

# AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## Women Policing The World



Special Agent Dinkler dressed in the national costume at the A.I.D. Mission in Islamabad, Pakistan.



Special Agent Dinkler negotiating the fee for a taxi ride on the road between Islamabad and Peshawar, Pakistan.



Special Agent Dinkler talking with local townspeople in Madras, India, during a commodities theft investigation.



Special Agent Dinkler off duty at the Grand Palace in Bangkok, Thailand.

The Agency for International Development's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) hired its first woman special agent in September 1985. This was a significant act for an historically male dominated office that operated in male dominated cultures abroad. Now, women make up 10% of the OIG investigative staff of 32, and they live and work successfully in the overseas environment. This article will provide a glimpse into the role one woman has played as a special agent with the Agency For International Development's (A.I.D.) OIG in the mission to control fraud, waste and abuse in America's foreign aid program.

By way of background, A.I.D. administers the major share of the \$8 billion bilateral Foreign Economic Assistance Program of the United States. Through this program, the United States helps countries acquire the resources and knowledge necessary to build a better life. Examples of assistance provided under the foreign aid program are economic support, technical assistance, food relief and disaster assistance. Over 1,500 programs and projects in 90 countries are administered by A.I.D. from offices in Washington, DC, as well as field offices in Africa, Asia, the Near East, Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe.

Such an expansive and encompassing program is fertile ground for fraud, waste and abuse of U.S. taxpayer dollars. Realizing this, the A.I.D. - OIG was established in 1981 as an independent organization responsible for audit, domestic and overseas security activities, and investigation and fraud control relating to the Agency's programs and operations.

The Office of Investigations is headed by an Assistant Inspector General to whom seven regional inspectors general report. Regional offices are located in Washington, DC; Cairo, Egypt; Nairobi, Kenya; Dakar, Senegal; Singapore; and Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Positions as special agents with the A.I.D. - OIG are unique in that they require the melding of two separate disciplines, that of criminal investigators (1811) and that of foreign service officers. The special agents are all highly skilled in the investigation of white collar crime, and many of them receive foreign language training before going overseas.

When the office hired its first women special agents, a great deal of internal debate ensued. Did women have the ability to function successfully in the foreign investigative arena? Everyone knew that the environment in which A.I.D. worked was harsh and often hostile, particularly to women. In most third world countries, women simply did not have the same social and legal status as men. How could the office insure a woman agent's safety, especially when the carrying of firearms was prohibited? And how could a woman agent do her job in cultures which did not extend women professional courtesy and respect?

With many questions unanswered, the A.I.D. Inspector General's Office of Investigations moved forward and hired its first women agents in 1985. Dona Dinkler joined the office as one of the initial two women agents hired. Her first post was Washington, DC, where she attended training programs designed to familiarize new foreign service officers with the projects, programs and operations of A.I.D. Then, she completed eight months of French language training. In 1987, after conducting numerous domestic investigations, Ms. Dinkler was assigned to the Regional Inspector General's Office for Asia and the Near East, where she spent the next three years traveling through Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Special Agent Dinkler was exposed to the same hazards imposed by climate, poor travel conditions and dietary restrictions as

were her male colleagues. Furthermore, as a woman, she had to work around cultural idiosyncrasies. For instance, in one country a police chief refused to let her travel to a remote area accessible only by boat. If she were attacked by alligators, the Chief would face grave consequences for letting a woman get hurt! Despite this travel restriction, Ms. Dinkler and her host country colleagues solved their commodities theft case: the culprit was removed from the A.I.D. program and prosecuted by local authorities.

While working in another country on a commodities theft case, Ms. Dinkler's hotel room was searched and she was detained at the airport by authorities who thought she was a spy. After all, women criminal investigators were unheard of in that country. To conform with religious values in countries where women have to abide by strict dress codes, Ms. Dinkler wore the national costume. In some countries unescorted women may even be considered offensive by certain societies.

Despite many obstacles, it was in Pakistan where Special Agent Dinkler uncovered one of the most significant criminal cases ever conducted by the A.I.D. - OIG. The prosecution resulted in five guilty pleas and restitution in the amount of \$2.7 million.

These significant achievements stemmed from an investigation involving two fraudulent contracts worth over \$5 million for the design and production of organic fertilizer plants. Special Agent Dinkler uncovered this case when a commodities officer at the A.I.D. Mission in Islamabad asked her to look at an invoice that appeared suspicious. It had been discovered by the officer when old data was being entered into a newly-installed computer system.

In an attempt to inspect the fertilizer plant for which A.I.D. paid \$1.8 million, Special Agent Dinkler found unassembled parts and equipment stored in a warehouse outside Karachi. With this discovery, she

planned and conducted an international investigation and led a multi-agency task force in the execution of a search warrant and the issuance of several arrest warrants.

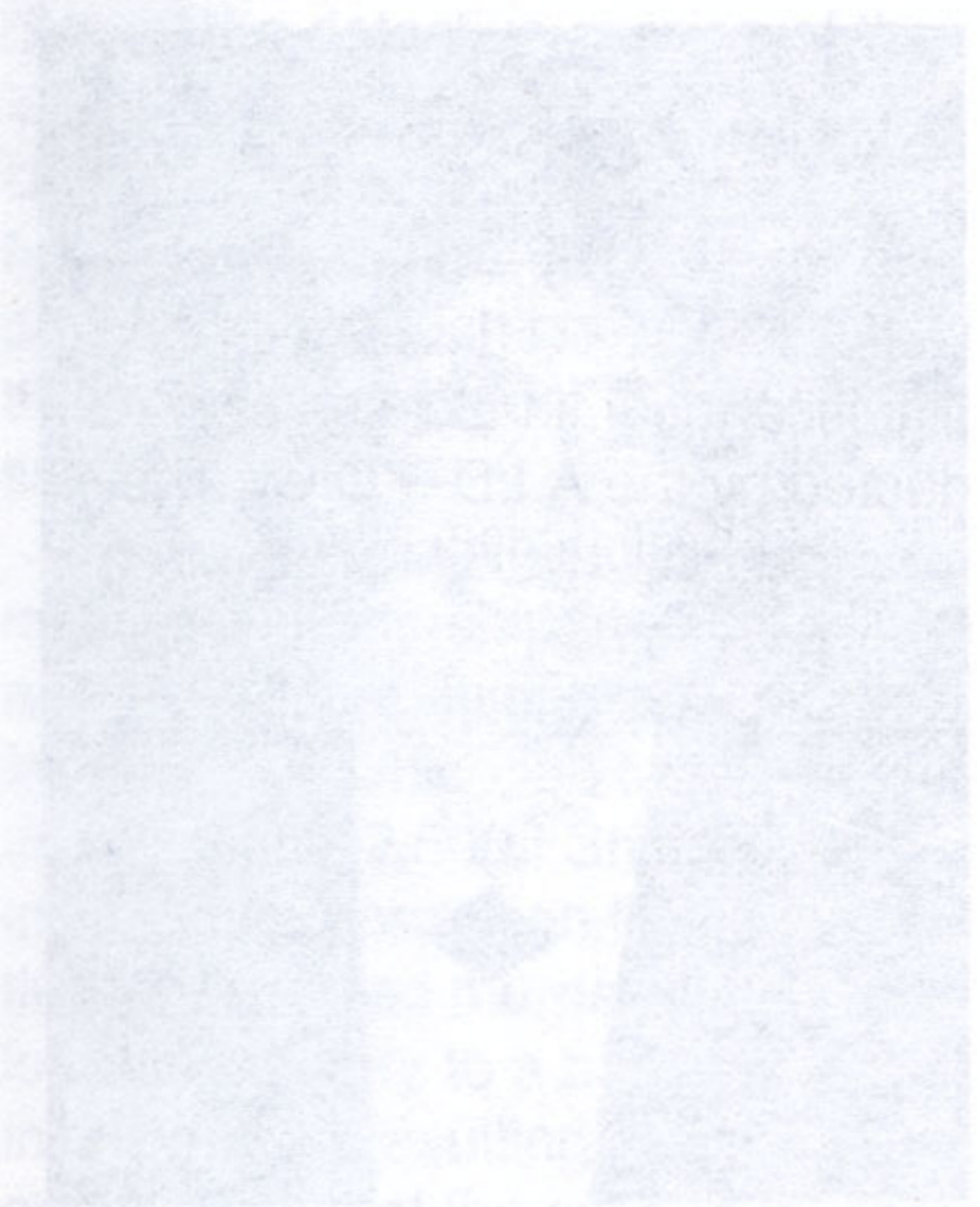
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gations, they can excel. Special Agent Dinkler is a pioneer in her field, and she has paved the way for other women who choose to pursue an exciting career with the A.I.D. Inspector General's Office of Investigations.

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