**

**A. Background**

The Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) is Georgia state government's business solutions provider. DOAS' product and service offerings encompass a broad spectrum that includes risk management services, purchasing services, fleet management, document services, and surplus property. DOAS previously supported the state's mainframe computer system which is now administered and maintained by GTA.

GTA's purpose is to deliver secure, reliable technology services and solutions, and provide guidance and oversight that lead to sound decisions for Georgia government. GTA has many responsibilities including operation of the state's data center and telecommunication network, as well as overall management of the state's portal to provide government information and services.

**B. Preliminary Inquiry**

Our inquiry revealed that the state's mainframe email system was implemented in 1987. In 1993, it was decided that users needed to communicate with other mail systems via the Internet. All users sending mail from the system needed the same domain name for identification purposes. Since the Computer Services Division was under DOAS at that time, the domain name chosen was "@gmail.doas.state.ga.us."

Currently, there are administrators of the system located across the state as well as sub administrators for different agencies. All applications that reside on the mainframe are accessed through the Georgia Online access screen, including the “go mail” system.

Our inquiry confirmed that city and county offices across the state have access to the State of Georgia network in order to conduct business via Georgia online. This network includes links for departments, agencies, cities and counties, and a variety of house and senate district information. Local access is used for a variety of computer applications permitting the offices to conduct related business such as vehicle tags, driver’s licenses, tax matters, children and family services. In order for access to be granted, GTA issues a specific identification number when requested by an office manager at the local level for employees.

Within the “go mail” system, Internet mail is also connected which allows local employees to not only perform their related applications but also communicate as necessary via Internet mail. Although GTA recognizes that the technology involved with this system is dated, it remains a necessity for many local government entities that have no other means to do their job. Although the computers housed within the local government entities are their own assets, they need connectivity to the state’s mainframe in order to conduct county business.

In an effort to retrieve specific identifying information regarding the identity of the sender, OIG met with DOAS Chief Information Officer Todd Cowan and GTA Operations/State Resource Access Control Facility (RACF) Administration member Bob Evans on October 26, 2006.

A review of official computer records disclosed the identity of the specific user whose identification was affixed to the subject email. It was determined that the individual sent the email from a local county tax office using the “go mail” system. By querying a number of databases, OIG was able to verify that the user was not a state employee, but was an employee at the county tax office.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

OIG appreciates Commissioner Douglas’ request for assistance to investigate and report on the issues discussed herein.

Although OIG has no jurisdiction over local agencies/employees, we contacted the county tax commissioner’s office to inform them of the “domino effect” the user created by sending the email to the bank employee. Although the user’s intent is unknown, their actions may be viewed as an inappropriate use of the county/state email system. Inappropriate use is clearly defined in GTA Policy Number 3.1.3 “Appropriate Use of Information Technology (IT).” The policy addresses the fact that transmitted material that could be considered as discriminatory, offensive, threatening, harassing, or intimidating, constitutes

inappropriate use. GTA policies and procedures for (IT) resources apply to all agencies of the State of Georgia. The policy applies to all employees, contractors, vendors, customers, and others who utilize, possess or have access to State of Georgia IT resources.

GTA IT resources are provided to authorized users to facilitate the efficient and effective performance of their duties. The use of such resources imposes certain responsibilities and obligations on users and is subject to state government policies and applicable state and federal laws. It is the responsibility of users to ensure that such resources are not misused.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

None.

## **VI. REFERRALS**

As a result of our findings, we are forwarding a copy of this report to the Director of the Georgia Technology Authority for review and any action deemed appropriate.